Edinburgh Leventis Studies 4

PURSUING THE GOOD

Ethics and Metaphysics in Plato's *Republic*

Edited by
Douglas Cairns, Fritz-Gregor Herrmann and Terry Penner

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Edinburgh University Press

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PREFACE

Thanks to a generous endowment from the A. G. Leventis Foundation, the School of History and Classics in the University of Edinburgh has the honour to welcome, every two years, a Visiting Research Professor in Greek, chief among whose duties is the organisation of a major international conference on a theme of his or her own choosing within the wide field of Hellenic studies. There have been four incumbents to date, and four such conferences. From each, a selection of papers has been revised and presented for publication as Edinburgh Leventis Studies, volumes 1–4.

The fourth Leventis Professor was Terry Penner, Professor of Philosophy (Emeritus) and former Affiliate Professor of Classics at the University of Wisconsin, Madison. Having spent almost all of his teaching career in philosophy departments, Terry very much welcomed his three months as a fully fledged member of a classics department distinguished especially for its contribution to Plato studies. For him, the outstanding collegiality and intellectual power that he encountered among the students, staff and former staff in Edinburgh was ample confirmation of the suggestion that analytical philosophers cannot do without the contributions of, and constant conversation with, their colleagues in classics. For their part, Edinburgh classicists and philosophers, at all levels, found in Terry a welcome reminder of what a university is for: during his tenure of the Leventis Chair Terry assiduously made himself available to students and colleagues, not only as an informal interlocutor and mentor, but also in a series of challenging and fascinating Friday seminars in which the rigour and originality of his thought were a constant source of inspiration.

In March 2005 Terry presided over a conference entitled 'The Good and the Form of the Good in Plato's *Republic*', from which the current volume derives. The editors would like to thank the A. G. Leventis Foundation for its generous support of the Chair, the

conference, and the publication of this volume. In supporting classics in the United Kingdom, the Foundation not only encourages classicists, historians and philosophers everywhere, but also addresses the justified aspiration of many Greeks, in Greece and abroad, that ancient Greek culture should continue to speak to humanity at large, through the constant reinterpretation and exploration of its legacy. The conference would not have taken place, and this volume would not exist, had it not been for the extraordinary scholarly concern for the project shown by Professor Keith Rutter: his patience, his tact, and his remarkable skills of organisation and attention to detail were invaluable. Also instrumental in the success of the conference were the dedication, industry and unfailing good humour of Mrs Jill Shaw. Finally, we should like to thank Carol MacDonald and Fiona Sewell for their care and skill in seeing this volume through to publication.

Douglas Cairns
Fritz-Gregor Herrmann
Terry Penner

Leventis IV took place with a remarkable assemblage of that interesting genre of classicist-cum-philosopher interpreters of Plato whose work has in practice generated an entire subject of its own. They came from Scotland, England, Wales, Ireland, Greece (six were either of Greek origin or descended from Greeks), the United States, Canada, Germany, Switzerland, France, Belgium, the Czech Republic and Japan – and that is not to mention those who were unable to accept the invitation. Many were scholars of renown. Others were young people judged to be important for the future of the subject. The conference itself was a feast of dialectic of the best kind – friendly, and generous, but always sharp. Unfortunately, the papers of Sarah Broadie, M. M. McCabe, Verity Harte, Dory Scaltsas, Jerry Santas, Anthony Price and Michael Erler could not be presented in this volume, mostly because they were antecedently destined for publication elsewhere. But of those that remain, many – those of Lesley Brown, Rachel Barney, Richard Kraut, Christopher Gill, Christopher Rowe, Gerhard Seel and Terry Penner – come from widely recognised members of the profession. Other younger scholars contributing to this volume – Fritz-Gregor Herrmann, Vasilis Politis, Mariana Anagnostopoulos, Rachana Kamtekar, Timothy Chappell, Antonio Chu and George Rudebusch (some of them already well known) – surely all give promise of accomplishments not less than those of their older counterparts.

I should also like to thank the University of Edinburgh School of History and Classics for doing me the honour – the great public honour of my scholarly life – of inviting me to hold the fourth Leventis professorship.

T. P.

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INTRODUCTION

THE GOOD AND THE FORM OF THE GOOD IN PLATO'S *REPUBLIC*

Of these essays, about half pursue an honourable twentieth-century tradition of exploring in tandem substantive questions of ethical theory and the light thrown on them by Plato's thought about the good in the *Republic*. Others address related exegetical questions concerning the Form of the Good and its relations to other Forms in the *Republic* and in other dialogues. Three of the former group of essays also discuss exegetical questions relating Plato's treatment of the good and the Form of the Good to Aristotle's opposition to the Forms, and his alternative, but often quite similar approaches to the human good.

The simultaneous pursuit of questions in systematic ethics and in *Republic* scholarship arguably goes back to a single important source – H. R. Prichard's justly celebrated 1928 inaugural lecture, 'Duty and interest' – as modified by subsequent, mostly anti-metaphysical tendencies within Anglo-American philosophy. These latter tendencies see themselves as uncovering metaphysical confusions, logical errors (or errors about the logic of such-and-such concepts) and fatal ambiguities in Plato's treatment of the Forms and also in his treatments of justice and the good. These diagnoses of confusions, errors and equivocations have necessarily influenced post-Prichard analyses of the ethics of the *Republic* as well. But there they fell on ground well prepared for such diagnoses by Prichard's lecture. That lecture was not itself hostile to metaphysics in any obvious way. It did much to fuel the ethical intuitionism of Moore, Prichard himself and Ross that was so influential in the first four decades of the twentieth century. But it also prepared the way for a quite natural metamorphosis to the emotivism (prescriptivism, etc.) of succeeding decades, once they asserted themselves. What is more, the confusion Prichard thought he had detected in the *Republic* reinforced the later diagnoses of confusion and

I am very grateful to Lesley Brown for helpful criticisms and comments on an earlier draft of this introduction.

logical error, once *they* asserted themselves. Since there is not much discussion of these modern diagnoses of Plato's supposed metaphysical confusion and logical errors in the present volume, they can be mostly set aside for purposes of the present introduction. But Prichard's article also proved to be a watershed in the interpretation of the *Republic*'s thought about ethics, thanks to its administration of a thorough shock to the widespread and complacent belief that, however astonishing one finds the *Republic*'s programme for clarifying what justice is, one can still establish a rapport between Plato's take on justice, on the one hand, and ordinary moral convictions and ideals, on the other. For Prichard's lecture claims to expose two quite different strands in the *Republic*'s thought about Justice and Goodness. And these strands directly conflict with each other. Let us pause for a moment over these two strands.

First, Prichard finds in the *Republic*'s concept of justice a strictly morality-based theory of ethics, which he himself regards as broadly, and obviously, correct. This view of the *Republic* Prichard bases on his account of what Plato *means* (or *must mean*) by the word *dikaion* – a kind of Moorean intuiting of what we have before our minds when we use a given word. By attending carefully to what we (and Plato) *mean* when we use such words as *dikaion*,[1] Prichard thinks, we see that what the word refers to is actually what is (morally) right, what one has a duty to do. The resulting idea of *dikaion* (what is just) as what is morally right has been broadly accepted by a great many subsequent interpreters. (Indeed Robin Waterfield's 1993 translation of the *Republic* actually *translates dikaiosunê* as *morality*!) This idea that *dikaion* stands for what is morally right, and what one ought to do, is also powerfully expressed in Lesley Brown's contribution to this volume (Chapter 2) – at any rate as what the *Republic should* have been aiming to capture in its arguments using the word *dikaion*.

Second, Prichard also recognises – if only by way of recording what he believes to represent a serious error – another line of thought in the *Republic* which, like many other moral philosophers, he abhors, and which indeed is for the most part under the radar screen for subsequent

1 The principal use of meanings in philosophy stems from the idea that 'meaning determines reference', that is, from the idea that the conditions for the linguistically correct use of, say, the word *dikaisounê* (the word's meaning or, in Frege, its 'sense') determines what it is that we are speaking of (the word's *reference*) when we use that word. This idea shows up in subsequent ethical theorising in the suggestion that the correct way to proceed in ethics is by investigating our concepts, or how we use words – as in 'the language of morals'. These and similar philosophical ideas are strongly opposed in Penner 2005, 2007, and forthcoming. There is a great deal more to be said about Prichard, Ryle, the paradox of analysis, and the 'common quality' theory of Plato's enterprise. But this is not the place.

moral philosophers. This way of thinking which Prichard thinks he has caught Plato falling into, even while Plato is also trying to produce a theory of what is morally right (as above), arises, according to Prichard, as a futile effort on Plato's part to address a worry about *motivating* people to act morally. (Prichard finds the same misguided effort in Bishop Butler and in T. H. Green.) As a result, the view Plato falls into is that one's own happiness is not only *a* motive, but *the* motive for all deliberate action[2] – even moral action. But this apparently exclusive reliance on mere prudence about one's own happiness seems to Prichard threatening to morality.

This philosophical use of the term 'prudence' (*providentia*: foresight) can be thought of as derived from Kant's notion of the *hypothetical imperative* – 'You ought to do this *if* you want that' – and, in particular, from one species of hypothetical imperatives which Kant singles out from all the others, and which he calls *counsels of prudence* – 'You ought to do this if you want to be *happy*.' (Sidgwick uses the notion of prudence in a similar way.) These counsels of prudence Kant thinks everyone will follow who acts in accordance with the universal laws of psychology. For it is a law of nature, Kant holds, a scientific law, that everyone always wants to be happy. Fortunately for Kant, since he holds that laws of nature are merely 'phenomenal' while morality is 'noumenal', free will and morality remain possible for anyone who grants Kant's phenomenon/noumenon distinction. (In Kant's Copernican revolution, one is phenomenally – empirically or scientifically – determined, but could conceivably be noumenally free.) As for the *command* (or *imperative*, or *norm*) in this account of prudence – You *ought* to do this if you want to be happy – Kant apparently finds it convenient so to regiment his account of motivation that *all* actions are represented as a response to some internal command. Actions you do from duty will be responses to the internal command 'You ought to do this *period*'; actions you do out of prudence will be responses to the internal command 'You ought to do this if you want to be happy'; and actions you do as means to a more limited end *E*, such as beginning to cook this meal, will be responses to the internal command, 'You ought to do this (say, turn on the stove) if you want to begin cooking this meal.' Such a regimentation of actions as responses to internal commands will seem to

2 In the present context, I call an action 'deliberate' if it is generated *not by* an irrational desire or impulse, but rather by the desire for happiness. In Socrates, all motivated actions are generated by the desire for happiness, while for Aristotle, and, similarly (some would argue), for Plato's parts-of-the soul-doctrine, some motivated actions *are* generated by irrational desires or impulses. (See the remarks of Prichard quoted at p. 6 below.)

some to represent simply a move to soften us up for accepting that if human experience contains hypothetical imperatives, there must be categorical imperatives. To such people, this regimentation will therefore be a move to be resisted. (Of course no one would suggest that Kant himself is ever less than scrupulous about the necessity of making a truly hard-working case for the existence of categorical imperatives.)[3]

Such a command (or normative) theory of action is hardly the way Socrates, Plato and Aristotle thought of motivation in the psychology of action. For them, either (1) all motivated actions are responses to *desire* for *good*, as in Socrates; or (2) there may also be motivated actions of a sort which Socrates does *not* allow for: actions that are motivated not by the desire for good, but rather by desires for things other than the good, such as food, drink and sex, as in Plato and Aristotle. These desires are taken by Plato to originate in the irrational parts of the soul, and to bring the agent to act contrary to the desire for good issuing from the Rational part of the soul.[4]

What need is there for internal commands in such desire-theories? Why would the desires themselves not be enough to motivate the

3 One may take 'categorical imperative' more narrowly (as, say, the imperative to act in accordance with the Kantian 'what one could will to be a universal law of nature') or more widely (as, say, any imperative (or, come to that, any normative principle) that has the form 'Do this *period*, that is, whether or not it will make you happy'). This wider interpretation will cover not only the narrower interpretation, but also 'Do this because it is morally right, whether or not you want to be happy' and 'Do this because it is intrinsically good, whether or not you want to be happy.'

4 Prichard understands this picture of the essential similarity of the views of Plato and Aristotle on irrational desires. See his remarks in [1928] 1968: 218, quoted below (p. 6), and especially the clause 'when he is acting deliberately, and not merely in consequence of an impulse'. (Incidentally, this last clause suggests immediately one way of settling the vexed question of how to interpret 505E1–506A2. For this clause suggests that the 'pursuit' referred to there is *deliberate* pursuit.) The remarks in this quotation apply equally to Aristotle on the difference between acting on *boulêsis* (wish or want) on the one hand, and acting on *thumos* (spiritedness) or *epithumia* (appetite) on the other. The issue is not at all one of whether Plato is, and Aristotle is not, committed to an explicit triparte ontology of *parts* (the Rational, Spirited and Appetitive parts), but solely of the kinds of desires admitted. Thus Plato's views in the *Republic* do not differ essentially either from the view in the *Laws* or from the views of Aristotle. See, contra, Bobonich 2002. Notice that Prichard's idea here is not the idea that all *motivated* action is directed at the agent's own good, but the idea that all *deliberate* action is so directed. It should be compared to Lesley Brown's closely related, but perhaps different ideas about what she calls 'rational egoism' (p. 47 below), the point of which is simply that it is *foolish* to act otherwise than from prudential motives. Thus it is left open whether the charge of folly represents the violation of a fundamental *norm* – as it would in Sidgwick and Nagel (see the next note) – or merely (as the prudentialist could wish) the fact that the agent is not therein doing what he or she wants (which seems to be the option Prichard is choosing for interpreting Plato: see also the next paragraph) – or some totally other option.

actions without some internal command? Consider merely the deliberate desires which originate in the Rational part of the soul. Here, we have, in all three of Socrates, Plato and Aristotle, that (1) you want the good; (2) you find out the truth about the best means to that good; then (3) your initial desire for the good is redirected towards just that means, so that (4) you act accordingly. Commands are thus quite unnecessary to the explanation of people's reason for action. (No necessity for 'The Will'.) Indeed, from this point of view talk of a hypothetical *imperative* is actually quite inappropriate. For from this point of view, there is really no imperative or normative principle here at all. The so-called 'hypothetical imperative' merely gives a factual statement – not in any way a normative statement – connecting the result which the hypothetical imperative 'commands' in the consequent to the desire mentioned in the antecedent.

The fundamental role of desire in the psychologies of action of Socrates, Plato and Aristotle makes it clear what Kant's worry is about these counsels of prudence, and about the appearance of happiness at the very focus of all ethical behaviour. The Kantian worry is this: that there is *nothing of morality* here – the *ought* of 'you ought to do this if you want to be happy' – is not an *ought* or a norm at all. For Kant, by contrast, the appropriate command to produce moral behaviour is the categorical imperative: 'You ought to do this *period*', that is, whether or not it will make you happy; and the hypothetical imperatives are merely degenerate cases of this fundamental imperative. (Here we see that the softening up for a new kind of good, the *moral* good, closely akin to the Judaeo-Christian 'quasi-jural' good is clearly enough in progress.) Returning to Socrates, Plato and Aristotle, according to whom deliberate actions are always, as it were, responses to counsels of prudence, the only good in question is one's own happiness, and the only goodness there can be in a person will be *getting the right answers as to what to do as a means to that happiness*. Kantians may invite one to speak of a command to seek one's own happiness. But where is the need for any imperative or norm? Surely, the desire for good does everything that needs to be done for these cases without commands or norms. If we now set aside this command psychology of action and call the resulting ethical theory 'pure prudentialism', we can say that this second strand Prichard identifies in the *Republic* is this pure prudentialism, for the entry of which into the ethical tradition he very much censures Plato.[5]

5 Notice the rearguard action on behalf of the Kantian line of thought at Sidgwick 1907: 36–8. Sidgwick argues that prudential imperatives actually *presuppose* another imperative. The idea is that we cannot understand the deliberative process (1) to (4) leading to action without the existence of a command or norm 'You ought

Prichard goes further. He defends the view that there *is* this pure prudentialism in the *Republic* by means of further remarks about *meaning*. Thus he argues that Plato's use of words for *should* and *ought*, such as *dei*, *chrê* and the -*teon* ending, make no reference whatever to morality, since what they say is something along the lines of the counsel of prudence: 'You ought to do this *if you want to be happy*.' But there is more. For, by implication, Prichard recognises Plato's tendency to appeal to a purely prudential account of *the good*, according to which (though Prichard does not put it in exactly this way) the single good which we all (deliberately) pursue is *happiness*.

As Prichard ([1928] 1968: 218), puts it,

> There is no escaping the conclusion that when Plato sets himself to consider not what *should* but what actually does *as a matter of fact*, lead a man to act, when he is acting deliberately, and not merely in consequence of an impulse, he answers 'The desire for some good to himself and that only'. In other words we have to allow that, according to Plato, a man pursues whatever he pursues simply as a good to himself, i.e., really as something which will give him satisfaction, or, as perhaps we ought to say, as an element in what will render him happy.

Given his belief in meanings, it is only natural that these reflections should lead Prichard to further conclusions about what Plato supposedly *means* by such words as 'good'. We see this in the following remarks:

> It might be objected that these statements do not bear out the view which is attributed to Plato, since Plato certainly did not mean by an *agathon* a source of satisfaction or happiness to oneself. But to this the answer is that wherever Plato uses the term *agatha* (goods)

(footnote 5 *continued*)
to act rationally *period*', that is, 'You ought to take the indispensable means to the end you have adopted *period*.' (Compare, in Nagel 1970: 20–3 with 4 and 16, n.2, the exploitation of the Lewis Carroll Paradox of Achilles and the Tortoise on the need to supplement any axioms by rules of inference (*logical* norms, so to speak) to the same effect – to disallow the possibility that the prudential imperative could produce action without some sort of categorical imperative to be rational. But here too, Socrates and Plato would surely ask: why isn't the desire for happiness, together with the desire for truth required for choosing the means to that happiness, sufficient to motivate our making such inferences, without any further imperatives? If there are no categorical imperative or norms that are otherwise required why should we suppose that the so-called 'hypothetical imperatives' are genuine imperatives or norms, rather than simply disguised statements of fact which we see to be relevant to our fulfilling our desire for our own happiness?)

> elsewhere in other dialogues, such as the *Philebus*, the context always shows that he means by a good a good to oneself.[6]

Prichard's idea here – in effect, that what Plato is doing is employing a psychology of action that is not command-based or norm-based in order to move ethics away from its natural home (rightness, morality, norms and duty) – is one that scandalised Plato interpreters in its ethical import, and they moved quickly to exclude from future discussion the possibility that Plato was no genuine defender of morality. The ethical import found objectionable in the view Prichard is attributing to Plato may be further elaborated as follows:

> The point of the argument that a just individual is happier than the completely unjust individual who 'gets away with' unjust actions is not merely that happiness is *added to* the just or moral person (as in the Old Testament and Homeric promise of plentiful flocks for the righteous – and also, in a different way, in Kantian transcendental eschatology). Rather, it is that happiness is the *only* rational motive to action, the only motive Plato's Rational part of the soul ever acts on. Hence there is no independent rational motive to good or right action, such as *doing something merely because it is right and even if the action works against one's happiness both short term and long term.*

This view, excluding the very idea of morally right motives, would thus conflict startlingly with what Plato supposedly *means* by *dikaion*,

6 This idea about Plato is well described in Prichard's great predecessor, Sidgwick. Thus he says at 1907: 105–6: '[In ancient Greek ethical controversies,] . . . Virtue or Right action is commonly regarded as only a species of the Good: . . . . [We will not understand what they took the genus to be] unless with a certain effort we throw the quasi-jural notions of modern ethics aside, and ask (as they did) not "What is Duty and what is its ground?" but "Which of the objects that men think good is truly Good or the Highest Good?" ' This is the approach to ethics which Sidgwick 1907: 4 characterises as the 'art of conduct' approach, but which Sidgwick nevertheless never considers as a possible 'method of ethics'. Sidgwick makes clear here that he excludes any such arts of conduct from the methods of ethics because of the fact that some people hold that they are not methods of ethics, since they hold that there are intuitive judgements about rightness that have nothing to do with such an art of conduct. This leads Sidgwick to say, 'Hence, as I do not wish to start with any assumption incompatible with the latter view, I prefer to consider Ethics as the science or study of what is right or what ought to be, so far as this depends upon the voluntary action of individuals.' Very well, no doubt a systematic study of ethical theory does well to discuss the position of those who believe that there are such legitimate intuitive judgements about rightness. But is that a good enough reason *not* to include those who would deny this? Is this a good enough reason to exclude arts of conduct from the methods of ethics? For what may have been influencing Sidgwick here, see n.5 above.

namely, precisely what we find in Prichard's own attitude to what is morally right regardless of its effects on an individual's happiness. This idea of morality tends to be expressed by later thinkers as the view that we must always distinguish in ethics *instrumental goods* and *intrinsic goods*. Intrinsic goods – or moral goods – are the only things which make actions ethically good. By contrast, actions done as instrumental means to happiness are, as it were, 'without moral worth'. The second, 'prudentialist', line of thought Prichard finds in Plato would annihilate that distinction, and make all supposed good actions 'instrumental' to the agent's happiness. It does this in spite of the fact that, as Prichard and other Kantians and moralists see it, happiness is not an intrinsic good, merely a (heteronomous) non-moral good. Their view *will* be correct – but only if it is also correct that intrinsic goods will not motivate us to action without a norm enjoining the securing of the intrinsic good *even when it goes against the agent's own happiness*. Proponents of this purely prudential approach to conduct will be expected not only to *reject* the latter condition, but also to reject the entire distinction between intrinsic and instrumental good.

It should be noted here that before Prichard, it did not for the most part so much as occur to interpreters that there was any real conflict to be found within the *Republic* between these two different accounts of the good and goodness: that involved with the moral good (the motive to which cannot be self-interest according to Prichard, Kant and Kant's many followers on this point), and that involved with the purely prudential good (the motive to which is the agent's own advantage, that is, the agent's own happiness).[7]

Predecessors of Prichard, along with most of his many successors, have supposed there must be some way of fitting these two accounts together in a single theory. Indeed, a reconciliation of the two accounts is entirely possible according to many such interpreters. After all, why shouldn't it be the case, even on a Kantian conception of morality, that morality results in happiness, without happiness being the *motive* for moral actions? True, on Prichard's (Kantian) understanding of morality, the motive to moral behaviour *cannot*, on pain of incoherence, be the happiness that the Old Testament God (or, come to that, Kantian transcendental eschatology) ensures. But what logical inconsistency would there be if it were the case that the agent's own self-interest (the agent's own happiness) is the fully foreseen – but not *intended* – consequence of following out the intention of obedience to the law (in

7 It is for this reason that I have marked Prichard's lecture as a watershed within work of the past two centuries on the ethical import of the *Republic*. This in spite of the major contributions to be found in the work of such scholar-philosophers as Jowett, Campbell, Sidgwick, Jackson, Green, Richard Nettleship, Bosanquet and others.

this case, the laws of morality)?[8] Certainly there is no *logical inconsistency* in this sort of 'double effect' theory – this inverse of what is known in modern military parlance as 'collateral damage'.

But Prichard evidently had no interest whatever in this ('logically possible') option. Indeed, he does not even consider this option for representing Plato's claim that justice will make us happier than complete injustice would. Perhaps it was an impatience on Prichard's part (which some of us will share) with the strenuous mental gymnastics involved in knowing full well that being moral will make us happy, but rigidly keeping that knowledge out of our intentions. *Pace* Morris (in his 1933–4) and other strict analytical philosophers, it is not a matter of what can be *consistently* believed – 'double-effect'-style theories certainly seem to be consistent – any more than it is consistency that is involved when many apparently rational people object to talk of a 'collateral damage' that is taken to be both foreseen and nevertheless falling outside an agent's intentions. It is a matter of what makes sense as a theory of human motivation. Whatever Prichard's reasons, he insists that these two ideas, of *dikaiosunê* as pure morality, and of the decidedly self-interested pursuit of one's own happiness, are present together in the *Republic*, and stand in contradiction to each other. And a purely prudentialist strand would eliminate all possibility of the benefit's being collateral. It would have to be intended.

This finding of a purely prudential theory of the human good in the *Republic* was greeted with the greatest opposition on the part of a great many subsequent commentators – including, among many distinguished figures, Morris, Mabbott, Kirwan, Irwin (in his way), Cooper and Annas. These commentators attacked vigorously the idea that Plato had anything in mind in his discussion of justice other than a strictly moral good (or a *nearly* moral good – an impersonal and non-relative good that does not speak to anyone's interests). For these interpreters, we see in the *Republic*'s Form of the Good how 'the philosopher is moved by the knowledge of the Idea of the good, not by desire for his own good' (Morris 1933–4: 142). That is, we see, in the Form of the Good, a new object-to-be-sought *besides self-interest* for the desires of the Rational part. This new object of rational desire would thus be seen as not less pregnant with consequences for moral philosophy than Kant's alleged discovery of another new object of desire (or at any rate another new object for one's motives): the moral law that is presupposed by the categorical imperative. Accordingly, motives of the sort Kant spoke of – motives to do what is right *period* or what is intrinsically good *period*, without regard to what will make

8 See Morris 1933–4: 130–1, with the opening paragraph of Mabbott 1937.

one happy – will need to be possible. Looked at in this way, what Morris offers is a liberalisation of Plato's theory of motivation comparable to that wrought in the defence of benevolence and altruism in the British moralists, especially Butler. On such views, however guilty Plato may have been of metaphysical confusions and logical errors in the Theory of Forms, he was certainly doing something of considerable ethical significance.

But in spite of these rearguard actions to make the world safe for Plato the moralist, Prichard's lecture opened the floodgates (especially among Anglo-American interpreters) for charges that Plato was confused in how he was thinking of justice in the *Republic* – whether that be the confusion of moral good with self-interest or the closely related confusion of *obedience to certain moral rules and prohibitions* with *the state of psychological well-adjustment among the three parts of the soul*, which well-adjustment Plato thinks will make us happier. (The first confusion is attributed to Plato in Prichard, the second in Sachs 1963, as well as Foster 1936, 1937, and many after Sachs.) In its way, this tradition has been much more influential and long-lasting than the famous tradition of attacking Plato for his supposed illiberal totalitarianism, as in Crossman (1937) and Popper (1945). (Some of us were lucky enough to begin our study of the *Republic* in detail when the tide of both the accusations was at the full. One learns nothing from the *Republic* if one does not, in a manner of which Socrates would surely have approved, take up the strongest and best cases against the arguments and convictions expressed in that great work.)

Obviously, some of these interpreters in the tradition of Foster and Sachs gave credence to Prichard's idea that Plato might have in mind the kind of purely prudential theory suggested above; but the best they could do for Plato was to make the Prichard-like accusation that Plato confuses self-interest with other, more quasi-jural moral notions. Such interpreters are obviously not of the group singled out two paragraphs above, who wish to take Plato's contributions to ethics more seriously. To take just three of many examples of scholars who find in the *Republic* work of considerable significance for ethics (whatever the metaphysical shortcomings of the Theory of Forms, and, in particular, the Form of the Good), (1) White (1979) argues for the presence in the *Republic* of what he regards as a powerful variant of Rawls's (constructivist) theory of justice; (2) Irwin (1977, 1995) argues for an ingenious integration of justice into happiness, so that if it isn't moral it isn't happiness;[9] and

9 The idea is close to Mill's idea of *parts* of happiness in ch. 4 of *On Utilitarianism*. But I rather doubt that Irwin's account is supposed to have habituation built into it in the way Mill's clearly entirely depends on habituation (as does Mill's idea of doing right actions for their own sake). Mill understands the hazard here: the

(3) Santas (2001) finds an entire range of important ethical theories on display in the *Republic*, some of them usefully comparable to the work of Rawls.[10]

These three distinguished interpretations of the *Republic* make Plato a moralist (or a *near* moralist), in spite of any difficulties there might be in the metaphysics of the Forms. Others, as has been noted, find in him ambiguities fatal to Plato's case against his opponents. Few seem to have been tempted to pursue single-mindedly Prichard's purely prudential option as capturing just what Plato was up to in the *Republic*. In his inaugural lecture (Chapter 1 below), and in his conference lecture (Chapter 5), however, Penner espouses just this despised view of what Plato had in mind when speaking of the Good and the Form of the Good – based on an argument that the *Republic* supports a claim that the Form of the Good, properly understood, is the Form of Benefit or Advantage. He backs this suggestion by an attempt (in Chapter 5) to present Forms as nothing more mysterious than 'the real natures of things', the abstract structures that underlie the things and events of spacetime. Rowe too (Chapter 6) argues for the direct relevance of the Form of the Good to central questions about the good construed as related to the agent's own interest and indeed to the view of the good often associated with Socrates rather than with the *Republic*. Rowe sees in this the necessity of distancing oneself from the 'developmentalist' tradition in Plato. Chu (Chapter 3) argues that the approach to the good as related to the agent's own interest fits well the arguments of *Republic* I, even the passage where it is said that the ruler *qua* ruler seeks not his own good, but the good of those he rules. And in an essay (Chapter 7) without overt reference to Plato, Kraut,

'dissolving force of analysis' (ch. 3), something that would not have surprised the author of chapter 2 of *On Liberty*.

10 On ways in which it can be said that the Theory of Forms generally, and the Form of the Good in particular, do not measure up metaphysically, according to these authors, in spite of Plato's insightful approach to ethics and morality, see White 1979: 35–7, 47–8 (some of this matter quoted below, p. 97), and Santas 2001: esp. ch.5 (which goes to great lengths to avoid the bad consequences for Plato of attributing to him the wholly implausible thesis that each Form is self-predicational). Irwin 1995: chs.10, 16, has been careful to develop a range of auxiliary exegetical hypotheses to avoid attributing to Plato self-predication and other rather confused views: for example, the auxiliary hypothesis of the 'compresence of opposites' in those *universals* he calls '*sensible* properties', a 'compresence' which is made the sole genuinely *philosophical* significance of flux in Plato's account of becoming; and the hypothesis that wherever the contrast between the one and the many occurs in a philosophically important place, '"the many" refers to these universals as well as to particulars'. It seems clear that all three philosophers are anxious to preserve a doctrine of the good in the *Republic* which will be free from the threat of metaphysical confusions and logical errors that have been commonly attributed to the Theory of Forms since Prichard.

well-known Plato scholar that he is, argues for the view that the fundamental notion of ethics is the notion of what is *good for* an agent. Brown (Chapter 2), on the one hand agrees with Prichard, Penner, Rowe and Chu, and against many others, that Plato does indeed pursue single-mindedly some version or other of the pure prudentialism described above. (Brown speaks of 'rational egoism', on which see above, n.4.) On the other hand, by contrast with the chapters just mentioned, she herself has little sympathy with this prudentialism as a viable approach to ethics. On this point, she is therefore in full agreement with Prichard's view that this prudentialist approach to justice is well off the mark as to what we (and Plato) have in mind when we speak of justice – or, at any rate, of just action. Rudebusch (Chapter 4) *considers* this prudentialist approach to the *Republic*, but, like Brown, rejects prudentialism as an utterly false ethical theory. Indeed, unlike Brown, he rejects this prudentialism even as an interpretation of what Plato is up to in the *Republic*. In Rudebusch's view, what Plato was after was, after all, solely that account of justice as something like the moral rightness which Prichard finds as the first of the two strands he finds in the *Republic*. For Rudebusch, the prudentialist strand is entirely absent.

Of the chapters mentioned, only those of Penner and Rowe discuss Plato's views on justice and the good within the context of discussing the Form of the Good. Of the chapters not mentioned so far, almost all are centred on the Form of the Good and the continuing problems modern interpreters have had being sure what its metaphysical status is, or how, if at all, the Form of the Good bears on ethics or moral theory. The exegetical possibilities here become vividly apparent in the important suggestions of Burnyeat (2000) on the intimate relation he sees between the Form of the Good and mathematical entities. These suggestions would take us a long way from the more Socratic direction Penner, Rowe and others in this volume would take us. It is more than appropriate, therefore, that Burnyeat's proposals are discussed at length by Gill's 'The Good and Mathematics' (Chapter 12) which proposes modifications to Burnyeat's thesis, some of Gill's modifications then being challenged by Kamtekar's 'The Good and Order: Does the *Republic* Display an Analogy Between a Science of Ethics and Mathematics?' (Chapter 13). Again, the difficulties and alleged antinomies for the Form of the Good raised by the distinguished Swiss scholar Rafael Ferber provoke a defence of the Forms from Seel (Chapter 8), which defence Mason (Chapter 9) then discusses. In the course of his investigations, Seel explores a line of the sort already suggested by Irwin (1995) and Fine (2003), namely, that the Form of the Good may not be something at the apex of a hierarchy of all the other Forms so much as it is, quite simply, the entire hierarchy – or, as Seel

has it, a principle underlying this hierarchy. As for this, so to speak, sinking of the Form of the Good into the other Forms, the next essay, Herrmann's (Chapter 10), goes, if anything, in exactly the opposite direction, as it were sinking the other Forms into the Form of the Good. In two of the chapters we find a change of pace. From his studies of the first-rate puzzles that the *Charmides* has almost always inspired, Politis (Chapter 11) proposes to use the *Republic*'s treatment of the Form of the Good to solve what he regards as an important puzzle in the *Charmides*. Chappell (Chapter 16) broadens the scope of these inquiries by offering a general discussion of two very different notions which people expect to find in Plato's discussions of the metaphysics of the good: first, in the language of the Cave, *conversion*, and, second, in the tradition of Socratic dialectic, *conversation*. Finally, Anagnostopoulos (Chapter 14) and Barney (Chapter 15) both pursue questions of the widest scope about the good we all seek, and about the underlying metaphysics of the Form of the Good – considering not just the *Republic*, but also what is common to Plato and Aristotle in their thought of the good. They also offer novel criticisms of places where Aristotle objects to Platonic metaphysics, especially as Aristotle sees Plato's belief in the Form of the Good as bearing on central questions of ethics.

As might be hoped in a gathering to discuss the great master of dialectical writing, there is lots of disagreement about fundamental issues in these essays, disagreements either in ethics or in how one may think about the Form of the Good. What is certain is that if the study of Plato is as relevant to ethics as is the study of Hume, or Kant, or Rawls (as several of the essays here implicitly suggest), then these ethical questions cannot be separated forever from fundamental questions of interpretation involving the Form of the Good and the other Forms.

Terry Penner

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1

WHAT IS THE FORM OF THE GOOD THE FORM *OF?* A QUESTION ABOUT THE PLOT OF THE *REPUBLIC*

Terry Penner

I have chosen a theme which I hope will turn out to be of equal appeal to classicists and to philosophers. This is the exploration of a very serious – and largely ignored – difficulty in our usual presentations of the plot of the *Republic*. True, details of plot over and above the fairly clear surface organization of this dialogue might seem of minimal interest to philosophers. One hears analytical philosophers objecting:

> Are we not all about formulating and assessing *arguments?* If one's *philosophical* job in reading Plato is to assess arguments for what their premises say; what conclusions Socrates draws from them, and what other propositions are *entailed* by the propositions involved; then surely one is unlikely to find further considerations of plot or context of much relevance? What the premises and conclusions say (the propositions expressed), and what conclusions are entailed by what premises, and what other propositions are entailed by either (as determined by the semantics backing one's theory of entailment), surely requires no special attention to context within the drama. A few stray indexicals aside, it is unclear how any considerations of plot or dramatic context will be of much use to the job of figuring out what Plato is saying philosophically.

Such objections now seem to me seriously misguided. This evening, I hope to demonstrate, by means of a single example, that explorations of plot difficulties can shed important new light on what Plato is up to, even philosophically, in the *Republic*. Thus it will turn out to be important to me that I consider Plato to be the very greatest of dramatists – the equal in his own way of the great Athenian tragedians and even of Homer. True, I do not hold Plato to be the greatest of *philosophers*,

since I reserve that title for Plato's great teacher, Socrates – if you can call what Socrates does 'teaching'.[1] But I do hold Plato to be not only the greatest of philosophers who also wrote, but also to be one of the very greatest writers in the Western tradition – in part precisely because of his qualities as dramatic representer of dialectical *agônes*.

This is sure to evoke the reply,

> Look, the dialogues show undoubted literary charms, and even genius – in the presentation of such characters as Thrasymachus, Hippias, Euthyphro, Callicles, Critias, Lysis, Crito and Alcibiades (one might almost choose at random), not to mention Socrates himself. But dramas are about *particular overt actions*, such as public accusation, disobedience to the commands of a tyrant, imprisoning, murder, insult, supplication, and retaliation. True, these actions involve motive, deliberation, and the assessment of the situations agents are assessing in deciding how to act; so that they do involve reasoning of a kind. But this is all practical reasoning about particular actions in particular situations, while Plato is almost always centered on general and theoretical questions. And that is what we philosophers are interested in.

Since I am unmoved by Aristotle's quaint suggestion that the kind of reasoning we do in theoretical matters differs from the kind of reasoning we do about practical matters, I shall content myself with merely mentioning that Plato shows us clearly enough in the *Euthyphro* how the same general considerations he takes up in other dialogues bear upon the practical matters of deliberation about particular actions. Take Socrates' questioning Euthyphro about whether Euthyphro acts piously in prosecuting his father – and hence, it is implied, does well in prosecuting him. Can this action be well deliberated about, Socrates is surely asking, without a clear view of just what piety is? (And the rest of the dialogue shows Euthyphro getting an intellectual bellyful of general matters he would do well to consider in thinking about whether to do this act. Even when one decides whether to go to a doctor, one can hardly avoid reflecting on such general matters as the value of one's time and how much the type of ailment involved admits of useful treatment.) Do philosophers really do well to ignore particular matters of context that reflect either the ways agents look at things or the ways things are?

I should enter a caution here. If analytical philosophers seem to me often to go wrong by the ignoring of literary matters, it also seems to

1 For my view of what in the first stylometric group of dialogues is Socratic, see Penner 2002, a view not very different from that suggested in Rowe, p. 127 below.

me that any classicists there may be who think they can teach such rich literary works as the *Apology*, the *Protagoras*, the *Symposium* and the *Phaedrus* 'in a purely literary way', with only superficial attention to any details of argument, are seriously misled. Questions of plot, and literary appreciation of other facets of a drama, surely very much depend upon the human matter of the actors' motivations, reasons, assertions and actions. But in Plato, motivations, reasons, assertions and actions are all intellectual, general and philosophical in content: to try to understand those dramas which are Platonic dialogues without grappling with the philosophical content is to ignore the nature of the actual action of the dramas. If the dialogues are dramas, then their action is indeed human, but for all that intellectual and philosophical. One can hardly understand the dialogues as dramas with plots, and with literary merits, without grappling with the philosophy.

On the other hand, once one begins to attend to the actual action, there is something important that those whose primary interest is in Homer, the tragedians and other poets have to tell analytical philosophers. This is that what is to be found by way of such reasons and motivations in *all* these dramas, Plato's included, will involve, for one thing, reasons for action (or assertion) not made fully explicit in the precise 'propositions' given by the semantics of the words used. What is more, these reasons are made evident enough *within a larger context* to nearly everyone sufficiently attentive simply to the plot of the drama. For another – and in philosophy this is frequently overlooked – it will involve reasons the interpreter is being invited to identify from the given context. These reasons are, in addition, to be identified (at least partly) on the basis of *truths* about the human condition and about human nature generally. Grasping such truths, even partly, will surely involve going well beyond any meanings of the words used or the 'propositions' expressed by them, and will depend upon our degree of grasp upon the truth about human beings generally – as tempered by such grasp as we have of any unusual features special to Greek culture of preoccupations of the author that we know of from other works; of what we know of other authors they may be in reaction to; and so forth. As I see it, if our aim is to see what is going on in the action of a great epic or play, we are not just forced to apply to what takes place in the action before us such understanding as we may have of our lives, of human nature and of the human condition – much as that goes beyond what we could know about what is being transacted merely from knowing the meanings and propositions expressed by the words used. We are also forced to *stretch* that partial understanding to the task of construing inevitable deformations that have to be made in that understanding if we are to construe what turns out to be involved in the action, as laid before us by the playwright, as *also* part of that truth

concerning human life. So it is, I claim, with Plato's dialogues. We have to strive to adjust and stretch our understanding to the presentation of realities which even Plato himself cannot do much more than *indicate* – whether he does so by the way in which Socrates pursues a line of inquiry, or by the overall direction the inquiry takes in the dialogue as a whole. As with epic and tragedy, so with Plato's dialogues: we are not merely looking at someone's *conception* of the truth, even the author's; we are trying to see *through* that to *what is so*. For that is what the author is talking about, whether it be Aeschylus or Plato.

One important consequence of this recognition is that it tells us that it will never be adequate to attempt to interpret argumentative steps in Platonic drama by simply putting the sentences involved into logical form, and then working from the meanings (or semantical interpretations) of the words in assessing the validity and soundness of the resulting formulations of arguments. 'Look, he says it right here!' one often hears from analytical philosophers arguing to a formulation of a Platonic argument, employing both exacting logical alertness as to so-called 'logical form' and also that careful philological attention to the words of the Greek text which analytical philosophers have inherited from the great nineteenth-century commentators on Greek literary, historical and philosophical texts, and on whose shoulders all who work on Greek culture still stand. The danger here for analytical philosophers is that with their careful attention to propositions and entailments, they take their eye off important questions of context, and off reality itself, on which Plato, like Homer and the tragedians, is also communicating to us – both those involving plot, and those involving *what the actual truth is* concerning the reality being discussed.[2]

In this chapter, I limit myself to drawing attention to just one example of concern with the apparently 'purely literary' – the difficulty in the plot of the *Republic* which I have said I shall discuss here. A general question first, however, about the source of plot difficulties: how is it that modern readers may come to feel difficulties about a plot that do not flow merely from faulty construction by the dramatist? (Flaws of construction – as opposed to failures to grasp the author's design – one will, I suppose, hesitate to attribute to authors of the calibre we are discussing.) My concern at the moment is with two sorts of answers to this question, since they are the ones which will prove relevant to my present example. This is that plot difficulties often flow from interpreters – whether they are aware of

2 In Penner and Rowe 2005, we argue that the truth of the matter in the world, even if not known to us ourselves, let alone to the participants in the dialogues, is in one way or other a part of what people are saying: see esp. ch.10, sec.1. I am grateful to Rowe for many discussions of this and related points, and look forward very much to the early appearance of his work on Plato as writer.

doing this or not – either (1) expecting to find modern ethical and psychological presuppositions which we bring to the work, or (quite as often, especially for the learned reader) (2) expecting that religious, democratic or oligarchic presuppositions one has come to take as common across classical Greek and Athenian culture will be more or less granted by Plato. In the use of underlying cultural presuppositions of the latter sort, I often find a kind of fashionable – and anti-Platonist – idea to the effect that what people are talking about, in any era, is determined by their conceptual and linguistic repertoire only. What the truth is about things that characters are *trying* to single out in their thought is no part of what they are saying, it appears, unless their concepts determine those things. (I myself quickly tire of those who harp on 'the Greek mind', as if these features hold – and *must* hold – of *all* classical Greeks, because of this (alleged) conceptual and linguistic determination.) Presuppositions of both kinds are, in my opinion, often simply dead wrong when applied to the approach of revolutionary thinkers such as Socrates and Plato. In sum, I hold that standard ways of thinking, either in modern thought, or in what is thought to be characteristic of classical Athenian culture, tend, first, to be automatically read into the text as part of the context, and thereby, second, to become impediments to our seeing through to the quite different things Socrates and Plato are up to.[3]

I am not of course saying that these are the most frequent or the most important sorts of plot difficulties that have shown up in classical scholarship, where there has been much absolutely brilliant and fruitful work. I am merely saying that in my example this evening, it is modern presuppositions to which I advert, presuppositions concerning the supposed *moral* nature of justice – justice as morality, even.

Most readers will naturally suppose that the surface organization of the *Republic* gives us about as much as can be gained by way of plot for the dialogue. So what does this surface organization tell us? Book I raises the question 'What is justice?' But in the course of that book, while discussing the best-developed answer to this question that appears in Book I, the subject is abruptly changed from the question 'What is justice?', to the question 'Is the just person happier than the completely unjust person?' – hereinafter 'the main question'. Books II–IV answer

3 By now it will probably be evident that I do not think, as do many, that the reason why it is a mistake to read modern presuppositions into Greek thought is that the ancients are in general talking about something different from what we talk about. My view is rather what might be expected from a Platonist on such fundamental matters as human nature: that Socrates and Plato are talking about the very same things that we want to talk about – where I hold it probable that we are more often wrong than they are. We have as much to learn from Socrates and Plato as we have from Homer, the tragedians and Thucydides. The subject is too vast for us to eschew learning from them.

the main question in the affirmative, largely by means of a determination of an answer to the question of what justice is via the so-called 'analogy' between the justice of a certain ideally just city constructed in theory *(logôi)* and the justice of an individual soul. Books V–VII are ostensibly devoted to the discussion of 'three waves' of criticism of this construction of the ideal city: on the equality of women; on communism; and on the possibility of an ideal city. Thus we appear to turn aside from any direct considerations of the psychology or ethics of Book IV, the concern appearing to be solely with utopian political arrangements. But in fact a whole new subject appears to be opened up in the long discussion of the third of these waves. For that discussion of the possibility of realizing the just city – almost two and a half books long – seems to consist mainly in metaphysical digressions to that political question. The digressions are, first, on the Forms in general, and then, with much high-flown imagery, on the Form of the Good in particular. Books VIII–IX offer a confirmation of Book IV's affirmative answer to the main question by means of an examination of the converse relations between (1) four kinds of unjust cities, (2) the corresponding four kinds of citizens in those cities, and (3) the corresponding four kinds of unjust individual souls (in *any* city). Were it not for their extraordinary sociological and psychological brilliance, these books would be consigned by a modern writer to an appendix in smaller type (being somewhat too long to go into footnotes). Finally, Book X contains two further supplementary discussions, the first on arguments for extruding poets from the ideal society because of their bad educational influence on citizens – even on guardians – and the second on showing that, while the arguments of Book IV were supposedly enough to show that the just would be happier even if all the rewards of *reputation* for justice go to the completely unjust, in fact the just person *will*, in time, receive the rewards of reputation both here and in the next world.

Question: does this account of the surface organization of the *Republic* give us the essential features of the plot? One reason for thinking it cannot do so is the fact that this account gives the impression that the *Republic* is either (a) a work that is primarily about the imaginative construction and possibility of an ideally just society, or (b) a work which is at least as much about this ideal city as it is about the greater happiness of just individuals than of completely unjust individuals (those who get away with their injustices). Neither (a) nor (b) seems quite consonant with Plato's telling us repeatedly[4] that the

4 See I.344E–345B, 347E–348A, 354A, II.358B, 360C–E, 362C, 367C–368C, III.392BC, IV.427D, 445A, V.472C, VIII.544A, 566D, IX.576B–E, 580BC, 583AB, 587B–588B, 588E–592B, X.612B–614A, 621CD.

main question of the work is whether the just individual is happier. This suggests that Plato would himself endorse the remark in the 1885–8 lectures of the admirable Nettleship (1906: 4): 'Its name might suggest that [the *Republic*] was a book of political philosophy, but we very soon find that it is rather a book of moral philosophy.' But if Nettleship (and Plato) are right, why would so much of the work apparently be devoted to utopian political and educational reflection? Just how *are* we honestly to construe the *Republic* as primarily a work of individual ethics?

It will help us to deal with this problem if we focus briefly on what Plato's ostensible strategy is in Books II–IV for examining the announced main question of the happiness of the just individual by way of the construction of an ideally just city. Plato tells us that the examination of this question depends crucially on the account of justice in the individual derived from the account of justice in the ideal society:

> If (1) justice in a just city consists in a certain well-adjustment of its parts with each other, that is, in the preservation of certain harmonious internal relations between its three parts – the three classes consisting of, first, the intellectuals, second, the soldiers and the police, and, third, the wage-earners – such that each of the three parts fulfils its own function (see here the important Santas 2001: 117–25) and does not interfere with any other part fulfilling its function – then (2) justice in the soul of an individual will consist in the preservation of precisely the same well-adjustment between its parts – the same harmonious internal relations between the *soul's* three internal parts, reason, spirit, and appetite, where each of the three parts fulfils its own function while refraining from interfering with any other part fulfilling its function. Thus (3) we have here two quite different kinds of tripartite beings, city and soul, where one and the same set of structural features is present in both, and constitutes the justice of each. It will then be appropriate to call this set of structural features an *abstract structure*, or to give it Plato's name, a *politeia*, a constitution. (As Schofield 2000: 199, remarks, *not* a *republic*, as in the standard, and highly misleading, translation of this work's title, due to Cicero.)

(Notice that this account tells us that the relation between the justice of a city and the justice of an individual is *not* an analogy, but an identity.) This account of individual justice is crucial to Plato's main strategy for answering the question for the following reason. Had he been working with a different account of justice, such as that which is embodied in the familiar (not to say 'vulgar') idea of justice as following certain rules

(telling the truth, returning what one owes and the like), he would never have been able to offer the almost ridiculously brief corollary to this account of justice that Plato thinks is all he needs to complete his strategy for showing that the just are happier. All there is to this corollary may be summarized as follows: as life will not be livable with a body that is corrupted (that is, whose elements are not in harmony with each other), no matter what food or drink, wealth or political power one allows it; so too, it will be impossible to be happy with a soul which is corrupted and disrupted by the parts being at war with each other, no matter what Gygean desires and fantasies one allows it to satisfy. (444E6–445B4, briefly prepared at 444A10–E5; and see also 588B–592B.) By contrast, it would be a *huge* argument that attempts to show the just happier that works with an account of justice as telling the truth, keeping promises, acting in accordance with principles of fairness and the like. On the other hand, the response just summarized as a reply to Thrasymachus, since it would surely involve *changing the subject* on Thrasymachus, Glaucon and Adeimantus (who, after all, appeared to suppose they were talking, not about psychological adjustment, but about following certain rules) seem little more than a policy of bait-and-switch. This has been widely regarded as a virtually crippling objection to the program of the *Republic* since David Sachs's formidable 1963 paper. I have elsewhere (2005a) responded to this objection (which I regard as entirely misconceived), and to two other related objections.[5] So I shall not repeat my replies here.

5 Here briefly are the three objections. First, there is Sachs's claim that Plato offers his argument that the just are happier against a Thrasymachean position where 'justice' stands for something like *following certain rules*, so that the argument that justice *as a kind of psychological well-adjustment* is irrelevant to what Thrasymachus is saying. My 2005a responds by insisting that Sachs *may not ignore* – as his arguments certainly do – the question what justice *is really*, and that if one does not thus ignore the truth of the matter about what justice is, a good case can be made for what Plato says, at least on the anti-Socratic assumption (which I do not share) that irrational desires and emotions can *by themselves* generate motivated actions. Second, there is the fact that Plato, starting with the justice of an ideal society as consisting in certain relations that are *internal* to that society but also *external* to the members of that society, does *not* derive as justice in the individual those same relations *external* to members of that society – as, for example, Rawls does. Rather he derives the view that justice in the individual involves the same *internal* relations – this time between the three parts of the individual soul. I argue that easily the best explanation of this is that while Plato does not follow Socrates on the idea that all actions proceed from the desire for whatever is the best action available, he does follow Socrates in expecting virtue to be an internal state. Indeed, I suggest, the internal state designed to produce happiness which is identified with justice in the *Republic* is surely exactly what one would expect, if Plato differed from Socrates on ethical and psychological matters solely where such differences were required by the new admission of irrational desires and emotions which by themselves generate motivated actions. See also pp. 101–8 below. The third objection is elaborated in the appendix to this chapter.

Sachs's paper was itself a natural outcome of Prichard's great 1928 inaugural lecture, which, as noted in the introduction to this volume, opened the floodgates to interpretations calling in question whether Plato quite knew *what* he had in mind when he spoke of justice. It is no wonder, given the extraordinary influence of Sachs's objection, and its use of modern conceptions of logical consequence and/or propositional identity – almost universal nowadays in Anglo-American interpretations of Plato – that those who still revere the *Republic*, seeing no way out of Sachs's difficulty, should, as I view it, take their eye off the ball and so take refuge in having Plato more interested in social and political questions than in questions of individual ethics. This naturally reinforces the tendency to construe the plot in terms of the surface organization of the dialogue.

I want to resist here both this suggestion that the *Republic* is really a book about politics, and not primarily a book about individual ethics at all; and also the suggestion that the long treatment of the Forms, and especially of the Form of the Good, is a mere metaphysical digression to a political digression on the possibility of realizing the ideally just city. On the contrary, I want to continue to affirm and support Nettleship's view that the *Republic* is focused on individual ethics, and not, except incidentally, on politics. (I say this while fully granting that much of Plato's evident fascination with political detail – of a sort one does not see in the 'Socratic' dialogues – leaks out everywhere at the seams of the *Republic*. How could all this political detail have shown up in the *Republic* on my view? I have not yet been able to make a thorough attempt on this problem. The appendix to this chapter sketches an answer to just one of the many questions I shall have to answer.) What is more, I want to argue that the supposed long digression into the metaphysics of the Form of the Good (including the similes of Sun, Line and Cave) is no mere digression, but the very heart of Plato's effort to make clear what that individual justice is which will make an individual happy. It would in any case be desirable to show such a connection between the discussion of the Form of the Good and the individual ethics of Book IV, since any unbiased reader will readily admit that the great central section of the dialogue at V.471C–VII.541B gives the strongest impression of being intended by Plato to be the philosophical centerpiece of the *Republic*. If these books were entirely incidental to the argument that the just individual is happier – or, even worse, a digression within a digression concerning the possibility of realizing an ideally just city – we should do little credit to Plato's ability to stick to the point of his investigation into the happiness of the just individual.

The question now arises: can we really draw any connection at all between the Form of the Good and the main question, answered with

such apparently ludicrous brevity at the end of Book IV? I claim we can. The evidence consists in what, both in Book IV and in Book VI, Socrates calls the 'longer road'. These two references to a 'longer road' pose a serious problem which has not received much attention from, or been accorded much importance by, scholars. I believe that the solution I shall offer here to that problem will not only allow me to bring out how the long discussion of the metaphysics of the Forms, especially the Form of the Good, is central to the question of the happiness of the just individual, but will also allow me to come to a further conclusion about the good which the Form of the Good is the Form *of*. This conclusion should give pause to those interpreters brought up on the views of the Form of the Good put forward by such formidable interpreters as Prichard, Mabbott, Irwin, White, Cooper and Annas, to the effect that the Form of the Good is either the Form of the morally good, or some close relative to it – the intrinsic, absolute or general good (or at least the good of the ideal city),[6] and not at all a Platonic Form of the kind of individual good we discover in Socrates (at least on some views), namely, the happiness of the individual. This conclusion will also show a far closer connection in *ethical* views between the Plato of the *Republic* and the Socrates represented in the 'Socratic' dialogues – which is not to minimize the contrast, at the level of psychology of action, between the *Republic*'s parts-of-the-soul doctrine and Socratic intellectualism.

So now consider the 'longer road' as it is first introduced in Book IV. This 'longer road' is introduced because, in order to answer the question of whether the just individual is happier than the unjust individual (even when the latter 'gets away with' all his injustices), Plato needs first to answer the prior question of what justice is. But to get his startling parts-of-the-soul account of justice as psychological well-adjustment in the individual soul, Plato also needs arguments to show that the soul has precisely the three parts (reasoning, appetitive and spirited) which we have already seen in the ideally just city.[7] As he introduces the application of the accounts of virtues in the city to those in the individual, Plato has Socrates preface the arguments for the division of the soul with the following remark:

> But now the city was thought to be just because three kinds of natures existing in it [= the three classes, intellectual, soldiering and wage-earning] each performed its own function; and again it was temperate, brave and wise because of certain other affections

6 See White 1979, quoted at p. 97 below.
7 On the question of parts of the soul, see the appendix to this chapter.

> and habits of these very kinds (*dia tôn autôn toutôn genôn*) . . . . Then, my friend, we shall expect the individual also to have these very same forms *(ta auta tauta eidê)* in his soul [the three parts: intellectual, spirited and money-making or appetitive], and by reason of identical affections of these with those [of the three parts] in the city, to receive properly the same appellations ['wisdom', 'courage', 'temperance', 'justice'] . . . Goodness gracious, . . . , here is another trifling inquiry into which we have plunged, the question whether the soul contains three forms [i.e., parts] in itself or not. (*Glaucon*: It does not seem to me at all trifling. . . .) That's apparent *(phainetai)*! . . . and let me tell you, Glaucon, that in my opinion we shall never apprehend this matter accurately *(akribôs)* from such methods (*methodôn*) as we are now employing in discussion. For there is another longer and more considerable road (*hodos*) that conducts to this. (435B4–D3)

At that, Socrates and Glaucon agree that they will *not* take up this 'longer road' at this point, resting satisfied with what Socrates evidently regards as the somewhat less accurate (or less exact) arguments which will be all we get in Book IV.

But what *is* this 'longer road'? Plato does not tell us in Book IV. When he does so, at VI.504A4–505A4, referring back explicitly to the Book IV remarks (504A4–B4), we learn that

> the 'longer road'
> = the *megiston mathêma* (the greatest thing to be learned)
> = the Idea of Good.

And here we see our problem. How on earth does knowledge of the Form of the Good – or anything Socrates says about the Form of the Good in Books VI and VII – have the slightest bearing on the question of getting a more accurate account of the division of the soul into three parts? Worse, when we come to Books VIII–IX, we discover that the 'longer road' described in Books VI–VII appears not to have resulted in *any modification whatever* of the parts-of-the-soul doctrine of Book IV. Yet Plato has surely told us – on any account – that the 'longer road' makes all the difference to improving the results apparently gained in Book IV. How can this be?

One natural reaction here is, I think, simply to ignore the difficulty and say something like the following:

> Look, when Plato gets to the Form of the Good, it is quite clear that he has the bit between his teeth. He has been staying more or

> less on course with his investigation of the question of whether justice makes us happier than complete injustice – at any rate, give or take a few fascinating digressions about the equality of women, communism and the possibility of realizing the ideal city which don't seem to have very much to do with justice in the individual soul. But, having introduced the Form of the Good without telling us how it bears on the question about parts of the soul, he simply goes off on a metaphysical tear – introducing the famous and inspirational images of the Sun, the Divided Line, and the Allegory of the Cave. These wonderful passages, by any account, seem designed to represent the intellectual center of the *Republic*. Don't they show that Plato has simply *forgotten* about coming back to the initial problem which the 'longer road' was supposed to solve, namely, giving us a more accurate account of the division of the soul into three parts? . . . Look *(our objector continues)*, the author Plato, this most fascinating of all controversialists, *proceeds* by digressions – just dragging things in whenever it suits him. Everyone knows that, organizationally speaking, the *Republic* is a mess! Get used to it!

On this view, the discussion of the Form of the Good simply *is* a metaphysical digression unrelated to the main theme of the *Republic* and even to the problem the 'longer road' was designed to solve – a kind of philosophical *anacolouthon*, one of the many perfectly extraordinary and utterly fascinating digressions that Plato is forever dragging in without any very obvious attempt at showing relevance, this one obviously being the most fascinating and seminal of all of them. As against such insouciance about the question of whether Plato has completely lost his way in the discussion of the greater happiness of the just, I shall lean on the text of the *Republic* to provide a more satisfactory answer to the question of how the discussion of the Form of the Good bears on the supposed inaccuracy in Book IV and therefore on the question of whether the just are happier.

The first step toward resolving this difficulty is to notice that the *Republic* gives us what might seem to be a slightly different account of the need for taking the 'longer road' when the 'longer road' is first returned to in Book VI. What happens here is that, as part of his description of the training of the guardians, Socrates makes the transition from emotional and physical training to intellectual training by speaking of 'the greatest thing to be learned' (504D2–3). Glaucon asks what this greatest thing to be learned is; and it is in Socrates' reply to this question that reference to the 'longer road' appears once more. Socrates says:

> You remember, I presume, . . . that having distinguished three kinds in the soul, we undertook to say about justice, temperance, courage and wisdom, what each was *(ho hekaston eiê)*?. . . . Do you remember what was said before this? . . . We were saying, I believe, that if we are to discern these things (*auta katidein*) another longer road would be necessary by which [they] would become quite clear to one taking that road. (504A4–B3)

What are the *these things* referred back to here of which he says that if we are to catch sight of them, we shall need to take the longer road? I suggest that the neuter plural refers back, not to the division of the soul into three parts, but rather to the implied four occurrences of *what each is* (*ho hekaston eiê:* cf. the *tauta* at 504D4–5 which certainly refers to the virtues). In that case the point of taking the 'longer road' would no longer be so much to determine how the soul is to be divided into three parts as to see how the tripartite account of the soul will enable us to grasp what Justice, Temperance, Courage and Wisdom are in the individual.

So our two passages appear to tell in opposite ways on the question how taking the 'longer road' is supposed to help us. What *is* the point of taking the 'longer road': to gain a more accurate account of how it is that the soul is divided into three parts, as the crucial sentence of Book IV suggests? Or, as Book VI suggests, to gain more accurate accounts of what the virtues are that are based on that division of the soul into three parts? Or can we show somehow how the two accounts of the problem that generates the need for us to take the 'longer road' are not fundamentally different from each other?

For those who believe in *propositions*, the Book IV account of the problem leading to the 'longer road' *must* be different from the problem leading to the Book VI account, since the *proposition* expressed by the relevant sentence that the soul is divided into three parts is quite distinct from the *proposition* that *what justice is* needs to be understood in terms of the very same ordering of parts – the same *politeia* – that we see in the ordering of the parts of the just city. But for those not hypnotized by propositions,[8] it would be entirely possible to argue that in

8 For present purposes, a proposition is *what a sentence says*, given by a synthesis (via a grammar) of the meanings of the individual words of the sentence (*modulo* the use of indexicals such as 'I', 'here', tense and so forth). The criterion for propositional identity is given by the Frege/Ryle doctrine of 'logical powers'. (If sentences *A* and *B* do not follow from each other by means of logic alone, they are different propositions. Thus it does not follow from 'The soul has three parts' that definitions can be given of the virtues in terms of the parts-of-the-soul doctrine, let alone that justice in the city will be the same thing as it is in the soul. So the propositions involved are all different.)

referring to the tripartite division apparently said to be inaccurate in Book IV, what Plato is (self-consciously) referring to is not so much simply the fact that the soul is divided into three parts as its being divided into the three parts, intellectual, spirited and appetitive, which he needs if he is to be able to use the analogy with the ideally just city. This gets us a sort of identity between the questions. Here is another way of getting the conclusion that the two accounts offered of the inaccuracy in Books IV and VI are, after all, telling us of the very same inadequacy. First, consider the fact that what the three parts *are* is as much given by what they do, that is, their respective works or functions, as by anything else. Second, consider similarly what the virtues are, as characterized by the parts-of-the-soul account: are they not also as much differentiated by how far the particular functions of the parts are carried out? Third, consider the obvious fact that most crucial of all the functions of the parts is the function of the Rational part: for justice is that structure of city and soul in which each part carries out *its own function* and does not interfere with other parts fulfilling *their function*. It is easy to see, then, that clarifying the functions of the parts would be clarifying both what the parts are and what the virtues are, so that in this crucial respect, it would be one and the same thing to get clear on the three parts and on the four virtues. If so, then we would have here two different 'ways of referring' to the same thing: 'the soul having precisely these three parts' and 'the soul having just these virtues'.[9] Plato would be telling us that, after all, the question about the parts in Book IV *is* the question about the virtues in Book VI.

This suggestion – that to give a more accurate account of the three parts is, in this context, to give a more accurate account of the virtues, by becoming clearer on the *functions* of the three parts – can be given further (indirect) support, even in Book IV, once we notice that, quite surprisingly, Plato considers it necessary to test the account of justice in the city (which he appears to be arguing *from* in generating his account of justice in the soul) against that very account of justice in the soul. See the slightly longer passage earlier in Book IV in which the reference to the tripartite division is introduced at 434D–E, just before the first mention of the 'longer road', where Socrates also mentions for the first time the division of the soul into three parts. Here Socrates says, in effect (434D1–435A4):

> Let us now see whether this account of the virtues in the city *does* apply to justice in the individual: if it does, all will be well; if not

9 For my use of the notion of *ways of referring*, see the variation on Fregean senses in my 2005a. n.30.

> let us go back and forth between city and individual and see what we can determine about either as a result.

Now this is surely a little surprising on the supposition that the inaccuracy is only in the treatment of *the individual soul*. This mutual adjustment of accounts of virtues in the city to those of the soul involves not only correcting our account of the virtues in the individual if they don't fit our account of the virtues of the city, but also correcting our accounts of the virtues in the city if they don't fit our account of the virtues in the individual. The idea is that we are to strike each against the other in hopes a flash of light will be cast on both.[10] But *why* this back and forth? Why this gesture toward Goodmanian or Rawlsian 'reflective equilibrium'? However we resolve this puzzlement, we have here an important clue to what the inaccuracy in Book IV is: that it is quite as much a question of the accuracy of the division of the *state* into three parts as it is about the *soul*.

We have already mentioned something else which is an important clue for us: that there is a serious problem with one very natural kind of interpretation of this inaccuracy, namely, that the account of justice must be inaccurate on the grounds that there is something in this account which is contradicted by the truth. The problem for all such interpretations is something we have already mentioned: that, for all the talk of inaccuracy, nowhere in Books VIII–IX, which are from beginning to end centered on the parts-of-the-soul account of the virtues and vices, do we find a whisper of anything contradicting the parts-of-the-soul doctrine or of the accounts of the virtues and vices in Book IV. This suggests very strongly that the inaccuracy can only be the need for filling in, in fuller and more informative detail, something left insufficiently determinate in the original account.

A passage in Book VI which refers back to the Book IV account suggests how we might use these two clues. This passage tells us that the earlier, Book IV account is giving us only an *outline* (*hupographê:* 504D6) of the virtues. But then if the inaccuracy that necessitates taking the 'longer road' is the need to *fill in* these accounts of the virtues which are, so far, mere outlines or sketches, there would be no

10 This suggests that what he have here is no mindless application of our account of virtues in the city to virtues in the individual as a consequence of some myth or 'model'. It is certainly not the idea behind the elegant remark in Ryle 1949: 23–4, alleging that Plato is exploiting a 'parapolitical myth' in his account of mind, so that Plato would just be taking for granted that he has the right account of justice in the city, for purposes of straightforwardly applying it to justice in the soul. Nor is it the idea of those philosophical diagnosticians who are always looking for the misguided 'models' which the ancients are using.

need for Plato later to *take back* anything he said earlier. All he would have to do is to embark on filling in the outline – for both soul and city.

So, then, what is it that is so far merely in outline about the accounts of virtues, whether in city or soul, which also has to do with the division of city and soul into the parts intellectual, spirited and appetitive? In light of my remarks four paragraphs back, it will hardly need arguing that it is natural to begin our search for what is inaccurately or incompletely specified with one part of soul or city above all, the Rational part, and with the one virtue, Justice, which is the central topic of the *Republic*. As for Justice, we have seen that Justice in an individual, like Justice in the just city, is the three parts of the soul (or city) each fulfilling its own *function* and not interfering with the other parts when they are fulfilling *their* function. So, what is it for the Rational part to fulfil its function? The answer is 'to rule, being *wise* and exercising forethought *on behalf of the entire soul*' (441E3–4). (We see here why Plato thought it necessary to give accounts of other virtues involving other parts of the soul: an account of justice *itself presupposes* an account of wisdom.) Very well, what is the *being wise* referred to here? In the *Republic*, Plato tells us that Wisdom is the science the rational part has of advantage or benefit (*tou sumpherontos*) to each of the three parts of the soul and to the whole these parts constitute (442C5–7). So what is advantage or benefit? If we turn to the characterization of wisdom in the city, we find that the wisdom involved is:

> the science (*epistêmê*) . . . by means of which one does not deliberate about some particular thing [as the science of carpentry deliberates about how wooden things should be in the best state (*echoi beltista*); or the sciences of bronzesmithing and of farming about how bronzes or crops should do best: 428B7–C10]; but about the whole – how the whole city[11] gets along best (*arista homiloi*), with itself and with other cities. (428D1–4)

11 In the very next line, Glaucon replies (434A5), 'Now you're talking *kath' hodon* – in the right way (*hodos:* road); and that is how we should proceed.' I take the idea of talking *kath' hodon* to be the idea, 'You're on your way, man.' It seems to me just possible that the reference to a way or road in this idiom is, as it were, an unreflecting (more or less unconscious) pun, setting up Socrates' important remark immediately below (435D2–3) to the effect that, actually, we are going to have to take a *longer* road around. If I am right in this, then Socrates would be here giving an indication that, if the longer road in question is a longer road to dividing the soul in three, that is only because it will enable us to apply the account of virtues in the city to the account of virtues in the individual. He would also be giving an indication of what I shall shortly argue, that the 'longer road' will also lead to the need to correct the account for the city in light of the account we come up with for the individuals.

I take it to be clear that good and advantage are here taken to be the same thing. Might it be *advantage, i.e., good*,[12] then, that is still in outline only in Book IV? Simply to ask the question is to see that the answer must almost certainly be Yes. For the road to removing the incompleteness consists in (apprehension of) the Form of the Good. And what could the Form of the Good clarify if not what that *good*, i.e., *advantage* is which it is Reason's function (a) to have the science of and (b) to seek to realize in deliberating and in ruling the other two parts of the soul?

This identifying of good with advantage is so important, and so central to the *Republic*, that I must pause over its implications. For this identification of good with advantage tells us also that what the Form of the Good is the Form *of* is advantage or benefit. I myself take this to refute conclusively what I refer to above as the standard view that what the Form of the Good is the Form *of* is either the moral good (Prichard, Morris, Mabbott), or some quasi-moral good – an agent-independent, impersonal, unqualified or unconditional, absolute or intrinsic good (p. 24 above). For what would such a good have to do with the advantage or happiness that the rational part seeks for the other parts and for the entire individual? It is true that the view I am here rejecting is given great currency within the field by the apparent unavailability in modern times of any answer *other than* the moral or quasi-moral good. Given that unavailability, interpreters tend simply to read into the *Republic* this moral good (or quasi-moral good).

But there is an objection to identifying the good, i.e., advantage, as what it is that remains merely 'in outline' in Book IV. The objection runs in something like the following way:

> Book IV does plenty by way of filling in what good (i.e., advantage) is in the case of the city. Socrates identifies the relevant good (i.e., advantage) with the happiness not of any one class, but of the entire city (420B5–7, C1–4, 421B5–C5; compare V.466B5–6, VII.519E2–3, 520A1). It would appear, then, that, for cities, *advantage* or *benefit* is interchangeable with their happiness.[13] And the

12 I use the awkward-looking 'i.e.' instead of the more colloquial 'or' or 'and' to emphasize that it is an *identity* between good and advantage that is in question.

13 This identification of advantage with happiness shows that talk of advantage is not talk of so-called 'instrumental means' only – an interpretation often given of *chrêsimon* (useful) which is used interchangeably with, for example, *sumpheron, ôphelimon* and the like. Notice also the way in which this understanding of advantage strongly confirms the implication of Socrates' remark to Thrasymachus that he, Socrates, *would not be surprised* should it turn out that justice *were* the advantageous properly understood (I.337D9–10). Notice also how the suggestion is strongly at variance with the powerful remarks of White 1979: 35, quoted below, p. 97.

> same will hold, *mutatis mutandis*, for individuals, since the greater happiness of the just individual is argued for at the end of Book IV by showing that this happiness is assured by the structure of the just soul, which structure enables the Rational part to carry out its function unimpeded. Surely, therefore, we should suppose that *advantage, i.e., good*, is *not* left merely in outline in Book IV? Surely it has been altogether adequately identified – as happiness.

The objection fails – at least it does if what Plato is interested in is good, i.e., advantage, *in general*. But why should he be? Aren't we really interested only in the human good? Consider the references to the goods in the sciences or expertises of carpentry, bronzesmithing and farming three paragraphs above. These goods are furniture, bronzes and crops, not happiness. What if, in order to understand what the good is for humans, Plato thinks he will need some understanding also of what the good is quite generally, and how *it* will generate all of these different goods, including the good for human beings? In that case, good, i.e., advantage, in general *will* be only in outline within Book IV. What, then, would remove this sketchiness or incompleteness to good, i.e., advantage? Something that would work is seeing that as an individual stands to happiness in an individual, and a city to the happiness of the whole city, so carpentry stands to furniture, bronzesmithing to bronzes, and farming to crops. (Compare *kat' analogian* which Aristotle introduces at *Nicomachean Ethics* I.6.1096b28, and then as quickly drops.) To get beyond a mere outline of what *good, i.e., advantage*, is would then be to have something by way of an account of the *principle* of this analogy. Or, in modern terms, it would be to identify some (logical) function[14] taking us from each kind of thing that has a good (be it the kind *human being*, or one of the kinds *eye* or *ear*, *shuttle, bronzes* or *farmer*) to its own proper kind of good. The question of what advantage, i.e., good, is would be, then, the question of what this (logical) function is. Now I am far from saying that what Plato is doing is precisely seeking out such a logical function. I *am* saying that what he is doing is trying to see how all the different goods are alike generated from the single entity *good* – or, we may say for the moment, the Form of the Good. Indeed, it is surely clear that in the simile of the Sun he *is* providing us with at least a *picture* of such an account of good for all teleological kinds.

It is true that the simile of the Sun does give one the feeling that it is intended to supply us with no more than an extravagant image to

14 A logical function, like a mathematical function, is simply a many-to-one relation (though in this case it is also a one-to-one function), and should not be confused with a teleological function, which relates to means to ends.

lend importance to our inquiries. But Plato himself seems to give the lie to this feeling when he has Socrates undertake to explain more fully what he takes to be the lesson of this simile:

> All right, let us investigate (*episkopei*) this image of the Sun. . . . You will say, I think, that the Sun is not only what gives us the ability (*dunamis*) to see [the visible world] but also the coming-to-be (*genesin*), growth and nurture of it, the Sun not actually *being* [the realm of] coming-to-be. . . . So then, you should say not only that knowing is present (*pareinai*) for things known because of the Good, but so are being (*to einai*: existing) and [the realm of] being (*tên ousian*) present because of the Good – the Good not being [the realm of] being, [but] surpassing [the realm of] being in dignity and power. – By Apollo, that's a devil of a hyperbole (*daimonias hyperbolês*), Glaucon replied, greatly amused (*mala geloiôs*). (509A9–C2)

Does Glaucon's finding this a little ridiculous indicate that what we have in this explanation as well is mere extravagance of image? I think not. For Socrates appears to be telling us that, in reinvestigating the simile, he is *spelling out the upshot of* the simile. What is more, it is clear that Plato is here connecting the Form of the Good to all Forms whatever: the Form of Health and the Forms of the Shuttle (or the Bed) are only amongst the most obvious examples one could cite. So, the problem is not that this passage is too vague, too airily metaphysical. It is that it is too specific – in its hardly credible suggestion that the Form of the Good is responsible both for our knowing all the other Forms and for the existence of all the other Forms! How can this be? (It does sound like a devil of a hyperbole – and profoundly silly into the bargain.) How could knowledge of any Form whatever require knowledge of the Form of the Good? And how could it be the case that the existence of any such Form depends on the existence of a Form of the Good?

Consider the Form of Health. Health is not only the *object* of the science of medicine, it is also the good or end of the science. So if we are to know what the Form of Health is we would have to know that health is a certain good. But then does not knowledge of the Form of Health – that Form which is the good and end of the science of medicine – presuppose knowledge of the Form of the Good? What is more, the Form of Health could not exist if there did not exist a Form of the Good. If *all* Forms were in just this way the object of a teleological science or expertise, the same considerations would apply. So if we could satisfy ourselves that Plato thought all Forms are objects of

teleological sciences,[15] we would have our explanation of the wild-looking things Plato says about the scope of the Form of the Good in the simile of the Sun.

Can we make out that Plato thought all sciences teleological? I do not believe the suggestion would have surprised Plato. We know, from *Phaedo* 95Eff, especially 97B–99D, that Plato's ideal was to offer teleological explanations of all things in the perceptible world. (The *Timaeus* evidences a similar position, if somewhat retrenched to account for what he seems to have thought to represent a kind of necessity – or chance – brought on by something like matter.) Now, in Plato, all explanations employing the Forms are *general*, that is, all explanations are done via the *kinds* we appeal to in explaining perceptibles. (There are no Forms of individuals, only of Kinds. In this, Plato's theory of Forms hardly differs from modern sciences where all explanations aim at complete generality, and contain no particular things except as parts of the boundary conditions – the constants of integration – where particular events are being explained by means of the relevant laws.) So if the Forms are the Forms of the kinds which function as the objects of teleological sciences, then all the Forms appealed to in explaining perceptibles will be Forms of the relevant kinds of good. So the Forms of these kinds are the relevant goods which provide us teleological explanations of kinds of things in the perceptible world. This would certainly make it the case that, for Plato in the *Republic*, teleology is involved in all the sciences, and with all the Forms. (Not, of course, that a Form *does* something *for the sake of* some good. It's just that to explain the goods which are the objects of sciences other than the science of good itself, you will have to appeal to the real nature of good – the good which the Form of the Good is the Form of.) This confirms the suggestion above that the good is (what we would call) a (logical) function – one which takes us from *kinds of individuals* to *kinds of good*, and which, given the remarks above about teleology, will be fundamental both to the knowledge of all things and to the existence of all things. So I would explain the remarkable claims in the simile of the Sun about the Form of the Good being responsible both for our knowledge of other Forms and for the very existence of the other forms.

It is time to begin drawing some conclusions. My concern has been with a difficulty in the plot. The difficulty arose from the following considerations. On the one hand the surface organization of the *Republic*

15 This perhaps needs qualification: they are either objects of teleological sciences or kinds required for an economical articulation of such sciences. That the Forms of Bad and Unjust (476A5) are mostly ignored is perhaps best explained by their *not* being objects of sciences, but needed in other ways for the sciences.

does not cohere with Plato's telling us that the main question is as to whether the just individual is happier – especially given the long digression in the great central Books V–VII which seem exclusively concerned with utopian political arrangements, while including an extensive metaphysical digression which then proceeds, apparently, simply to ignore the parts of the soul. On the other hand, the surface organization also ignores the question about how the inaccuracy in Book IV's account of the three parts of the soul, which is supposed to require that we take a 'longer road', is to be remedied by the references to the 'longer road' in Book VI. That 'longer road' is identified with the Form of the Good. But what do the Sun, Line, Cave and other metaphysical matters concerning the Form of the Good have to do with parts of the soul? And how is the 'longer road' supposed to fit into the surface organization? I have argued here that the long discussion of the Form of the Good is actually directed at removing the sketchiness or incompleteness of the account of *good, i.e., advantage*, which it is the function of the Rational part to seek on behalf of all three parts and of the whole which the parts constitute. And it is to the removal of some of that incompleteness that the three famous similes are directed, in terms of a global theory of good, i.e., advantage. Thus I conclude that the discussion of the Form of the Good is not merely an irrelevant metaphysical digression from what is in itself a utopian political digression, but speaks directly to finding a clearer account of good, i.e., advantage. The resulting discussion of the Form of the Good speaks directly both to the inaccuracy in Book IV's account of the parts of the soul, or of the virtues, and also to the main thesis of the greater happiness of the just individual. On both counts, the surface organization, as presented here, is misleading as to the actual plot of the *Republic*. As for why Plato allowed the surface organization to mislead us into thinking that he cared more for the possibility of realizing the ideal political constitution than he did for whether justice made the individual happier, I have attempted no account here.

Second, I conclude that when, in embarking on the 'longer road' of giving an account of the Form of the Good, Plato gives us the simile of the Sun, claiming therein that the Form of the Good is necessary to explaining not only the *knowledge* of any other Form, but also the *existence* of any other Form, what he is doing in this troubling subordination of all Forms to the Form of the Good is looking not only for a general theory of all good or advantage, but also for a whole great big theory of good in the universe. This theory will impact all areas in which good, i.e., advantage, shows up, including the area of the greater happiness of the just individual, which is the *human* good, i.e., advantage.

Third, I find a further conclusion about the 'longer road' emerging from the fact that it is merely *embarked upon*, and not followed through to the end. For this idea of a professed ignorance on Socrates' part in the 'Socratic' parts of the dialogues is reproduced in the *Republic*'s insisting that it cannot answer the question of what the Form of the Good is, but only give images of it. I say this whatever scholars (my past self included) may have said about the *Republic* offering positive conclusions. True, the Plato of the *Republic* does have definite views (though so does the less forthcoming Socrates in the earlier dialogues). But Plato does not claim to have knowledge of the Form of the Good, and therefore would not claim to have knowledge of the good[16] – any more than Socrates claimed to have knowledge of the good.

Finally, I have presented a picture of the Form of the Good (as the Form of Advantage or Benefit) which is quite different from the moral or quasi-moral picture that has tended to dominate the interpretation of Plato – especially since Prichard's great 1928 paper 'Duty and interest'. I applaud Prichard for forcing interpreters to confront the possibility that the *Republic* might be working with two opposing pictures of justice: (1) justice as morality, and (2) Justice as what makes each just individual happier. In forcing us to choose here, I claim that he – and his most distinguished successors (if we include under morality the quasi-moral notion of agent-independent good) – make exactly the wrong choice, opting for morality. What I have been arguing here, by contrast, is that what the Form of the Good is the Form *of* is not the moral good or some quasi-moral good, but quite simply advantage: a notion that involves the kinds of means/end considerations that are normally consigned to the dustbin as speaking merely to instrumental goods – a purely prudential notion of good that lies entirely outside of the realms of morality. I regard putting this purely factual notion of advantage at the center of ethics as a valuable departure on the part of Plato from the strong belief in morality almost universal in Greek thought as in Western thought generally.[17] In my view (which I believe I inferred from my studies of Socratic doctrine), it is not clear that morality and the moral good (as opposed to what is quite simply good *for* humans, regardless of any supposed *moral* good) are intrinsically involved in the human good.

Three things I have not attempted to do here. The first is to tell a story about why Plato should have gone with the surface organization

16 I am grateful to Christopher Rowe for insisting on this point to me.

17 I agree on this point with the main thesis of White 2002. Like Brown (below, p. 44), I nevertheless depart from White's view that, in particular, Socrates and Plato endorse a moral or quasi-moral good. (See my variant on Prichard's scenario in the conclusion of my 2006.)

he did choose if the plot is as I say it is. I claim only that any account of why the surface organization is the way it is (apparently mainly concerned more with the utopian political than the ethical) must account for the way in which the great central metaphysical section is primarily answering the question of an incompleteness or sketchiness to the account of advantage, i.e., good, in Book IV employed in the account of the function of the Rational part of the individual soul. Second, I have not discussed at all what the relation is between the *Form* of the Good, i.e., Advantage, and the *attribute* of advantage which it is Reason's function to secure for the individual. Third, I have not done much to explain why I think that the ethics of the *Republic* does not differ in any respect from the ethics of the Socratic parts of the early dialogues – other than those respects which flow from the differences between the two thinkers on the psychology of action – the differences between the parts-of-the-soul doctrine and Socratic intellectualism. The first task is currently beyond my powers. But I attempt to say something more substantial about the second and third in Chapter 5 below.

APPENDIX

Why is Plato content to give such bad arguments for the existence of a third part of the soul if the main subject of the *Republic* is the happiness of the just individual rather than the construction of an ideal state?

Where do the parts of the soul, absent from Socratic thought, come from? My former colleague Gregory Vlastos seems to me to have set in place the right framework for *embarking* on this question. For he pointed out to me some four decades ago that in the *Republic* we see an important change from a Socratic denial of the possibility of 'clear-eyed *akrasia*' to the parts-of-the-soul affirmation of such a possibility, in which one is led by one's irrational desires to act contrary to one's desires for what is best over all. This *aperçu* will explain how it is that Plato's first division of the soul is defensible *if* the idea of *akrasia* is defensible at all. The idea is this: a part with rational desires for whatever is best is one which adjusts to such rational considerations as a change in belief: they are belief-dependent desires. In particular, such a desire will receive a direction from, or be redirected by, a belief as to which particular available action in the context would in fact be best, and will, as a result, metamorphose into the desire to do that particular action. A part with irrational desires is one which does not so adjust to changes of belief. The desire persists through all changes of belief and can overpower rational desires. From this, it appears that without these two parts, the soul would be forced to act in opposite ways at the same time (436B9–10). Suppose the rational desire is a desire to get to

work right away, while an irrational desire for drink presses one to stop for a drink. Then because of the subsitutions whereby the Rational part adjusts the direction of its action, this desire to get to work right away *becomes* the desire *not* to drink. So if there were no parts, the soul would both desire to drink and desire not to drink. As I have noted in a number of places (1971, 1992, 2006) this would be enough to explain the occurrence of *akrasia*, in terms of one part which adjusts to perceptions and thoughts of what is best, and another part which is a repository for every variety of irrational desires that can lead a person to act contrary to his or her rational desires. So why the third part? Plato's arguments for this third part are juvenile, and quite irrelevant to showing, as above, that if there weren't this third part (resulting from subdividing one of the other two parts), one of the other two parts would be forced to do opposite actions at the same time. But then we need to face Plato's ill-advised move – at least if we wish to deny that Plato is basing his argument for the first division of the soul on mere appeal to vague metaphors, hand waving, or 'useful ways of classifying motives' (as if there weren't scores of other ways we could classify motives) – to giving the soul a third part. In my 1971, I argue that, on anti-Socratic assumptions (which I do not myself accept), the argument does very well at showing the need for the division of the soul into the first two parts, but his argument for *thumos* does not even meet his own standards. I argue there that the reason that Plato nevertheless introduces a third part, using arguments *which he cannot have failed to notice – at least in passing – were entirely inadequate*, was political. That is, a third part was, quite simply, what he needed for his ideal city. Since I am now claiming that, within the *Republic*, justice in the city is strictly secondary to justice in the individual, it behooves me to do better than this.[18] I now see, therefore, that, rejecting the explanation 'it's all for the sake of the ideal city', we still lack a sufficient account of Plato's philosophical motivation.

Once more, then, why does Plato not opt for two parts, instead of three? The answer, I suggest, is that the parts-of-the-soul doctrine reflects an interest in rather more than simply allowing for *akrasia* and wicked actions. It represents in addition Plato's desire to explain what he has come to believe is a need *in moral education* for one's Reason to be enabled to *control* one's irrational desires. This need is of course consequent upon the supposed existence of cases where the irrational desires simply overwhelm the desires of Reason for what is best, by

18 Incidentally, Plato does better in Book X, where, we see merely two parts of the soul, the rational and the irrational. See also the take on the parts-of-the-soul doctrine at *Magna Moralia* I.i.1182a24–32; *Phaedrus* 237c–238c (though the myth of the charioteer persists in three parts); and (by implication) at *Laws* I.

force majeure. (The possibility of any such overwhelming is denied by Socrates in his response to Protagoras' embracing of this very issue that leads to the talk of control: *Protagoras* 352B1ff.) Now, the thought of *control* arises first for us in contexts of social authority. Think only of how believers in moral right and wrong tend to think of 'morally wrong' actions as *deserving blame or punishment*, blame being a social sanction, parallel to the legal sanctions of punishment: fines, imprisonment, and even death in some jurisdictions. Thus do questions of individual ethics become matters of the ethics of social units (the family, circles of friends, cities, states).

The scenario I suggest is, therefore, something like this: Plato, following the attitude natural to political elites (such as his own family belonged to), at some point loses any faith he had in the Socratic possibility that, *with anyone whatever*, the best way, and indeed the only way, to bring them to act in a more discriminating way and to live better lives – especially if they are among the young – is to involve them, in depth, in seeing the relevance to their getting what they want in life of questions about what they believe. By contrast, the *Republic*, leaving behind this Socratic picture of how to live, reverts to the view of political and legal elites concerning, on the one hand, what they see as the dangers, for most people and most contexts, of no-holds-barred discussion of the most important matters in life, and, on the other hand, concerning the need for careful training of 'character', by means that are largely non-intellectual, in those too dim to understand things as those in the elite understand them. This idea – that education cannot do without habituation and conditioning, punishment, praise and blame, and the like – has been with us in Western educational traditions ever since. In Plato's case, this sort of view generates the even more extreme theory of elementary education that we discover in the ideal city described in Books II–III of the *Republic* – with its insistence on the proper music, stories and rhythms for dance, exercise and athletic training. (The ultimate in the developing of good moral habits, indeed the ultimate in political correctness.) Even with a majority of those who have reached mature years in the ideal city, there is to be no such unrestricted discussion of important matters. Not that Plato thinks the rulers of the ideal city can prejudge who will be in the highest class, and who will be allowed such dialectic. Nevertheless, all must receive, from infancy up, certain non-intellectual training in both mental and physical culture of a sort which alone will prepare members of any future elite for fruitful intellectual discussion on the most important matters. For without this prior training – to be continued throughout life – dialectic will do no one any good. Once it is clear who is suitable for the intellectual ruling class, the fortunate few are allowed to engage in such

discussion starting in their thirties, and are even led to so engaging as part of their higher education. Nevertheless, as Books VI–VII show, even they must continue to undergo constant training and testing of their ability to control or subordinate their lower parts to their Reason. So large are the consequences for education of the admission, against Socrates, of the possibility of *akrasia*.

So, returning to the issue of control, given that authority-contexts are, taken broadly, political, what should we find surprising in the thought that control within an ideal city is typically exerted not so much by the decision-making rulers as by the soldiers or police who execute and enforce the orders of the rulers? Hence, turning to the issue of the individual's controlling his or her irrational appetites, it will surely be natural, once one has in hand the idea of a rational part and an irrational part, to think in terms of the rational part exerting its control over unruly appetites only by employing a third internal part as its policeman in order to exert control on the irrational appetites. Once we have two agents within the soul, the temptation to go for a third part will be difficult to resist if one is primarily thinking of the need for one's rational part to execute *control* over one's appetites. This remains the case, even though the only division of the soul into parts for which Plato has a high-quality argument yields only the rational part and the irrational part.

In summary, I suggest that the point is that punishment, blame, and even the rhetorical use of falsehood by the virtuous have become philosophically important to Plato. This is because he no longer thinks that Socratic reasoning is, by itself, able to procure the development of one's dialectical skills in the young, or even, as Books VI–VII show, in the mature – not without the continual training of the emotions and irrational desires. And so Plato needs to get across the idea that a person needs not just discussion, but also the *controlling*, or *policing*, of one's irrational appetites. This could easily have given Plato the idea that, as in the city, policing will naturally be done, not by the intellectuals, but by another class, namely, the military (including the police), so too in the soul, it would be natural to have policing done not by Reason – even though Reason still has its own (Socratic) desires and executive capacities in Plato – but by another agency within the soul, the *thumos*, the policing force of the soul, acting on the orders of reason.

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2

GLAUCON'S CHALLENGE, RATIONAL EGOISM AND ORDINARY MORALITY

Lesley Brown

In his inaugural lecture 'Duty and interest' delivered in 1928,[1] Prichard singled out for criticism a theme which, he believed, pervaded many ethical theories, both in ancient times and in his more immediate predecessors. Among philosophers, wrote Prichard, Plato is far from being alone in presupposing that *an action, to be right, must be for the good or advantage of the agent* (2002: 26). After spending a few sentences on Cook Wilson and Butler, he resumes:

> Nevertheless, when we seriously face the view that unless an action be advantageous, it cannot really be a duty, we are forced both to abandon it and also to allow that even if it were true, it would not enable us to vindicate the truth of our ordinary moral convictions. (2002: 27)

Later in the same lecture, he writes that he will now take it as established

> that (1) both Plato and Butler in a certain vein of thought are really endeavouring to prove that right actions, in a strict sense of right actions, will be for the agent's advantage; (2) that their reason for doing so lies in the conviction that even where we know some action to be right, we shall not do it unless we think it will be for our advantage; and (3) that behind this conviction lies the conviction of which it is really a corollary, viz. the conviction that desire for some good to oneself is the only motive of deliberate action. (2002: 35)

I am very grateful to Terry Penner and other participants at the conference for discussion of the first version of this chapter. Terry Irwin generously gave me written comments which forced me to improve my argument. I also owe a lot to earlier discussions with Adam Beresford, now of the University of Massachusetts, Boston, while he was writing his doctoral thesis, 'Moral Reasons in Plato and Aristotle' (cf. n.25).

1 Reprinted in Prichard 1968 and 2002. Page references are to the latter.

I OBJECTIONS TO PRICHARD'S CHARGES, AND REPLIES

In this chapter I shall go against the stream and offer a partial defence of Prichard.[2] Though his criticism was highly influential, the predominant opinion today seems to be that it was misconceived, or at least that it can be answered. Two main strands of a critique can be mentioned. (In formulating them, I provisionally accept something I discuss below: Prichard's claim that his talk of actions being right, or being a duty, is equivalent to Plato's meaning when he writes than an action is *dikaion*, or just.) The first part of the critique is to protest that, contrary to what Prichard claims, in the *Republic* Plato is not offering to show that just *actions* are for the good or advantage of the agent. Rather, the thesis being defended is one about justice as a characteristic, not of actions, but of *an individual's soul*.[3] The second part asserts that when Plato makes Socrates talk of being just as advantageous for the just person, he must be understood to mean not that justice is an *instrumental* good for the agent, but rather an intrinsic good.[4] To combine these, the objector to Prichard says that Plato argues, not that individual just acts pay, but that justice pays, and we must understand that as the claim that justice is in itself worthwhile for the agent to possess (not, that it *advantages* the agent).[5]

My reply to these objections will be brief, and I take them in the reverse order. The issues raised by the second part – that justice is presented as an intrinsic and not an instrumental good – are important and deserving of fuller discussion, but for the purposes of my argument the point can be conceded. All that my discussion requires is agreement that a person's justice is presented as *good for that person.* Once that is conceded, as it is by most if not all scholars, Prichard's objection still has considerable force.[6] As I explain shortly, I'm particularly interested in defending Prichard's claim that even if the theses he finds in Plato were true, they would not enable us to defend the truth of our ordinary moral convictions. What I take him to have in mind is this: it is part of our

2 There are a number of claims and forms of argument to be found in Prichard which I would not wish to defend. His claim (3) above is fair to Plato (in my view) but only if rephrased in terms of *rational* motives, as I argue in section II below.

3 Vlastos 1971b: 67–8.

4 Irwin 1995: 193 argues that justice should be seen as identical to a *dominant part* of happiness. In Kirwan 1965: 172–3 justice is represented as a formal, not an efficient, cause of happiness.

5 A quite different response is that of Professor Penner, who agrees with Prichard that Plato is talking about advantage, but denies that he is talking about morality (chapter 1 above, e.g., at p. 36).

6 A dissenter is Cooper 1999: 127, at least in so far as the *motivation* of the just person is concerned. He insists that the just person's reason for acting is that the good-itself (not his own good, and not anyone's good) demands it.

ordinary moral convictions that a moral person's reason for doing just actions is not that to do so is a good to the agents themselves.

But what about the first part of the reply, which urges, against Prichard, that Plato does not seek to show that just *actions* are for the advantage or the good of the agent, but that justice itself, as a quality in the soul, is a special kind of good for the agent? I am happy to agree that Plato *should* have drawn a firm distinction between the question 'What reason have I to be just and to cultivate justice in my soul?' and the question 'What reason have I to do this, that or the other just action?' Richard Norman makes this point in connection with Prichard's criticism of Plato, and it is an important one.[7] But in truth the distinction is systematically ignored in the relevant discussion, which, for the purposes of this paper, is Books I–IV of the *Republic*. (I return to this issue at the end of the chapter.) Consider, for instance, the climax of the discussion, where Socrates pinpoints the task as inquiring 'whether it is profitable *to do just acts and to practise noble ones and to be just*, whether or not people recognise that you are like that, or *to do unjust acts and be unjust* (*adikein te kai adikon einai*)' (445a). So the first reply to Prichard is incorrect; Plato does not restrict his speakers' questions and answers to the psychic state of justice in the agent. He is happy to make Socrates pose the question 'Is it profitable?' both about doing just acts and about being just, and indeed to link these in one breath.[8] So the reply that seeks to defend Plato by saying that he seeks to show that justice is profitable for the agent, but not that doing individual just acts is profitable, does not stand up.

II 'ORDINARY MORAL CONVICTIONS': PRICHARD ON DUTY, RIGHT ACTION AND *DIKAION*; RATIONAL EGOISM INTRODUCED

As already indicated, my chief aim is to support Prichard's charge that Plato's theory cannot vindicate our ordinary moral convictions. In this

7 Norman 1998: 45: 'There is one way in which we might try to avoid it [the position he labels moral egoism], and might retain the idea of one's own happiness and the idea of other people's needs as reasons for altruistic activity. We might do this by distinguishing two levels of reason giving. We could perhaps distinguish between the question, "What action should I perform (here and now)?", and the question, "What kind of life should I lead?" '

8 I am not suggesting that Socrates hopes to prove that a non-just person, in doing just acts, benefits himself. No doubt the claim that doing just acts benefits the doer would be restricted to the just acts of a just person. What I do draw attention to is the fact that Socrates *is* represented as arguing both that doing just acts, and that being just, benefits the agent (and thereby suggests that this benefit is the just person's reason for doing the acts).

chapter I consider some traces of 'ordinary moral convictions' as we find them in the first two books of the *Republic*. I look at how they are treated (or mistreated) by all parties to the debate – Thrasymachus, Glaucon, Adeimantus and Socrates. I hope to show how the discourses of all the participants omit something important in ignoring and/or distorting these everyday moral views.

Of course, to appeal to 'ordinary moral convictions' is highly dangerous. It may be thought that what Prichard understood by it is so far removed from any fifth-century or fourth-century Greek notion that it is idle to spend any time on his views as quoted above. For a start – it may be objected – neither the Greeks nor we now are inclined to discuss the issues in terms of *duty*. True, but note that in the other quotations Prichard simply speaks about an action's being *right*. Is Prichard's equation of the notions of 'right' and 'duty' with Plato's *dikaion* (just) defensible? There are reasons why one might dispute it. Drawing on Williams's distinction, we might point out that *dikaion* (just) is a thick moral concept, whereas 'right' (as well as 'duty') is a thin one. Indeed, we should recall that justice is only one of four virtues discussed in the *Republic* (the others being wisdom, courage and temperance), though of course it is by far the most prominent.

Despite these considerations, it is not a distortion to regard the challenge 'Why should I be just/do just actions?'[9] as being very close in spirit to the challenge 'Why should I be moral/why should I do what is right/my duty?' And many scholars – whether or not they have accepted Prichard's critique – have agreed with this. Here is a further piece of evidence in its support. Although, as noted above, four virtues are discussed, of which justice is but one, the other three are – in Books II–IV of the *Republic* – used only to describe agents (whether the person, or the *polis*). Only *dikaios* is used of actions as well as agents. This supports the impression that discussion of just actions is in effect discussion of right actions, specifically, actions in which we do the right thing by others. So I am happy to go along with Prichard's framing of Plato's question in terms of right actions.

In favour of this rough equation of the just with the right, we can note that the range of actions designated *dikaion* and *adikon* (just and unjust) is far wider than those picked out by the English just/unjust. As Socrates reminds us, mentioning vulgar or everyday views (442D–E), typically *adika* acts include depriving someone of the gold they have left on deposit with you; temple-robbing, theft; betrayal, either of friends or of the city; breaking oaths or other agreements;

9 See the end of section I above for evidence that Plato does not (though he should) distinguish these questions.

adultery; neglect of one's parents; not giving due care to the gods. Many of these would not naturally be described as unjust (but rather simply as wrong or immoral), and similarly many of the acts labelled *dikaia* would not naturally be called just. This handy list will be important when we come to ask how we should understand Glaucon's point that unless you strip a man of his reputation it will be unclear if he acts *tou dikaiou heneka* 'for the sake of the just thing/for the sake of justice'. Henceforth, though I largely continue to use the terms 'just' and 'unjust', as direct translations of Plato's *dikaion* and *adikon*, we must bear in mind that 'right' and 'wrong' would be an equally good and in some ways less misleading translation. To this extent, then, Prichard's equation of the right and the just (when applied to actions) can be accepted.

So what are the ordinary moral convictions Prichard appeals to? First, that what makes just actions just is not their contribution to an agent's happiness, good or well-being. An essential feature of just actions is that they are other-regarding; indeed, we can usefully take over the idea Polemarchus derives from Simonides, that a just action is one in which in some way someone gives another what is owed or appropriate or due to them. As the list of 'vulgar' unjust actions shows, the 'other' may be the *polis* or the gods, as well as other persons. Though this account was rejected in Book I (no doubt because it focused on the justice of actions and not of agents), it certainly chimes well with the list of unjust (and by implication just) actions Socrates offers in Book IV. Of course, that they are other-regarding cannot be the whole of what makes just actions just, since an account is also needed of why they are praiseworthy. Second, and importantly for my argument, a *dikaios*/just person has reasons for doing *dikaia*/just actions which are independent of the agent's own good or happiness. This second point could be understood in terms of either motivating or justifying reasons. I am assuming that 'ordinary moral convictions' are at odds with both forms of egoism, psychological and rational. Rational egoism is the thesis in which I am mainly interested, but let us first get the other out of the way.

Psychological egoism is the thesis that the sole ultimate motive of action is the agent's own happiness/good/well-being. As I mentioned in my introduction, Prichard does assume that Plato held this thesis (and some views expressed by Socrates in, say, *Protagoras* and *Meno* offer some support). But I think that this is wrong. Certainly, all speakers in the *Republic* assume that one's own good is a very pervasive motive, but, as I shall show in sections III and IV, Thrasymachus, Glaucon and Adeimantus all briefly mention exceptions. They recognise, but describe scornfully, what I shall label moral 'oddballs', people who

act from considerations of what is just, despite holding that this is in opposition to their own good. A very different kind of exception is recognised by Socrates in his discussion of the tripartite soul. There Socrates argues that sometimes people are motivated by their appetites to do something in opposition to what the rational part recognises is best for oneself. So we should not agree with Prichard that Plato holds psychological egoism to be universally true of all actions, though no doubt Plato regards the motive of one's own good or happiness to be a very common one.

Rational egoism (also known as *rational eudaimonism*) is the thesis that the *practically rational* person always acts or chooses with a view, ultimately, to their own happiness. That is, it is a view about what it is *rational* to choose (not about what everyone does in fact choose). I take Prichard to be arguing that 'ordinary moral convictions' deny rational egoism, and are correct to do so. And I take his criticism of Plato to be a challenge to a discussion of morality which assumes that, to defeat the sceptic about morality, it can and must be shown that being just and doing just acts benefits the agent. 'Ordinary moral convictions', once again, deny rational egoism. They deny that the ultimate reason for doing a certain action is that it conduces or contributes to your own happiness. As such, ordinary moral convictions are at odds both with the immoralism of Thrasymachus, who declares that there is no reason to do just acts, since they do not benefit the agent,[10] and with what some have called the moral egoism of Socrates, who replies that there is supreme reason to do just acts and to be just, since to do so and to be so is a special kind of good for the agent.[11]

III 'ORDINARY MORAL CONVICTIONS': A GLIMPSE IN *REPUBLIC* I

In discussing what I call the glimpses of 'ordinary moral convictions' in *Republic* I (and, in the next section, *Republic* II), I borrow a little from White's *Individual and Conflict in Greek Ethics* (2002). White is concerned to deny the widespread belief in what he calls Hellenic harmony, the view that in Greek thought, both that of the philosophers and of the common man, there was held to be no conflict, but rather a harmony, between one's own happiness and one's conformity to ethical norms. I do not accept White's interpretation of the major thinkers, wherein he denies that Plato and Aristotle should be characterised as espousing

10 For instance at 348CD.
11 See especially IV. 443–end, discussed in my final section.

eudaimonism or rational egoism.[12] But I think White is absolutely correct about everyday moral views, and is right to argue that the common man did not necessarily espouse eudaimonism or rational egoism. In addition to arguments drawn from Thucydides and Aristophanes, White draws on the *Republic*. He convincingly shows that both Thrasymachus and Glaucon fleetingly recognise (but deride) a type of person who is not motivated solely by pursuit of their own happiness; and they recognise (but do not endorse) a view which holds that there are reasons to act which are not eudaimonist. In the next section I'll consider Glaucon's stance at some length. Here I consider Thrasymachus, drawing on White's discussion.[13] Notoriously, Thrasymachus characterises injustice as *euboulia*, good sense, and justice as high-minded simplicity, *panu gennaia euêtheia* (348c12). Now White's argument – that Thrasymachus recognises and derides non-eudaimonist thinking on the part of the everyday adherent to justice – depends on the adjective *gennaia*, high-minded or noble.[14] If the people whose justice he labels thus – the simple just people – were assumed to be merely pursuing what they took to be their own self-interest in acting justly, then they would deserve the label 'simple', since they are – in Thrasymachus' view – badly mistaken about where their self-interest lies. But Thrasymachus is not merely saying these people are going the wrong way about pursuing their self-interest. In calling their conduct high-minded, he implies that they take the fact that certain conduct is just as a reason for doing it, independent of its being in their interest to act that way; perhaps even in spite of recognising that it is not in their interest to act that way.[15]

12 See Irwin 2004 for a searching review of White's book. While White argues that neither ordinary Greek morality nor Plato (or Aristotle) accepted what he calls Hellenic harmony, Irwin holds that eudaimonism, as defined above, is the predominant view both in ordinary Greek morality and in the philosophers. Irwin's criticisms of White's major theses are telling, and I agree with him against White that Plato's own theory is eudaimonist. But on 'ordinary morality' as glimpsed in the *Republic*, White is, I believe, correct.

13 White 2002: 166–73.

14 Cf. also 361b7 *andra haploun kai gennaion*, a straightforward and noble person. It is true that *gennaios* can have connotations of naivety (see next note on Irwin on this passage), but it seems clear that in the famous description of justice as *panu gennaia euetheia* it also has the connotation 'high-minded' or 'noble'. Plato is surely echoing Thucydides III.83.1, which also links *euêthes* with *gennaion*. As part of his well-known description of how words came to be differently applied, Thucydides relates 'simplicity, of which nobility has a large share, became a matter for derision'. Here *gennaion* has to have connotations of nobility, and so does it in the mouth of Thrasymachus.

15 Irwin 2004 resists this line of argument. He thinks that Thrasymachus' labelling justice as high-minded simplicity is compatible with his holding that the simple-minded just people are eudaimonists. The naive and foolish belief they hold is not that I can have a good reason for doing something that does not promote my

IV EGOISM IN GLAUCON'S DISCOURSE, AND THE ODDBALL

I turn now to the discourse of Glaucon. Let's recall how the whole debate is framed within an assumption of rational egoism.[16] When Glaucon kicks off with a division of goods into three classes, the goods of all three classes are goods *for the agent*. They are all things we welcome for what they bring us, whether directly ('by themselves') or indirectly, i.e., through their so-called consequences.[17] It is sometimes remarked that this leaves no room for something we might regard as good in itself, independently of any good *for someone*. And it's true that the division has no room for such a conception. Another absence, not often remarked, is this: there is no place in the three classes of goods for goods we welcome for their consequences, but not for their consequences *for the agent*. A person who had suffered from the plague might well be aware that he was in no danger of getting it a second time. Might he not still welcome as a good the ending of the plague, or a medicine which cured it or relieved its symptoms, or the practice of a doctor who could help sufferers? Of course, such concern *might* be purely egoistic (the person might value the health and the lives of other people only as contributing to his own well-being), but again it might not. So here is an overlooked class of good: one we welcome for what it brings to others. (This underlines what I said above about the whole discourse being framed in terms of rational egoism.) You may object that we are dealing with a division of goods introduced by Glaucon, which should not, therefore, be supposed to represent Plato's take on the matter. But I don't think this reply will do. It is a prevalent assumption voiced by Socrates in many of Plato's discussions that to desire

interest. Their naive beliefs will be that justice promotes the common interest and that rulers (who like everyone else are recognised to be pursuing their own interest) in claiming to act justly are claiming to promote the common interest as well as their own interest. But this interpretation depends on taking *gennaia* to mean naive. As argued in the previous note, it more probably retains its meaning of being noble or high-minded.

16 Cf. Kraut 1992b: 313: 'the thesis [Socrates] undertakes to prove is phrased in various ways: It is better (*ameinon*) to be just than unjust (357B1); justice is to be welcomed for itself if one is to be blessed (*makarios* 358A3); the common opinion that injustice is more profitable (*lusitelein*) must be refuted (360C8); we must decide whether the just person is happier (*eudaimonesteros*) than the unjust (361D3); justice by itself benefits (*oninanai*) someone who possesses it whereas injustice harms him (367D3–4)' and so on. The question of which life we should choose is decisively answered by showing which life benefits us more, makes us happier, is better for us etc.: these are simply interchangeable.

17 I pass over the much-debated question of how we should understand the division of goods. I have been convinced by Heinaman's 2002 interpretation, but I don't think my argument depends on a particular interpretation.

something is to desire that it come to oneself.[18] Likewise, it is assumed that to regard something as good is to regard it as good for oneself.

The social contract theory sketched by Glaucon places justice, *to dikaion*, 'in the middle'. This amounts to the claim that justice – that is, me doing just acts – is a second best. It is intermediate in value for me between the best for me (allegedly the situation in which I am able to wrong others by getting what is rightly theirs, and not suffering in return) and the worst for me (in which others wrong me and I am powerless to defend my own interests, 359A6–9). Notoriously, in his presentation of the social contract theory, Glaucon paints a strikingly pessimistic picture of human nature, claiming that everyone, just and unjust alike, pursues *pleonexia* – the desire for more than your fair share – as a good, and that anyone, granted immunity from detection, would commit every crime in the book to pursue his own interest at the expense of others. (Despite this, he will go on to mention an oddball exception, of whom more in a moment.)

It is interesting to note how unsympathetically the social contract theory is presented by Glaucon, in comparison to its appearance in Protagoras' Great Speech.[19] Here are some contrasts. First, the version in Protagoras' myth makes it advantageous *to the group* to acknowledge laws which prevent them fighting one another, while Glaucon's version presents it as an advantage *to an individual* that he secure a non-aggression pact. Second, Protagoras's version bases law and morality on self-interest, yes, but not on the outright selfishness or *pleonexia* to which the Glaucon-theorists marry it. And third, Protagoras' myth shows how the benefits of coming together in a mutually beneficial set of rules and practices can be achieved only when those in a community have the motives of *aidôs* and *dikê* instilled into them. In effect, Protagoras' myth recognises that if *pleonexia* were indeed the predominant motive of every individual, then law-abidingness, mutual respect and the advantages they bring would not be possible.[20] All this is missing from Glaucon's version. That version may take for granted the advantages to the group of a set of rules and practices which are generally observed, but it is striking that there is no mention of such, but rather, an insistence on *pleonexia* as a motive and a focus on the attractiveness of being a free-rider.

18 *Meno* 77C6–D1; *Symposium* 204D, 205E.

19 The Great Speech, *Protagoras* 320D–328D. Zeus's gift of conscience and justice, *aidôs* and *dikê*, 322BC; cf. 323A. Similar theses can be found in some fragments of Democritus D 109, D 112 (law benefits men, in opposition to Glaucon's view that it constrains them) and D 116, with Taylor 1999: 229.

20 Cairns 1993: 356 stresses correctly that Protagoras envisages internal as well as external sanctions operating. He suggests that nurses, teachers etc. saying 'this is just, this is unjust' etc. (325D) amounts to the teaching of *aidôs.*

Most of the time it is left implicit in Glaucon's speech that good means good for the agent, but occasionally this is made explicit, as at 360C–D, a passage of interest as it is the first appearance of what I shall call the oddball, the exceptional just person.

> No one is just voluntarily, but only under compulsion. Justice is not thought to be a good thing for the individual (*hôs ouk agathou idiai ontos*). Every man believes injustice to be much more profitable to the individual (*idiai* again) than justice.

Now for the oddball (360D):

> anyone who came into possession of the kind of freedom I've described, and then refused ever to do any wrong and did not lay a finger on other people's possessions – he'd be despised as pathetic and brainless, though in public people would be deceptive and praise him, for fear of being wronged.[21]

Here is the first appearance of the oddball: the exception to Glaucon's rule about what everyone would do. True, he is strictly only a hypothetical case, but the remainder of the description suggests he is a reality, praised in public but pitied and despised as a loser. So here is someone who – unlike everyone else – is *hekôn dikaios*, is voluntarily just. He isn't doing it only for the reputation, and in fear of the consequences of being caught stealing someone else's property. Acting justly isn't a *pis aller* for such a person – the silly fool!

I now jump ahead to the reappearance of the oddball in Adeimantus' speech, before returning in the next section to interrogate Glaucon's speech further. Adeimantus recalls how parents, poets and teachers recommend the just life for its rewards, and urge that even the gods can be bought off by appropriate rites. He asks how anyone with any power, money or influence would honour justice rather than laugh at it, but then recognises the possibility of one who through some divine nature has an aversion to wrongdoing, or one who through knowledge refrains from it (366C–D). No one else, among those who act justly, does so voluntarily, *hekôn* (a direct echo of what Glaucon said) – they're compelled to by cowardice, old age or weakness.[22] I suggest we have here another glimpse of the person who doesn't want to take another's property

21 Here and elsewhere translations are from Griffith 2000, though lightly adapted in some cases.

22 Vegetti 1998: vol. 2 notes ad loc. suggests that we are to understand Socrates as the one who through some divine nature has an aversion to injustice, and Plato as the one who refrains through knowledge (*epistêmên labôn*). But I find this implausible.

(360D), because, say, the idea of stealing what rightfully belongs to the orphan disgusts him. White correctly points to these passages as showing Plato's recognition of exceptions to the rule that everyone seeks their own interest in everything, so that if they do just acts, it is because they think it is in their interest to do so.[23] Unlike White, however, I do not find authorial recognition that the approach represented by these exceptions is a rational one. The dice are loaded heavily against morality, in a way I'll now try to demonstrate by returning to Glaucon's speech.

V THE JUDGEMENT OF LIVES: SOME ISSUES

Glaucon follows up the social contract theory and the thought experiment of Gyges' ring with a further one: the Judgement of Lives. Here an even more extreme counterfactual possibility is envisaged, labelled by Bernard Willliams Plato's 'experiment in motivational solipsism'.[24] Two lives are to be described – that of the perfectly unjust person with all the advantages of the reputation for justice, and that of the perfectly just person with all the disadvantages of the reputation for injustice – and we are invited to decide which is preferable, which is happier. We are to subtract nothing either from the injustice of the unjust man or from the justice of the just man, but must assume that each is a perfect example of his particular way of behaving, his *epitêdeuma*. Blocking a gap left in Thrasymachus' position, Glaucon insists that the unjust person is to be allowed to attempt only what he can succeed in; he successfully acquires a reputation for justice, or the power, money and friends sufficient to get his way with or without such a reputation (360E–361A).

Now I draw attention to how the Judgement of Lives is staged, and first, to the unjust person. Though we get a pretty clear picture of what we are to suppose about the unjust man who gets all the advantages of the reputation for justice, please note the following. He is said *adikein ta megista* (to commit the greatest crimes) but Glaucon does not spell out the massively unjust and wicked acts his life entails – the murders, enslavements, betrayals and so on.[25] Since these do not accrue to him,

23 'Two distinct attitudes prevail. Some people find justice attractive and injustice repulsive, and engage on just action without reckoning on advantages to themselves. Many others profess to be like these people, but they do so merely to reap the benefits of a reputation for justice. What they profess, however, is not that they are just for their own advantage, but rather that they think justice beautiful and injustice ugly'. White 2002: 173.

24 Williams 1993: 99.

25 Adam Beresford first drew my attention to this, and to the parallel omission re the just person.

but to others, why – Plato seems to ask – should we be interested in them in judging which life is preferable?

When we turn to the just person wrongly believed to be unjust, some interpretative problems arise. The first is: how should we envisage this? I distinguish two possible scenarios, which I label the Moral Loner, such as Socrates, and the Victim of Calumny, such as Hippolytus. If the just person is a moral loner, then the sense in which he is a just person thought unjust is that onlookers are mistaken *about justice.* We may think of Socrates: what he *does* is perfectly well known; the mistake is not about the nature of his acts, but about their being just or unjust. Whereas on the Victim of Calumny scenario, where the case of our just person thought unjust is like that of Hippolytus, the onlookers' mistake is not about what is just and unjust, but, more simply, about what he has been getting up to. Which does Plato intend the reader to imagine?

Since the figure of Socrates as the pre-eminently just person is so pervasive (cf. 361C7 and 367D8–E1), one might, with Bernard Williams, favour the first reading.[26] But I think we should prefer the second. As the Just man scenario is to be the mirror image of that of the Unjust man, then what we must suppose is a mistake about his lifestyle, about what he actually gets up to, since that was also true in the unjust man scenario: for him it was crucial that he doesn't get caught (361A4). So let's think of the just person as the victim of Calumny or Mistake.[27]

The second question in interpreting the Judgement of Lives is this: what are we to imagine about the just person in the thought experiment? Glaucon issues two injunctions:

a. take away his reputation (361B7: *aphaireteon to dokein*);
b. strip him of everything except his justice, and put him in a situation which is the opposite of that of the unjust person.

To anticipate, I shall conclude that the injunctions in fact come to the same thing. But it is worth thinking of some of the many ways in which (b) might go beyond (a). In particular, what if the just person is to be stripped of his power of actually doing just actions, the power to pay his debts, to ransom prisoners of war, to succour orphans, to care for

26 Williams 1993: 98–101 with notes. At n.46, p. 199, Williams suggests the two scenarios of Socrates and Hippolytus, citing for the latter Winnington-Ingram, *Hippolytus: A Study in Causation*, Entretiens Hardt, vol. 6, p. 185. The labels are mine, not Williams's.

27 A second reason for favouring the Victim of Calumny scenario is that it makes more sense of the suggestion that a just person of this kind could escape the notice of the gods in being just.

his parents in old age, return deposits and so on? For those who hold what I have called ordinary moral convictions, it surely makes a huge difference which scenario we are asked to envisage: (1) a just man whose life consists of successful devotion to just causes and actions such as those listed above, but who through misrepresentation or misunderstanding suffers terribly for his false reputation for injustice; or (2) a man with a pure heart and good intentions but whose entire life is somehow so arranged (for instance, by stepmotherly nature) that he never succeeds in just action: never manages to keep a promise, pay a debt and so on *and furthermore* suffers terribly for his false reputation for injustice. Though a certain Stoic or Kantian approach might find as much moral value in (2) as in (1), ordinary moral convictions would naturally value (1) more highly.

Despite the language of (b), strip him of everything etc., it is pretty clear that the injunction is not meant to go beyond (a). Why? First, because immediately Glaucon reverts to the formula: let him do no wrong but have the reputation for supreme wrongdoing. And second, because when the Judgement of Lives was set up, we were told to imagine each as 'a perfect example of his particular way of behaving (*epitêdeuma*)' (360E6).

So for Glaucon, stripping him of everything but his justice simply equates to removing his reputation and all the good things which accrue to him from that. But that passes over in silence something of huge importance: what he achieves in the world by his justice. That he is supremely successful in his practice of justice might seem to us pretty important in the question whether his life is preferable. But the way Glaucon is made to set up the debate shows that, for all of the parties to the argument (and, I am tempted to say, for Plato himself), it seems to be *of not the slightest relevance* what the just person achieves by the *epitêdeuma*, the practice of his *dikaiosunê*. Any good he achieves is another's good, and why should anyone care about that? (Remember we noted how Glaucon also did not trouble to describe the terrible deeds wrought by the unjust person, but only the good results which accrued to him.) Since the good done by the just person is not *idiai*, is not good for him, it is irrelevant to the discussion, apparently. But let's recall the oddball who 'didn't want to do any wrong or to take another's goods' (360D) – soon to be recalled by Adeimantus as the person who through some divine nature is disgusted at the idea of doing unjust acts. If we try to imagine his response to the Judgement of Lives, these considerations – what each person actually achieves in his life, how he interacts with others – would not, I suggest, be irrelevant.

Between the two injuctions ((a) and (b) above) comes a remark which raises another important issue about the Judgement of Lives.

> We must remove the just person's reputation for justice, for otherwise 'it will not be clear whether his motive for being just was a desire for justice or a desire for the rewards and the recognition' (*eite tou dikaiou eite tôn dôreôn kai timôn heneka toioutos eiê*). (361c2–3)

It is this remark which leads commentators to say that Plato here is making Glaucon give a condition for being a truly just person, viz., that the person must act *tou dikaiou heneka*.[28] I think this is correct, and that the function of the Judgement of Lives is both to say what it is to be just, and to pose the question of whether the life of the just person, so understood, is preferable to that of the unjust person. But it is more controversial what it is to act *tou dikaiou heneka*. Here are some possibilities:

A. The just person is the one who chooses just acts and does them because they are just (that is, not for some ulterior motive such as rewards, reputation, avoidance of punishment and so on).
B. The just person values/cares for justice for its own sake.[29]
C. The just person values justice as an intrinsic good to himself.

In so far as he is appealing to an everyday conception of what it is to be a just person, Glaucon at least intends (A), as the remainder of the sentence quoted above makes clear. It may be thought that (A) and (B) amount to the same thing, though (B) may have the extra implication that to value justice for its own sake is to value it regardless of *any* consequences just acts may have. If so, (B) goes beyond (A). I shall argue that, contrary to appearances, (C) is quite different from both the others.

Exactly what (A) entails is a controversial matter, not so dissimilar from the issues of what Aristotle intends by his insistence that the virtuous person is the one who chooses virtuous actions 'for themselves', and by his other formulation: because of the noble (*hoti kalon*). I suggest that the ordinary moral convictions on which Glaucon is here drawing would hold the following. To do just acts *tou dikaiou heneka* is for those acts themselves, and the concerns which prompt them – providing for the orphans, making your elderly father comfortable, returning the deposit or whatever – to be the reason for what you do, rather than any ulterior motive of reward, good reputation or whatever. 'Doing just acts for the sake of the just' may well not even require the

28 Irwin 1999: 182.
29 Irwin 1995: 258. Most translations support Irwin, if 'acting for the sake of justice' is the same as 'caring for justice for its own sake'. For instance, Griffith, quoted above; Williams 1993: 98, 'it will then be unclear whether he is just for the sake of justice, or for the sake of the honours and rewards'; Grube 1992, 'for the sake of justice itself'.

person to have the thought that his act is just, and I feel more sure that it does not require the agent to 'care about justice for its own sake', though of course these extra conditions may well obtain. It is important here to remember that acts described as *dikaia* are a far wider range than acts we would label just. Recall (cf. section II) the list of 'vulgar' unjust acts at 442E–443A.

An everyday example of someone whose conduct which might be described thus comes in a speech of Lysias.[30] The speaker claims that his father, as well as doing various services to the *polis*, privately provided money for dowries, ransoms and burials, 'thinking a good man should help his friends, even if no-one should know about it'. What the speaker claimed need not of course have been true but it must at least have been faintly plausible. I suggest that the speaker is claiming, in effect, that his father did these things *tou dikaiou heneka* and not for the honours which such deeds might reap if publicly known.[31]

But now I want to bring out the sharp difference between that everyday understanding of what it is to be just person – that you act *tou dikaiou heneka* in the sense I've described – and what Glaucon and Adeimantus ask of Socrates, when they say they want to hear justice praised itself for itself, and to hear what power it has, by itself, in the soul of the possessor. In effect they are saying: 'Most people think justice is one kind of good to the possessor (the kind which is burdensome in itself but has indirect consequences which are good). We want you to show that justice is another kind of good to the possessor.' And, as we know, Socrates accepts the challenge in that very form. Once Socrates has delivered his account, to the satisfaction of all parties, does it follow that the just person – who recognises that justice is this other kind of good to him – acts *tou dikaiou heneka*? Not on any natural understanding of that phrase, I submit.[32]

Put in terms of the three interpretations above, the point is this. (A) is (I suggest) the natural understanding of the condition of what it is to be a just person. (A) is often equated with (B), and it is easy to see how it is possible to slide from (B) to (C), though in truth they are surely very different, given that (C) speaks of valuing justice *as a good for oneself*. The upshot is that Glaucon's speech contains an unstable

30 Lysias 19.59, quoted in Dover 1974: 222.

31 Compare Demosthenes *Oration* 16.10.5 'Then it will be obvious to everyone that you want Messene to exist not because it's just (*tou dikaiou heneka*) but because of your fear of Sparta.'

32 I here disagree with Irwin 1995: 258: 'In focussing on virtues and motives, Plato is not abandoning common intuitions about justice.' I think that the reinterpretation (as (C)) of the condition that a just person act *tou dikaiou heneka* does, subtly, take Glaucon and Socrates far from the common intuitions about moral motivation.

amalgam of the assumptions of 'ordinary morality', as exemplified in 361c quoted above, and his own egoist take on the matter, as exemplified in (C). But while ordinary morality assumes, correctly, that being just gives you reasons for action which are quite independent of your own good or happiness, Glaucon's challenge shows that he cannot accept or even fully understand this, despite his using the 'ordinary moral language' of acting *tou dikaiou heneka*.

VI CONCLUSIONS FROM THE DISCUSSION OF GLAUCON'S DISCOURSE

Let me draw out some morals of this examination of some details in the discourses of Glaucon and Adeimantus. First, we get glimpses which show that they both recognise an oddball, someone whose acts are not motivated exclusively by desire for their own good or happiness, but by moral considerations. Second, all parties to the debate assume that the only *rational* motivation is a desire for one's own happiness (compare the presuppositions of the three classes of goods); thus oddballs are regarded as foolish, though doubtless also as high-minded. Third, the Judgement of Lives is constructed in such a way that what might seem to us (and to the people I have labelled oddballs) highly salient matters when we come to judge which life is preferable – the dreadful crimes of the one, and the massively beneficial acts of the other – are passed over in almost complete silence, since only the good or bad *for the agent* is deemed to be a relevant consideration. Fourth, in the requirement that a just person act *tou dikaiou heneka*, we get another glimpse of ordinary morality: the everyday thought that a just person is, say, the one who paid for dowries simply to help his poor neighbours, or the one who repays his debts from a concern to give the other what he owed him, and not merely to avoid a lawsuit. It is unclear to me how close this need be to the Kantian thought which the phrase 'caring for justice for its own sake' suggests. It is certainly a long way from what underlies Glaucon's request that justice be shown to be good in itself, since that proves to mean: show that it is a special kind of good for the agent himself. The truly just person, on this new understanding, is the one who acts for the sake of a special kind of good for himself – a far cry from the everyday understanding of the demand that a just person act *tou dikaiou heneka*.

VII SOCRATES' RESPONSE TO GLAUCON'S CHALLENGE: PRICHARD VINDICATED

It may be objected that I am being unfair in criticising the egoist stance revealed by Glaucon in his challenge to Socrates. After all, Glaucon

rehearses points and theories propounded by others.[33] The challenge he puts to Socrates is a sophistic one, and that accounts for the stress on external sanctions and on selfish motives.[34] But it remains true that Glaucon's own request to Socrates is that he show justice to be a supreme good for the agent himself, and that in setting up this request he shows no understanding of the kind of reasons a just person has for their actions. But, the objector will continue, this criticism still focuses on the discourse of Glaucon, and we should look at the response Socrates makes to the challenge.

My reply is that, had Plato rejected this approach root and branch, he could have made Socrates refuse to accept the challenge Glaucon issues. But Socrates welcomes it, and provides Glaucon with exactly what he asks for: a defence of justice and of just acts in terms of the agent's own good (albeit a good of a very rarefied kind). I stand by the claim I made at the outset, that *all* parties to the debate, Socrates as well as the others, 'omit something important in ignoring and/or distorting everyday moral views'. The key evidence comes towards the end of the reply Socrates makes to the challenge. After developing his analogy between individual and city, and after discussing the division of the soul and the nature of the virtues in an individual soul, Socrates concludes the search into what justice is for an individual in a well-known passage, 443C9–444A2. Justice for an individual is an internal version of 'each doing its own', when the elements of a person's psyche are correctly harmonised. And by showing that justice is this kind of internal harmony, Socrates intends to have shown that it is the just person who is the happier.[35] The eloquent speech concludes thus:

> In all these situations he believes and declares that a just and good action is one which preserves or brings about this state of mind [i.e. the harmony of the soul's elements] – wisdom being the knowledge which directs the action. An unjust action, by contrast, is any action which tends to destroy this state of mind – ignorance, in its turn, being the opinion which directs the unjust action. (443E4–444A2)

Recall the distinction (section I) between the questions 'Why should I be just?' and 'Why should I do this, that or the other just act?' If we look at the wider context, the upshot is that justice is supremely worth having since it is a harmony of the parts of the soul, analogous to

33 358E3, 'they say'; 359B5, 'according to this theory'.
34 Sarah Broadie urged this line of argument at the fourth Leventis conference.
35 Cf. n.16.

bodily health. This answers the question 'Why should I be just?' But the extract quoted is about just and unjust *actions*, claiming that just actions are those which promote this excellent state of the soul. The extract gives Socrates' answers to two questions: 'What makes a just act just?' and 'Why should I do this, that or the other just act?'[36] The answer suggested to the first question seems extraordinary, and it is hard to know how seriously it is meant. It seems to suggest, as the criterion for calling an action just, that it promotes a state of internal harmony in the agent.[37] The answer to the second question is exactly the one which rational egoism/eudaimonism demands, but it too seems quite unsatisfying. Like Glaucon and Adeimantus earlier, so too here Socrates fails to recognise that a just person has reasons for just action *of a quite different kind* from an appeal to one's own good. What I have called ordinary moral convictions (glimpsed in the oddballs who are scorned in the brothers' speeches) recognise this, and I agree with Prichard that it is a fatal flaw in Socrates' account in the *Republic* that it does not do so.

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36 This passage provides excellent support for the claims made by Prichard quoted at the opening of this essay.

37 Annas 1981: 160 takes a different view. She regards this passage as containing an 'idea which is to become much more developed in Aristotle's ethics (and those of the Stoics): the good man is the norm for just action. . . . the just man identifies the just action by reference to the state of psychic harmony which is Platonic justice, not by reference to lists of duties accepted from any external source'. This sympathetic reading seems to overlook an important difference between Socrates' proposal to identify as a just act one which *produces* psychic harmony (i.e., justice in the individual), and Aristotle's view by which a just act is the act a just person would do in the circumstances. Annas's Aristotelian reading of the passage cannot succeed, I think.

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3

THRASYMACHEAN RULERS, ALTRUISTIC RULERS AND SOCRATIC RULERS

Antonio Chu

I INTRODUCTION

Let me begin with an account of the three conceptions of rulers mentioned in the title of my chapter.

1. A *Thrasymachean ruler* (TR) is a ruler (a) who seeks *his own benefit* in ruling by taking advantage of the subject and (b) who, in virtue of his expertise of ruling, never errs in his pursuit of the aim of the ruling craft, which is *to secure what is beneficial to the ruler by taking advantage of the subject*.
2. An *Altruistic ruler* (AR) is a ruler (a) who seeks *the benefit of his subject* in ruling without regard to his own benefit and (b) who, in virtue of his expertise of ruling, never errs in his pursuit of the aim of the ruling craft, which is *to secure what is beneficial to the subject without regard to the ruler's own benefit.*[1]
3. A *Socratic ruler* (SR) is an expert ruler (a) who seeks *his own benefit* in ruling and (b) who rules by pursuing the aim of the

I would like to thank the participants in the fourth A. G. Leventis conference for their helpful comments and suggestions. I am particularly grateful to Terry Penner, George Rudebusch and Naomi Reshotko, whose invaluable discussion, comments and advice on an earlier draft have saved me from many false steps. It goes without saying that I am solely responsible for the remaining errors in the present chapter.

1 Here I talk about an Altruistic ruler instead of an agent-neutral ruler – whom my co-symposiast George Rudebusch prefers to discuss, for example in Rudebusch 2003 – since, as I shall explain in greater detail shortly, the text in *Republic* I that has led Rudebusch to look for a philosophical position other than egoism to ascribe to Socrates has to do purely with Socrates' claim that the ruler *qua* ruler seeks not his own benefit but the benefit of his subject. The text in question, as far as I can see, does not involve any claim to the effect that the ruler *qua* ruler is indifferent as to whom his practice will benefit.

ruling craft, which is to *command what is beneficial to the subject without regard to the ruler's own benefit*.

As I see it, the crucial difference between a Thrasymachean ruler and an Altruistic ruler has to do with a ruler's *psychological* motive in ruling. While a Thrasymachean ruler is psychologically motivated to rule by his desire for his own benefit, an Altruistic ruler is motivated by his desire for the benefit of others. The two rulers differ further in the way each conceives of the goal of the ruling craft. Each takes the goal of the ruling craft to coincide exactly with his personal motive in ruling.

A Socratic ruler resembles a Thrasymachean ruler in being a psychological egoist. However, the two rulers disagree on the goal of the ruling craft and on *how* the ruling craft secures one's own benefit.[2] Since in the case of a Thrasymachean ruler the ruler's motives are identical with the goal of the ruling craft, a Thrasymachean ruler naturally believes that one's own benefit is *automatically* secured by fulfilling the goal of the ruling craft. A Socratic ruler, on the other hand, believes that, in the cases where a ruler might think his benefit is secured only by exploiting his subject, his benefit will in fact be secured only *indirectly* by fulfilling the goal of ruling.[3]

Certainly these are not the only possible conceptions of ruler. My reason for focusing on just these three is because I believe that the way Socrates reacts to these three conceptions in *Republic I* will shed invaluable light on whether the Socrates there is a psychological egoist. No doubt, by calling the Socratic ruler 'Socratic' I am suggesting that it is this conception of ruler Socrates accepts. For a number of years now I have tried to persuade my co-symposiast George Rudebusch of my present suggestion, but sadly without much success. I can only hope that I will have better success this time around.

The dispute between Rudebusch and me stems from our disagreement over the implication of the following two claims that are central to Socrates' refutation of Thrasymachus' account of justice.[4]

2 On the other hand, even though a Socratic ruler and an Altruistic ruler agree on the goal of the ruling craft, they disagree on the possibility of a ruler securing his own benefit through the practice of the ruling craft. While a Socratic ruler believes that ruling can be a means to a ruler's own benefit, an Altruistic ruler rejects this very possibility.

3 I do not claim to have provided an exhaustive account of the similarities and differences between these three conceptions of ruler. Here I merely highlight those similarities and differences that are relevant to my subsequent discussion.

4 Please note that throughout this chapter, I use 'craft' and 'expertise' interchangeably. That claims (E) and (R) are central to Socrates' refutation of Thrasymachus' account of justice is evident from the number of Stephanus pages devoted to their discussion. The discussion begins at 341B and is not satisfactorily resolved till 347D. It takes up six pages of Socrates' nine-page refutation.

(E) No expert in so far as he is an expert – i.e., no expert qua expert – seeks his own benefit; every expert qua expert seeks the benefit of the object that his expertise rules over and cares for.

(R) No ruler in so far as he is a ruler – i.e., no ruler qua ruler – seeks his own benefit; every ruler qua ruler seeks the benefit of his subject.[5]

Rudebusch takes (E) and (R) to suggest that, for Socrates, it is possible for an individual to seek something other than his own benefit, and thereby concludes that Socrates is no psychological egoist. I, on the other hand, do not see (E) and (R) as posing any real threat to the view that Socrates is a psychological egoist.[6] In what follows, I shall argue that to appreciate properly the significance of (E) and (R) it is important that we do not confuse *a person* with *the role of the expert* that a person may choose to assume.[7] Once this distinction is observed, we will see that (E) and (R) are not claims about *the motives of a person who assumes the role of the expert*, but claims about the specific aims and goals of the role he assumes, which is identical with the aims of the expertise. And since (E) and (R) only state the aim of an expert qua expert (i.e., the aims of the role of the expert, i.e., the goal of the expertise), they do not rule out the possibility that an expert may assume the role of the expert as a *means* to his own benefit. That is, (E) and (R) do not rule out the possibility that a person may have an egoistic motive to practice his craft expertly. Not only does Socrates seem to make allowance for such a possibility in his argument for (E) and (R), he actually makes it a point in his argument to show that it is precisely because of (E) and (R) that experts need to be motivated by some self-interest to assume a particular expert role. In sum, Socrates' rather quaint contrast between an expert qua expert and a person who happens to assume the role of an expert is what enables him to reconcile psychological egoism with the impersonal goals crafts generally set for their practitioners.

5 As we shall see shortly, Socrates clearly intends (R) to be an instance of the general principle (E).

6 In the present discussion, I will only address Rudebusch's claim that (E) and (R) support the conclusion that Socrates is not a psychological egoist. I will not address his claim that (E) and (R) support the further conclusion that Socrates is no ethical egoist either. Whether Socrates is committed to ethical egoism is too large an issue for me to take up in this chapter.

7 To assume the role of the expert is to realize the goal of the expertise in one's practice of the expertise.

II THRASYMACHUS ON RULERS QUA RULERS

In order to understand (E) and (R) in their proper context, let us begin at the beginning and look at how the seemingly quaint notions 'an expert qua expert' and 'a ruler qua ruler' emerge in Socrates' cross-examination of Thrasymachus and his account of justice.

In response to Socrates' invitation to teach him what justice really is, Thrasymachus boldly suggests that

(T1) Justice is the advantage of the stronger (338C1–2, 339A1–2, 341B6, 344C8, 347E).

Thrasymachus' defense of (T1) goes as follows: in real-world politics, rulers are the lawmakers. There is no denying that real-world rulers seek their own advantage/benefit in ruling. They lay down laws *as being beneficial to them* and declare that it is just for the subject to obey them and unjust to violate them. In that case, how can justice be anything other than the advantage of the ruler? And since rulers are the stronger,[8] real-world politics confirms (T1).

In response Socrates gets Thrasymachus to concede that real-world rulers are fallible. They are often wrong about what is and what is not beneficial to them. When such a mistake occurs, they will be commanding laws that are not in fact beneficial to them. Justice, consequently, will turn out to be no more beneficial than not beneficial to the rulers. In sum then, (T1) will not hold up if real-world rulers are the stronger.

Socrates' objection leads Thrasymachus to abandon real-world rulers who are fallible for *rulers qua rulers* who are infallible. Thrasymachus motivates his idea of a ruler qua ruler by first identifying ruling as an expertise. He then argues that experts qua experts – i.e., the true experts – never err.

> [Each expert/craftsman], to the extent that he is what we call him, never makes errors, so that, according to the precise account . . . no craftsman ever makes errors. *It is when his knowledge fails him that he makes an error*, and, in virtue of the fact that he made that error,

8 Thrasymachus finds it reasonable to identify the stronger with the ruler because the only type of power that seems to be relevant in the present context is the power to determine and command justice. Rulers, in virtue of their political position, are invested with the *political* power and authority to determine and command justice (via the laws they passed). It will follow that rulers are indeed the stronger. On the other hand, if what Thrasymachus has in mind here is not just the power to command justice, but also the power to exploit others for one's own benefit, then – as Socrates' subsequent argument shows – real-world rulers are far from strong in this additional manner.

> he is no craftsman. No craftsman, wise man, or ruler makes an error at the moment when he is ruling, even though everyone [when he is speaking loosely] will say that a physician or a ruler makes errors . . . [A] ruler, to the extent that he is a ruler, never makes errors and unerringly decrees what is best for himself. (340E1–4, my emphasis)[9]

Since

(A) Errors always indicate a lack of expertise (in the area in which one errs),

Thrasymachus reasons, a true expert – i.e., an expert qua expert – will have to be an expert who never errs. Moreover, since

(B) A ruler is an expert skilled at taking advantage of his subject for his own benefit (via the laws and justice he imposes on his subject),

Thrasymachus contends, it will follow that

(T2) Justice is the advantage of the ruler qua ruler (341A4–6).

In short, by opting for rulers qua rulers, Thrasymachus believes he can reconfirm, and has reconfirmed, the validity of

(T1) Justice is the advantage of the stronger (i.e., the ruler qua ruler).[10]

Obviously whether Thrasymachus has succeeded in defending (T1) will depend in part on whether he is correct in assuming

9 All quotations of the *Republic* are from Reeve 2004.

10 That at this point Thrasymachus is identifying the stronger with the ruler qua ruler is put beyond doubt when Thrasymachus asks rhetorically at 340C5 'Do you [Socrates] think I would call [a ruler] who is in error stronger at the very moment he errs?'

It is worth noticing that the notion of strength that Thrasymachus is operating on at this point can't just be the notion of political strength. For if that were the case, Thrasymachus would not have any basis to rule out fallible rulers as being the stronger at this point. It is arguably the case that, for Thrasymachus, rulers qua rulers are the stronger because in addition to having political power they have the power to secure what is in fact beneficial to themselves (in virtue of the expertise that they are expert at). If I am right about this, then the type of strength Thrasymachus has in mind at this point will have to be grounded in some specific sort of knowledge/expertise, viz., the expertise of taking advantage of others for one's own benefit. For lack of a better name, we might call this notion of strength the knowledge-dependent notion.

(R_t) Rulers qua rulers seek their own benefit.[11]

For if rulers qua rulers, unlike their real-world counterparts, do not aim at their own benefit, then even if they are indeed infallible, this will provide no basis for (T1). It comes as no surprise then that it is precisely (R_t) which Socrates challenges in his rejoinder.

Even though Socrates focuses his criticism on (R_t), (R_t) is by no means the only questionable assumption in Thrasymachus' present defence of (T1). As a principle presumed to hold for all crafts, assumption (A) lacks credibility. With perhaps the exception of the expertise Socrates identifies as the science of good and bad (i.e., virtue), it is not impossible that an expert may have a motive to err willingly in spite of his knowledge. For instance, a doctor may err willingly in his treatment of a dictator or the patient who has infected him with AIDS; and a financial advisor may willingly err in his advice to his former drill sergeant. Hence in so far as (A) denies such genuine possibilities, it is a dubious claim for Thrasymachus to ground his justification for the infallibility of rulers qua rulers.

Why then does Socrates not challenge (A) – or challenge (A) instead of (R_t) – in his rejoinder to Thrasymachus? I believe it is because Socrates sees rightly that the root problem with Thrasymachus' defence of (T1) is not (A) but (R_t). Given (i) his belief that the expertise of ruling is the expertise of taking advantage of the ruled for the benefit of the ruler, and (ii) his belief that rulers seek their own benefit in ruling, Thrasymachus naturally assumes that those who possess the ruling craft will never have any motive or desire to err. In other words, as long as Thrasymachus does not repudiate (i) and (ii), then even if (A) fails to hold for expertise in general, this will do little to undercut his confidence that (A) does hold for the ruling craft. And so long as he continues to believe in the latter, he will still be able to make his case for (T1). By attacking (R_t), Socrates undermines (i) and (ii) and thereby Thrasymachus' real underlying rationale for (T1). To this argument of Socrates we must now turn.

III SOCRATES ON RULERS QUA RULERS

Socrates' argument against (R_t) proceeds by way of a general inquiry into the goals and aims of individual crafts.[12] His strategy is to let the

11 (R_t) and (B) are merely different formulations of the same assumption. The advantage of formulating Thrasymachus' assumption as (R_t) rather than (B) is that, given Socrates' explicit endorsement of the contrary of (R_t), (R_t) serves better than (B) in bringing out the disagreement between Socrates and Thrasymachus.

12 341B5ff.

goals and aims of individual crafts reveal to us the proper aim of a ruler qua ruler.[13]

What generally then is the goal of an expertise? Socrates' answer is that every expertise aims at securing a certain specific type of benefit for the objects over which it rules. Every expertise *rules* over its objects with the aim of benefiting them.[14] Moreover, since every expertise is without error and thus perfect, it has no needs and does not seek its own benefit.[15] Socrates thereby concludes that

(S) no expertise seeks its own benefit; every expertise seeks the benefit of the object over which it rules (342C9–D1).[16]

And from (S), Socrates concludes straightaway that

(E) no expert qua expert seeks his own benefit; every expert qua expert seeks the benefit of the object over which he rules (342E6),[17]

and that

(R) no ruler qua ruler seeks his own benefit; every ruler qua ruler seeks the benefit of the subject over which he rules (342E6).[18]

Now if (R) is true, Thrasymachus is mistaken in his belief that

(R_t) rulers qua rulers seek their own benefit.

13 Underlying Socrates' strategy is the following rationale: according to Thrasymachus, an expert qua expert never errs. Presumably, an expert will never err only if he *always* aims at realizing the goal of his expertise *in his practice*. In that case, to determine what goal an infallible expert is committed to realizing in his practice it will suffice if one can determine the aim of his expertise. However, as I shall argue shortly, settling what goal an infallible ruler is committed to realizing in his practice will not automatically settle what ultimate motive *a person* can have in assuming the role of an infallible ruler. Only a theory of human motivation can help us settle the latter; a theory that merely states the goals of individual crafts cannot.

14 According this conception of ruling, it is precisely by submitting to the rule of the expertise that the ruled is able to receive the desired benefit from the expertise. This is a benevolent form of ruling since its goal is to provide benefit to the ruled through its rule. It goes without saying that it is in the interest of the ruled to submit to the rule of the expertise.

15 342A1–B8. Socrates' reasoning here probably goes something like this: an object will seek its own benefit only if it is deficient and is not yet perfect. Given that the perfection of an expertise consists solely in its being completely error-free, and given that an expertise – being a completed science – is already error-free, an expertise will not seek its own benefit, which it already possesses.

16 See also 341D, 346E3ff. and 347A1.

17 See also 342D3–E5.

18 See also 347D5.

Moreover, justice will turn out to be the advantage of the weaker (i.e., the ruled) rather than the advantage of the stronger (i.e., the ruler qua ruler) – the exact opposite of what Thrasymachus alleges.

There is no denying that Socrates affirms (E) and (R) and sees them as being vital to his refutation of Thrasymachus' account of justice. However, it will be premature to infer from this that Socrates after all entertains the possibility of a person acting from an altruistic rather than an egoistic motive. Such an inference would be warranted if (E) and (R) were in fact statements affirming *the (altruistic) motive* of those who choose to practice their craft expertly. But, as I shall presently argue, (E) and (R) should not be so read.

First, let me suggest the following hypothesis (H) concerning how Socrates conceives of an expert qua expert: contrary to what Thrasymachus might have thought, as far as Socrates is concerned, neither an expert qua expert nor a ruler qua ruler is a genuine person to whom one can ascribe motives or desires. For him, an expert qua expert is nothing more than the role of an expert that one can choose to take up or not to take up. To take up the role of an expert (in respect of a particular expertise *e*) is to realize the goal of *e* in one's practice of *e*. When an expert qua expert is viewed thus, the aim of an expert qua expert is one and the same as the aim of his expertise.[19] This nicely explains why Socrates invariably infers (E) and (R) from (S) without the slightest hesitation.[20] For if (E) and (R) are really statements about the aim of an expert qua expert, as (H) suggests that they are, then given that the aim of an expert qua expert is identical with the goal of his expertise, Socrates is unquestionably justified in concluding (E) and (R) from (S). In short, the very ease with which Socrates moves between (S) on the one hand and (E) and (R) on the other hand seems to confirm my hypothesis (H).

Now, even though (E) and (R) tell us what goal a person is committed to realizing in his work *if* he chooses to assume the role of the expert,[21] they do not tell us what *motive* a person may or can have *in choosing* to assume the role of the expert. For all that (E) and (R) tell us, it is quite possible that a person's motive for taking up the role of the expert may not coincide exactly with the goal of his expertise. Take for instance the expertise of horse breeding that Socrates brought up at 342c. Just because the goal of horse breeding is to secure certain

19 I am by no means the first to suggest that for Socrates the aim of an expert qua expert is tantamount to the goal of the expertise. Both H. W. B. Joseph and Paul Shorey had made similar suggestions some decades earlier. See Joseph 1935: 22–3 and Shorey 1937: 58–9, n. *e*.

20 See for instance 342c10–e, 345c–d and 346e–347a.

21 Namely, realizing in his work the goal of his expertise.

benefits for horses, it doesn't mean that a person can only be motivated to assume the role of horse breeder by his concern for the welfare of horses. It is not impossible – and in fact, quite likely – that a person assumes the role of horse breeder not *as his ultimate end* but only *as a means* to some further end of his. Moreover, for all that (E) tells us, a person's *ultimate* motive for assuming the role of horse breeder may be altruistic,[22] but it is also possible that it is not.[23]

Since the goal of an expertise generally does not exhaust the motives of those who choose to practice the craft expertly, there is no safe or reliable inference from the former to the latter. Consequently, in so far as (E) and (R) are merely statements about the aims of experts qua experts (i.e., the goals of individual crafts), they should not be regarded as evidence that Socrates acknowledges the possibility of altruistic experts. That is, from the mere fact that (E) claims that the role of the expert aims not at its own benefit but at the benefit of the objects over which it rules, we cannot thereby assume that for Socrates the motive of any person who takes up the role of the expert must be similarly restricted and thus altruistic. Whether Socrates is in fact committed to the possibility of altruistic experts will depend on what, if anything, he has to say about the motives of those who assume the role of the expert. Interestingly enough, it is precisely this issue to which Socrates turns his attention immediately following his argument for (E) and (R).

Some commentators, such as Reeve and White,[24] have questioned the plausibility of Socrates' inference from (S) to (E) and (R). According to them, just because no expertise aims at its own benefit, it doesn't follow that no expert can be motivated by self-interest to practice his craft expertly, since *the goal of an expertise* is logically and conceptually distinct from the *ultimate motive of an expert*. It should be clear by now that their objection is misguided if my hypothesis (H) is correct. What the commentators fail to see is that neither (E) nor (R) is concerned with the ultimate motive of an expert. And in so far as (E) and (R) are merely about the aim of an expert qua expert, it is perfectly legitimate to infer them from (S), given that the aim of an expert qua expert is identical with the goal of the expertise. In sum, the commentators have confused the aim of an expert qua expert with the motives of a person who happens to assume the role of the expert. This confusion, as we

22 For instance, for all that (E) tells us, a person may take up the role of horse breeder as a *means* to benefit his fellow human beings. It is worth noting that even in this case we cannot identify the altruistic motive of the expert with the goal of his expertise.

23 For instance, for all that (E) tells us, a person may take up the role of horse breeder as a mean to secure a raise from his employer.

24 Reeve 1988: 19; White 1979: 67.

shall presently see, is the very confusion Thrasymachus made in his response to Socrates' (E) and (R).[25]

Both puzzled and infuriated by Socrates' argument for (E) and (R), Thrasymachus asks Socrates why his wetnurse fails to do her job and allows Socrates to dribble nonsense such as (E) and (R). Is it not naive for Socrates to suppose that shepherds and cowherds think about nothing else night and day but the benefit of their sheep? Is it not plain to everyone that shepherds and cowherds seek their own benefit in shepherding? And aren't (E) and (R) refuted by the fact that experts generally have motives that do not coincide with and often go beyond the aim of caring for the objects over which they rule?

In response, Socrates points out that Thrasymachus seems to have confused an expert qua expert with a person who assumes the role of the expert. A person who assumes the role of the expert may have motives that go beyond the aims of his expertise, for he may realize the aim of his expertise (i.e., the aims of an expert qua expert) *as a means* to some further end of his. For instance, a shepherd may assume the role of shepherd (i.e., realize the aim of shepherd qua shepherd) *as a means* to earn a wage. And he may indeed *secure* his financial gain in shepherding. However, his financial benefit is secured for him not by the use of the shepherding craft, but by the use of the moneymaking craft.[26] More importantly, neither (E) nor (R) is impugned by the fact that the aim of an expertise generally does not exhaust the motives of those who practice it expertly, since neither claims that the aims of an

25 Very likely, Plato the author has Thrasymachus commit this confusion at this juncture so that his readers will not fall prey to the same error, seeing how easy and natural it is to mistake Socrates' remarks about the aim of an expert qua expert for remarks about the motives of those people who practice their craft expertly.

26 Socrates' present account of how the shepherd's financial interest is secured – viz., via his use of the moneymaking craft – has led some commentators (including Reeve and my former self) to conclude that Socrates must regard the moneymaking craft as an exception to (E). This conclusion will indeed be justified if Socrates is here suggesting that the moneymaking craft aims only at the benefit of its practitioners. However, it is not implausible to suppose that for him the moneymaking craft is merely that craft which aims at the financial benefit of whoever is in need of such. It is true that in Socrates' present example the shepherd practices the moneymaking craft to secure his *own* financial need. But he could easily have used the same craft to secure the financial interest of someone else who has financial needs. Moreover, it is not qua moneymaker but qua someone who has financial need that the shepherd has benefited from the use of the moneymaking craft. In sum, there is no clear indication in the text that Socrates will (or will have to) construe the moneymaking craft as an exception to (E). This raises the question of whether Socrates, given his own ethical position, will exempt any expertise – e.g., virtue, i.e., the science of good and bad – from the stricture of (E). I shall address this issue, albeit briefly, at the end of my chapter. For a detailed analysis of Socrates' argument that financial benefits are not the aims of any craft except the moneymaking craft, see Rudebusch's chapter in this volume.

expert qua expert (i.e., the goal of an expertise) must coincide with the motives of those who practice the expertise.[27] We can see then that Socrates' response to Thrasymachus' challenge to (E) and (R) seems to confirm my hypothesis (H) concerning the real import of (E) and (R).

IV SOCRATIC RULERS

As far as Socrates can see, psychological egoism – as it is presupposed in Thrasymachus' objection to (E) and (R) – not only poses no threat to (E) and (R), it actually supports the veracity of these claims. Socrates reasons as follows.

He first points out that, with every expertise that resembles the craft of political ruling in being a form of rule,

(1) there is no willing ruler (345E5).[28]

In other words, with any such expertise, no one willingly assumes the role of the expert and pursues the goal of the expertise for its own sake in his work. (1) is borne out by the fact that every expert demands to be paid for the service he renders as an expert. No one is willing to assume the role of the expert, not unless his service as an expert is compensated for by some financial gain.

How then are we going to account for the fact that (1) is in fact the case? The reasonable explanation, Socrates contends, is that every expert realizes that 'anyone who is going to practice his type of craft will never do or enjoin what is best for himself – at least not when he is acting as his craft prescribes – but what is best for his subject'.[29] In other words, every expert recognizes that

(E) no expert qua expert seeks his own benefit; every expert qua expert seeks the benefit of the object over which he rules.[30]

27 As we can see, this is exactly the same reason why Reeve and White are mistaken in their criticism that Socrates' inference from (S) to (E) and (R) is fallacious. This is also the reason why it is a mistake to suppose that (E) and (R) imply the possibility of altruism. Once again, all this seem to confirm my hypothesis (H) concerning the significance of (E) and (R).

28 This will include all the crafts that Socrates and Thrasymachus have discussed so far: doctoring, navigation, shepherding, horse breeding, moneymaking, accounting etc. These crafts are all a form of rule in that each aims at realizing its goal through its rule of the objects over which it rules.

29 346E5–347A.

30 After all, who will know more about the goal of an expertise than the experts themselves?

And since 'anyone with any sense would prefer to be benefited by another than to go to the trouble of benefiting him',[31] an expert will agree to assume the role of the expert only if he is compensated financially for his expert service. In short, it is precisely because of (E) that (1) is what we actually observe in reality.[32]

Now, since political ruling is obviously a type of rule, the above account of ruling crafts should hold of political ruling as well. It is because

> (R) no ruler qua ruler seeks his own benefit; every ruler qua ruler seeks the benefit of the subject over which he rules (347D2–5),

that

> (2) no ruler rules willingly (345E1).

An expert in ruling will not agree to take on the role of the expert unless he is compensated in some way for his service. Socrates insists that even ruling experts who are virtuous persons will behave similarly. You can motivate a virtuous person to rule only via his egoistic desire for his own good. A virtuous person will only choose to assume the role of ruler in order to avoid the greatest penalty, which is to be ruled by an inferior person, who will rule badly and ruin things for everyone.[33] Not to be ruined by someone inferior is the only possible benefit a virtuous person will receive from his ruling qua ruler, without which he will not rule.

> In a city of good men, if it came into being, the citizens would fight in order not to rule, just as they now do in order to rule. (347D1–2)[34]

This is also why 'wanting to rule when one does not have to is thought to be shameful'.[35]

31 347D5–7.

32 On the assumption that humans can only be motivated to act via their egoistic desire for their own good, if experts qua experts seek their own benefit, you will expect that experts will willingly practice their craft even if no financial compensation is forthcoming. But this is not what we observe in reality.

33 347C2–5.

34 Presumably, the reason why people *now* fight to rule is because they hold the mistaken Thrasymachean belief that rulers qua rulers seek their own benefit. A virtuous person who recognizes the good, on the other hand, will not hold such an erroneous belief about the ruling craft.

35 347C1.

A person will willingly take up the role of ruler whenever he has some self-interested motive to do so. On the other hand, he will decline to rule if other, better alternatives for securing his own benefit are available.

Underlying Socrates' explanation is the assumption that humans – including the virtuous – are egoistic by nature and that they can only be motivated by egoistic motives to act. For unless psychological egoism is true, neither (E) nor (R) can account for the fact that no expert acts willingly as an expert.

Moreover, even if we suppose that Socrates must concede that the motive of a virtuous person is identical with the aims of the science of good and bad (i.e., virtue),[36] we still can't deny that his account of the truth of (1) makes it abundantly clear that even the virtuous acts egoistically. That is to say, even if we grant that virtue (i.e., the science of good and bad) is an exception to my sharp distinction between the motive of an expert and the aim of an expertise, it is still the case that there is no evidence in Socrates' refutation of Thrasymachus to suggest that he will regard the virtuous as an exception to psychological egoism on the basis of either (E) or (R).

Socrates juxtaposing (E) and (R) on the one hand and (1) and (2) on the other in order to highlight the distinction between an expert qua expert and a person who happens to assume the role of the expert: while an expert qua expert does not seek his own benefit,[37] someone who happens to assume the role of the expert does seek his own benefit in his practice. In emphasizing this contrast, I believe Socrates is trying to correct Thrasymachus' tendency to treat an expert qua expert as a genuine person.[38] It is because Thrasymachus stipulates at the outset that an expert qua expert is a person that he has a difficult time differentiating his talk about the aims of an expertise from his talk about the motive of a person who assumes the role of the expert.[39]

36 This is a reasonable supposition to make since Socrates will have to concede that a virtuous person aims at the very thing at which the science of good and bad aims, viz., human goods. But for this very reason, given his commitment to psychological egoism, Socrates will likely see the science of good and bad as an exception to (E). It is important to observe, though, that allowing such an exception to (E) will neither weaken Socrates' argument against Thrasymachus' account of the ruling craft, nor force him to reject psychological egoism.

37 In view of my preceding note, it is more than likely that Socrates intends the present remark to hold for all crafts except the science of good and bad. Socrates' primary concern here is not that there is no exception to (E), but that the opposite of (E) is the norm (as Thrasymachus seems to suggest).

38 While Reeve also notices this tendency with Thrasymachus, he does not seem to recognize it as a source of Thrasymachus' difficulty. See Reeve 1988: 277, n. 7.

39 My present reflection is inspired by some lessons I have learnt from Terry Penner's brilliant 1988 account of *Republic* I: 340c. However, whether Penner will agree with my present observation is a different matter.

In truth, an expert qua expert is nothing more than the role of the expert that a person can *choose* to take up or not to take up. To take up the role of the expert is to pursue the goal of the expertise in one's practice of the expertise. And one will need to have a motive to assume such a role. Given Socrates' psychological egoism, the motive in question can only be an egoistic one. Consequently, for Socrates, experts are all egoistic. They pursue the goal of their craft as a means to their own happiness.

CONCLUSION

By showing how Socrates defends (E) and (R), I hope I have made clear that neither (E) nor (R) poses any real threat to psychological egoism. To begin with, there is no evidence that Socrates' defence embraces the possibility of either an altruistic expert or an altruistic ruler. Second, there is evidence in Socrates' defence that he upholds psychological egoism – even for those who are virtuous. Third, there is evidence in Socrates' defence that he entertains the possibility of a Socratic ruler who pursues the goal of the coherent science of happiness as a means to his own happiness.

Hence if my interpretation of Socrates' refutation of Thrasymachus' account of justice is correct, it will be a mistake to conclude from Socrates' endorsement of (E) and (R) that Socrates is not a psychological egoist.[40]

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40 It is clear from Rudebusch's comments on my present chapter that he is far from convinced that I have interpreted correctly Socrates' position in *Republic* I. And nor, for that matter, am I convinced by his comments that (E) and (R) are clear evidence that Socrates is a neutralist. Our disagreement now turns on how one should interpret Socrates' remark that even good men are motivated by self-interest to rule. But since settling this issue will require a detailed analysis of what Socrates actually said at 345B5–347E, I will leave it for another occasion to show why I believe Rudebusch has misread this passage. In closing, I must thank Rudebusch once again for moving our discussion forward.

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4

NEUTRALISM IN BOOK I OF THE *REPUBLIC*

George Rudebusch

I EGOISM, ALTRUISM AND NEUTRALISM DEFINED

Some ethical theories are based upon a descriptive account of what is intrinsically desirable for human beings, taken to be an objective good. Call any such theory *perfectionism.*[1] Egoism and altruism are species of perfectionism, each making the good relative to the agent, either himself or his others. An example of an egoist perfectionist is the Callicles featured in Plato's *Gorgias.* For he defines the good in such terms: 'Here is what is fine and just by nature . . . that he who would live rightly should allow his appetites to get as big as possible and . . . satisfy each appetite in turn with what it desires' (491E–492A). Perhaps another example of an egoist perfectionist is Raskolnikov in Dostoyevski's *Crime and Punishment*. In contrast to Raskolnikov's egoism, Dostoyevski's character Sophie seems to exemplify altruism, willing to degrade herself for the sake of others. Both altruist and egoist make the good relative to the agent, either the agent's self or the agent's others. In contrast to agent-relative accounts, the utilitarian John Stuart Mill is an *agent-neutral* perfectionist: what matters is only the *amount* of good life, not *whose* good life it is. Such an account of

1 See, e.g., Hurka's 1993 account of perfectionism, according to which this generic ethical theory 'starts from an account of the good human life, or the intrinsically desirable life' (p. 3), 'has an objective theory of the good' (p. 5), and tries to provide a 'descriptive' account of human nature (p. 18) by means of 'a teleological science' (p. 35) that in some versions discovers human nature 'via scientific explanations' (p. 34). While some 'perfectionists allow their views about human nature to be shaped by moral considerations', Hurka finds such 'moralism' to be unsatisfactory (p. 19). Although Hurka recognizes some problems with the name 'perfectionism' (pp. 3–4), the name seems particularly apt for Socratic ethics. In the *Apology* Socrates describes his 'habitual manner of speaking' (λέγων οἷάπερ εἴωθα, 29D6–7) as 'prescribing' (παρακελευόμενος, 29D5) to others that they ought to worry 'how to make the soul perfect' (τῆς ψυχῆς ὅπως ὡς βελτίστη ἔσται, 29E1–2). For further discussion of Socratic perfectionism see Rudebusch 2004.

the good differs from egoism and altruism in not making the good relative to the agent.[2]

II NON-PHILOSOPHERS, PHILOSOPHERS AND THE WISE DEFINED

In the *Apology* Socrates distinguishes three levels of attainment of wisdom 'of the excellence proper to a human being and citizen' (τῆς τοιαύτης ἀρετῆς, τῆς ἀνθρωπίνης τε καὶ πολιτικῆς, 20B4–5). The highest level is 'real wisdom' (τῷ ὄντι . . . σοφὸς, 23A5–6), which is the property of God. The middle level is being 'wisest among men' (ὑμῶν, ὦ ἄνθρωποι, σοφώτατος, 23B2), which is the property of anyone who, like Socrates, 'knows that he does not possess real wisdom of any value' (ἔγνωκεν ὅτι οὐδενὸς ἄξιός ἐστι τῇ ἀληθείᾳ πρὸς σοφίαν, 23B3–4). The lowest level is 'not being wise, but seeming wise, especially to oneself' (δοκεῖν μὲν εἶναι σοφὸς . . . μάλιστα ἑαυτῷ, εἶναι δ' οὔ, 21C6–7). In what follows I shall call those at these three levels the wise person, the philosopher and the non-philosopher.[3]

2 For further discussion of agent-neutralism, see Hurka 1993: 62–8. In discussion, I understood Terry Penner to raise the objection that I fail to distinguish *selfish* from *self-regarding* egoism. Unlike Callicles' selfish egoism, which values others only as tools to be used for sake of the agent's own good life, self-regarding egoism identifies the good of others with part or all of the agent's own good. My reply to this objection is that once the agent identifies his own good with the good of others, his position is no more egoist than altruist. It follows that neither egoism nor altruism is definitive of such an agent. In view of the theoretical incoherence of self-regarding egoism, the only intelligible egoism must be selfish, that is, Thrasymachean, egoism. See Rudebusch 2004 for further discussion of the incoherence of self-regarding egoism (there called 'eudaimonism') and for interpretive and philosophical objections to selfish egoism (there called simply 'egoism').

3 Socrates presupposes these three levels in other dialogues. Meno's slave boy began at the lowest level, thinking he knew what he did not know, but after Socrates' questioning, he reaches the middle level and 'no longer thinks he knows what he does not know' (84B), and as a result the boy 'is in a better position concerning the thing he does not know' (84B), because while at the lowest level he would not have 'attempted to seek for or to learn what he did not know but thought he did' (84C). Now at the middle level, the boy desires wisdom and in that sense has become a philosopher.

The *Lysis* draws a three-level distinction between the Good, the Neither-good-nor-bad and the Bad. It is only at the middle level, the Neither-good-nor-bad, that there is desire for wisdom (218A). At the highest level, just as the good body possesses health, the good souls 'whether divine or human' (218A) possess wisdom and hence do not desire it. At the lowest level, the bad souls are so ignorant they do not even desire wisdom (218A). What distinguishes souls at the middle level is that, 'although possessing ignorance, which is bad, they are not yet so foolish and ignorant [as the lowest level], for [at the middle level] they understand that they do not know what they do not know' (218A–B). In the course of the *Lysis*, we see Socrates help the boys, Lysis and Menexenus, ascend from the lowest level to the middle level.

In the *Protagoras*, too, Socrates distinguishes three levels in his interpretation of Simonides' poem. He calls the highest level 'being (not becoming) good' (340C). As

The specific wisdom sought by philosophers such as Socrates is the knowledge how to make human beings excellent, analogous to the knowledge how to make horses or oxen excellent (*Apology* 20B). Of course, as Socrates points out in the *Apology* (23A6–7), no human being possesses this wisdom to any degree worth mentioning. In the first book of the *Republic* (348C–350D) Socrates shows that this knowledge of human excellence is precisely the *righteousness* (δικαιοσύνη) that earlier he and Polemarchus identified as the specific human excellence (335C4–5), to the scorn of amoral egoists such as Thrasymachus (336B–C).[4] In the same book Socrates also shows that this same righteousness is sufficient for the soul's happiness (352D–354A).[5] Socrates proves the universal benevolence of the righteous person (τοῦ δικαίου) at a passage just before the one we consider, (335B–D).[6] Because, as

footnote 3 (*continued*)
Socrates interprets the poem, 'a god alone can have this privilege' (341E) of being good; 'to be a good man is impossible [for mortals] and superhuman' (344C). The level of becoming (not being) good is the difficult one (340C, 344C), and he describes this condition as 'the middle' (346D). The lowest level is 'being bad' (344C).

4 I prefer the word 'righteousnous' to the alternatives – 'morality' and 'justice' – as a translation of δικαιοσύνη. The Greek noun refers to a virtue (hence a problem with the translation 'morality'). And (unlike 'justice') it connotes the general human virtue as well as the specific social virtue. Moreover, only 'righteousness' permits distinct cognates for two Greek cognates of δικαιοσύνη, δίκαιος ('righteous') and δίκη ('right').

5 For a defence both of the argument that righteousness is the knowledge of human excellence and of the argument that such knowledge is sufficient for happiness, see Rudebusch 1999: 97–113.

6 Someone might object that I am not justified in speaking of the universal benevolence of the righteous person on the basis of this passage. For I read the passage to speak of persons who are righteous. But, one might object, the passage in fact refers *only* to professional roles, *not* to persons; in other words, the passage refers only to experts qua expert, not to persons with human motives. I reply that there is no textual basis for reading such a distinction into this passage. Socrates argues by analogy, from 'musicians by means of their musical skill' (τῇ μουσικῇ οἱ μουσικοὶ, 335C9) and 'horsemen by means of their horsemanship' (τῇ ἱππικῇ οἱ ἱππικοὶ, 335C12), to 'righteous men by means of their righteousness' (τῇ δικαιοσύνῃ . . . οἱ δίκαιοι, 335C14) and 'good men by means of their excellence' (ἀρετῇ οἱ ἀγαθοὶ, 335D1). There is no hint that in this passage Socrates and Polemarchus are coming to agreement about curious abstractions such as *musicians who are not persons* rather than about persons who possess and use powers. On the contrary, the immediate context has them speaking of righteous men *as men*. For example, just prior to this passage, Socrates' references to 'each man' (ἑκάστῳ, 334C1), 'someone' (τις, 334C4) and 'human beings' (οἱ ἄνθρωποι, 334C6) making mistakes about their friends must be taken – if the argument is to succeed – to be references to actual as opposed to merely hypothetical men. And Socrates introduces his argument that righteous men are *universally* benevolent (as opposed to merely being benevolent to their loved ones!) by inferring (from Polemarchus' premise) that it is righteous '*for these men*' (τούτοις, 334C10) 'to harm good men' (ἀγαθοὺς βλάπτειν, 334D1) and hence to harm 'just men'

Socrates argues, wisdom is nothing but righteousness, which is the specific knowledge that is sufficient for human happiness, throughout this chapter I shall refer to the wise person's wisdom as prudential expertise. The issue I aim to resolve in this chapter concerns neither the power nor the benevolence of the wise person but rather the wise person's motive or object in acting.

III ALTERNATIVE INTERPRETATIONS OF THE WISE PERSON

All agree that the philosopher is needy and is conscious of the need, and that this consciousness motivates the philosopher's life of examination. I defend a more controversial thesis about the wise person: while the philosopher's soul needily longs for self-improvement, according to Socrates,

> (*Wisdom's neutralism*) The wise person is an agent-neutral perfectionist.

My thesis is opposed to both of the following theses:

> (*Wisdom's egoism*) The wise person is an egoist.

> (*Wisdom's altruism*) The wise person is an altruist.

I make my case based upon my interpretation of Socrates' two arguments about the aims of rulers in *Republic* I.[7]

(334D5–6). Polemarchus objects that this consequence is no good (334D7–8) and endorses instead the thesis that it is righteous to harm the unrighteous (τοὺς ἀδίκους . . . δίκαιον βλάπτειν, 334D9). It is Polemarchus' revised statement of this same thesis ('one ought to harm bad men who are enemies', τούς γε πονηρούς τε καὶ ἐχθροὺς δεῖ βλάπτειν, 335B4–5) that becomes the target of Socrates' refutation, in the course of which he proves that righteous men are universally benevolent. This proof would be pointless as a refutation of Polemarchus' claim if it was stated merely in reference to *the righteous qua righteous, who are not persons*, rather than to the subject of Polemarchus' claim, namely, persons.

Later in the dialogue Thrasymachus introduces a distinction between experts loosely and strictly speaking (see below, section IV). It would be anachronistic to read this later distinction back into the earlier passage. Certainly no one in the dialogue ever says or suggests that this distinction was in fact in operation anywhere prior to Thrasymachus' discussion. In any case, Thrasymachus is drawing a different distinction: neither Thrasymachus nor Socrates, who adopts the distinction, ever states or implies that experts strictly speaking are not *persons who are experts*, that is, persons with the power of knowledge. See section IX below for further discussion.

7 See Rudebusch 2004 for the same neutralist conclusion derived from the *Lysis*.

IV SOCRATES' RULER-*QUA*-RULER ARGUMENT

In *Republic* I, Thrasymachus defends the thesis that justice is the advantage of the stronger. Socratic cross-examination leads him to restrict his claim to the ruler *qua* ruler: 'The ruler, insofar as he is a ruler, never makes errors and unerringly decrees what is best *for himself*' (τὸ αὑτῷ βέλτιστον τίθεσθαι, 340D7–341A2). Socrates proceeds to refute this thesis about the ruler so defined. He argues as follows.[8]

Strictly speaking (τῷ ἀκριβεῖ λόγῳ, 341C4–5) and correctly speaking (ὀρθῶς, 341C9), the expert is so called because of his expertise (καλεῖται . . . κατὰ τὴν τέχνην, 341D2–3).[9] Moreover, expertise does not consider its own good but the good of its object (οὐδὲ . . . τέχνη οὐδεμία ἑαυτῇ [sc. τὸ συμφέρον σκοπεῖ] ἀλλ' ἐκείνῳ οὗ τέχνη ἐστίν, 342C4–6). It follows inescapably that the expert, speaking precisely and correctly, does not seek his own good but the good of the object of his expertise. There is, moreover, a connection between ruling and expertise: expertise rules over and is stronger than that at which it is the expertise (ἄρχουσί γε αἱ τέχναι καὶ κρατοῦσιν ἐκείνου οὗπέρ εἰσιν τέχναι, 342C8–9). It obviously follows that no one at all, in any ruling position, in so far as he is ruling, considers or commands his own advantage but rather that of the object ruled (οὐδεὶς ἐν οὐδεμιᾷ ἀρχῇ, καθ' ὅσον ἄρχων ἐστίν, τὸ αὑτῷ συμφέρον σκοπεῖ οὐδ' ἐπιτάττει, ἀλλὰ τὸ τῷ ἀρχομένῳ, 342E6–8).

One instance of Socrates' conclusion is the expert at human life, who like other experts considers not his own good or advantage but rather the advantage of those he rules. Socrates' ruler-*qua*-ruler argument refutes the thesis that the wise person is an egoist. However, the argument appears to show that the wise person is an altruist rather than a neutralist.

V IS THE RULER-*QUA*-RULER ALTRUIST OR AGENT-NEUTRAL?[10]

There are two possible explanations why the wise person cares exclusively for others. The first is altruism: the wise person values only the good of others, not of himself. The second is that the wise person, as a matter of fact, has no needs to meet.

8 See Tony Chu's chapter in this volume for further discussion of the ruler-*qua*-ruler argument.

9 I generalize here on Socrates' examples of ship's captain and medical doctor. Socrates mentions no general term for expert in this argument.

10 I am grateful for discussion with Antony Hatzistavrou, who helped me see the issue between altruism and neutralism more clearly.

As Socrates points out, 'expertise has neither defect nor fault' (οὔτε γὰρ πονηρία οὔτε ἁμαρτία οὐδεμία οὐδεμιᾷ τέχνῃ πάρεστιν) and, 'being right, is unmixed and without harm, so long as it is that precise whole that it is' (αὐτὴ δὲ ἀβλαβὴς καὶ ἀκέραιός ἐστιν ὀρθὴ οὖσα, ἕωσπερ ἂν ᾖ ἑκάστη ἀκριβὴς ὅλη ἥπερ ἐστίν, 342B1–8). Moreover, as Socrates will painstakingly elicit from Thrasymachus (349A–354A), the human being who possesses prudential expertise, that is, virtue or righteousness, needs nothing further to be happy.[11]

While there is nothing said in the text at this point to determine whether altruism or neutralism is the wise person's motive, further reflection on the nature of expertise rules out altruism. Consider, for example, how medical expertise directs the medic who comes upon a patient with multiple injuries. Medical expertise might direct the medic to restore breathing before treating for shock, but to stop arterial bleeding before restoring breathing. In the same way medical expertise directs the principles of triage when the medic is present at a site with multiple patients. The medic's priorities are agent neutral: the medic treats his own injuries not last (as an altruist) or first (as an egoist) but in order to maximize recovery without regard to whose recoveries they are. A seeming exception proves this point. The familiar rule for managing a loss of air pressure in an airplane is to put an oxygen mask on *oneself* before putting masks on those needing assistance. The aim of this self-first rule is to maximize health in general, not to maximize one's own health. One risks failure to save anybody's health if one ignores the health of the body of the expert. Since prudence is a species of expertise, it too is agent-neutral. It follows that the explanation why the prudential experts never tend themselves is not because they are altruists but because they have no needs, being 'unmixed and without harm'.

VI THE RULER *QUA* RULER IS DISTINCT FROM RULERS IN OUR CITIES

On the basis, then, of Socrates' ruler-*qua*-ruler argument and of my argument in section V about the way expertise determines its objects of care, agent neutralism appears to be the correct account of the wise person's motive. But Socrates elicits another argument following the ruler-*qua*-ruler argument, an argument that presupposes that rulers act to meet their own needs. Unless we are to accuse the text of contradiction, we need to find a way to reconcile these two arguments.[12] We can

11 See n. 5.

12 In Rudebusch 2004 I accepted the contradiction. I thank Tony Chu for making me reflect further on the relation between the ruler-qua-ruler argument and the actual-ruler argument.

reconcile them by noticing that 'ruler' refers to someone different in the two arguments. In the first argument it refers to rulers in the strict sense of the word; in the second it refers to rulers 'actually ruling in our cities'.[13] I show this distinction by considering Thrasymachus' response to the ruler-*qua*-ruler argument and Socrates' reply to Thrasymachus' response.

Thrasymachus responds to the ruler-*qua*-ruler argument by telling Socrates that he is ignoring the plain facts about the real world.

> (T) Shepherds and cowherds consider the good of the sheep and the cattle and fatten and tend them for the sake of . . . the good of their masters and themselves; and just so *the rulers in our cities – those who are actually ruling –* . . . consider their subjects as sources of their own profit.[14] (τοὺς ποιμένας ἢ

13 Virtually the same terms – 'actual ruler' and 'qua ruler' – are used in both arguments: τὸν τῷ ὄντι (ἄρχοντα) ὄντα in the first argument at 341C6–7 and τῷ ὄντι in the second at 343C4. Again, we find ὡς ἀληθῶς (ἄρχουσιν) in the second argument at 343B5, 343C6, and 345E2, and in reference to the first argument at 345C1 and C2. Also we find καθ' ὅσον (ἄρχων ἐστίν) in the first argument at 340D7, 340E8–341A1, 342D4, 342E7, and in the second at 345C4 and 345D6. (I thank Rachel Barney for discussion of the verbal similarities.)

Despite the verbal similarity, the text makes clear *both* that Thrasymachus changes the reference of 'ruler' in replying to Socrates' ruler-*qua*-ruler argument (see text T below) *and* that Socrates remarks the change, as I show in the last paragraph of section VI. Any inference from verbal similarity to same reference of 'ruler' in the two arguments must explain the change of reference Socrates explicitly points out. See also my argument in section IX below that Chu's premise C2 is false: the fact that Socrates speaks of the 'best' men ruling in actual cities should not lead us to infer that Socrates thinks that there are in existence men who are a level above the *philosopher* – namely, *wise* men (see n. 3 above for this distinction) – who actually rule in some cities.

14 Thrasymachus' reference to profit here is an instance of a general moneymaking theme throughout the first book of the *Republic.* The theme is introduced at the moment Socrates first steered the conversation from the conventional to the philosophical. Socrates had asked Cephalus if old age is 'hard to bear' (329E). Cephalus replied that if one has proper character, it is 'not inordinately hard' (329D). Socrates, reporting the conversation, said that he 'wondered at Cephalus saying so and wanted to hear more' (329D). Thus he asked Cephalus if it is 'character or rather wealth that is the cause of easily bearing old age' (329E). Cephalus replied that character alone is insufficient for a happy old age: 'a capable man in poverty will not bear it with the complete ease' of a wealthy, capable man (330A). Cephalus' thesis, that character excellence alone is not sufficient for complete happiness, will be refuted by the end of the first book (353E), though Cephalus is not willing to stay and hear the refutation. (Cephalus leaves the conversation at 331D. See Rudebusch 1999: 97–113 for a defence of Socrates' refutation. Had Cephalus maintained that character required anything else to have complete happiness – happy children, for example – Socrates' argument that excellence or righteousness alone suffices would have as well refuted any such alternate insufficiency thesis.) In this way the issue of money and its connection to happiness provides a philosophical frame to all the argumentation in Book I.

τοὺς βουκόλους τὸ τῶν προβάτων ἢ τὸ τῶν βοῶν ἀγαθὸν σκοπεῖν καὶ παχύνειν αὐτοὺς καὶ θεραπεύειν πρὸς . . . τὸ τῶν δεσποτῶν ἀγαθὸν καὶ τὸ αὑτῶν, καὶ δὴ καὶ *τοὺς ἐν ταῖς πόλεσιν ἄρχοντας, οἳ ὡς ἀληθῶς ἄρχουσιν*, . . . σκοπεῖν αὐτοὺς . . . ὅθεν αὐτοὶ ὠφελήσονται, 343B1–C1)

Since T is true, Thrasymachus reasons, Socrates' anti-egoist conclusion (342E6–8, quoted above) must be false.

In reply, Socrates marks Thrasymachus' distinction between *ruler qua ruler* and *rulers in our cities.* He says, 'Change your ground openly, not in secret!' (ἐὰν μετατιθῇ, φανερῶς μετατίθεσο καὶ ἡμᾶς μὴ ἐξαπάτα, 345B8–9). And Socrates identifies the change: 'First you defined real doctors [in a precise sense]; later you did not maintain the precision about real shepherds' (τὸν ὡς ἀληθῶς ἰατρὸν τὸ πρῶτον ὁριζόμενος τὸν ὡς ἀληθῶς ποιμένα οὐκέτι ᾤου δεῖν ὕστερον ἀκριβῶς φυλάξαι, 345C1–3).

VII SOCRATES' RULERS-IN-OUR-CITIES ARGUMENT

Although Thrasymachus does not analyze his premise T, it entails the following statements. (a) There are a number of different actual rulers: private, such as shepherds and cowherds; and political, such as

Cephalus specifies the value of money 'to a decent and capable man' (331B): wealth lets one be honest and pay one's debts and therefore allows one to go to the next world in righteousness (330E–331B). Socrates immediately refutes the implied definition of righteousness (332A). Polemarchus' definition of righteousness as rendering to each what is due (332B) becomes, as a result of Socrates' cross-examination, the claim that the righteous man is an expert thief of 'silver' (334A). When Polemarchus maintains the statement that it is righteous to help friends and harm enemies (334B), Socrates refutes that statement and says that no wise man would assert that the function of righteousness is *ever* to harm – on the contrary, that is the statement 'of a plutocrat' (336A). When Thrasymachus breaks into the conversation, Socrates' first reply to him includes the claim that righteousness is more precious than 'gold' (336E). When Socrates says that the appropriate penalty for being ignorant of the real nature of righteousness is to learn from the wise, Thrasymachus says the penalty is in addition to pay 'silver' to converse with him, and Glaucon and others are willing to pay this wage on poor Socrates' behalf (337D).

In his rejection of the ruler-*qua*-ruler argument, Thrasymachus stresses the financial advantages of unrighteousness. The unrighteous man makes more money in 'business deals', pays less in 'property taxes', avoids 'monetary damages' and 'makes money' in public office (343). In reply, Socrates predicts that for Thrasymachus to be examined on his praise of unrighteousness will be a good 'investment' for him (344A). The key premise in Socrates' refutation of Thrasymachus' final account of rulers is that they are 'wage-earners' (345E). And in response to Thrasymachus' claim that 'unrighteousness profits oneself' (344), Socrates elicits from him, at the end of Book I, that in fact righteousness is more 'profitable' than unrighteouness (354A).

those in our cities.[15] (b) Each such ruler knows a paronymous expertise: shepherds know the shepherding expertise; cowherds the cattle-raising expertise, political rulers in our cities the expertise at political rule. (c) Each such ruler performs the paronymous expertise. (d) Each such ruler's paronymous expertise produces something good for the paronymous object of that expertise: shepherds produce the good of the sheep; cowherds the good of cattle; political rulers in our cities the good of their citizens, the *politai*. (e) Each such ruler activates the paronymous expertise for the sake of the ruler's own good: shepherds herd sheep and cowherds cattle in order to earn a living themselves; political rulers in our cities rule their subjects in order to make a profit.

By adding to T a plausible premise about the identity conditions of expertise, it will be easy for Socrates to show that the benefit *from the ruling* goes not to the rulers in our cities but to their subjects and as a corollary that no rulers in our cities willingly rule. The identity condition is as follows. One expertise differs from another by having a different power (τῷ ἑτέραν τὴν δύναμιν ἔχειν, 346A2–3) and providing a different benefit (ὠφελίαν ἑκάστη τούτων ἰδίαν τινὰ ἡμῖν παρέχεται, 346A6–7). Socrates illustrates this identity condition with the examples of medical expertise, which provides health, and the expertise of the ship's captain, which provides safety in sailing (346A). Then he states another, equally obvious, illustration: the distinctive benefit produced by the power of moneymaking is money (μισθωτικὴ μισθόν; αὕτη γὰρ αὐτῆς ἡ δύναμις, 346B1).

Socrates points out that the distinctions about each expertise's proper power and benefit apply to actual experts as Thrasymachus now speaks of them, that is, to experts who have needs for health, money or other external goods. For instance, we must agree that, even if sailing produced health in one performing the expertise of ship's captain, the captaining expertise is nonetheless distinct from medical expertise (346B3–7). Likewise, even if an actual medical expert makes money from healing, we would continue to distinguish moneymaking and medical expertise (346B8–9). Such cases do not cast doubt upon the identity condition.

As Socrates proceeds to argue, it obviously follows from the identity condition that:

(S1) In cases where experts all derive some common benefit, they are benefiting from using, in addition to their differing paronymous expertises, some further shared expertise, the

15 At 342C8–9 (quoted above) Thrasymachus agreed that shepherds, cowherds, etc. are by dint of their expertise also rulers, an agreement we can reasonably extend from experts qua experts to actual experts in our cities. I thank Lesley Brown for discussion of this point.

same for each of them. (ἥντινα ἄρα ὠφελίαν κοινῇ ὠφελοῦνται πάντες οἱ δημιουργοί, δῆλον ὅτι κοινῇ τινι τῷ αὐτῷ προσχρώμενοι ἀπ' ἐκείνου ὠφελοῦνται, 346C5–7)

As quoted above at T, Thrasymachus, holds that the antecedent of S1 is one of the plain facts about the real world. It is his view that in real life each ruler activates the paronymous expertise for the sake of the ruler's own good: shepherds herd sheep and cowherds cattle in order to earn a living themselves; political rulers in our cities rule their subjects in order to make a profit. In the case of such profiteers, therefore, it undeniably follows – however grudgingly Thrasymachus concedes it (συνέφη μόγις, 346C12) – that:

(S2) Experts who make money from their various kinds of expertise gain this benefit by using, in addition to their paronymous expertises, the moneymaking expertise. (τὸ μισθὸν ἀρνυμένους ὠφελεῖσθαι τοὺς δημιουργοὺς ἀπὸ τοῦ προσχρῆσθαι τῇ μισθωτικῇ τέχνῃ γίγνεσθαι αὐτοῖς, 346C9–11)

For example, in the case of the real-life experts postulated by Thrasymachus at T and who are still the subject at S2, 'while their medical expertise produces health, their wage-earning expertise produces a wage; and while their house-building expertise produces a house, their wage-earning expertise accompanying it produces a wage' (ἡ μὲν ἰατρικὴ ὑγίειαν ποιεῖ, ἡ δὲ μισθαρνητικὴ μισθόν, καὶ ἡ μὲν οἰκοδομικὴ οἰκίαν, ἡ δὲ μισθαρνητικὴ αὐτῇ ἑπομένη μισθόν, 346D2–5). On the basis of these examples, Socrates states a further premise (S3 below) about expertise. This further premise makes explicit what was shown above to be entailed by Thrasymachus' description T of the real world: each real-world ruler's paronymous expertise produces something good for the paronymous object of that expertise: shepherds use shepherding expertise to produce the good of the sheep; cowherds use cowherding expertise to produce the good of cattle; and political rulers use political expertise to produce the good of their citizens, the *politai*:

(S3) The benefit each expertise produces benefits the paronymous object of the expertise. (τὸ αὐτῆς ἑκάστη ἔργον ἐργάζεται καὶ ὠφελεῖ ἐκεῖνο ἐφ' ᾧ τέτακται, 346D5–6)

Two premises follow from S3, as Thrasymachus must agree:

(S4) Thrasymachus' postulated real-world expert gets no benefit from the paronymous expertise whenever no wage is attached to it. (ἐὰν δὲ μὴ μισθὸς αὐτῇ προσγίγνηται, ἔσθ' ὅτι ὠφελεῖται ὁ δημιουργὸς ἀπὸ τῆς τέχνης; —οὐ φαίνεται, 346D6–9)

(S5) Whenever such an expert works as a free gift, he still produces a benefit. (ἆρ' οὖν οὐδ' ὠφελεῖ τότε, ὅταν προῖκα ἐργάζηται; —οἶμαι ἔγωγε, 346E1–2)

Thus Socrates' neutralist claim, which he first proved true in the case of rulers *qua* rulers, now is a demonstrated truth as well of Thrasymachus' postulated rulers in our cities, the consequence of S4 and S5:

(S6) The benefit *from the paronymous ruling* goes not to such rulers but to their subjects. (οὐχὶ αὐτοῖσιν ὠφελίαν ἐσομένην ἐκ τοῦ ἄρχειν ἀλλὰ τοῖς ἀρχομένοις, 345E7–346A1, restated about rule and expertise rather than rulers and experts at 346E3–7)

Moreover, as a corollary, what Socrates first stated upon hearing T follows from T and S6:

(S7) No one of the rulers Thrasymachus refers to in T *willingly agrees to rule*. (διὰ δὴ ταῦτα ἔγωγε, ὦ φίλε Θρασύμαχε, καὶ ἄρτι ἔλεγον μηδένα ἐθέλειν ἑκόντα ἄρχειν, 346E7–9, a restatement of 345E6)

Since the rulers described in premise T engage in rule and practice whatever form of expertise that rule is – private rule as shepherds or cowherds or public rule in cities – for the sake of a distinct benefit, they do not perform their distinctive expertise without some wage; they would not do it as a free gift, or for its own sake. If, as I recommend, in premise S7 we interpret the words 'do not willingly agree to rule' to mean 'do not rule for its own sake but only in subordination to some other goal', then premise S7 obviously follows from premises T and S6.

VIII CHU'S ARGUMENT FOR *WISDOM'S EGOISM*

In his chapter in this book, Tony Chu interprets Socrates' rulers-in-our-cities argument to show that Socrates believes that the wise are egoists.

As I understand it, Chu's argument assumes that:

(C1) The motivation of a person is incompatible with the motivation of a ruler *qua* ruler.

Moreover, obviously, the wise person who rules is a person. Thus the wise person who rules is not a ruler *qua* ruler. Now the text, as we have seen, refers to some rulers in our cities as 'the best' (τῶν βελτίστων, 347A10). As Chu interprets this passage:

(C2) Some actual rulers in our cities are the 'best' people, that is, they are the wise.

Hence Chu could plausibly justify the assumption that the wise person who rules, rules as rulers in our cities do. Moreover, according to Thrasymachus' litany T about the plain facts of the real world, rulers in our cities rule in order to fill their own needs. Hence Chu can plausibly infer that rulers in our cities are egoists.[16] It follows that the wise are egoists. Thus Chu establishes the thesis of wisdom's egoism.

IX TWO PROBLEMS WITH CHU'S ARGUMENT

As it seems to me, Chu's argument contains two false premises, C1 and C2. Consider his premise C2, that some rulers in our cities are the wise. Premise C2 would be an astonishing change from Socrates' position in the *Apology* (23a), that no human being but God alone has such wisdom. Fortunately, we need not attribute such a change to Socrates.

C2 is false. Socrates' reference to 'the best such, the ones most suited' (τῶν βελτίστων . . . οἱ ἐπιεικέστατοι, 347A10–B1) is a reference to the best *of actual rulers in our cities*, not to the best rulers *qua* rulers or to the best rulers in some other sense of rulers. Ever since Thrasymachus changed the subject from rulers *qua* rulers to actual rulers in our cities at T (343B–C), a change marked by Socrates (345A; see section VI above), the discussion has concerned such rulers, as the following remarks show.

Premises S1 and S2 must refer to such rulers, and their terms – 'all the experts' (πάντες οἱ δημιουργοί, 346C5–6) and 'the experts' (τοὺς δημιουργοὺς, 346C9–10) – should be understood as brachylogies

16 In discussion, I understood Christopher Gill to question the accuracy of the term 'egoism' in the interpretation of ancient Greek ethics. One text that supports an egoist interpretation is Thrasymachus' speech T. I assume that, when Thrasymachus there describes servant shepherds and cowherds acting for their master's good, Thrasymachus means they act for the master's good *for the sake of their own good.*

with an appositional phrase to be supplied of the same sort as in T: 'those actually working in our cities' (τοὺς ἐν ταῖς πόλεσιν δημιουργοῦντας, οἳ ὡς ἀληθῶς δημιουργοῦσιν). In order to support the argument, the examples of wage-earning doctors and builders (346d3–5), used to support the generalization S3, must be examples of the actual experts Thrasymachus refers to at T.

The consequences inferred from premise S3, consequences about hypothetical experts mentioned in premises S4 and S5 who are receiving no wage or who work as a free gift, must again, for the sake of the argument, refer to the actual experts of premise T *under the payless conditions there hypothesized*. In Socrates' conclusion S6, the grammatical antecedent of 'them' (αὐτοῖσιν, 345e7) is 'those actually ruling in our cities' (τοὺς ἄρχοντας ἐν ταῖς πόλεσιν, τοὺς ὡς ἀληθῶς ἄρχοντας, 345e2–3), not all such rulers but those performing 'the other offices of rule' (τὰς ἄλλας ἀρχὰς, 345e5), that is, the private rulers. In Socrates' corollary S7 that no one willingly rules, stated at the beginning and restated at the end of the argument, the grammatical antecedent of 'no one' (οὐδεὶς, 345e6) is 'those actually ruling in our cities' (τοὺς ἄρχοντας ἐν ταῖς πόλεσιν, τοὺς ὡς ἀληθῶς ἄρχοντας, 345e2–3).

Consider now Socrates' speech in which he states corollary S7:

> Because of this [argument], Thrasymachus, I said just now [at the start of the argument] that *no one willingly agrees to rule* (= S7) and take in hand and straighten out the problems of others, and this is why all ask payment, because the man who intends to perform his expertise well never creates the very good [object of his expertise] for himself, nor commands it [for himself] when he commands according to his expertise, but [creates and commands it] for the one he rules. For this reason, as it seems, we must provide a payment to those intending to accept office, either money, prestige, or a penalty if he does not rule.
>
> διὰ δὴ ταῦτα ἔγωγε, ὦ φίλε Θρασύμαχε, καὶ ἄρτι ἔλεγον μηδένα ἐθέλειν ἑκόντα ἄρχειν καὶ τὰ ἀλλότρια κακὰ μεταχειρίζεσθαι ἀνορθοῦντα, ἀλλὰ [sc. πάντα] μισθὸν αἰτεῖν, ὅτι ὁ μέλλων καλῶς τῇ τέχνῃ πράξειν οὐδέποτε αὑτῷ τὸ βέλτιστον πράττει οὐδ' ἐπιτάττει κατὰ τὴν τέχνην ἐπιτάττων, ἀλλὰ τῷ ἀρχομένῳ· ὧν δὴ ἕνεκα, ὡς ἔοικε, μισθὸν δεῖν ὑπάρχειν τοῖς μέλλουσιν ἐθελήσειν ἄρχειν, ἢ ἀργύριον ἢ τιμήν, ἢ ζημίαν ἐὰν μὴ ἄρχῃ. (346e7–347a6)

Since, as shown above, the whole argument preceding this speech, and in particular the corollary S7 restated at the beginning of this speech,

refer to actual rulers in our cities, it is evident that all the underlined terms in this speech also refer to actual rulers in our cities, in particular the last underlined phrase, whose vocabulary echoes S7.

It is about these very rulers, and the third type of 'payment' for them – the penalty – that Polemarchus then asks (347A7–9). Socrates answers that, while Polemarchus is aware that money and honour are payments accepted by inferior types – the type that covets glory or money (τὸ φιλότιμόν τε καὶ φιλάργυρον, 347B2) – Polemarchus is 'ignorant of the payment for the best [such rulers], for the sake of which they, the most capable, rule, whenever they consent to rule' (τὸν τῶν βελτίστων ἄρα μισθόν, ἔφην, οὐ συνιεῖς, δι' ὃν ἄρχουσιν οἱ ἐπιεικέστατοι, ὅταν ἐθέλωσιν ἄρχειν, 347A10–B1). Thus Socrates' reference to the 'best' and 'most capable' here is a reference to the best and most capable of the actual rulers in our cities, the same reference fixed by Thrasymachus at T.

We should likewise understand Socrates' continued references to these penalty-motivated rulers in the next two dozen lines as consistently referring to actual rulers in our cities. Socrates there says that it is from fear of being ruled by their inferiors – the ones coveting money and honour – that the capable men rule, whenever they do rule (ἣν δείσαντές μοι φαίνονται ἄρχειν, ὅταν ἄρχωσιν, οἱ ἐπιεικεῖς, 347C5–6).[17] Moreover, he says, such men 'do not go [to rule] as to something good or as something to enjoy in itself' (οὐχ ὡς ἐπ' ἀγαθόν τι ἰόντες οὐδ' ὡς εὐπαθήσοντες ἐν αὐτῷ, 347C6–7). Rather, such men go to rule 'as to a necessary [evil], having no one to turn to who is better or even as good at ruling as they are' (ὡς ἐπ' ἀναγκαῖον καὶ οὐκ ἔχοντες ἑαυτῶν βελτίοσιν ἐπιτρέψαι οὐδὲ ὁμοίοις, 347D1–2). Indeed, 'if a city of [such] good men came to be, the fight to avoid ruling would be like the [fight] to rule now [in cities of inferior men]' (πόλις ἀνδρῶν ἀγαθῶν εἰ γένοιτο, περιμάχητον ἂν εἶναι τὸ μὴ ἄρχειν ὥσπερ νυνὶ τὸ ἄρχειν, 347D2–4).[18] And 'in that case it would be evident that an actual ruler in reality does not by nature consider his own advantage but that of the one being ruled' (ἐνταῦθ' ἂν καταφανὲς γενέσθαι ὅτι τῷ ὄντι ἀληθινὸς ἄρχων οὐ πέφυκε τὸ αὑτῷ συμφέρον σκοπεῖσθαι ἀλλὰ τὸ τῷ ἀρχομένῳ, 347D4–6). The common expression 'in reality' (τῷ ὄντι) echoes Thrasymachus' exhortation to look at the plain facts about the real world in his lengthy speech at 343B–E, where he uses the same expression at 343C4. The

17 The penalty motivating the best rulers is in no way an anticipation of the motivation of the ideal ruler described in the later books of the *Republic.* Those ideal rulers are motivated by considerations of justice that compel them, not the penalty of being ruled by inferiors (520E).

18 As in the previous note, this again is in no way an anticipation of the circumstances of the ideal city of later books of the *Republic*, in which no such fight is evident.

word 'actual' (or 'true', ἀληθινὸς) likewise echoes Thrasymachus' word 'actually' (or 'in truth', ἀληθῶς) used at T. This expression and this word here – however translated – give us no reason to interpret an unannounced change of subject from Thrasymacuhus' actual rulers in our cities back to the rulers *qua* rulers of Socrates' first argument against Thrasymachus' egoism.

It is in the very same context that Socrates says that 'the result is that everyone with understanding [in actual cities or the hypothetical city of good actual rulers] would choose to *get* help rather than *give* help' (ὥστε πᾶς ἂν ὁ γιγνώσκων τὸ ὠφελεῖσθαι μᾶλλον ἕλοιτο ὑπ' ἄλλου ἢ ἄλλον ὠφελῶν πράγματα ἔχειν, 347D6–8). The background assumption is that everyone *needs* help. This assumption is true of actual rulers in our cities – even the best and most capable of them – but not the ruler *qua* ruler of Socrates' first argument.

Neither the references to singular good men in actual cities nor those to a hypothetical city of such men, then, support premise C2, which assumes that Socrates is referring to ideal wise persons in this passage. Unless we take Socrates to have, unannounced, forsaken his divine mission as described in the *Apology* – the mission to convince humanity that no mortal can be wiser than the philosopher, who, unlike the wise person, is in need of wisdom and improvement – we should regard C2 as false.

Premise C1 is false. Premise C1 states that the motivation of a person is incompatible with the motivation of a ruler *qua* ruler or expert *qua* expert. According to Chu, the decision to be an expert *qua* expert is *optional* in a way that being a person is not: the expert *qua* expert is 'nothing more than the role of an expert that one can choose to take up or not to take up' (G1). And, according to Chu, self-interest *transcends* expertise in persons: 'No one is willing to assume the role of the expert, not unless his service as an expert is compensated for by some financial gain' (G2).

Chu's claim of *optionality* is false for the superordinate role of prudential expertise. The superordination of prudence to all other expertise is a familiar theme in Socratic dialogues.[19] Precisely because prudential expertise is superordinate, one cannot choose to discard it

19 If finding gold or making health is to have any value for human beings, their paronymous expertises must be subordinated to the expertise whose function is human benefit (*Euthydemus* 288D–289B, likewise *Charmides* 174C–D, *Lysis* 219A–E, *Gorgias* 467C–468C). In the later books of the *Republic*, the subordination in the soul of all other expertise to prudential expertise is a theme. And this superordinate expertise, providing benefit to human beings, answers Socrates' question to Polemarchus earlier in Book I: 'The expertise one might call righteousness provides *what* to *whom*?' (ἡ οὖν δὴ τίσιν τί ἀποδιδοῦσα τέχνη δικαιοσύνη ἂν καλοῖτο, 332D), a question Polemarchus proved unable to answer successfully (332D–334B).

as a role: any decision to discard it would itself be an exercise of prudence! Thus, unlike, for example, the optional decision to be an actual ruler in one of our cities, there is no option for us to discard the role of prudential expert, which is not at all to say that whoever plays this superordinate role plays it wisely. Now the expertise possessed by the wise person is precisely prudential expertise, which in Socratic ethics is identical with virtue and righteousness. The wise person, therefore, has no choice but to act as prudential expert: that role is not optional.

Chu's claim that self-interest *transcends* expertise is also false in the case of the superordinate expertise prudence. To see this, consider objections one might raise.[20] One might object that a distinction remains between the prudential expert *qua* expert and the self seeking *itself* to live well: there is nothing to stop such a self, one might think, from subordinating prudential expertise and using it to seek *only* the self's own good life. And, a Thrasymachus might add, self-regarding selves are the actual selves we find in our cities! To reply, consider the self either insofar as it possesses prudence or insofar as it lacks it. Insofar as this self *possesses* prudence (i.e., virtue or righteousness) this self lacks nothing for its happiness (as Thrasymachus soon will learn; cf. n.5), and lacking nothing therefore acts with seeming altruism but in fact with neutralism (as argued in section V above). On the other hand, insofar as the self *lacks* virtue it is either a philosopher, seeking prudence, or a self ignorant even of its ignorance. But Socrates is a neutralist only about the perfected wise person, not about those who lack prudential wisdom.

There is another objection: the wise person in any case acts and rules wisely in order to avoid the penalty of inferior rule (see section VII above). So the wise person after all is an egoist in motive. To reply, consider, as Socrates rightly points out in his corollary S7, that acting in order to avoid penalty is to act unwillingly and subordinately. But it is a theme of Socratic dialogue that happiness consists in freely doing whatsoever one wishes, and that insofar as we are prudentially wise we shall do as we wish: no one will voluntarily impede us, we shall be free, rule over others, and possess their lives.[21] Just as we can imagine a weaver who simply loves to weave – in contrast with a weaver who weaves for money or to avoid a penalty – so also we can imagine a wise person who simply loves to perform his distinctive human expertise.[22]

20 See Rudebusch 2004 for further discussion of objections and replies to the thesis that self-interest cannot transcend prudential expertise.

21 See, e.g., *Lysis* 210B–D, discussed in Rudebusch 2006. That the wise freely do whatever they want does not entail that they are egoists, except in the trivial sense in which every free agent, even the altruist, is an egoist.

22 See Rudebusch 1999: 68–72, 124–6, for further discussion of the pleasure expertise can be in its performance apart from its products.

Such a wise person is the true wise person, acting freely, not subordinately. Thus it is false to assume that the wise person who rules, rules as do the rulers in our cities described by Thrasymachus. For Socrates has shown (see S7 above) that Thrasymachus' postulated rulers act out of need, unwillingly, unfreely, and hence unlike the wise.

X CONCLUSION

As shown in sections IV and VII above, both the ruler-*qua*-ruler argument and the rulers-in-our-cities argument refute Thrasymachus' doctrine that the truly wise are egoists. I take those arguments to establish the thesis of wisdom's neutralism, not altruism (section V above). While Chu's argument (section VIII) would establish that after all the wise must be egoists, his argument depends upon two false premises, C1 and C2. The falsity of these premises is further support for the thesis of wisdom's neutralism. The wise ruler *qua* ruler, who rules freely and agent-neutrally, is a person. This wise person does not rule involuntarily and subordinated to his own needs, as do the rulers identified in T by Thrasymachus.

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5

THE GOOD, ADVANTAGE, HAPPINESS AND THE FORM OF THE GOOD: HOW CONTINUOUS WITH SOCRATIC ETHICS IS PLATONIC ETHICS?

Terry Penner

In my earlier investigations of the 'longer road' in Books IV and VI–VII of the *Republic* (pp. 19–44 above), I come to the conclusion that the good which the Form of the Good is the Form *of* is *benefit or advantage pure and simple*. It is not some moral good, or some 'intrinsic good' (whether utilitarian or quite impersonal), or some mystical good. This, in spite of the fact that moral, 'intrinsic', utilitarian, impersonal or mystical goods are nowadays almost universally supposed to exhaust the possibilities as to what the Form of the Good is all about. The Form of the Good is, quite simply, the Form of Advantage.

This identity, I also noted, suggests two important possibilities. First, suppose we could show that the greater *advantage* of the just human being is that human being's greater *happiness*. Then we might be able to show that the *announced* main question of the *Republic* – 'Is the just individual happier than the successfully unjust individual?' – actually *is* the main question of the *Republic*. To show this would be to reject two other entirely natural candidates for being the main question or questions – one concerning utopian political philosophy, and one concerning the metaphysics of the Forms. A second possibility is this: we might be able to bring the ethical theory of the *Republic* into rather closer relation to the ethics of the Socratic dialogues than would usually be allowed. On the other hand, neither of these possibilities would be realized if it proves that the surplus metaphysical value of the Form of Advantage (over benefit or advantage pure and simple) brings, all by itself, metaphysical, theological, moral or mystical overtones to benefit or advantage of a sort which, according to Aristotle, are not to be found in Socrates. I devote the entire second half of this chapter to dealing with this difficulty for my view.

I

I take up first, however, the question of the relations between happiness and advantage. It will be useful to broaden this question to the question of the relations between (1) advantage in general; (2) advantage for *humans* in general, namely, happiness (happiness is not what advantage is for *trees*, for example, or for eyes, shuttles or the science of medicine); and (3) advantage for an *individual* human being, namely, that individual's *own* happiness. For we need to ensure that investigating *advantage in general* will help us with understanding not only the kind *happiness in general*, but also the *individual* happiness of particular individuals. I begin from the fact, exploited also in my earlier chapter (pp. 33–4 above), that we can see from the simile of the Sun that Plato believes, first, that grasping what any Form whatever is requires our grasping of the Form of the Good, and, second, that in order for any Form whatever to *exist*, the Form of the Good will also have to exist. The reason why Plato believes these two things, I have suggested, is because (1) he supposes that the only Forms there are will provide us with precisely the kinds needed for the sciences; and because (2) he supposes that all sciences whatever are teleological: that is, all sciences whatever (2a) involve centrally structures of means and ends, and (2b) are regularly subordinate one to the other within a hierarchy reaching all the way up to the good for human beings. So as not to complicate the discussion for the moment, let us begin with such sciences or expertises as medicine, shoemaking, farming, navigation, carpentry, shuttle-making, weaving and military science. It must be sufficiently evident that all of these both (2a) involve means to ends, and (2b) are regularly subordinate one to the other (as flute-making is to flute-playing, and as shuttle-making is to weaving, which is subordinate to clothes-making, which is subordinate to the science of the human good, and so forth).

It is considerably less obvious how means and ends are involved in such mathematical sciences as arithmetic and geometry (and, we would add, in the physical sciences – though the physical sciences are certainly envisaged, at least in the *Phaedo*, as teleological). But how exactly are arithmetic and geometry supposed to be teleological? Socrates does tell us that arithmetic and the like are subordinate to dialectic, because arithmeticians hand over their results to dialecticians to use.[1] Perhaps we could say that each of the mathematical sciences has an end, and that it is in each case mathematical truth of the relevant kind, which will also be of a sort usable by generals and rulers, and then, ultimately, by dialecticians. What, then, are we to understand dialectic to be? At least

1 At *Euthydemus* 288D–289D, 290B–291D, esp. 290C; and compare *Cratylus* 387Aff., esp. 390C–E.

this: if dialectic is the art or science of pursuing the truth via the asking and answering of questions, then the Socratic dialogues will identify this science of dialectic with the science of wisdom which is human goodness – to which presumably all other sciences are subordinate, all telling us of potentially useful means to our ends as human beings, namely our advantage or benefit.[2] This would, I suppose, make the mathematical and physical sciences teleological in some minimal way.

But this way of thinking makes all sciences teleological in this same minimal way. For they are all attempts at revealing truths which have the potential to be sometimes advantageous to us humans. This would then apply also to the sciences of astronomy and harmonics in the *Republic*. The point here is not that the truth is relative to human desires for the good. For one thing, the good or end which humans desire is itself not relative to human desires, but is a matter of what is in fact best for humans – at any rate, if, as I believe, what we want is what is really best and not merely what we think is best. For another, the point of these truths is to secure for us means which actually lead to our actual ends. This can happen only if the truths about means to ends relate to how things really are, and are not simply what humans might *want* them to be or what they *think* they are.

But how does finding out about advantage in general help us with *human* advantage in general (happiness in general), and how does finding out about happiness in general help us out with the *individual* happiness of particular individuals? My claim about the simile of the Sun is really the claim that to know what human happiness is, one needs to know what advantage in general is. In order fully to understand human advantage, we need to see how it fits into a wider sweep involving advantage in general.

Here is a way of seeing what this wider grasp of advantage in general would clarify for us. Wherever there are means and ends (as there are in all the teleological sciences, even the minimally teleological ones), the *end* gives one a *good*, and the beings good *at* getting that end via supplying the means to it have a *goodness* which is goodness at securing the relevant *means*. Now consider the following suggestion about the human good and human goodness:

1 Happiness is *the good*, or end, of the human being, and a human being possesses *goodness* as a human being (is a good human being) by being good *at* finding the means to this end.

2 *Euthydemus* 288Dff. The thesis on which I am chancing my arm here is that all sciences, being devised by humans, are aimed at potential use by humans, and so have as their end human good, i.e., human advantage, whatever other kinds of advantage may be involved.

If Plato held that view, we might also have predicted that he would, by analogy, hold similar claims about a group of other quite disparate entities, such as the eye, a pruning-knife, a doctor and the science of medicine. (These claims about doctors and so forth are all in fact found both within the Socratic dialogues and within the *Republic*.) In each case there is a relevant good, and a kind of goodness for the kind of entity in question. Each of these kinds of being has a *function* which consists in the discovery and employing of means to the end or good of those beings – the advantage supplied by the eye, the pruning-knife, the doctor or the science of medicine.[3] Again, for each kind, we see not only the *end or good* of this kind, but also *a virtue* or *goodness* which is its supplying of means to that end.[4] We get, then, the following analogy: as

1a the *function* of the human being is supplying the means to the *happiness* which is the end – the good – of the human being; and the virtue (or goodness) of the human is being good at supplying the means to happiness; so

1b the function of the eye is to supply the means (seeing) to the end of the eye (conveying to its possessor useful information about the world external to the possessor), and the virtue (or goodness) of the eye is being good at supplying the means (seeing) to that end; so

1c the function of the pruning-knife is to supply the means (pruning) to making vines grow in the most useful way which is the end of the pruning-knife, and the virtue (or goodness) of the pruning-knife is its being good at supplying those means to that end; and so

1d the function of the doctor (or indeed of medical science – since to speak of 'the doctor' in general *is* to speak of medical science) is to provide the means to healing patients which is the end of the doctor (or of medical science), and the virtue (or goodness) of a doctor (or of medical science) is the doctor's being good at supplying the means to healing patients.

Instead of speaking in terms of this analogy, one might also speak (as I do in my earlier chapter) of a one-to-one logical function from

3 These are of course merely *standard* goods, that is, things which will mostly prove advantageous *if used wisely*. They are not good in themselves – that is, they are not *always* good. See Penner & Rowe 2005: 264–9, 276–9.

4 One consequence of this Socratic approach is this: that most things good of their kind such as arithmetic possess *goodness*, not the relevant *good*. They are therefore, as it were, *hypothetical* goods: Penner and Rowe 2005: 48, n.25.

teleological kinds (humans, eyes, doctors, sciences or expertises) to their respective goods or ends.[5] What this one-to-one logical function shows is that there is no problem whatever about speaking sometimes of *the Good* as what every human being ultimately desires, and sometimes of *Happiness* as what every human being ultimately desires. But there is no need to identify the two. The good in the case of the human being is one thing, in the case of an eye or a tree or a science it is something else. For all that the good, in the case of humans, *is* happiness, though in other cases it is not.

But there is still the problem of connecting happiness in general with what seems to be at the centre of Socrates' ethical concerns, namely, each individual's own happiness. Can one really connect the Form of the Good with individual happiness? Several important commentators have suggested otherwise. Consider the following possible objection:

> Socratic ethics, as you, Penner, have represented it elsewhere, has an egoistic character, while the talk of the Forms – even a Form of Advantage – surely puts any talk of advantage up on a general level that suggests that what is good is something general, and *not* something relative to a particular individual's own happiness. Is this not the point made so effectively by Morris 1933–4: 142, when he says 'The philosopher is moved by the knowledge of the Idea of the good, not by desire for his own good'?

For that matter, the objection continues, the interest in generality suggests that you need to attend also to the following remarks in White 1979: 35, 48:

> the idea of the Good is the idea of something that is good somehow independently of that reference to a benefited subject that is implicit in the notion of benefit as it is usually understood. . . . The Good is . . . good without qualification, whereas various benefits are only good *to* or *for* something else. . . . [Nevertheless,] the good of the city is more of an unqualified good than one's own good. . . . [As *Republic* 517–19 shows,] the claim of justice takes precedence over the philosopher-ruler's self-interest.

5 This argument could be extended, in the way Aristotle certainly would extend it, to cover also other biological species besides the human being, for example, the tree. The end of the tree is obviously not happiness, but rather something like having a nutrient-providing root system, full foliage, and adequate resources for distributing seed. And a good tree will be one which is good at supplying the means to this end.

So, the objection continues,

> even if you set aside White's rejection of the concept of advantage (as you do above at pp. 24, 31), the emphasis on benefit or advantage should surely be to people's advantage or benefit *generally*, shouldn't it, rather than to the just individual's *own* benefit? Also, isn't the good at which each person aims in the Socratic dialogues nothing other than happiness? But surely you are not going to say that the Form of the Good in the *Republic* just *is* happiness (or the Form of Happiness)?

There is some considerable prospect of confusion here (though I do not suggest that Morris or White is exploiting any such confusion). I must therefore first remove this confusion, and then proceed to look in more detail at the explicit claims of Morris and White. The possible confusion lies in the belief that because the Form of the Good is general – a sort of universal, as Aristotle would put it – and an individual's happiness is particular, we cannot draw the required connection between the Form of the Good and an individual's own happiness. But this supposed difficulty, lying in the, as it were, categorial disparity between universals and particulars (between *suches* and *thises* as Aristotle has it), is easily disposed of. Consider the claim, common to Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle, that

2 There is some one thing which we all desire, namely, happiness.

If happiness is something desired by everyone, will it not have to be a universal? What, then? Does everyone desire a universal instead of each desiring his or her own happiness? (I can hear my revered teacher Ryle asking the question.) To think so would be a mistake induced by a mistake about what Ryle called 'categories'. What it is for us all to desire the same thing, happiness, is for it to be the case that

3a I desire that [the universal] happiness be instantiated in my life,
3b you desire that [this same universal] happiness be instantiated in your life,
3c Archelaos desires that [this same universal] happiness be instantiated in Archelaos' life, and so forth.

But this says the same thing as the following:

4a I desire my own happiness,
4b you desire your own happiness,
4c Archelaos desires his own happiness, and so forth.

(At least it says the same thing for anyone who also believes there *is* a universal, *happiness*.) Just for good measure, compare

5 There is something we all want to do, namely, to run, or
6 there is something we each want, namely a television set.

Both 'to run' and 'a television set' are perfectly general. But of course these references to a general object of desire yields us only

5a I want that *I* run, you want that you run, Archelaos wants that he runs, and so forth,

and

6a I want that I have my own television set, you want your own, and Archelaos wants his own (a different television set, it may be, in each case).[6]

The preceding remarks show that there can be no difficulty whatever about a contrast between there being a certain universal good which every individual desires, and each particular individual desiring that individual's own good. I now suggest that we can use a parallel move on Morris's supposed difficulty about a contrast between an individual guardian being moved by knowledge of that general good which is the Form of the Good, and an individual's desiring his or her own individual good. My suggestion is that the remarks above about the universals *happiness*, *to run* and *a television set* apply also, *mutatis mutandis*, to the Form of the Good. Hence, what is affirmed by

7a this guardian is moved by the Idea of the Good (and all other guardians are moved by the same Idea)

is the same (at any rate for those who believe in Forms) as what is affirmed by

6 I have often spoken of the supposed fallacy of the quantifier shift at the beginning of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, as well as the parallel fallacy that would have to be wrongly charged to Eudoxus in X.2, where he says every kind of animal desires pleasure, so there is something, pleasure, which every animal aims at. The fact that each kind of animal aims at a different kind of pleasure – hay for donkeys, dialectic for humans, and so forth – does not in any way raise a difficulty for this argument. If there *is* a genus pleasure, with different species of pleasure for different species of animal, that does not stop its being the case that the same thing is desired by each kind of animal.

7b this guardian wants that his or her life partake in the Idea of the Good (and so each other guardian wants that his or her life partake in the Form of the Good, *a* wanting that *a*'s life so partake, *b* that *b*'s life so partake, and so forth).

What, then, of the following argument, derived from White? White argues that

8 each individual guardian, in being moved by the Form of the Good, is moved not by his *own* good, but by some general, non-relative good,[7] or at any rate by the good of the city?[8]

On that basis, White moves from the model consisting in the ideal city to the just individual who is being *modeled* in the *Republic*, and so infers that

9 what it is for a just individual to be moved by the Form of the Good cannot be that this individual seeks the individual's *own* good, but must be that this individual seeks either some general non-relative good (even should that go against the individual's own good), or, at any rate, the good of the city (even should that go against the individual's good).

This has, in part, already been responded to by the anti-categorial arguments of the preceding two paragraphs.

But there is another point that perhaps needs to be made here against *arguments from* what is true of such elements of the model as the individual guardians, *to* what is true of the individuals whose lives are being modeled by the ideal city. This is that those elements of the model consisting of individual guardians are *mere artifacts of the model*. That is, those individual guardians are no part of the model which should be expected to show up as corresponding to parts of the just individual being modeled. What models the Rational part of the individual just person can only be the guardian *class*. (No one thinks – or no one *should* think – that Plato thinks the Rational part of the soul has a

7 In addition to the passage quoted above, see also White 1979: 194: 'Therefore, the Form of the Good is not, in and of itself, good *for you* or good *for me,* and the ability to apprehend or understand what is good *for oneself*, but precisely the ability to understand the notion of what is good *without reference to* any particular person (or circumstance).' Of course, White's entire discussion, esp. 50–1, 54–5, 173, 189–96, presenting a position in many ways the polar opposite of the one I am presenting here, always repays careful study.

8 See White 1979: 47–8, but also 113–14 (which is about the goodness of the city, though making inferences about the good of the city).

plurality of individual Reasons which make it up.)[9] So, then, what *is* the lesson of the modeling relation? It is surely this: that since

> 10a the guardian class of the city does what it does – that is, brings the city to do what it does – for the sake of the good or happiness of the entire city,

we may infer from the model that

> 10b the individual's Rational part does what it does – that is, brings the individual to do what the individual does – for the sake of the individual's *own* good or happiness.

I conclude that we have no good reason so far to be tempted by the positions suggested by Morris, White – and indeed also Rudebusch (pp. 76–92 above) – or to doubt the divergence of Platonic ethics, like Socratic ethics, from the usual Kantian or utilitarian values some prefer to find in Plato. I am not here denying that there *are* differences between the view of the human being in the Socratic dialogues and the view of the human being in the *Republic*. For the *Republic* has, while the Socratic dialogues do not have, two irrational parts of the soul throwing off the action of the Rational part in pursuing the good of the individual. Nevertheless, there is still this important comparison between the Socratic psychology of action and the *Republic*'s *parts-of-the-soul* psychology of action: that the Rational part of the just individual, when unimpeded by the irrational parts, just as much acts to secure the good of the just individual as does the Socratic individual. (See above, p. 22, n.5.)

II

Still, some uneasiness may remain. 'Isn't it still profoundly unsatisfactory to hang on Socrates (and indeed on the Rational part of the soul in the *Republic*) such an unattractive view as selfish egoism? You're

9 Just to fix the point, consider the quality of the argument that because in the model, soldiers are all courageous, therefore in the reality which is being modeled, individual soldiers (who are not possessed of wisdom, but merely follow the instructions given to them by the wise, employing the true belief they have that it is good to do this) are courageous. This is of course a bad argument, since the model of the brave person is not individual soldiers of the ideal city, but rather the entire soldier *class*. This class is a part of a city which *is* wise. Hence, in the real world being modeled by the ideal city, no one can be courageous without being wise. Hence soldiers in reality are also not courageous unless they are wise.

suggesting that Socratic ethics urges people to promote their own good above all? Isn't that by itself a sufficient reason to shy away from the interpretation you are offering?' The question both misunderstands the egoism that is to be found in Socrates, and also grossly underestimates the role of *kinds* – Forms, attributes, properties, whatever – in Socratic ethics. First, then, about egoism. The threat here is from the following picture (especially evident in some forms of Protestant Christianity, as well as in Kant):

> Some people, at least some of the time, seek the good of others, even when it conflicts with their own good. They are surely the good people, and the people whose example we ought to follow. And surely the bad people are those who not only always put their own good above the interest of others, but are prepared to gain their own good by taking the good away from others. *Those* people – the egoists – are the people we ought *not* to follow.

But, as will be seen, I am not suggesting that Plato thinks, contrary to this, that we are *all* selfish, only that he thinks that we (or at any rate our Rational parts) are all, necessarily, self-interested. The issue is: where do we see our self-interest leading us – into selfishness, or into (wisely) seeing our own happiness in the recognition that it is bound up with the happiness of others? Let me emphasize the distinction just made between *selfish* action and *self-interested* action. For there is an element present in selfishness that need not be any part of self-interest. Selfishness involves *thinking that to take away the good of others is to contribute to one's own good – pleonexia*, literally, getting more (than others), that is, taking advantage of others. But now both Socrates and Plato think that *pleonexia* must face the following difficulty: what if it is false that taking away the good of others is a good means to gaining more good for oneself? What if gaining the good is not a zero-sum game? In fact, the lesson of both the Socratic dialogues and the *Republic* is surely that exploiting others, taking advantage of them or harming them, is not in one's interest. Socratic and Platonic wisdom surely bring with them the perception that the good of others is bound up with one's own.[10] For Socrates, or for the Rational part of the soul in the *Republic*, the claim that the end of an individual is that individual's own good is not the claim that the individual is fundamentally selfish.

Notice also that both of the two psychologies of action involved here, Socratic intellectualism and the parts-of-the-soul doctrine, are

10 See Penner & Rowe 2005: e.g., 281–91.

deterministic. In Socrates, all motivated actions are determined by that desire, common to all, for one's own good as one's ultimate end, together with the agent's beliefs at the time as to what is best for the individual.[11] So too in the *Republic*, all motivated actions due to the Rational part are determined by that desire for the individual's own good as the individual's ultimate end, together with the individual's beliefs at the time as to what is best for the individual. With the irrational parts, I take it that actions *they* bring about in opposition to desires of the Rational part are themselves determined by the activity of thirst, hunger, and the like. (I leave this point unargued for the moment.)[12] On these assumptions, the conclusion is inevitable: there *are* no people who act in the selfless way described first in the picture of good people vs. bad people in the preceding paragraph.[13] No, on the

11 Obviously, what we believe at a given time is also determined. Given my past beliefs and present perceptions and thoughts, I cannot just *decide* to believe otherwise than I do. Our beliefs, like our perceptions are, as it were, imposed on us. See, e.g., Penner 2005b: 178–9. This is so even though we are of course often moved to *look for* reasons for disbelieving something we wish we didn't believe. But that motive I do not deny. The point is that we cannot just ignore any such quest for reasons when we are in the situation of not wanting to believe something.

12 It is true that we may perhaps expect a difference between Socrates and the Plato of the *Republic* at the level of punishment. But that is only because, in Plato's theory, you punish people – as you habituate and condition them – for the sorts of people they are, in order to *change* them, that is, to change their irrational parts. There would be no pretense that they in any way *deserve* the punishment: they would be punished simply because they inconveniently disrupt the lives of rulers and the life of society as the rulers see it, by virtue of being the people they cannot help being. The point is to *change* them (or their characters), not to mete out something they deserve.

13 This is one of my reasons for dissenting from Rudebusch p. 77, n.2, above, when he claims that if some psychological egoist (like myself) views

A the situation in which I gain the maximum of the happiness available to me in my circumstances

as identical with

B the situation in which others, especially those closest to me, gain the maximum of happiness available to them

then

C that psychological egoist is indistinguishable from a psychological altruist (or a psychological neutralist).

This claim about indistinguishability seems to me a clear mistake. The point I have just been making is that both on Socratic views and on the views of the *Republic*, there *are* no ultimately altruistic desires, so that on that account alone, the view cannot be identical with psychological altruism. But the second reason for dissent from Rudebusch's view is even more obvious. This is that, on this Socratic-Platonic view, the ultimate end of *all* desire – both in those who take the view that their own happiness is best achieved by including the happiness of others (especially those one cares for), and also in those who do not take this view (and whose desires are therefore not only self-interested, but also *selfish* and uncaring about the happiness

Socratic view the goodness or badness of a person does not reside in a difference between the fundamental desires of the person, since, as *Meno* 78A6–7 says, there is no such difference between good and bad people. And, except where perturbations in one's actions are introduced by the irrational parts, the same is true of a Platonic individual. This confirms a point already made: that the Rational part of an individual does not have desires that could make the person selfless.

We can see from the preceding, I hope, that in the theory of the human good and human goodness, there is no place for values, norms or moral principles. All is factual, part of a teleological (means/end) science. (At any rate, that is so if it is an objective matter of fact whether happiness is the end of the human being, hitting the target the end of the archer, health in patients the end of the doctor, and so forth.)[14] I attribute to Socrates and Plato here the (at any rate implicit) belief that it is a matter of fact within the science of biology that happiness is the end for all individuals of the kind *human being* (people's own individual

(footnote 13 *continued*)
of others) – is the agent's own good. Unless this were true of *all* desires on my account, I do not see how it could be the case, in the Socratic dialogues, that Virtue is Knowledge and that no one errs willingly: see Penner 1973: esp. 136–43, as well as Penner & Rowe 2005: 222 n.41. For that no one errs willingly ensures that anyone who fails to act virtuously is *mistaken*. The point is precisely not that they have bad *motives* and (viciously) desire their own good ultimately, instead of (virtuously) desiring the good of others. *No one* has bad *motives*. And *everyone* has their own good as their ultimate end. There is no room for (psychological) altruism or neutralism within this theory. Notice that I make no use here of the instrumental/intrinsic distinction, since I do not grant there is any good for any being of any species which is not the good proper to individuals of that species, e.g., my own happiness in my case, your own happiness in your case, and so forth. (And similarly, *mutatis mutandis*, for trees. Thus I deny that in my account human goodness deals in instrumental good only: for the accusation is based on a false dichotomy.)

14 No one should suppose that there is in Socrates or Plato any tincture of that doctrine of 'ethical egoism' which is one of Sidgwick's three 'methods of ethics'. For that is the view that one *ought* to seek one's own, that there is a *categorical imperative* (a *moral obligation*) to seek one's own good. (Psychological egoism, by contrast, has nothing to do with any *ought*. It is the doctrine that as a matter of fact one *does* always have as the ultimate end of one's desires one's own good.) But suppose that determinism is *true* – that is, the teleological determinism I have just suggested we find in Socrates and Plato, according to which the individual in Socrates, and the Rational part in Plato, are determined in their choices as to what to do by the one fundamental desire for the real good (again: *psychological* egoism). Then there can be no such thing as an obligation to seek one's own good. No, the pure prudentialism of which I have been speaking is not Sidgwick's ethical egoism. It is rather closer to what Sidgwick calls the 'art of conduct' theory which he finds in the ancients, but which he denies is a method of ethics – with rather poorer justification than he has for *including* intuitionism as a method of ethics (1907: 4, 105–6). How could Sidgwick have made such a decision: to exclude 'arts of conduct' from the methods of ethics? I suspect it is because of the weird – and question-begging – view he has (37–8) of the hypothetical imperative discussed above at p. 7, n.6.

happiness in each case, as above).[15] There are also within these teleological sciences such other matters of scientific fact as general facts concerning what kinds of actions are *means* to what kinds of things: facts which can also serve as means to happiness. No values, no norms, no moral principles, and no intrinsic goods (those frequent stalking horses for moral goods). What we have here is a purely factual teleological science, that is, a purely prudential theory of the human good.

I have now done what I am able to here by way of rejecting the accusation that my account of the ethics of the Socratic dialogues – and now my treatment of the Rational part of the soul in the *Republic* – wrongly hangs a selfish egoism on the Socratic dialogues (and therefore also on the treatment of the Rational part of the soul in the *Republic*). For the argument works in the same way for the *Republic*, once we allow for perturbations from the irrational parts of the soul.

I want now to point out that this accusation concerning selfishness misreads what I am saying in another way: by grossly underestimating the role of kinds – Forms, attributes, properties, whatever – in the ethics of the Socratic dialogues (and now in the ethics of the *Republic*). Let me explain why I say this by adverting to the dispute above between Chu and Rudebusch, on whether the ruler *qua* ruler of Book I of the *Republic* is a person who necessarily acts only in the interests of the ruled. As Socrates, Plato and Aristotle all know very well, kinds are the very subject matter of the sciences – the very *objects* of science or knowledge. (*Health* is what the science of medicine is the science *of*.) Science divides the world up by *real* kinds: not just any old kinds one might think there are, but only the kinds which enable us to break reality up at the joints that are really there. (Science does not, like a clumsy butcher, simply hack away at the bones of reality in just any old place, as Plato memorably puts it at *Phaedrus* 265E.) Now, in the case of Plato, the real kinds (or real natures of things) are the Forms. This is what the Forms *are*, I claim. (More on this below.) This is not true

15 This teleological view about the end of species is not so distant from what may perhaps be called the *implicit end* of species in general within the theory of natural selection. I say there is this implicit end, because the theory of natural selection works by its being the case that the young of a species *grow from seed to maturity and then reproduce, each after its own kind*; for this aims, as it were, to ensure the sequence of procreation from generation to generation upon which the entire edifice of natural selection depends. True, we would have to add a little to the bare bones of growing and reproducing – in the case of humans, no doubt, the care of the young as they develop to maturity, and therefore the care (and perhaps even the happiness?) of those who will take such care. But that places us in the neighbourhood of the Socratic function *par excellence*. Indeed it yields a Darwinian function both for those humans, such as the old, who are past the age of procreation, and for those who, for whatever reason, do not choose to breed with their own kind – including the celibate and homosexuals.

of Aristotle's universals or attributes. For though some of Aristotle's universals are the real kinds which science requires, others turn up as entities required for the supposed science of logic – whether or not they are required for science. You need to be able to do logic with *grue* just as well as with *green*.[16] We shall return to this particular difference between Plato and Aristotle later.

As we have seen, human goodness for Socrates is a wisdom which is the science of the good and the bad (that is, the advantageous), and so, being a science or expertise, is also entirely general. (So too for all the other sciences or expertises which Socrates exploits to persuade his listeners that virtue is a science or expertise in the same way as medicine, carpentry, piloting, shoemaking, farming and the like.) So if we identify the Socratic science of the good and bad with human virtue, that is, human goodness, that science will also be perfectly general. As is clear in what Chu and Rudebusch above (pp. 61–92) both say (in spite of their otherwise opposed views) about the ruler *qua* ruler, and the expert *qua* expert, such a science or expertise as *ruling* (or such a science as that science of justice which is virtue)[17] is *utterly general* and not relative to any particular good accruing to the particular expert employing it in a given case. Even the science of moneymaking – economics or business science as we call it – is perfectly general. That is, it is the same expertise whether one uses it to make money for oneself or uses it to help others to make money. (This is so, even though the reference to the science of moneymaking will have been taken – wrongly – by *Thrasymachus* as a science of gaining one's *own* financial interests at the expense of others.)

Earlier (n.14), I made an argument about *ethical* egoism making no appearance in Socratic ethics, though there *is* a universal *psychological* egoism in the psychology of action of a Socratic individual, and in the psychology of action of the Rational part of the individual soul. I now need to make a similar point about the science of good and bad whether in the goodness of any Socratic individual, or in the goodness of any individual in whom a Platonic Rational part resides. (In the *Republic*, the gaining of this science is also purely intellectual and dialectical in the way it is in the Socratic dialogues, even though the perturbations from their irrational parts – which the wise person and

16 Something is *grue* if it is green and examined before 2010, and otherwise blue, so that if 'green' and 'blue' have extensions, 'grue' will also have a perfectly good extension. 'Grue' first appears in Goodman's famous 1955 'new riddle of induction' – a demonstration of the futility of syntactical accounts of the logic of predicates if they are to be used for a logic of science, though Goodman's own suggestion concerning what he calls 'projectibility' seems either question-begging or disturbingly obscure in content.

17 *Republic* 353E6–7, *Lesser Hippias* 375E1–376B6.

the student must neutralize if the dialectic is not to be impeded – are neutralized by the entirely non-intellectual means of habituation and conditioning. In the absence of these perturbations, the dialectical training of the Rational part is purely intellectual and dialectical.) For me, as I believe for Chu (above) in his account of Book I of the *Republic*, the (psychological) egoism in Socratic doctrine makes no appearance whatever at the level of the science of the good and the bad, or at the level of virtue, but solely at the level of the fundamental desires of the individual. The fundamental desire of all individuals is for the same thing (since all humans desire the same happiness); but the fundamental desire shows up in each individual as the desire for *that* individual's own real happiness. One way to bring out this point is to return to a point already made above: that all sciences are general, and are about the *kinds* into which fall such individual objects as people. For me, as I believe also for Chu, all talk about experts *qua* experts is a variant way of speaking about the science or expertise in question. Hence, given that sciences or expertises are not people, we get Chu's important point, which I fully endorse, that an expert *qua* expert, not being a person, does not strictly have any desires or motives.[18] Only individual people have motives or desires. An expertise of course has a function, and therefore has an *end* which is a *good*. But that does not yield either a desire or a motive. On the other hand, an individual who adopts the role of *any* expert (and so acts as an expert *qua* expert would act) will always, being an individual, *use* the science to gain *its* end, but in accordance with the desire for that individual's own good. Thus for Chu, as for me, an individual's motive is always directed at the individual's own good – whether that individual is virtuous or not. An individual who adopts the role of wise person *qua* wise person will also act from self-interest: a consequence of the psychological egoism which Socratic intellectualism exemplifies. This of course does not block the science of the good from being used to obtain the good of others. (This is so, even though on such occasions, the person using it will need to regard the good of others as a means to the user's own good.)[19]

18 In my 1991, I make a similar point about the reference to orators being ignorant at *Gorgias* 466E13. Socrates is not making a point about individual orators, but about the science of rhetoric, according to the *theory* of which one does not need to know anything whatever about medicine or politics to gain the end of persuading people to do what the orator wants them to do.

19 See my 1973, as well as n.13 above. One more point in fairness to Rudebusch's quite different take on the expert *qua* expert. He agrees that with all sciences *but* the science of good and bad, the expert *qua* expert is *not* a person. But with a person, we have a science where good people always have a motive to adopt the end of the science as their own motive. So, identifying the good ruler with the good person – an identification neither Chu nor I accept – Rudebusch argues that he is home and dry.

As noted above, I claim that what the good is that each person seeks for himself or herself is an entirely factual matter – not a matter of the person's *values*, *norms* or *moral principles*, but solely a matter of what will give the person the greatest happiness available, all things taken together, over the rest of the person's life. (And I take what happiness in general is for human beings, and also what an individual's own happiness consists in, given the circumstances he or she is in, also to be purely matters of fact.) I now add that what the person desires is his or her own *real* good (to the extent it is available in the circumstances), even if that is different from what the person thinks it is. It is not merely what the person *thinks* it is, that is, the *apparent* good. Similarly, in the *Republic*, not the person, but the person's Rational part seeks the person's own real good,[20] even though the two irrational parts may sometimes bring the person to act contrary to that (rational) desire for the real good. This common feature – that it is the real good which moves the Socratic individual to act, and the real good which moves the Rational part of the Platonic individual to initiate action – is obviously of a piece with the profound commitment of both thinkers to the sciences or expertises. This is evident in the *Republic*'s treatment of the Form of the Good, and all the other Forms, as the objects of the sciences, and in the Socratic treatment of the many expertises which he is constantly using to persuade his interlocutors that virtue too is a science. As desire is for the real good, so too the sciences seek what is *in fact* good (regardless of what humans may think is good) and not what we think is so. In making this claim, I am evidently setting my face against the modern view – not altogether divorced from Protagoreanism – that reality is what our concepts license as being so.[21]

III

Now to the problem of the supposed surplus metaphysical baggage to the Form of Advantage over advantage plain and simple – or more generally, the supposed surplus metaphysical baggage to the Forms over more common or garden universals. This problem flows from a very natural thought one has when one first comes to the *Republic:* that all the obvious metaphysical panoply which hangs around the *Republic* must surely betoken some non-Socratic ethical assumptions delivered

20 See especially the references to not knowing what one desires at *Republic* 505A–B, 505E–506A, 570D.

21 Herein my chief difference with Brown above: she agrees with Prichard that Plato is wrong about justice. She does so on the grounds that what the *Republic* says about justice does not fit what our ordinary moral convictions determine: see the discussion of 'meaning determining reference' above, p. 2, n.1.

up by the metaphysical heaven from which the ethics of the *Republic* descends. Of course if this were right, then we would have to go well beyond anything I have been suggesting so far to account for the ethics of the *Republic*. So, do the Forms carry this surplus metaphysical baggage over more common or garden universals? I begin with some remarks about common or garden universals. How they tend to be construed is in terms of the notion of *predication*, so that it turns out that they are attributes of the same general sort as are crucial to modern logic, in the central idea of the semantics of all modern logic, that every predicate has an *extension*. While this does not rule out the existence of attributes or universals for which there is *not* a predicate in the language being used, it does require that there *be* such attributes or universals or extensions for every predicate whatever of the language. This fact, for reasons connected with the Russell paradox (to be discussed a little below), makes it possible to urge the following argument in defence of Plato's Forms, or, as I shall describe them, his *real natures of things*: that any objectionable metaphysics there may be in abstract objects such as the Forms or universals is not on the side of Plato's Theory of Forms. Rather it is all on the side of Aristotle's universals – and the associated notion of property or attribute for each predicate (represented in modern logic and mathematics by *sets*, the *extensions* of each predicate).[22] Such a notion of universal will be a requirement for any theory of logic (modern theories included), since, both in Aristotle and in modern logic, logic is to be applied to *sentences*, that is, to bits of *language*, and requires – in order to make logic apply to the world – that there be names (designating *things*) and predicates (designating universals, attributes or sets, that is, extensions).[23] For the proof theory

22 This treatment of an extension as a kind of universal may surprise, since many people tend to think of an extension as a plurality of individuals, when of course it is in each case a single set. (Without 'sets as one', there would be no semantical theory.) Logicians and mathematicians prefer extensions over attributes or universals because extensions or sets neutralize difficult questions about the identity of universals. For example, if all things that have the attribute *being red* are things with the attribute *reflecting primarily light of the longest visible wavelength*, are they the same property (attribute, universal) or not? Logicians and mathematicians do not need to worry about such problems. What they do have to worry about is what believers in attributes also have to worry about, namely, the paradoxes. See the next few paragraphs.

23 Modern logic, because of the paradoxes and through Hilbert's adjustments thereto, is always transacted via language. Thus modern logic is not a theory of

(a) operations such as conjunction, alternation, existential quantification and so forth;

rather it is a theory of

(b1) certain interpreted symbols for these things in artificial languages – together with

or syntax of logic, if it is to be acceptable, requires a semantical backing.

I can illustrate my objections to Aristotelian universals as objects of the science of logic by looking at modern logic, which has incorporated everything desirable in Aristotelian logic, while surpassing it in very many respects, especially with respect to many-placed relational attributes and multiple quantification. The problem with these universals or attributes (including extensions) is that, as already noted, there is one for every predicate in any well-formed language. And that way lies trouble for any realist logic.[24] In a realist logic, where attributes or universals represent real properties, out there awaiting our discovery, not

(footnote 23 *continued*)

(b2) supposed entities which are the references determined by certain semantical rules *we* assign to those artificial languages.

(Here we see what Brouwer 1907 called Hilbert's 'methodological turn' from numbers and functions to number-symbols and function symbols and which, thanks to Frege, Russell, Wittgenstein and others, became the 'linguistic turn' which turned away from the real things *out there* that we wanted to talk about in the first place, to our *words*. True, there is an attempt to recover reality in asking for a semantics for those symbols which are names and predicates. So, it is implied, we are speaking about entities in the real world after all. Unfortunately those entities are merely *whatever references may be picked out from the world* by the meanings *we* assign to words, or, more properly still, to whatever references may be determined by the semantical interpretations we antecedently assign to our words. That is, we only get such things as are thrown up by the references *we* assign to the words. If there are real things not picked out by our rules of interpretation, they are simply not reckoned with at all. It has become our words (and associated concepts) that are in the driver's seat as to what we are referring to.

I cite here just four reasons for the greatest caution in employing any theory of logic so constructed. First, the paradoxes. Second, the extraordinary restrictions one must impose if one is to avoid contradiction even in the meta-theory of first-order logic (e.g., excluding from the range of 'every being' in first-order logic – the 'language of science'? – those extensions for every predicate which the meta-logician is committed to for proofs of soundness and validity, and for the account of logical consequence), they being restrictions that are totally unmotivated except for the desire to avoid the paradoxes at all cost. Third, we have the same complete lack of philosophically motivated axioms for set theory if that is to be about Platonist (antecedently existing) sets; and similarly for the Tarski solution to the Liar paradox. The last is worrying, because the linguistic turn requires this kind of one-to-one relation between expressions and references in order to argue that nothing else is necessary for speaking of what is really there.

24 This is not true of a *constructivist* logic which works at a given time only with so many predicates as have been constructed by this time, and admits, so far, only so many universals as have already been already generated by the construction of predicates. Thus, in constructivist theories, the range of 'all universals' changes according to our mathematical activity. We may say, with apologies to Kronecker, that, for constructivists, God made the individuals, while everything else – the universals – is made by humans. This will not be a notion congenial to most of those investigators of the abstract structures which govern behaviour in the universe – our scientists. See below on Forms and laws of nature.

simply entities created by us, one will reasonably work with the Law of the Excluded Middle. Every object will either have a given attribute or it will not have it (whether we have discovered the attribute yet or not). This is to say that the Law of the Excluded Middle divides the universe into two: into all those things which have the attribute and all those things (including attributes) which lack the attribute. *Into two:* two *what*? Evidently, two sets – two extensions, for example. Thus by the Law of the Excluded Middle, it is inescapable that there be one extension for the things that have 'is red' true of them, and one for the things that have 'is not red' true of them.

The problem is, of course, that the existence of these extensions, thanks to the Law of the Excluded Middle, leads straight to contradiction. For as soon as one admits into one's logic reflexive relations, such as *loving oneself*, and hence also (by the Law of the Excluded Middle), negative reflexive relations, such as *not loving oneself*, the immediate result is the Russell paradox produced for extensions by the predicate 'is not a member of itself' and for attributes or universals by the predicate 'does not instantiate itself'. Unfortunately, as Quine has insisted, none of the realist (non-constructivist) responses to this paradox is anything but arbitrary or *ad hoc*.[25]

Now, I suggest, the problem here is the desire to have a logic universally applicable to all reasoning whatever – a logic that is neutral on all 'matters of fact and real existence', as Hume has it – to all sentences whatever of any well-formed languages whatever. This it is that generates the paradoxes. What this tells me is that the realist notion of attribute or universal is the source of the problem, where for any stock of atomic attributes ('red', 'green', for example), every Boolean combination of any already existing attributes will also already exist (for

25 Russell's theory of logical types, as Gödel 1944 remarks, makes most sense only as a constructivist theory. The same is true, I would argue, of Aristotle's *this/such* theory and Frege's concept/object theory. And Zermelo-type axiomatic set theories arguably succeed only by ensuring, via the axioms, that no sets will exist which couldn't have been created by us by starting with the non-sets, and constructing sets, using the (quasi-constructivist) axioms of unit set, of union and of power set. If this is declared to capture what is out there *prior* to any constructions of ours, then what a lucky accident that the only sets really *there* prior to our constructive activities are just those which we *could* have constructed by this means! What is more, the analogue of Russell's theory of logical types in Tarskian semantics (with *its* use of the Law of the Excluded Middle), which excludes from every language *L* the predicate 'is true in *L*' (on pain of the Liar paradox), is just as arbitrary as applied to natural languages. It is true that, thanks to Davidson, philosophers have begun to think that Tarskian semantics can be applied to natural languages. But Tarski seems to me to have been right that this is a hopeless solution for natural languages. What? We can have no predicate 'is a false sentence of English' in English? See Davidson's remarks on this question – remarks he takes to be sufficient for now – at Davidson [1967] 1984: 28–9.

example, extensions for all of ‘not red’, ‘red or green’, ‘if red then not green’, ‘grue’, and so forth).[26] We need to get back to something like the idea that the only attributes there are, are those which we find we cannot avoid referring to for purposes of the sciences. (And this, of course, tells us that logic is not properly a discipline *prior* to science, but only posterior to it. Except that, pragmatically, logic will serve our purposes very well where there are no crucial questions of existence involved. The situation is different when, as investigating Plato’s Forms, fundamental metaphysics is in question.) For because of the paradoxes, the entities needed for a logic cannot exist in the required way for a realist. Against the thesis that there are abstract objects for every Boolean combination of predicates, notice how Plato insists in the *Sophist* that if there is a kind *beautiful* or a kind *being*, nevertheless, there are no kinds *not-beautiful* or *non-being*. For the Form of Other gives Plato the means to avoid any such entities.[27] There are no further kinds beyond those needed for science – or, better, there are no kinds beyond those that would be needed by a science of *everything* if there could be such a thing. At any rate, there are no kinds to be generated solely for purposes of the semantics of a supposed science of classical logic. Hence, as I have argued many times elsewhere, beginning in my *Ascent from Nominalism* (1987), it is a fool’s errand to apply a universal logic of entailments, validity, soundness and so forth to fundamental metaphysical questions (however unproblematic such a logic may be in less fundamental contexts).

Our choices are stark: either (1) take it that all attributes whatever (including extensions and relations) are constructed by us, or (2) admit that there are some abstract structures – those which structure the universe and which exist antecedently to our thought and language, and whose existence cannot fail to be part of the ontology of whatever reasoning we conduct in this area. There can be no doubt which option Plato took.

So then, what kinds there are will be given by the requirements of the sciences. Or, more exactly, what kinds there are will be best accessed in practice through the requirements of the sciences. (It is not ruled out,

26 This requirement that there be extensions for every Boolean combination of predicates is clearly visible in the rule $\forall x A \vdash A(a)$ for all open sentences A.

27 One might suppose that we needed two Forms, the Beautiful itself and the Non-Beautiful itself, if we are to explain how it is that some things are beautiful and some are not beautiful. But the Form of Other enables us to dispense with the second Form. For something to be non-beautiful is merely for it to partake in Other itself with respect to the Beautiful itself. (A rough translation is: this non-beautiful thing is other than any of the things that partake in the Beautiful itself.) Thus with the single addition of the Form Other itself, we can dispense not only with the Form of the non-beautiful, but also with Forms of non-humans, non-red, and the like.

for example, that there are laws of nature which no human science ever *could* discover. Laws of nature are prior to scientific theorizing.) A word about Plato and modern science may be in order here. When most of *us* think about abstract structures best accessed by the requirements of the sciences, we think in terms of abstract structures called 'laws of nature' existing antecedently to our thought or language, and which we are doing our best to capture by mathematical functions of various sorts. Plato, on the other hand, thinks in terms of abstract structures called 'the Forms', as they exist in the complex teleological hierarchy of Forms underneath the Form of the Good. I do not believe the effect is fundamentally different – though I recognize that, given the prevailing normativist, evaluativist or moral ethical theories of our time, few moderns would admit that there are laws of nature for the good. As will be clear from the present chapter, I myself believe the prevailing theories mistaken.[28]

The only kinds there are, then, are *real kinds*. Thus not all predicates of a language correspond to real kinds: if they did, real kinds would be trivially, and – inconveniently – inconsistently generated for all predicates whatever of a language. Herein – and in my option herein only – lies the *genuine* metaphysical surplus value of the Forms over the common or garden attributes or extensions required by logic: that they are generated only by those abstract structures that govern the universe – and not at all by the needs of a theory of predication.

IV

But can this belief – that what Forms there are is at any rate best accessed via the needs of the sciences – be found in the *Republic*? Much of my argument in defence of this position has been given elsewhere. Briefly, the central argument is one which I believe Aristotle correctly captures in his 'Argument from the Sciences' and which I have referred to as an *anti-nominalist* argument for the existence of real kinds, but which, for various historical reasons, might be better described as an *anti-reductionist* argument for the existence of real kinds. (This leaves a little more open what the reference to Forms cannot be reduced to – physical objects, psychological episodes and the like.)

This anti-reductionist argument takes it to be sufficient to show that there is a Form of Beauty simply to show the defeat of a certain very

28 I have spoken extensively of the relation between Forms and laws of nature elsewhere: see, for example, 2003, 2005a and esp. 2005c. For the placing of the Forms and the sciences in a rather more than usually general framework, see my 2006b.

natural *reductionist* account of the answer to the question 'What is beauty?', namely:

LSS The answer to the question 'What is beauty?' is nothing more than simply the many beautiful sights and sounds.

A defeat of this reductionism would then have led to the conclusion, for people looking for objects of the science of the beautiful, that there is something more to beauty than simply the many beautiful sights and sounds – let us call this 'something more' 'the Form of the Beautiful'. (This, of course, provided that they think the objects of the sciences are already there antecedently awaiting our *discovery*, and are not objects created by us, or brought into existence by our probing, like Aristotelian secondary qualities, or like Dummett's astonishing 1959 theory of mathematical objects.) Now, what is important to what I am saying here is that, for Plato, it is not a matter of there being Forms *in addition to attributes or universals*. For

11 the only attributes there *are*, on Plato's view, are precisely those real kinds.

For Plato's Theory of Forms is the first systematic theory of abstract objects in the history of Western thought. (No one prior to Aristotle has a systematic theory of *attributes* or *universals* other than the Theory of Forms.) To continue, my claim is that, as Aristotle implies, it is in this anti-reductionist way that Plato would have argued for the existence of a real nature of health, that is, the Form of Health. And if this is so, then there will be no metaphysical surplus value to the Form of Health and to the Form of Advantage, over and above those universals health and advantage which are the objects of the science of medicine and the science of good. The Form of Advantage will be the same thing as advantage pure and simple.

It is true that Aristotle famously objects that there is no problem with the part of Plato's Argument from the Sciences that concludes that there is more to health than just the healthy things to which one might be tempted to try to reduce it; Plato is simply wrong to think that the something more is a *Form*, when all there is besides is a *universal*. But this Aristotelian move, I have already suggested, will fail.[29]

There is pleasing confirmation, in the Divided Line and the Cave in the *Republic*, of this suggestion that Plato argues for the existence of Forms via instantiations of this very same anti-reductionist argument.

29 A theory of logical types: see above, n.25.

Since I have only recently made this argument elsewhere,[30] I shall merely reiterate here the crucial point of my case in these passages. The argument was given in the context of my claim that the two upward paths in the Divided Line and the Cave each represent not (A) four different sorts of cognizing (perceiving or knowing) things together with corresponding objects *of four different degrees of reality* – as if each stage of Line and Cave represented attempts to ask and answer four kinds of questions, each about a different kind of object – but rather (B) the addressing of *just one* question to four different attitudes concerning what things exist. In the Allegory of the Cave, people at the level of the chained prisoners think to reduce the answer to a question, say, the question 'What in the world is a horse?', to the black shapes they see on the rock opposite them (and nothing else); people at the level of the freed prisoners, once their eyes have adjusted, think to reduce that answer to statuettes of horses (and nothing else); people at the level of prisoners when first outside of the cave think to reduce the answer to actual spatio-temporal horses (and nothing else); while it is people at the highest stage only who see that the answer is, without any sort of reductionism, *the real nature of the horse*, that is, the Form: the Horse itself. To know what a horse is, one needs to know that abstract structure of all horses which is the real nature of the horse. (The point in modern terms would be that to know what a horse is, one needs to know those abstract structures which are the laws of nature governing horses.)

My case for this anti-reductionist reading (B) of the Cave over the Degrees-of-Reality reading (A) is based on a clue in the way Plato sets up the 'What is *X*?' question at the two lowest levels of the Cave. If the question 'What is it that you are seeing?' asked of the chained prisoner is intended to be parallel to the question Socrates offers in explanation of what he is asking, namely, 'What is it that you are hearing?', then, with respect to the second question, we know this: the freed prisoner, once he grasps what the sound is that he was hearing when chained, namely, an utterance of the statue-holders, realizes that the question he was being asked earlier was the *same* question he is being asked at this second stage. He also knows that his later answer is more correct, his earlier answer wrong. One question, two answers, one falser than the other. The same should therefore be true of the question 'What is it that you are seeing?' The point is not, therefore, that his initial answer, 'Black shapes on the rock and nothing else' is an answer that is true enough about an inferior level of reality ('empirically correct', so to speak). It is that his initial answer was completely wrong. This he realizes at the second stage, where he learns that his second answer, 'The sculpted

30 2006a: 249–57.

rocks (the statuettes) and nothing else' is at any rate closer to the truth than his first answer was *to the very same question*.[31]

In my 2006a, I make a similar argument about the question 'What is the real nature of a square?' in the Divided Line. For example, the geometers' answer to this question – the geometer who has only *dianoia* (the second-best form of cognition, perhaps translatable as 'general comprehension'), and not *nous* or *epistêmê* (the highest form of cognition, perhaps translatable as 'understanding' or 'science'), recall – is 'The square is what I have defined it to be, and nothing else.' But the real nature of the square is a good deal more than this, and is not captured by definition, any more than Plato thinks mathematical truth is captured by the notion of proof. (Since at least the late nineteenth century, it has been clear that there is no such thing as 'absolute proof' – even in mathematics. So-called 'axioms' are mere postulates, so that so-called 'proofs' represent at best merely hypothetical knowledge: that *if* the axioms capture the real nature of the square – no proof *that* it is so – *then* the conclusion is true *if* the reasoning is correct.)[32]

Let me now bring these remarks about Forms into connection with the Socratic 'What is *X*?' question which the theory of Forms has often, and correctly, been said to grow out of. My idea here is this:

AFN1 if there is a relevant 'What is *X*?' question, there is an attribute *X*, that is a real kind *X*; and if there is such a real kind, then either there is a science of *X* (an *epistêmê* or a *technê* 'expertise', though often translated 'craft') or *X* is a real kind necessary to some science;

AFN2 these are the only attributes there are; and

AFN3 all Socratic, Platonic and Aristotelian *epistêmai* or *technai* are teleological in nature – they aim at some

31 The text I use here is Adam's. I found much to agree with in Verity Harte's outstanding paper on the Cave given at the conference, but destined for publication elsewhere. I agree with her reasons for preferring Adam's text over the neo-Platonist text adopted by both Burnet and Slings for the crucial 515B4–5, though because of my remarks above about the parallel between 'What are you saying?' and 'What are you hearing?', I do not agree with either her or Adam about how one ought to take Adam's text. They both take the text to be raising the question,'What are the passing *shadows*?' For me, *ta parionta* are the statuettes passing by on the parapet behind the chained prisoners, which, so far, like the statuette-holders who speak, fall completely outside of any conceptual scheme of theirs – a bit of Plato's (nowadays quite startling) ultra-realism. In Plato, our concepts do not determine what we are referring to.

32 See 'Socrates' dream' at *Theaetetus* 201D–208B, with the letters construed as axioms and the syllables as theorems. Notice that what we have here won't even be *hypothetical* knowledge unless one somehow non-axiomatically knows that the underlying rules of reasoning never lead from truth to falsehood. But no one does. Logic at its *best* is also done axiomatically.

> good, so that the sciences in question have achieving that good as their function.

Now, the important corollary for me here, in wanting to show that the ethics of the *Republic* is not significantly different from the ethics of the Socratic dialogues, is this: that for one who believes in Forms, and who (as above) believes that what the good is for humans is happiness, there is no difference whatever between

12a Jane wants to be happy

and

12b Jane wants her life to partake in the Form of the Good.

I have elsewhere given a demonstration of this point that may strike many as startling. This is what I call 'the doublet of triptychs' in *Republic* Book X.[33] I have in mind here as the first triptych, which I shall call the *God-triptych*, three pictures: in the lowest picture, the painter produces a painting of a bed; in the middle-level picture, the carpenter produces a physical bed; and in the highest picture, God produces the Form of the Bed (596E–598D). The painter in this picture is also 'at the third remove from the truth [about beds]', which of course implies that the carpenter is second in his grasp of the truth about beds, and that God alone knows the truth about beds. But in the second triptych – which I call the *expert-flute-player-triptych* – we have once more the same two lower-level pictures, the painter producing (and so having knowledge or expertise about) a *painting* of a bridle bit or a flute, the carpenter producing (and so having knowledge or expertise about) a *physical* bit or a *physical* flute. Then, in the highest picture, we have an expert flute-player who knows how to *use* what the carpenter makes, and has the knowledge or expertise that enables him to tell the carpenter just what the carpenter should be producing (601B–602C). Surprisingly enough, therefore, since the second, expert-flute-player-triptych is plainly designed to be to the same effect as the original God-triptych, knowledge of the end of the flute, here attributed to expert flute-players, must be *the very same thing as* knowledge of the Form of the Flute. The second, expert-flute-player-triptych can be nothing other than a doublet of the God-triptych. And this says that knowledge

33 Penner 2006a: 244–6. This account of the argument was originally presented in my classes at Madison, then in Edinburgh, and was destined to be written up for the present chapter; but since the material could be presented sooner in 2006a, I am presenting only the gist here.

of how to play the flute (and so of to what effect the flute is to be made) corresponds to God's knowledge of the Form of the Flute. But this is to say that the Forms are precisely the real kinds which are the objects of teleological sciences. Plato uses the sentences

13a John is an expert at flute-playing

and

13b John knows the Form of the Flute

to say exactly the same thing – just as I have suggested above that he will use the two sentences

12a Jane wants to be happy

and

12b Jane wants her life to partake in the Form of the Good

to say the same thing.

One more bit of confirmation of this claim that the Form is precisely the attribute studied by a relevant science may be noted at the crucial passage, 504E–506D, picking up from Book VI's reintroduction of the question of the 'longer road' (503D–504E), and introducing the Sun, Line and Cave (506D–521D). For within this crucial passage, it becomes quite clear that Plato regards it as entirely acceptable to use references to 'the good' and to 'the Form of the Good' interchangeably. The point may be put as follows: that the Form of the Good which, in the *Republic*, the guardians seek *is* the good which the Socratic dialogues hold all humans desire as their ultimate end. Let us start with the passage 504E–505D. At 505A2–3 (discussed in my 2006a: 204), where the Idea of the Good is *that, by using which, just things, and all other things, become useful and beneficial*, one surely cannot fail to notice that this is exactly what is said about *the good*, that is, the happiness, that is the ultimate object of all desire at *Meno* 77A–78B with 87E5–89A7 *and Euthydemus* 278E–282D. Plato continues at 505A3–B4 by saying that (1) we do not know 'the good'; and (2) if we do not know *it* (*autên*), even if we know all other things *without* the good, we get nothing beneficial. The second claim not only repeats what has just been said about the Idea of the Good (notice the feminine *autên*, showing that the 'it' in question in fact refers back to the feminine *Idea*); it is also the very same thing as is said about the good *pure and simple* in the Socratic

passages just mentioned. What is more, given that this *is* the Form of which we are said to have no knowledge, this is the very same knowledge the Socratic dialogues say Socrates does not have with respect to the most important things (the good, and goodness: to know what virtue or goodness is would require knowing the good). This claim connecting ignorance of the Form of the Good in the *Republic* with ignorance of the good *pure and simple* as we see it in the Socratic dialogues will also show up in the next passage to be considered. Let me just add that if the *autên* at A5 quite certainly refers back to the Idea of the Good, it is also overwhelmingly likely that *tou agathou* at B1, 3 (again, without which nothing will be useful), is also identical with the Idea at A2 without which nothing is useful. Given the passages mentioned from the Socratic dialogues, 'the good' at B1 will work both when interpreted as the good *pure and simple* of the Socratic dialogues, and as the Form of the Good in the *Republic*. Indeed, if talk of the Form of the Good is talk about the good pure and simple, this would explain in a quite straightforward way what Socrates says at 504E6–7, 505A2–4: that Glaucon has very often heard that the Form of the Good is that by reference to which just things and everything else is useful. For what he is saying here is precisely what we have often heard about the good pure and simple in the Socratic dialogues.

At this point, we may seem to have run into a roadblock. For in the immediately following lines of the text (505B5–D4), Glaucon asks about the many thinking that 'the good' is pleasure while the more sophisticated think it is knowledge. This raises a doubt: are we not bound to say that 'the good' referred to here is the good *pure and simple*, and is *not* the Form of the Good? For mustn't we concede that the many have no conception whatever of the Form of the Good? So in saying that the good is pleasure, can they really be saying that the *Form of the Good* (of which they have no conception) is pleasure? (Evidently, if one assumes that speakers must always know just what they are saying and what they are not saying, this will be the case.) Since the question appears again below at 506B3–4, let us consider this doubt as we look at the way Plato apparently responds to the difficulties involved both in identifying the good with pleasure and in identifying the good with knowledge, in the passage immediately following.

The passage 505D–506E concerns the good which our guardians must know (506A5, B1). Now surely the text makes clear that this good can only be the Form! For we are told that no soul whatever *does* know 'what in the world it is' (*ti pot' estin*: a regular way for referring to the Forms in the *Republic*). This same good is that without which, again once more, nothing else is useful (505E4–5, 506A4–5). Glaucon immediately asks (B2–4) our problematic question again: 'But, what

about you, Socrates? Do you say the good is knowledge, or pleasure, or some other thing?' Very well, what does Plato think Glaucon is referring to here? If he takes Glaucon to be asking merely about the good *pure and simple* (which, it was thought, was all the many could have been talking about earlier) and not about the Form of the Good, then this will be an abrupt change of subject from what has gone just before, which is about the Form of the Good. On the other hand, if Plato takes Glaucon to be asking about what is indifferently the good *pure and simple* and the Form of the Good, then he is saying either that Glaucon is a partisan of the Theory of Forms, or that in order to say something about the Form of the Good one does not need to know that one is doing so. The text of the passage that follows is decisive, I believe, that, either way, Plato thinks that the question 'Is the good pleasure or knowledge?' is equally a question about the good *pure and simple* and a question about the Form of the Good.

In this passage, after making clear that he has no knowledge on the question of whether the good is pleasure or knowledge, and will not on this matter be contented with blind opinion, Socrates says, in effect: I can't tell you *what in the world the good is*, but I can give you an *image* of it (D7–E3) – the image of the Sun. Notice two things. First, 'the good' here is plainly the good about which the question 'Is the good pleasure or knowledge?' has arisen. Second, it is equally plainly the Form of the Good. For it is this good of which he says he can only give an image – the Sun. And that is without question our very Form of the Good. (See also 507B3, where surely, in this context, we have in 'the good itself' the standard formula for the Form.) So for Plato,

A for the many to think that the good *pure and simple* is pleasure

is the very same thing as

B for the many to think that the Form of the Good is pleasure.

But how *can* he think this? How can someone think with something outside of his or her conceptual repertoire?

This last question, about thinking about things outside of one's conceptual repertoire, is to be answered, I think, by simply drawing attention to the contrast between Platonic thought and a great deal of modern analytical thought connected with the idea of philosophy as conceptual analysis. The issue here is whether what a person says, and what a person is referring to by means of the words he or she is using, are determined by that person's concepts and conceptual repertoire. In much modern analytical philosophy, this is taken to be so. It is summed

up in the slogan 'meaning determines reference' – that we determine what the reference of an expression is by looking to see what the meanings of our words pick out from reality.[34] It may also be summed up as the idea that our concepts of such things as good, justice and the like determine what good, justice and the like *are*.

My response to these suggestions is that it is totally un-Platonist – and also, in my view, philosophically incorrect – to think that meaning determines reference.[35] There is not space to pursue this question just here; but I can note that I have already implicitly questioned this view in my account, pp. 115–16 above (with n.31), of questions the chained prisoners are asked. For consider the answers given first by the prisoner when chained, and then once he is free and used to the light within the cave. They will be 'What it is that I am seeing is black shapes and nothing more. Wait, no! It's statuettes. . . .' and 'What it is that I am hearing is noises from the black shapes and nothing more. . . . Wait, no! It's noises made by the statuette-holders. . . .' Here it is clear that the prisoners recognize that what they were referring to when, still chained, they used the expressions 'what it is that I am seeing' and 'what it is that I am hearing' was in either case something beyond his conceptual repertoire at the time. They only discover what they were referring to after they were freed. Their new view of what they were referring to is inconsistent with their earlier view, since in the earlier view they thought it was nothing outside of their world of black shapes. A similar point could be made about the reductionists who maintain that all there is to beauty is beautiful sights and sounds. They don't at the time of utterance *think* that what they are referring to is some *real nature of beauty* which exists in addition to beautiful sights and sounds. Nevertheless, if Plato's argument is correct, then whatever they *think* they are thinking about, what they *are* thinking about is the Form of Beauty – an object well beyond anything their concepts could determine.

V

It is time to draw some conclusions. In my earlier chapter, I argued that, in spite of the first impressions one gains from the way the *Republic* is organized, scrutiny of the part played by the 'longer road' in Books IV and VI–VII leads inexorably to the conclusion that what the Form of the Good is the Form *of* is not some intrinsic or moral good, but *benefit*

34 See n.1 of the introduction above, p. 2.

35 The meanings involved may either be meanings 'in the speaker's head', or, as in Putnam's 'division of linguistic labour', meanings given in part by social norms including such things as the claims of the scientific experts within the community. See Penner 2005a.

or *advantage* pure and simple. In the present chapter, I have argued for a stronger version of this thesis, namely, a version in which the Form of the Good (or the Form of Advantage) just *is* the good pure and simple (or advantage pure and simple) with which readers of Plato are familiar from the Socratic dialogues. This version of the thesis greatly strengthens two other suggestions of the earlier chapter, and elaborated on earlier in this chapter – first, that the thesis that the just individual is happier is not only the *announced* main thesis, it really is the main topic; and, second, that the ethics of the *Republic*, psychology of action aside, turns out to be indistinguishable from the ethics of the Socratic dialogues.[36]

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36 I realize that this lecture leaves hanging many explananda: for example, the qualitative preponderance of political – and utterly non-Socratic – material: will it all be adequately accounted for by the change in Plato's psychology of action? Another example: the guardians' motives for returning to the cave, and the like. I shall try to deal with each such difficulty as it shows up, or, at any rate, as I become able to do so clearly and convincingly. I am grateful to the challenging questions from various members of my weekly classes at the University of Edinburgh – from Caroline Coxon, Andrew Mason, Thomas Johansen, Anna Marmodoro, Calum MacIver, Michael Cummings, Simon Trépanier, and especially Douglas Cairns, Christopher Strachan, David Robinson and Dory Scaltsas, for the enormous stimulus they provided to my own work, and for the joy of discussion with them. Special thanks go to Fritz-Gregor Herrmann, whose devotion to the project from the beginning followed through right to the end – at whatever cost to himself in travel time and expense, or in energy. I am also, as often, grateful to Ruth Saunders for a careful and critical reading of a late draft of this essay.

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6

THE FORM OF THE GOOD AND THE GOOD IN PLATO'S *REPUBLIC*

Christopher Rowe

1 THE GOOD AND THE GOOD: THE LARGER PICTURE

This chapter addresses a topic that everyone will agree in locating at the very centre of Plato's philosophy: his conception of the good.[1] However I propose to address the topic from a perspective which, for at least some readers, will appear an unusual one. The standard view, at any rate in Anglophone circles,[2] is that the treatment of 'the form of the good' in the *Republic*, and in consequence perhaps the *Republic* itself, represent a new departure for Plato. According to this view, the Plato of the *Republic* differs significantly from the Plato of that set of dialogues that the same Anglophone scholars are in the habit of describing as 'early', or 'Socratic': this later Plato, the one of the *Republic*, is a metaphysician, as he – and his main character, Socrates – were not before; and the approach to ethical philosophy they use is also different. That is, the Plato of the *Republic* is a believer in forms, of a distinctively Platonic sort (existing independently of the human or even the divine mind, outside time and space, different from but somehow causative of corresponding sensible particulars, and so on); and he is a proponent of a kind of good – the form of the good – that is significantly different from the good that the Socrates of the 'Socratic' dialogues continually insists that we need to get knowledge of, along with knowledge of its opposite, the bad. *That* good is the good of each of us, our happiness. By contrast, the form of the good, as introduced in the *Republic*, is

1 The chapter has some of its longer roots in a discussion paper entitled '"All our desires are for the good": reflections on some key Platonic dialogues', published in Migliori and Napolitano 2003: 265–72. I am grateful to Terry Penner for giving me the opportunity, in Edinburgh, to provide some of the documentation for, and work out some of the implications of, the ideas that I first, and very roughly, sketched at the Piacenza meeting.

2 In such circles there dominates what – in conformance with convention – I shall call a 'developmental' reading of Plato, which is rather less common outside the Anglophone world. See further below.

some sort of impersonal, or non-personal, good;[3] and it is at the same time a cosmic principle which, even as it serves somehow as the object of human striving, also shapes and gives meaning, if not existence, to the world as a whole.

So much for what I treat as the standard view of the good (the Good) in the *Republic*. The view that I shall put forward in the present chapter could hardly be more different. I shall argue that the Good of the *Republic*, so far from representing a break with the good of the 'Socratic' dialogues, cannot be properly understood except from the vantage of those dialogues. Indeed I shall propose that Plato's text indicates a certain close relative of identity between the goods involved. However, in case such a proposal should at this stage seem too shocking, I shall for the moment restrict myself to claiming simply that it is not possible to understand at least important parts of what Plato intends by 'the form of the good' in the *Republic* without starting from what he has Socrates say about the good in dialogues like the *Charmides* and, especially, the *Lysis*.[4] In other words, if we set aside dialogues like these two, we shall be omitting some of the most important evidence about the *content* of 'the form of the good' in the *Republic*. (By dialogues 'like these two' I mean those dialogues that more or less directly discuss the good as practical end[5] – as indeed does the main argument of the *Republic* itself, but with a heavy emphasis on the provisional nature of most of what it says on the subject: see below for the alleged consequences of this for the issues in hand.) The *Republic* is notoriously silent about what exactly the lucky philosopher will grasp when he grasps the Good at the end of his long intellectual journey. We are told that he will have the key to all existence, or something of the sort; but what precisely it *is* that constitutes that key, we are left mainly to guess at. My own modest proposal is that instead of throwing away whatever we may glean about the good from the 'Socratic' dialogues, on the grounds that the *Republic* shows Plato moving on from them

3 Or a 'non-self-referential' good: see White 2002. For the purposes of the present brief sketch of the *status quaestionis*, I propose to use White's position as representative of a certain type of approach, common among modern (again mainly Anglophone) interpreters, which has strong Kantian allegiances.

4 'Especially' the *Lysis*: see Penner and Rowe 2005. I shall not have space here to say anything in detail about the *Lysis*, but the thoughts contained in the present chapter were certainly conceived in the course of working on, and struggling with, the treatment of desire and the good in that dialogue: the *Lysis*, according to Penner and myself, is as revealing about these subjects as any other part of the Platonic oeuvre.

5 The *Philebus* might be included here – not, of course an 'early', or even (on anyone's account) a pre-*Republic* dialogue, even if it is in many respects a strikingly 'Socratic' one: see n.15 below.

(a claim that I shall dispute), we should actually make those dialogues our starting point. Indeed the second, and more specific, part of this chapter will be devoted to what I hope will come close to a demonstration that Plato directly invites us to do just that.[6]

Before that, however, it may be helpful to say a little more both about the kind of interpretation of Plato I wish to recommend, and about the interpretation I propose to reject. The good that others see as being replaced by the Good of the *Republic* is not, of course, restricted to the so-called 'Socratic' dialogues (*Charmides*, *Lysis* and so on). It features, too, in dialogues as diverse as *Protagoras*, *Meno*, *Euthydemus*, even perhaps the *Symposium*;[7] none of them – by the reckoning of those who talk in this way – straightforwardly 'Socratic', but rather 'transitional', or in the case of the *Symposium*, even 'middle' (like the *Republic* itself). What is at issue, in all the dialogues in question (let us for convenience call them the 'pre-*Republic* dialogues'), is a perspective in which it is the *human* good, and specifically an agent-centred good, in the sense specified, that dominates the philosophical landscape,[8] and in a way that it does not, or may appear not to do, in the *Republic*, and certainly in some *Republic* passages that are plainly marked off, by Socrates and his author, as key.[9] What allegedly makes the *Republic* different is that the human, agent-centred perspective is – in these key passages – replaced by a larger, cosmic one which, in some developmentalists, actually *excludes* individual personal happiness. It is not that this cosmic perspective, or something apparently resembling it, is absent from the group of dialogues I am contrasting with the *Republic*: it quite plainly appears, for example, in the *Gorgias*.[10] But the cosmic dimension is there dangled only briefly before our eyes, and it is knowledge of what is good and bad for humans, i.e., human agents, that is the proper and immediate subject of the dialogue.[11]

6 One might well be inclined to retort that there is actually rather little to 'glean' about the good even in the 'Socratic' dialogues; there too the nature of the good is left essentially undetermined. But this is strictly untrue. We learn a great deal about what the good is *not* (money, power, material goods in general), and at least something about what it is. We learn, variously, that it is knowledge, that it is our own happiness, that our own happiness will not include damaging others, and so on. It is with these scattered but substantive pieces of information about the good that I suggest that we must start.

7 This is a controversial claim; but see Rowe 2006.

8 See especially *Gorgias* 467cff.; *Meno* 77bff.; *Euthydemus* 278eff.; *Symposium* 205e–206a; *Lysis, passim*.

9 I refer here, of course, especially to the three notorious similes of the Sun, the Line and the Cave in Books VI and VII.

10 *Gorgias* 507d–508a.

11 Contrast *Phaedo* 99c, where we are told somewhat elliptically that it is the good that 'binds everything together'. But here too in the *Phaedo* it is ultimately human

Now as it happens, all of what I – again, chiefly for convenience – label the pre-*Republic* dialogues, and not just those alleged to be undisputedly 'Socratic' dialogues (like the *Lysis*), in fact belong to what the stylometrists – those who measure the differences in Plato's style from one dialogue to another – have declared the first of three chronological groups (which, following Charles Kahn, I shall call 'Group One', 'Group Two' and 'Group Three').[12] In the present context, however, that is of little more than incidental interest, for in fact I shall not for the most part be operating within a 'developmental' framework of interpretation at all. That is, I shall be turning my back upon the sort of interpretation that takes it as a central assumption that Plato's thought underwent significant changes over time, tending both to *find* such significant changes of thinking, and to use Plato's 'development' as a main hypothesis for explaining them. (Kahn's own position, as I acknowledge, in fact amounts to a rejection of the 'developmentalist' approach, at least so far as concerns the relation between Group One and Group Two dialogues.) I do myself happen to think that, in addition to all those differences of emphasis, perspective or formulation that one might expect to find in a philosophical writer who evidently went on producing for half a century and more, there is at least one respect in which Plato's thinking *fundamentally* changed (I shall identify that change a little further on in the present chapter). But as should already be clear, my central argument will, in effect if not in intention, contradict one of the key claims of a typical 'developmentalist' interpretation: namely that the *Republic*, or more generally some set of so-called 'middle' dialogues, finds Plato turning his back on his Socratic

happiness, and the human good (albeit from the perspective of eternity), that are at the core of the argument: with 97B–99D, see especially 107C–115A (the eschatological myth).

12 See Kahn 2002: 94. Since the membership of the three groups Kahn identifies, accurately following a general consensus among the stylometrists, fails in important respects to coincide with that of the groups now traditionally called 'early', 'middle' and 'late', it matters – that is, if we concede any value at all to the measurement of style as a guide to the chronology of the dialogues – that we should adopt a different terminology. In particular, at least three 'middle' dialogues (and notably, ones containing clear reference to 'separated' forms: *Cratylus*, *Phaedo* and *Symposium*) belong stylistically to Group One, and *Parmenides* and *Theaetetus*, frequently treated as 'late', belong stylistically to Group Two: in short, as Kahn shows, the (again, overwhelmingly Anglophone) division into 'early/Socratic', 'middle' and 'late' is either at odds with, or in any case not directly supported by, the results of the stylometrists' inquiries. (Group One dialogues – as listed by Kahn – are *Apology*, *Charmides*, *Crito*, *Cratylus*, *Euthydemus*, *Euthyphro*, *Gorgias*, [*Hippias Major*,] *Hippias Minor*, *Ion*, *Laches*, *Lysis*, *Menexenus*, *Meno*, *Phaedo*, *Protagoras*, *Symposium*; Group Two are *Phaedrus*, *Republic*, *Parmenides*, *Theaetetus*; Group Three are *Sophist*, *Statesman/Politicus*, *Philebus*, *Timaeus-Critias*, *Laws*.) For a fuller account of the issues, see Kahn's essay.

heritage.[13] I shall find myself, somewhat unexpectedly, offering evidence in favour of that other sort of perspective, normally contrasted with the 'developmental': the 'unitarian' perspective, which in its classic form treats the whole corpus as describing and advancing, i.e., recommending, a single, unitary set or system of ideas (thus with centuries of Neoplatonists, and Middle Platonists before them).[14]

The question I shall be asking is this: if we suppose that there is a single conception of the good in Plato, or more or less a single conception of it (that is, in the *Republic* and my 'pre-*Republic*' dialogues[15]), how should we set about trying to understand that conception? One possible path, which is the one taken by most ordinary 'unitarians',[16] is to privilege a bigger, more ambitious dialogue like the *Republic*[17] – to take one's sightings from there, and to treat the other, smaller, dialogues as giving a kind of partial encounter with the ideas or doctrines developed more fully in their bigger and more favoured cousin; that is, to treat the *Republic*, or whichever grand dialogue it might be, as the

13 The situation is rendered somewhat complex by the fact that the one significant change that I do admit to discovering (among the dialogues presently under discussion) is itself one that involves the abandonment or significant modification of a Socratic position; one, moreover, that he – Socrates, on Plato's behalf – implicitly admits to abandoning in the *Republic* itself. See below and, for a more complex statement and solution of the issues, Rowe forthcoming 2007 (which also includes a version of the present discussion). However, I claim that even after this shift Plato remains, and continues to think of himself, as a Socratic; i.e., that even while he is moving away from Socrates, what he ends up by proposing is still more continuous than discontinuous with what Socrates had proposed before him. (I am of course here assuming a tight connection between Plato's Socrates and the historical personage called 'Socrates'. For some arguments in favour of this view, see Rowe 2002; however, for my present argument nothing much hangs on the existence of such a connection, the main point being about the relationship to each other of different parts and contexts of the Platonic corpus itself.)

14 Middle Platonists and Neoplatonists, however, have no interest at all in the kind of thesis I shall be advancing; *their* 'unitarian' approach for the most part results in a picture that has more in common with modern perceptions of 'middle' Plato. See further below.

15 I.e. *Charmides*, *Protagoras*, *Gorgias*, *Meno*, *Euthydemus*, *Symposium*, *Lysis* and other 'Group One' dialogues (see n.12 above) – though in so far as I am, for the most part, abandoning a 'developmental' view, there should in the end be no need to restrict myself to those. The *Philebus*, for example (see n.5 above: a 'Group Three' dialogue), would certainly need to be included in the discussion, and I exclude it (and others, e.g., *Laws*, or the *Theaetetus*) simply on the grounds of lack of space.

16 Modern examples might be the members of the Tübingen 'school' of interpretation, represented by Konrad Gaiser, Hans-Joachim Krämer and currently Thomas Szlezák; or its Italian relative, led by Giovanni Reale. But these are the conscious inheritors of a tradition that, in effect, goes back to the immediately post-Platonic Academy (and is taken forward, in different forms, by Middle and Neoplatonists).

17 By dialogues 'like the *Republic*' I intend especially the *Timaeus*, ranked higher even than the *Republic* by earlier Platonists; or *Philebus*, or *Laws* – but these, again, I shall not be discussing here.

basis for interpreting its less grand relations.[18] This particular path, as I have already said enough to indicate (for all that I shall in effect be advancing a unitarian reading of a sort), is one that I shall reject – on the basis that to follow it entails a radical, and unjustified, undervaluation of the evidence of those other, 'lesser', or at any rate shorter, dialogues. (Some, it has to be said, are actually not so short; the *Gorgias* certainly is not.) It is *these* works, I propose, that should – at least initially – guide us in our interpretation of the *Republic*, and not vice versa.

Now it must immediately be conceded that, especially on the subject of the good, there is what might appear to be a perfect argument for beginning from the *Republic*.[19] For I have myself implicitly conceded that it seems to offer us a fuller, *richer*, kind of good than we find in the 'pre-*Republic*' dialogues: a good which is an organising principle not just in the ethical sphere but on a cosmic level too. The principle of the good is one that, to borrow an expression from the *Phaedo*, 'binds together' the whole of existence[20] – the whole of nature, of which humankind itself is a part. It is hardly surprising that succeeding generations of Platonists should pick up *this* idea and treat it as archetypically Platonic (who could resist it?). As for those other dialogues (*Gorgias*, *Meno* and so on), their viewpoint is, one might say, just an aspect of that larger, more ambitious programme presented, or sketched, in the *Republic*. For all that such dialogues are concerned either exclusively or primarily with the ethical good, rather than with its cosmic counterpart, still – to judge from the *Phaedo*, or from the *Gorgias*[21] – they are not innocent of a cosmic dimension; they just do not give it the same prominence as does the *Republic*. But if so, why not go first to the *Republic* rather than to them? Why would one study a part, only, when the whole – or at any rate more of the whole – is there, ready and demanding our attention? In so far as the 'pre-*Republic*' dialogues for the most part address only one aspect of the good, it will look wholly appropriate to see them as, in one way or another,

18 On the face of it, this ought not to make so much difference, if they're all saying roughly the same things. But of course different dialogues say things *differently*, and *with different emphases*; so for example the language of the *Republic* (and of other 'middle' dialogues) is significantly different from – itself often grander, fuller, more suggestive than – that of the 'minor' dialogues. So in reality it makes all the difference from where one starts. (All the more so if even the big dialogues are seen – as they are by the *tubinghesi* – as themselves essentially no more than entry points for a set of underlying, and unwritten, *dogmata*.)

19 Or, better, from the *Republic* and *Timaeus* together (since the latter both is formally connected to the *Republic*, and considerably fills out its account of the good); but again I am leaving out Group Three dialogues in the present context.

20 *Phaedo* 99C again.

21 *Gorgias* 507D–508A again.

pointing towards[22] the fuller – if still openly and tantalisingly sketchy – treatment of the subject in the *Republic*.[23]

One can push the point under discussion – i.e., that there is good reason to begin from the *Republic* – still further. Perhaps, in *Gorgias* and *Phaedo* (or more generally during what will have been the long period of writing of the numerous dialogues of Group One), the cosmic perspective on the good, as it appears, is no more than a hint of what is to come – a programme or proposal that still has properly to be worked through, even in Plato's own mind. But that hardly seems a point worth arguing about: even if it is still a programme only, or a gleam in Plato's eye, the mere fact that he would already be showing himself willing to go in that direction will give the 'unitarians' most of what they want. If Plato is the best example of what it is to be a Platonist, then Platonism *is*, in part, a matter of seeing the universe, humankind included, as 'bound together by the good'; or, to put it in another way, of seeing nature itself in ethical terms. Not for nothing is Aristotle credited with the invention of the different spheres of ethics, physics, and metaphysics or theology: Plato, for the most part, actually preferred to mix them together, so that there is no physics or metaphysics, or indeed much else, without ethics, and – at least ultimately – no ethics without physics or metaphysics.[24]

But here we need to pause. That qualification 'at least ultimately' (and here I come to my central point) surely makes an enormous difference. On the one hand, Plato seems to believe that he needs a structured universe, ordered somehow 'for the best', in order finally to *justify* his ethical claims; and overall he shows an ambition to discover some universal principle or principles of explanation, which will apply across the board. But unless he is really serious about the sorts of extreme things he sometimes says[25] or suggests about the demands of

22 See Kahn 1996 for just this kind of perspective on Group One dialogues in relation to the *Republic*.

23 Since I am dealing here specifically with the 'unitarian' camp, I presently leave out of account the claim, typical of their 'developmentalist' rivals, and adverted to above, that the *Republic* marks a shift from an agent-centred, or egotistic, good to a non-personal one. So far as I know the 'unitarians' are innocent of this claim – which I myself regard as in any case mistaken.

24 That much will probably be true on anyone's reading of Plato. What I am conceding here, though without wanting to concede much more, to the sorts of unitarians I am here discussing (i.e., those who start from *Republic*, or *Timaeus*, and/or whatever may or may not lurk beneath the surfaces of those works) is that it is true in all periods of Plato's writing.

25 I am of course perfectly aware that *Plato* never actually says anything to us himself, unless in the *Letters* (though I happen to believe them all to be spurious); I use the expression 'Plato says' merely as shorthand, on what I take to be the reasonable assumption that he would sometimes wish to be associated with what he has his characters say, and that the likelihood of his doing so increases with the frequency with which he has those characters say any particular thing.

philosophy upon us (so that the right sort of life will consist in doing philosophy *and nothing else*), and perhaps even in that case, he will actually need to talk directly about ethical issues – as we, or Aristotle, might put it – in the strict sense, i.e., as affecting human agents. And while that may at some point require a larger frame of reference, the questions raised in such properly ethical discussions cannot fail to be more specific, and more immediate, than anything belonging to that larger frame – as, of course, is borne out by Plato's own practice. He frequently *does* have his characters talking directly about ethical issues, and either with only the briefest of gestures towards a larger, cosmic context (as in the *Gorgias*, or the *Phaedo*, and perhaps in the *Symposium*), or, more usually, with none at all.

Now again, *the good* is absolutely fundamental to all these more specific discussions. The good, in such contexts, is always a matter of our happiness; it is what is good *for us*. We become good by acquiring things that are good for us – whatever these may be, though in fact it seems to turn out that only wisdom or knowledge is always, and without fail, good in this way. Similarly, I suppose, if 'good' is supposed to be univocal, the cosmos will be good by virtue of possessing what is good for it: let us say order, structure, harmony, or something of the sort. And in certain dialogues, we are given an account of the human good that lends itself readily enough to the same sort of analysis: most obviously, in the *Republic*, where a happy soul is a just soul, and a just soul is one in which each of the parts performs its own proper role – or, in other words, (perhaps) an ordered and structured soul.[26] In *Timaeus* and *Philebus*, the element of order and structure may belong rather, or as much, to the functioning of reason itself, but that will be perfectly compatible with the position in the *Republic*, given that the consequence there of disorder and disharmony among the parts of the soul will precisely be disturbances in the functioning of reason. All of which looks as if it works well enough, at a general level – and well enough to allow talk of there being the *same principles* at work in human life and in the cosmos at large.

The notorious problem, however, is that in ethical terms all such talk seems distinctly, and obviously, unhelpful. Fine: so a good life will require us to set our souls and our lives somehow in order; but such a recommendation will not take us very far. We need to know, before we can make any progress, what *kind* of order it is that we are supposed to be imposing on our souls and our lives; we shall also need to know how to go about imposing it. It seems perfectly obvious that one could have an ordered life in pursuit of all the wrong goals: in the *Gorgias* and, in

26 One thinks again here of *Gorgias* 507–8 (see below).

a different way, in the *Republic* Socrates tries to deny this, but in the first case (the *Gorgias*) his argument probably begs the question,[27] and so too in the second (the *Republic*).[28] The division of the soul into three parts, one rational and two irrational, does provide a basic connection between the idea of system and particular kinds of practical choice, given the reasonable premise that we humans are essentially rational beings. That is, if human beings are fundamentally rational, then a decently functioning human being, one that is functioning in an 'orderly and correct' way, will be one whose choices are fundamentally rational rather than irrational. But how are we to determine exactly what *these* are? What exactly is it 'rational', rather than irrational, to choose?[29] This is where a specifically ethical inquiry seems absolutely indispensable; and also exactly where the *Lysis*, the *Euthydemus*, the *Gorgias* and other 'Group One' dialogues seem capable of coming to the aid of the *Republic*. After all, what all of these works are concerned with, of course among other things, is with trying to set up some set of criteria for choosing – rationally – between supposed goods, and distinguishing what is really good from what is merely neither good nor bad[30] or actually bad.

Even more basically, however, such dialogues are concerned with establishing that our making correct choices in such matters *depends on reason, and reason alone*. And the basis for this is absolutely simple: according to all of these dialogues, every human being desires the

27 Why should excellence (*aretê*) rather than its contrary be associated with 'order and correctness and knowledge ['art', *technê*]', 506D?

28 Goodness will typically, in the *Republic*, be self-preserving (providing that the educational system is maintained); if particular types of badness are thought of as inherently unstable, that seems hardly more than a presumption, if each type involves – as it appears to involve – the recruitment of *reason* by one of the two lower parts of the soul.

29 The type of objection I have been rehearsing will be familiar enough (it might even claim to be *the* standard objection to Plato's ethical argument). In my own view, however, the objection misses its target: Plato never (I believe) wished to claim that a grasp of general principles would be enough to tell us how to act in particular cases. See for example the case he has the Eleatic Visitor mount against rule by law in the *Politicus* (esp. 293E–296A: law is by its nature just too *general*); the same point is implied in the *Republic*, when Socrates suggests that the future philosopher-rulers will have to spend fifteen years getting practical experience (VII, 539E–540A) – and it is also, I believe, what finally lies behind Socrates' 'disavowal of knowledge' (a special feature of so-called 'Socratic' dialogues, but of course not restricted to them). If the simile of the Cave suggests a different picture, in so far as the returned prisoner's expertise when back in the Cave seems directly derived from his vision of the sun in the world above, we should probably remember that the Cave offers, is, no more than an image, and that it precedes the detailed account of the formation of the rulers that takes place in the rest of Book VII (and includes the fifteen-year requirement).

30 A category for which see especially the *Lysis*, *passim*.

same thing – the good, what is good for them, their happiness; for how could anyone not desire to be happy? The only difference between people is in the state of their beliefs about what will contribute to their happiness. There will always be a right choice to be made, but there will also be any number of wrong choices available. So: what we need is that *knowledge* which will enable us, unerringly, to make the right choice, since otherwise we shall make the wrong one. These ideas are summed up by the usual name for the thesis to which they belong: the 'intellectualist' thesis (so-called because it is *intellect* that determines the way we act, in our common pursuit of happiness); and they determine the course of the *Lysis* – especially[31] – and of the other 'lesser' dialogues.[32]

But then, in *Republic* IV, Plato has Socrates argue for a division of the soul into parts that are capable of being at war with one another: one rational, the other two – the *thumoeides* and the *epithumêtikon*, the 'spirited' and the 'appetitive' parts – irrational. What is significant about this move is that both of the latter two parts are capable, apparently, of bringing about actions by themselves, i.e., without reference to or even contrary to the desires of reason; or else, and perhaps Plato envisages this as the more usual occurrence, of recruiting reason to *their* projects.[33] Here is what I take to be the really significant change that occurs in the dialogues – the one that finally prevents me from declaring myself some sort of unitarian. It is a significant change, because *inter alia* reforming people's behaviour can no longer be just a matter of *talking* to them, as it can and indeed must be on the 'intellectualist' theory of action contained in the *Lysis*, *Protagoras* and other pre-*Republic* dialogues. (On that theory, what we do is determined by our beliefs, i.e., about what is good for us; and what will significantly, and reliably, change our beliefs except reasoning with us?) Given the psychology of *Republic* IV, talking to people will not be enough: somehow or other their irrational tendencies will also have to be curtailed (through 'education': i.e., as proposed by *Republic* Books II–III, conditioning, reward and punishment, inculcation of appropriate

31 The *Lysis*, as I claim, and as Penner and Rowe 2005 demonstrates, contains the most extended treatment of the theory in question that is to be found anywhere in the dialogues. To be clear: the theory is not, as sometimes supposed (on the grounds that Socrates takes all desire leading to action as desire for what the agent *believes* is good), to the effect that our beliefs determine our desires. For this supposition, see, e.g., Irwin 1979: 218; Cooper 1982.

32 That *Gorgias* contains the 'intellectualist' theory in question is something that I have argued in a series of overlapping papers, my 2005a, 2007a and 2007b. For the *Symposium*, see Rowe 2006.

33 It will not matter if true *akrasia* – so-called 'weakness of will' – occurs only rarely (and in fact Socrates only talks directly about one case where it actually occurs: that of Leontius, with his apparently pathological desire to view human corpses); the intellectualist theory rules out such cases in principle.

beliefs); or else, if necessary, controls will need to be imposed from outside, through policing. Yet at the same time Plato seems to retain the idea of a *universal* desire for the good. That is, it is still true that 'all desire is for the good', just in so far as we are all rational beings, and no one could *rationally* desire what will harm them.[34]

However, this is not my main focus in the present chapter. Rather, what I wish to stress is the simple presence of so much ethical theorising, concentrated particularly in some of the pre-*Republic* dialogues (again, I single out the *Lysis*, without having the space to explain exactly why); theorising which, as I have suggested, is *presupposed* by what I have called the 'cosmic' perspective, and which itself – so I claim – is what makes possible the synoptic view of things that is essentially, and uncontroversially, Plato's. Unitarians like the Middle Platonists, the Neoplatonists, or their epigoni are not, of course, obliged to accept that the ethical perspective came first in a chronological sense. Nor do I insist on it myself. But any sort of unitarian, as such, is bound to explain how ethical and cosmic perspectives *cohere* – and that seems to require that the Good (say, the Good of the *Republic*: the form) has some kind of ethical, and *practical*, relevance. For, to press the point: if it does not, Plato will be guilty of playing on a mere ambiguity: it will not be the same Good (good) that (a) is 'beyond being, exceeding it [sc. in that it exceeds it] in dignity and power' (*Republic* VI, 509B9–10),[35] and (b) is that 'for the sake of which we do everything' (505D11–E1). That is, whatever it is that is 'beyond being', it must have something or other to do with – in the sense of enabling us to determine, or at least providing us with some indispensable information required for determining – what is good *for us*. But now, once more, unless the best life is supposed to be one occupied exclusively with contemplating first principles,[36] contemplating first principles seems unlikely to help us much with the business of living our lives. It is contemplating *goods*, not the Good, that seems necessarily to take at least epistemic priority. That is, unless contemplating the Good is the same as contemplating goods – as I think it may very well be, though certainly not if the Good is a principle by way not just of having a cosmic dimension but of being some special and remote kind of ultra-'transcendent' metaphysical entity.[37]

34 I have argued this point in Rowe 2005c. The key passage, of course, is *Republic* VI, 505D–E, which I cite but do not discuss in detail in section 2 below.

35 I discuss this context in section 2 below.

36 I hardly think, myself, that this is what Plato ever had in mind, despite what the *Phaedo* and the central books of the *Republic* have seemed to some to suggest. But even if it was, that too would need justification; and the justification would need to involve consideration of other choices of life, other possibilities.

37 I here refer to one possible – and for some, irresistibly attractive – interpretation of the description of the Good as 'beyond being' (*Republic VI*, 509B9 again).

Here is my central point: in trying to understand Plato, we cannot afford to concentrate too exclusively on the larger context. We need to engage wholeheartedly with the fine detail of his arguments in all the dialogues, because (so I claim) the larger context, the synoptic viewpoint, either is itself partly a *product* of that detail, or at any rate can only fully be understood in the light of it. Where I have sympathy with what I may perhaps call the 'synoptic unitarian' method of interpretation, and where I even find it right, is in its emphasis on finding what it is that, in the end, Plato *stands for*. There is, finally, something that is the essence, or quintessence, of Plato, and I have little doubt that it lies somewhere within the ambit of his generous conception of the good: that transformation, as one might put it, of the ethical into the cosmic. After a fashion, all roads in Plato, all the other dialogues, do seem to lead to the 'masterworks' (however we choose these: *Republic*, certainly, and *Timaeus*; also *Laws*). But when we get to the masterworks – so I propose – we shall still need those other, 'lesser', pieces to understand where we have got to. No dialogue, I would venture, is ever fully superseded. And in this sense, the corpus is a true unity, even for someone like myself who claims not to be a 'unitarian'.[38]

Or, if the preceding argument is not successful, the question will still remain: what are all those conversations *for*, exactly, if the vision of the Good is everything? The developmentalists have a ready answer available, if indeed they want to make use of it – for after all, the account in the *Republic* is meant to supersede everything that went before (or to supersede as much of it as one wants it to supersede). Pre-*Republic* dialogues may even become a quite separate area for discussion, as it has for many followers of Gregory Vlastos.[39] The unitarians, for their part, must evidently treat Socratic dialectic – of the sort that we find in the 'Socratic' dialogues and elsewhere – as somehow contributing to the philosophical process, but as dealing with a different object, or set of objects (not with the cosmic good, plainly, and not with any sort of first principle). It will be exploratory, perhaps, or else it will belong to the essential, but even more preparatory, business of cleansing minds: inducing doubt, and in general putting us, or those of us that are suitably endowed, in a state in which we may begin the serious search for ultimate truth.

38 By the same token, 'developmentalism' will be profoundly wrong. (And yet there is that great break that occurs in *Republic* IV, with the introduction of irrational parts that can overcome reason itself: here is 'development' – even if, according to Terry Penner and myself, in philosophical terms it is a backward step rather than an advance: see Penner and Rowe 2005.)

39 Thomas Brickhouse, Nicholas Smith and Mark McPherran are three outstanding examples.

I concede that both kinds of approach, developmentalist and unitarian, receive some encouragement from the design of the *Republic* itself. Everything there revolves around a dialectical argument about what is good (what 'pays'), and its first book notoriously resembles a 'Socratic' dialogue – one of the alleged 'dialogues of definition'.[40] But Book I is clearly marked off as a kind of preface to the main argument in Books II–X, and that main argument is itself explicitly labelled as provisional, a shorter way, a substitute for something better.[41] True dialectic, true philosophy – so this may be taken to suggest – will follow a different path, and the surface dialectic of the dialogue, carried on between Socrates and Thrasymachus, and between Socrates and Plato's brothers (who specifically take on the role of ordinary, non-philosophical people), is a mere second best. But once all this has been said, and much of it agreed, a fundamental question remains: what *method* will be employed in any 'longer way' to the destination? The answer, according to *Republic* VII, is dialectic – and, as I have argued elsewhere,[42] by 'dialectic' here is meant something that is indistinguishable, except perhaps in terms of those practising and participating in it,[43] from the kind of thing we are apt to describe as 'dialectical argument' in the dialogues themselves. The most important passage in this context is *Republic* VII, 537Bff., where among other things Socrates talks about the dangers of having younger people, as opposed to the thirty-year-old intending rulers in the *Republic*'s scheme, indulging in dialectical discussions about the just and the beautiful, and questioning the ideas on such objects that are embedded in the law. The passage in question is a complex and controversial one: thus, for example, we are told at 537C7 that 'the person who is capable of seeing things together (taking a synoptic view: *sunoptikos*) is the one who has a dialectical nature, and the person who isn't, isn't', and this may well seem to have rather little to do with the model of dialectic as we find it actively deployed in the dialogues. That may then be taken as indicating that Plato has some different, more esoteric, kind of method in mind. However, the method about whose dangers Socrates has only just been talking, a few lines before, must surely be the old familiar one (involving question and answer, and – e.g. – challenges to established ideas about beauty and justice). The 'synoptic' requirement, as I propose that it should be

40 'Dialogues of definition': those that answer the question 'what is *x*?', where *x* is usually one of the virtues. But, strangely, these dialogues tend to end up by suggesting that each of the virtues is one and the same thing (knowledge of good and bad).

41 IV, 435C–D; picked up at VI, 504B.

42 See my 2003.

43 Practitioners and participants in the *Republic* context will all be hand-picked for their philosophical gifts; not so, or only rarely so, with Socrates' interlocutors in the dialogues.

understood, has more to do with the necessity for the dialectician to operate within a given framework, and order his questions and answers in relation to that, instead of attacking things piecemeal. That is to say, the point is about the need for the true dialectician to keep in mind the, or a, larger view – exactly as, I propose, Socrates always does.

There are, once again, very large issues involved here, which cannot be addressed fully. It must suffice to say that I am here implicitly challenging a whole tradition of interpretation of Socratic dialectic, according to which it consists essentially in a method of *refutation* ('elenchus'), and presupposes rather little in the way of positive views on the side of the person doing the refuting (Socrates), apart from some fairly general, and morally respectable, positions. This tradition of interpretation is relatively modern, and is naturally more associated with the 'developmentalists' than with the 'unitarians', for whom of course 'Socrates' possesses a whole system of ideas. My own position will once again turn out to have more in common with the position of the latter, the unitarians, if only by accident; that is, at least in so far as I incline to supposing that, underneath the surface of any dialogue, there is a – more or less – stable set of – more or less – connected ideas, which may not be made fully explicit and which may indeed be entirely invisible from the surface of the text itself. (I have indicated above what I take to be the general shape of at least part of this set of ideas, along with the single most important shift that occurs within it: that part that has to do with 'moral' psychology and the explanation of human action.) I also share with the 'unitarians' the view that it is not only possible but necessary to read the dialogues in conjunction with each other, since otherwise we shall be unable to fill in the gaps in understanding that result from his habit of writing self-standing dialogues, each of which may give us only aspects of what he is about as a philosopher and a writer. In short, this author always, or usually, has more of a story to tell us than he actually tells us. Our grasp of that story will always be liable to be improved – whether at the level of complete dialogues, or at that of individual arguments – if we are prepared to ask what Plato is up to. And that, I claim, is a question that can only be answered by using the complete range of information available; that is, by reading across the dialogues.[44] I shall shortly, in the second part of

44 To be clear: I am not proposing that interpretation should begin from the assumption that all dialogues are ultimately saying the same thing. Far from it. I believe that we should always start by trying to understand the argument of any particular dialogue by itself. But at the same time I claim that – again, both at the microscopic level of individual arguments, and at the level of the complete works to which these contribute – there will always be parts of the picture that will need to be filled in from elsewhere.

this chapter, introduce a central context where I think Plato positively invites such a strategy of reading.

I have spoken of what I have in common with the 'unitarians'. Now let me recur to the difference between my reading and theirs: that whereas they propose to read the 'pre-*Republic*' dialogues in the light of the *Republic*, I propose to do the reverse, at least in relation to that central subject of the form of the good. What I wish to focus upon is the way in which Socrates is made to bring up the subject, in the course of *Republic* VI; and what I hope to show, or at any rate to suggest, is that he brings it up in such a way as to connect it directly, and irrevocably, with the kind of good that is so often the subject in the pre-*Republic* dialogues. That is, Plato has Socrates talk in a way that makes it appear that the good spoken of in those dialogues is actually *the same thing* as the form of the good that Socrates gradually, and reluctantly, ushers on to the stage.[45] The difference that separates the *Republic*'s perspective on the good, I claim, is not a difference in the thing, the good, itself, but a shift of focus, which is well marked by the shape of Socrates' discourse: a shift that may broadly be described as being from talk about the importance of knowledge to talk about the *object* which that knowledge is ultimately of. Socrates has talked often enough, in those other dialogues I am still conveniently treating as 'pre-*Republic*', about the need for knowledge of good and bad, without saying anything much about what the content of such knowledge might be – unless the good, paradoxically, *is* the knowledge itself (see below). But now, in *Republic* VI, he finds himself pressed to say more: just what is this celebrated good, and what would it be actually to know it?

2 THE GOOD AND THE GOOD: THE *REPUBLIC* IN CONVERSATION WITH OTHER ('PRE-*REPUBLIC*') DIALOGUES

The passage at issue is in *Republic* VI, from 503E1 on. Socrates says that those who are being trained up to be rulers in the best city must be thoroughly tested to see whether they have the capacity to endure the greatest sorts of learning (*ta megista mathêmata . . . enenkein*, 503E4: i.e., presumably, learning [of] the greatest subjects). Called upon by Adeimantus to say what he means by these, he first recalls Book IV, and the way they distinguished between three aspects (*eidê*) of soul in order to put together (*sumbibazein*?) what each of justice, *sôphrosunê*,

45 This is the shocking thesis that I announced at the beginning of the present chapter. The normal (modern, mainly Anglophone) view is that Platonic forms only emerge in the 'middle' dialogues; but see n.12 above, and, e.g., Rowe 2005b.

courage and wisdom was. He then asks if Adeimantus remembers what was said before that[46] (and of course he does), namely that

> to get the best possible sight of these subjects there is another, longer road, and if one traverses this they [the subjects in question] become[47] clear to view (*kataphanê*), but that it was possible to apply proofs of the same order as what had been said before. (504B1–4)

Socrates says he hadn't been satisfied with these proofs, though Adeimantus confirms that he and the others still are; and, Socrates now adds, it certainly wouldn't be appropriate for someone whose task it was to guard city and laws (*phulaki poleôs te kai nomôn*, 504C7) not to go the full distance.

> That sort of person . . . must go by the longer road, and work out and train in learning no less [sc. than in physical exercise] – or otherwise, as we were saying just now,[48] he will never reach the goal of the greatest and most fitting sort of/subject of learning (*to megiston . . . mathêma*). (504C9–D3)

At this point Adeimantus expresses surprise: what could be 'greater' than justice, *sôphrosunê*, courage and wisdom? Socrates says that there is something greater – 'and moreover we mustn't look at just a sketch of these very things [either]; we mustn't forego the most complete rendering of them' (504D6–8). But what *is* the greatest subject, Adeimantus insists?

> There's no way you haven't heard it many times over (*pantôs auto ouk oligakis akêkoas*); either now you just aren't thinking, or else you have it in mind to put a hold on me and cause me trouble. I think it's the second; because that *the form of the good* (*hoti ge hê tou agathou idea*) is [the] greatest subject you've often heard; by their relation to which in addition [sc. in addition to their relation to the form of justice, the form of *sôphrosunê*, etc.?] both just things and the rest come to be useful and beneficial. You're pretty clear even now that this is what I'm going to say – and that I'm going to say as well that we haven't got sufficient knowledge of it

46 I.e., at 435C–D.

47 It is tempting to translate *gignoito* here (even without *an*) as '*would* become'; but it seems best to stick with the most natural reading of the Greek as it stands ('if one goes that way, things do become clear').

48 The reference back seems to be to 503E (*ta megista mathêmata*, etc.).

> [the form of the good]; but if we don't know it, and not knowing it, if we were as much as possible to know the rest, you know that there's no benefit to us, just as there isn't, either, if we acquire anything without the good. Or do you think there's any gain in possessing everything there is to possess, but not *good* possessions? Or to be thoughtful and sensible [*phronein*] about everything else, except the good, and to have not a single fine or good thought? (504E7–505B3)

Adeimantus is presumably supposed to know all this because he's talked to Socrates before, and on many occasions. He certainly can't have got much of it from anyone else. And it seems that there will have been a great deal in common between the conversations he's had with Socrates – from which he will have gleaned the ideas in question – and the conversations we find other people having with him (i.e., in other dialogues); that is, what Socrates asserts that Adeimantus has heard sounds more than a little like what we 'hear' Socrates actually saying when we see him in action elsewhere. He is perpetually saying that it is knowledge of what is good and bad that we need before anything else; in the *Phaedo* he gives us precisely the kind of account of the relation between form and particulars, and by extension, of that between the form of the good and other good things, that Socrates evokes here;[49] and the argument of the *Charmides* gives us a close parallel for 'if we don't know [the form of the good], and not knowing it, if we were as much as possible to know the rest, you know that there's no benefit to us' in the *Republic* passage. (I refer here to that part of the *Charmides* that issues in the conclusion 'But my dear Critias, we shall have missed out on each of these sorts of things [sc. the supposedly beneficial outcomes of the other sciences] happening well and beneficially, if this one

49 See especially *Phaedo* 100D4–6, *ouk allo ti poiei auto (sc. hotioun) kalon ê hê ekeinou tou kalou eite parousia eite koinônia eite hopêi dê kai hopôs prosgenomenou*, where the notion that the beautiful makes beautiful things beautiful by 'coming to be/having come to be [there, somehow] in addition [sc. to whatever other features the object has]' seems precisely parallel to, indeed the converse of, the proposal, here in the *Republic*, that things (just things, etc.) come to be good (useful, beneficial) 'by standing in/having come to stand, in addition, in a relation to' the good. The presence of the 'in addition' (*pros*), and the use of the aorist tense, in both contexts (*proschrêsamena* in the *Republic* passage being a kind of mirror image of *prosgenomenou* in the *Phaedo*) in my view is part of what makes it at least plausible to suppose that one of the two is intended as a reference to the other; another significant point is the *Phaedo*'s description of the forms as *poluthrulêta*, 'much talked about' (100B5), which parallels Socrates' 'you've often heard' here in the *Republic*. See further below. (In common with other editors, I read *prosgenomenou* in *Phaedo* 100D6 in place of the MSS reading *prosgenomenê*, which if it makes any sense at all must give us the same general sense as *prosgenomenou*. See Rowe 1993: ad loc.)

science [sc. of good and bad] is absent': 174C9–D1.) As it happens, Adeimantus is not among the dramatis personae of these and other 'pre-*Republic*' dialogues, though his brother may be (and I myself suspect he is) the Glaucon who is one of those responsible for passing on the story of the great dinner-party that provides the framework for the *Symposium*.[50] But that hardly matters; the point, presumably, given the patent intertextuality with other dialogues, is that the set of ideas in question will be familiar enough to anyone who has heard, or *read* about, Socrates before.

This will, again, be a controversial suggestion. Since the forms are already described as *poluthrulêta*, 'much talked about', even in the *Phaedo* (100B5; see n.49 above), and since by the normal reckoning – among those who think this way – it is the 'middle' dialogues themselves that introduce forms, the locus in which forms are 'much talked about' will not be the earlier, 'Socratic' dialogues, but other conversations of which we have no 'report', but only hints (in the *Phaedo* reference, or in our *Republic* passage: 'you've often heard . . .').[51] However, this very *Republic* passage surely tells against this (and in section 1 I have already taken issue with the division between 'early'/'Socratic' and 'middle' dialogues', which largely pivots on the supposed introduction of forms in the latter). The whole context, because of the intertextuality that Plato has Socrates himself underline, suggests a seamless continuity between (supposed) 'Socratic' and *Republic* (and so 'middle' works). That is to say, the text itself seems to go out of its way to emphasise that 'the form of the good' is something we, as well as Adeimantus, and Glaucon, are already familiar with: not only does Socrates say, twice, 'you've heard [what I have in mind] before/not just a few times', but he indicates, through his implicit references to other dialogues, exactly where we've 'heard' it. There is nothing in the passage that indicates that there is anything new at all, or indeed at all esoteric, about the subject being introduced. And after all, Socrates talked about forms at length in the last part of Book V without seeing the need for any great fanfare; he brought them in there in the most matter-of-fact way, as if they were things that anyone with a philosophical sense should need no persuading to accept. If *we* think of the form of the good as something new, that is something we bring to the text (because of our hermeneutic assumptions), not one that is in any way proposed to us by the text itself – or at least by that part of it that we have so far considered. (Alternatively, we think of the Good as something new because of what Socrates *will* say about it; but again, it

50 172C3.

51 Perhaps, then, conversations that stand for (esoteric?) discussions within the Academy.

can hardly be said that Socrates offers any great inducement for such backwards reading in this particular case.) What is new – as Socrates will make perfectly clear – is not the subject of the forms of the good itself, but rather what he will say *about* the form of the good: most importantly, through the three great similes of the Sun, the Line and the Cave.

The sceptical reader may well object at this point that the content of the *Republic* passage overall is sufficiently different, in its overall purport, from what we find in 'pre-*Republic*' dialogues to make the conclusion I have just drawn distinctly less than necessary. The *elements* may all – or most of them – be there before the *Republic*, but the *Republic* makes a new compound out of those elements . So, our sceptic goes on, while Socrates is suggesting a continuity with what he has said (to us) before, the suggestion is only partly true. One might even go so far as to say that he wouldn't need to make the suggestion at all if it were true, strictly speaking: he makes it *because* he wants to propose a continuity that we might otherwise miss (because there is also, importantly, *dis*continuity).

However, we have as yet not properly discussed the most striking aspect of the intertextuality between the present *Republic* context and other dialogues. This emerges more clearly in the lines immediately following the passage (504E7–505B3) cited above.

> 'But this too', Socrates says, 'is something you know: that to the many the good seems to be pleasure, while to the more subtle it appears to be knowledge ["sound thinking", *phronêsis*].'
> 'Of course.'
> 'And, my friend, that those who think this aren't able to say what kind of knowledge it is, but are forced in the end to claim that the knowledge is knowledge of the good.'
> 'And very comic it is, too', he said.
> 'Absolutely,' I said, 'if they rebuke us for not knowing the good and then talk to us as if we *did* know it.'
> 'Very true', he said.
> 'What about those who define pleasure as good [i.e., presumably, as *the* good, since that's what's under discussion]? Surely they're not a bit less full of confusion than the other lot? Aren't they too forced to agree [something, namely] that there are bad pleasures?'
> 'Very much so.'
> 'The consequence, I think, is their agreeing that the same things are good and bad.'
> 'Right.' (505B5–B1)

The whole is introduced by 'you know' – and is a kind of patchwork of elements from pre-*Republic* dialogues: *Protagoras*,[52] *Charmides*,[53] *Euthydemus*[54] and *Gorgias*.[55] (So: 'you know' will have the same effect as 'you've heard it often'.) But beyond all of this intertextuality, what stands out from the exchange is the way that the good – and so, by implication, the form of the good – is treated as something *practicable and achievable*;[56] that is, as something practicable and achievable within

52 'You know that the many think the good is pleasure': *Protagoras* 352cff. Notoriously, the many have to be *persuaded* there that they identify good and pleasant; but then most people are perhaps unlikely, in Plato's view, to have much of a theory about the good in any case.

53 'You know that subtler people think the good is wisdom (*phronêsis*), but when asked to say what it is wisdom *about*, they are forced to say it's wisdom about good and bad': in the *Charmides* Critias ends up sponsoring the view that *sôphrosunê* is a matter of knowledge of knowledges; if we're *sôphrones*, we'll be able to live knowledgeably, because we'll always be able to hand things over to the appropriate expert – and to live knowledgeably will be to live happily. But (Socrates insists) which of the many knowledges makes us happy? None except knowledge of good and bad. (So we'll be happy, have what's good, when we know what's good and bad.)

54 See the first 'protreptic' passage (*Euthydemus* 278e–282e), which ends with the conclusion that wisdom (*phronêsis* and *sophia*) is all that is needed for a good and happy life; together with the second (288d–290d), which ends with the young Cleinias supposedly looking for some special skill beyond (even) generalship to identify with this wisdom – a skill which, apparently, will have something to do with dialectic (290b–c). And then (291b–292e) Socrates and Crito get into a real *aporia* about the identity of this skill: it's not any existing, recognised skill, producing any of the recognised goods (e.g., kingly or political skills). Or rather Crito is in real *aporia*, at a real impasse: we surely only have to go back to the first protreptic passage to establish what the skill in question is, i.e., a *technê* of the good and the bad. But if the original question was about the identity of the *good* – and that was how the first passage started – this isn't much help. The *Republic* sketch of the 'confusion' that the 'more subtle' sort of person gets himself into is a fair summary, or caricature, of this whole *Euthydemus* context.

Someone might raise the bogey that *Euthydemus* 290b–c, with its talk of 'geometers and astronomers and calculators' handing over their discoveries to 'the dialecticians', must be a reference back to the treatment of the mathematicians in the simile of the Line in *Republic* VI (so that it will be *Euthydemus* that recalls *Republic*, not the other way round). I respond (a) that such an objection presupposes the very 'developmentalist' approach that I am at pains to undermine; and (b) that the reference in the *Euthydemus* seems to be to any case where experts really do discover things (diameters, stellar movements, numbers and their properties) but don't – from Plato's point of view – know what to do with them. This description will apply not only to the mathematicians of the Line, or to the geometers and astronomers of *Republic* VII (526c–530c), or to the astronomers who turn into birds in *Timaeus* 91d–e, but to ordinary mortals who 'recollect' equality and other such properties in the *Phaedo* and/or the *Phaedrus* (249b–c). All sorts of people, indeed all of us, have *some* sort of grasp of things, but without the dialectician's help we have no real use for it: this is the point that the *Euthydemus* is picking out, and it seems to be a rather general one, present in 'pre-*Republic*' dialogues as well as in the *Republic*.

55 'You know that those who define pleasure as [the] good are forced to admit that there are bad pleasures': see Callicles at *Gorgias* 499b.

56 As it is, of course, in *Protagoras*, *Charmides* . . .

a human life. Or, to put it more precisely, the good (the form of the good) is here being treated as if it were virtually identical with the human good. (If we ask how this can be, the simple answer is that the pre-*Republic* dialogues show us at least one way: each of us needs to know what is good for himself or herself, which will bear some sort of generic relationship to what is good for each of the rest of us. See further below.)

The preceding passage, 504E7–505B3, was also focused on the human good, in so far as it was concerned with benefit and usefulness (it's by their relationship to the form of the good that things become useful and beneficial; there's no benefit to us in knowing anything if we don't know the good . . .). And so it is with what follows:

> 'It's plain, then, that there are big disputes about it [the good], and lots of them?'
> 'Yes, of course.'
> 'Well then, isn't this plain, that in the case of just things and beautiful things many people would choose to do and to acquire what seems just or beautiful, and to think it so, even if it turned out not to be, whereas in the case of good things no one goes on[57] counting as sufficient what seems good, but people go after what really is good, and in *this* area everyone pays no respect to mere thinking ["belief": *doxa*].'
> 'Certainly.'
> 'What, then, every soul pursues, and does everything for the sake of it, divining it to be *something*, but being at a loss about it and not able to grasp adequately what on earth it is, or even to get a stable conviction about it of the sort that it [she, the soul] can about the rest, and because of this fails into the bargain to get whatever benefit there was in the rest: are we to say that the best people in the city too should be in the dark about a thing of such a sort, and such importance – the very people into whose hands we'll be putting everything?'
> 'Them least of all', he said.
> 'I myself think', I said, 'that if a person doesn't know how on earth just and beautiful things are good, they will have acquired in him a guard for themselves who isn't worth anything much; and it's my prediction that no one will recognise them [just and beautiful things] adequately before [he does know how they're good].'
> 'Yes, that's a fair prediction', he said. (505D2–506A8)

57 This is what I take to be the force of the *eti* in 505D7; here too the question is about how things 'turn out'.

In this passage Socrates circles back to the place he started from in 503E–505A. The good is the most important among the objects of knowledge, the one the future rulers must get to grips with above all others, because it is what makes just things and beautiful things good (just and beautiful things become useful and beneficial by virtue of their also having a relationship to the good), and one won't even recognise them adequately without knowing the good (there's no benefit in knowing anything else without knowing the good, just as there's none in possessing anything without possessing the good). Given these connections, there can be no doubt at all that Socrates is still talking about the good as the *useful* and the *beneficial* – and so a strictly *human* good.

But what kind of thing, then, is this good? The usual answer is that if we are to understand this, we need to look forward to the images of the Sun, Line and Cave: *those* descriptions will finally lift us up and away from all this parochial talk about our own, strictly human good, to a vision of a special object that will illuminate our understanding not just of our lives and ourselves, but even of the cosmos itself. And there can be no doubt that this account of what follows after 505–6 is at least roughly right. However, it cannot be wholly right. In particular, the object in question – the 'form of the good' – apparently still needs to be (virtually identical with) *our* good; the thing we always seemed to be talking about in the 'Socratic' dialogues (so called). Of course, as some hold,[58] there might be some special theory that lurks unexpressed in those dialogues, one that there too will make any knowledge of our good dependent on knowledge of some special object.[59] However, the good in question has also to be one that 'every soul pursues, and does everything for the sake of it'. So long as we may rule out the possibility of mere punning, it is this reference to what we *all desire and go for, so far as we can* – together with the references to usefulness and benefit – that is what finally seems to tie the present *Republic* context to those many contexts in the 'Socratic' dialogues in which the great man, in talking about the good and the bad, seems for all the world to be talking about what will benefit and harm us, and so make us either happy or unhappy.

The point is not that we cannot be mistaken about what we desire (clearly we can be, according to Plato, all the time), but rather that the

58 I refer here to unitarians who read back *Republic*-style thinking (as they understand it) into pre-*Republic* dialogues: see section 1 above.

59 My own position may in fact involve a variant of this position, in so far as I am perfectly content to have Plato's thinking about the objects of knowledge outrun anything that he has Socrates say in 'Socratic' dialogues. The difference is that any 'outrunning' of this sort will not include the positing of any 'non-self-referential', or ultra-'transcendent', good; just sophisticated thinking about the relationship between my good, your good, and anyone else's (and sometimes even the good of other things, up to and including the universe).

appeal to universal experience would fail unless it referred to something that everyone would stand *some chance* of recognising, and of recognising as what they really want – something, moreover, that they could in principle prefer when it was properly compared with mere 'seeming' goods, given whatever dose of Socratic persuasion they might need (which might be very large indeed, and even impossibly large). This is not, of course, to say that Socrates has to be offering something that will seem to any of us remotely plausible; just that whatever he is offering must be conceivably something of the right *type* (practicable, achievable). It is here that the intertextuality with the 'Socratic' dialogues gains particular significance; for in them the issue tends to be about substituting one kind of recognised thing as an object of desire and pursuit (normally wisdom) for others (money, power, etc.). The difference is that in the *Republic* the object to be substituted for other supposed 'goods' is something that is specifically set up as being of disputed value: justice. The question, then, with justice is why on earth we should want it (and it would indeed be a poor ruler of a city who didn't know the answer). So the question arises: what in general makes things good (beneficial)? Answer, as *per* the *Phaedo*: the form of the good (the useful, the beneficial). There is something which is such that by virtue of some relationship with it things that are good come to be good.

It would take many more words even to begin to establish how Plato might have supposed that one and the same thing could come to make things good (for us) as well as being responsible for the goodness of other things in the cosmos – even of the cosmos itself. Aristotle, of course, doubts whether the trick can be pulled off at all, except by sheer equivocation.[60] For a first[61] attempt at an explanation, and indeed an explanation of why Plato might even have been right to think in such a way, I must refer elsewhere.[62] For the present, I shall instead pose and attempt to answer a different objection to my proposed way of treating the form of the good (which no doubt some will consider reductive). How, one might reasonably ask, could Plato have Socrates say about such an apparently mundane object – some sort of generic goodness, existing over and above, or beside, particular good things[63] – the sorts of things that he in fact goes on to say about the form of the good?

60 Aristotle famously objects just that the form of the good isn't anything *prakton* (*Nicomachean Ethics* 1096B31–5); but hostile testimony is not always the best source.

61 Or perhaps a second: for a kind of (provisional, dialectical, and unsatisfactory) feint at the question, see p. 144 above.

62 Especially to Penner and Rowe 2005: 139–53, 278–9.

63 Cf. the treatment of the form of beauty in relation to particular beautiful things at the end of *Republic* V.

Could *that* be compared with the sun: the source not only of the intelligibility of other things, but even of their existence?

My answer is straightforward: that if we read the *Republic* sequentially, my interpretation of 503–6 – and of what follows this passage – not only is consistent with such an apparently exalted description of the good, but provides the means towards the best explanation of it.[64] Socrates has claimed not only that 'just and other things' become good by virtue of their relationship with the form of the good, but that – well, so far he was merely 'divining' this: 506A6–7 – no one will recognise (*gignôskein*) them before he knows the good. The primary, and immediate, aim of what follows is – so I claim – to restate, and in at least one important case further develop, these specific claims, and at the same time to put these into a wider context. What is at issue here is the *continuity* of the following passage with what has preceded it. The overwhelming tendency among interpreters has been to single out the three similes and the immediate argument in the course of which they arise, and treat these independently of their context. In my view, such an interpretative strategy is likely in general to offer poor returns, and to be particularly unhelpful in a case where, as here, there are not only no signs of a break separating the favoured portion of the text from what leads into it, but positive signs that there is *no* such break.

Even after 506A (i.e., after the long passage cited a few pages above), when Socrates has brought in the *form* of the good,[65] Adeimantus is still to be found asking him whether he says the good is knowledge or pleasure, or something else besides these (506B2–3; cf. Glaucon at 509A[66]).[67] Glaucon is of course being provocative – trying to sting Socrates into giving his own view of the subject instead of merely retailing what others think. ('No, Socrates, and it doesn't seem appropriate[68] for one to be able[69] to say what other people think, and not what one thinks oneself, especially when one has occupied oneself for so long with these things', 506B8–C1.) But the idea is not after all so out of place. Pleasure might be able to overcome the objection just raised

64 We should note Glaucon's own deflating remark at 509A: 'an astonishing beauty it has, if it provides knowledge and truth, while being above these itself; evidently *you*'re not saying it's pleasure!' He for one is evidently not carried away by Socrates' language. (One may also note, in passing, the coincidence with the plot in the *Philebus*, with knowledge and pleasure competing in the contest to be recognised as the good.)

65 And, it should be remarked, with rather little fanfare. Again, what is new is the extent of what Socrates is willing to say *about* the form (though in truth that is, in the end, little enough).

66 See n.64 above.

67 So Glaucon, at any rate, has no inkling that the form is not *prakton* (see n.60 above).

68 I.e., *dikaion*: 'just', 'fair'?

69 The verb is *echein*: 'to be allowed to'?

to its candidacy, and then it would be the pleasant, presumably, that made other things 'useful and beneficial'; and the *Apology* has Socrates himself making *aretê* cause of goodness in other things (but if *aretê* is 'virtue', still 'virtue is knowledge', and so *knowledge* will be cause).[70] If the good isn't either of these two things, then Socrates ought to come up with something better, shouldn't he? Interestingly Socrates doesn't say, here in the *Republic*, that it isn't, or wasn't ever, his view that knowledge was the good; he merely says it was clear all along that Adeimantus wouldn't be satisfied with other people's views (506B5–7) – which in principle leaves it open that he, Socrates, himself might have been one of the *kompsoteroi* of 505B6, the 'subtler' people who identify the good with *phronêsis*. And in the image of the Sun that follows Socrates' extended protestations of ignorance about the good,[71] one of the two chief outcomes is to distinguish the good from knowledge: just as the sun is not the same as sight, or light (or the eye), but provides the conditions for sight, so the good provides the conditions for knowledge without itself being knowledge, or truth.[72] There is, in other words, a clear sense in the whole careful account of the parallel between the good and the sun that Socrates' point is to get clear about the relationship between the good and knowledge, and the motivation for *that* seems immediately to derive from what he 'divines' at 506A6–7 – that the future rulers of the best city won't have an adequate grasp of just and fine/beautiful things until they know the good. (Their case will then be a counterpart of that of Socrates and his interlocutors, who don't have a proper handle on the just and the fine as a result of the merely provisional treatment of them down to the end of Book IV.) So: the good isn't knowledge, as such (and it certainly isn't pleasure: 509A again), but it is what makes other things knowable.

So the good is what makes just things knowable as just, beautiful/fine things knowable as beautiful/fine. How we might understand *this* will then be illustrated by the case of the madman and his weapons in Book I (331C). Giving back what one owes will in general be just, but not always – not, for example, where giving something back will result in harm, to oneself or others (cf. 332B–C). Whether or not Socrates would accept this example as it stands, given his special notion of what it is to harm someone,[73] matters less than that it gives us the *type* of instance

70 *Apology* 30B2–4, on which see now Burnyeat 2003.

71 The intertextuality continues: Socrates' protestations are themselves followed by a passage (507B2–C6) which he describes as reminding his interlocutors (a) of things already said earlier in the conversation (i.e., in the *Republic*), which (b) are things that 'have been said on many other occasions' (507A7–9), and (c) are highly reminiscent of things said in the *Phaedo* (in particular: see, e.g., 78C10ff.).

72 This seems an uncontroversial enough, if partial, summary of 507C–509A.

73 *Republic* I again: 334D–335E.

where knowing how something is good will allow it to be recognised as being what, as it were, it sets out to be. Someone who just has the rule 'give back what you owe' clearly won't have a proper grasp on what's just – given the cases where the rule fails to apply. He will have that grasp when he understands why it fails to apply, when it fails; which is (I suppose), because in such cases following the rule will lead to harm. So: the real criterion of justice is *goodness*. An action will be just only if it is good (but not all good actions will be just, justice being something that has to do peculiarly with our actions in relation to others: or so let us say, *more Aristotelico*).

But now it is only a short step from here to saying that it is that same action's being good that *makes* it just – which will give special point to the claim made in 505A2–4, '[it is] by their relation to [the form of the good] in addition [that] both just things and the rest come to be useful and beneficial'. Things *are* only just, etc., if they are good. Socrates couldn't say this, of course, earlier on, given that the goodness of justice – that is, of justice as ordinarily, vulgarly, understood – is precisely what was under challenge. But now that the good has been introduced, he can at last say what he wanted to say earlier but couldn't.[74] Given that Book VI, with Book VII, is framed by the argument about the advantageousness of justice, I find it hard to suppose that this essential relationship between justice and goodness is not at least a large part of what Socrates has in mind in 509B7–10:

> [And then I think you'll also say that not only does their being known come to them from the good,] but also that both their being [sc. whatever they are?] and their *being* [sc. at all, as whatever they are?] come to them in addition (*proseinai*) from it, where the good is not being, but still [sc. higher than that,] the other side of being, superior to it in authority and power.

That is to say, if we take the example of justice, which is the one from which everything began and around which the whole dialogue pivots, it will be just, and *there in the world*, as a just thing, by virtue of the addition of goodness (sc. by addition to whatever it was already: a particular action in a particular context, etc.). But that, of course, doesn't mean that the form of goodness is the same as being – because, after

74 We also now get closer to the kind of account Socrates would give of justice if left to his own devices, i.e., if he didn't have others to bring along with him: justice will be (as it always was) knowledge of the good – but now with the rider that there are irrational parts that have to be kept in order too. This means that the definition of justice actually given in Book IV is not wrong, just incomplete; as it has to be, given where the argument is starting from (the alleged advantages of *in*justice).

all, by the rule that the attributes of particulars derive from their relationship to the relevant form, things ought to be by virtue of the form of being. No: here something's being (something) derives – also? – from its goodness, and so (by the same rule) from the form of the good.

If the sun itself is, as Socrates says, the 'offspring' of the good (507A3, 508B12–13), then what he says about the 'power' of the good will presumably extend, somehow, beyond the human good, and beyond things like justice. His language in any case surely suggests that the 'power' of the good extends to making knowable *anything* that can in principle be known, and giving it its being; just as, when he introduces the second level in the image of the Line, he must apparently be talking about the state of mind, and the method, of any (so-called) science[75] that uses perceptible objects as images and 'is forced to make its inquiries from hypotheses' (510B5). I myself think it not unlikely that the argument of Book IV is supposed to belong to this part of the Line.[76] But by the time we have got here the argument has plainly broadened out. Even if it is still ultimately focused on human life and human behaviour (see especially 517B7–C5, where Socrates is completing his summing up of the outcomes of the image of the Cave), it has now begun to encompass the whole of existence, and to treat the human good in that context. All this being so, Socrates has obviously moved up a register. The good he is talking about is indeed – it seems – the principle of everything. However, in being that, it is also still what makes justice ('and the rest') knowable, and makes it what it is. And the signs are that when it plays the same role in relation to 'the rest' – if that now includes the universe itself – it is supposed to do so in some analogous way.

However – and this is the fundamental point I wish to make in this chapter – if we, the readers, have any idea at all about how exactly the form of the good plays this highly demanding role, it will derive from Socrates' treatment elsewhere of the *human* good. That is, even though he places the human good in a larger context (as he did, intermittently, in the pre-*Republic* dialogues), paradoxically we have little or nothing

75 Mathematics, of course, is introduced just as an example, to make it easier for Glaucon to understand the general principles involved. See n.54 above, on *Euthydemus* 290B–C.

76 'Using perceptible things as images': could the reference to 'vulgar' examples of injustice in 442d10–443b3 be a case of that? It is certainly tempting in general to see the 'shorter road' – shorter, it seems, because of the absence of reference to the good – as an example of the use of 'hypotheses' (e.g., about the 'parts' of the soul), not least because this will provide an immediate motivation for Plato's having the image of the Line follow that of the Sun. (The Sun tells us how the good is related to knowledge; the Line, *inter alia*, how knowledge relates to a state of mind that addresses the same objects, only deficiently.)

to go on, in interpreting the larger context, except what he has to tell us about the smaller one: that the good makes things (justice 'and the rest') knowable in so far as they won't be what they claim to be (justice, etc.) unless they're good; and indeed that they are what they are only in so far as they are good.[77] This complex of ideas is closely related to the idea that wisdom is capable of making things good, i.e., things like money that are in themselves neither good nor bad: they will *become* good if they are used with wisdom. The difference is that justice, beauty and the rest won't be present unless goodness is too, i.e., unless the relevant items or actions are beneficial. In this case it is the items or actions that will be neither good nor bad, until, in the context of wise use, they become good and useful. The two *loci classici* for this viewpoint, which might (I propose) provide part of the basis for that repeated 'you've heard it many times before', are the *Lysis* and the *Gorgias*.[78]

I here implicitly reject three other interpretations of the 'form of the good' in this part of the *Republic*. Two of these I have already sufficiently described in section 1 above: an interpretation which makes this good some kind of 'non-self-referential' good, and one – in so far as this is independent from the first – that treats it as ultra-transcendent ('beyond being'). The former seems to me ruled out by the identification of goodness with usefulness and benefit in 505A, while the latter seems to run contrary to the whole emphasis of the context: *pace* Aristotle,[79] the good in question is understood as *prakton*, which something ultra-transcendent – whatever such 'transcendence' might be, in this or any context – presumably would not be. The third type of interpretation that I reject is Irwin's,[80] according to which the good is not itself some separate item – some separate 'being' – alongside justice, wisdom, etc., but the system represented by the virtues themselves, each being a constituent part of the good. Most immediately, this is based on taking *ouk ousias ontos tou agathou* in 509B9–10 as 'where the good is not *a* being'. But even if such an idea might make sense, it would come from nowhere; and it is by no means the most natural reading of the Greek. What Socrates has said is that the form of the good is that by virtue of which just things, etc., become *good*. Now he

77 If this is an idea that is only clearly *stated* in the *Republic* (which for the present I think it is), it is nevertheless implied elsewhere in Socrates' ubiquitous assumption that virtue *is* knowledge of good and bad, when properly understood and spelled out.

78 The *Lysis*, through the idea of the 'first friend' (on which see Penner and Rowe 2005: esp. 143–53, 273–9); the *Gorgias* more directly: see esp. 468B8–C7 (with Penner and Rowe 2005: 251–68).

79 Cf. n.60 above.

80 Apparently adopted wholesale by Fine 2003: 98.

says that it is responsible for things' *being*, which we might have expected to be the business of the form of being; is the good, then (we might ask), the same as being? No, says Socrates, they're two separate things. The form of being will be implicated, one imagines, but (I supply the underlying argument) it cannot work its effect on its own; it requires the good as co-worker. The good, then, has greater authority, is a higher and more powerful cause.

However, the overriding problem that I find with all three interpretations is that none of them seems to read the text in sequence, and its various parts in their context. In particular, these interpretations miss the way in which – as I hope I have sufficiently demonstrated – the text builds on other, 'pre-*Republic*' texts. Now once again, as I have conceded, those references to other texts might in principle be there to mark the continuity between new ideas and old stock, as it were. But I have argued that there is in fact relatively little that is new: a shift of perspective, perhaps, and of emphasis, but hardly more than that. That is, little seems to be added to the things that Socrates insists Glaucon has heard before – and which, I claim, may all, in one form or another, be found in 'pre-*Republic*' dialogues. We do not need to posit any references to school discussions, or to any 'unwritten doctrines'.[81] (Or, if we do, we shall then have to decide what to do about the fact that the references to such discussions/doctrines *also* seem to refer to other dialogues.) This part of the *Republic* is a kind of coping-stone for structures already built and plain to view. If we fail to understand this, I suggest, it will be because we are blinded either by assumptions about Plato's intellectual development, or by a sense that Plato's immediate successors, and generations of later Platonists, must have got it right when they made the master into a metaphysician instead of a Socratic ethical philosopher with a metaphysical bent.[82]

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81 I refer here to the views of the Tübingen or Milan schools, for whom the 'Socratic' dialogues themselves will rest on esoteric ideas that only occasionally surface. See section 1 above.

82 If my own story is right, it is the Stoics (and perhaps Aristotle) who were Plato's true successors, and not the Platonists. But that really is another story, for another occasion.

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7

FLOURISHING: THE CENTRAL CONCEPT OF PRACTICAL THOUGHT

Richard Kraut

To Plato we are indebted for the hypothesis, breathtaking in its boldness, that the highest object of desire, study and action is the good. In one form or another, that suggestion was accepted by many of his successors in the ancient and medieval world. Aquinas, for example, is following in his footsteps, when he says: 'this is the first precept of law, that good is to be done and pursued, and evil is to be avoided. All other precepts of the natural law are based on this' (*Summa Theologica*, Pt. I–II, Q. 94, Art. 2). The practical pre-eminence of good is not a notion that evaporated in the modern era; on the contrary, it lies at the heart of utilitarianism. However, a second cardinal doctrine of utilitarianism, namely that good can be quantified and must be increased without limit, does not play an important role in Plato or in pre-modern ethics, although we find something resembling that idea in the *Protagoras*. In the *Philebus*, however, Plato instead emphasizes the affinity between goodness and limit, form, structure, measure and other such notions. Whatever is good – knowledge and pleasure, for example – is good only up to a certain point, and no more. A good life for an individual requires some proportionality or mixture, and likewise what is good for the political community. Many modern philosophers, by contrast, suppose that rationality itself requires maximizing something; according to their way of thinking, the only appropriate stance to take towards what is good is to produce as much of it as possible.

Classical utilitarianism also departs from Plato in its hedonistic conception of what the content of the good is. But this component of utilitarianism did not survive into the twentieth century. It was replaced, in some quarters, with the idea that a number of different things are good – knowledge, virtue, friendship (for example) – not just pleasure; and in other quarters with the thesis that what is good is precisely one thing – not pleasure, however, but rather the satisfaction of desires and the achievement of goals, or at least those desires and goals that are rational and adequately informed. Modern economists

typically assume that the relationship 'X is better for S than Y' must be made empirically operational, and can be made so only by treating S's rational preferences as the criterion for determining when things bear that relationship to each other.

Modern moral philosophy has also seen the rise of a more radical alternative to Plato's doctrine of the sovereignty of good. We find it expressed with great force and clarity in Rawls and Scanlon, though the idea certainly does not begin with them, but can be traced back to Kant's insistence on the practical centrality of duty, and the smaller role he assigns to pleasure and the systematic satisfaction of desires. Rawls, following Ross, takes the two main concepts of ethics to be the right and the good – note that this is already a great departure from Plato – and (moving farther still) he affirms the priority of the right over the good. We are not to make decisions, as the utilitarian proposes, by balancing good against bad and seeking the highest possible sum. Rather, when good conflicts with right, the former is to receive no weight whatsoever. Similarly, Scanlon denies that well-being (that is, what is good from an individual's point of view) is a 'master value', and assumes instead that the reasons that deserve the greatest weight in our deliberations are those based on moral rightness and wrongness. According to this way of thinking, pointing out that an act accomplishes what is good for someone is only one of several possible ways of justifying it. What one does might do no good for anyone and still be justified, because it is the morally right thing to do.

One might wonder whether Rawls's thesis that the right and the good are the two main concepts of moral philosophy is too simple a picture, because it slights or overlooks normative features no less important than they. Bernard Williams, for example, uses the label 'thin' for such notions as right and good, and proposes that more careful study be devoted to such 'thick' practical concepts as courage, honesty and justice, because of the way they are guided by empirical description. 'Virtue ethics' is sometimes conceived as a rejection of right and good as the controlling factors of ethical life, and an affirmation of virtue concepts as equal or perhaps even superior notions. Plato would not approve: he insists upon asking whether justice is good, and in doing so implies that the virtues must be shown to be virtues by an account that explains why it is good for those who possess them to have such qualities.

To make progress on these matters, we need, among other things, a satisfactory understanding of what is good and what it is for something to be good. There is now widespread agreement, as I have noted, that conation – wanting, planning, aiming and the like – is a central ingredient in the construction of someone's good. I will therefore call a

'conative conception of good' any member of a family of theories that holds that the entirety or a portion of what is good for someone is the satisfaction of his desires, or the achievement of his goals, or at least those that are rational, or are based on full knowledge of the facts, or would survive due deliberation. That is the conception of what is good for a human being that can be found in Sidgwick, and it is adopted by Rawls, who regards it as common ground between himself and his utilitarian opponents. Something along these lines has found favor among many other outstanding philosophers who have written about the good under the heading of 'welfare' or 'well-being' – Richard Brandt, James Griffin and L. W. Sumner among them. The kind of theory they oppose (what Derek Parfit calls an 'objective list theory') can be found in Moore and Ross: those earlier twentieth-century philosophers simply posit a list of items – pleasure, virtue, knowledge, friendship, and so on – and affirm that possessing those items is good; the satisfaction of desires, or of rational desires, is not on their list, nor are any related notions, like the achievement of aims, or of rational aims.

I have no wish to defend the kind of approach that Moore and Ross took, but neither do I accept the conative approach that has become so common. The thesis I would like to defend is that what is good for someone is a constituent or contributor to that person's *flourishing*. (My debt to Aristotle will be obvious; but I also give credit to Elizabeth Anscombe, for her revival of this concept.) I propose a second thesis as well: all practical justification depends, in some way or other, on a conception of what it is for someone to flourish. Properly understood, then, Plato's doctrine of the sovereignty of good is correct. This entails that there is something misguided in Kantian ethical theories. Their opposition to utilitarianism is to be applauded, but they throw out the baby with the bathwater. They properly reject the thesis that we must maximize something, but their elevation of rightness over goodness is based on a misunderstanding of what goodness is.

The concept that I claim to be fundamental for practical thought is the concept of G being good *for* S. I emphasize the word 'for' that follows 'good'. What is good for S is what is a benefit for S, an advantage for S, something that makes S better off, makes his life go better. Moore and Ross have no interest in this notion – in fact, Moore finds it unintelligible. He thinks it makes no more sense to talk about what is good for someone than to talk about what exists for someone. Surely he is wrong about that. Just as surely, the question 'what is good for someone?' deserves philosophical attention, and answers to it play some role in everyone's practical thinking. Parents typically care about what is good for their children, and many people have more than a passing interest in what is good for themselves. We can have no notion

of when people's interests conflict, unless we have a theory about what it is for G to be in the interest of, or good for, S. That, of course, does not by itself show that what is good for someone is the fundamental notion of ethics. But it should be clear that this is not a concept that ethical theory can afford to ignore – as Moore and Ross do.

It is important not to be misled by the word 'for' that occurs in the phrase 'G is good for S.' It does not allude, as is sometimes supposed, to the perspective or point of view of S. Of course, the word 'for' sometimes can be used in this way. 'For Berkeley, all objects are made of ideas' means that this is what he thought, what his point of view was. But 'for' has many other uses. 'That sweater is not right for you' does not mean that it is not right, according to you; but that it does not suit you – it is not so matched with you as to fit you well or to look good on you. That is the sense of 'for' in 'good for' as well. When I say that excessive drying is not good for orchids, the 'for' of 'good for' does not advert to the perspective of orchids, because they have none, but refers to the unsuitability of those conditions. When it is said that G is good for S, the truth of that claim depends in part on the nature of the G, the nature of S, and the nature of the relationship that is claimed to hold between them. What that relationship is does not vary each time the relata change, but remains the same throughout. 'Oats are good for horses' and 'knowledge is good for human beings' affirm the same relationship between oats and horses and between knowledge and human beings. So, 'knowledge is good for human beings' does not claim that, from the point of view of human beings – from something within them, such as their desires and goals, that gives them a perspective on the world – knowledge is good. A conative theory therefore finds no grounding in the very meaning of the concept of G being good for S.

We can also see, from this analysis of 'good for', that if knowledge is not good for horses, that must be due to the nature of knowledge, or the nature of horses, or both. To find out what is good for the members of a certain species, you must know something about the nature of that species. That is precisely what Moore and Ross ignore or deny. We find no statements in *Principia Ethica* or *The Right and the Good* about the human good, because Moore and Ross are opposed to grounding any evaluations or practical conclusions on facts about the natural world. By contrast, Plato, Aristotle and ancient schools in general propose a general picture of what the human soul is like, and ground their conceptions of what is good for us on those pictures. It is hard to see how else one could proceed. A theory about what is good for poets must depend on some conception of what poets and poetry are; a more general theory – one that applies not only to poets but to human beings,

by virtue of their being human beings – must draw upon some conception of human nature.

I offer two other remarks about the expression 'G is good for S', before moving to the question of what in fact is good for human beings. First, we should recognize a difference between saying that G is good for S and saying that it is a good thing that P. To say that it is a good thing that P is merely to affirm that the occurrence or truth of P should be entered on the positive side of the ledger of practical reasoning. It is not to say anything about why it should be entered there. It might be claimed, for example, that it is a good thing that wrongdoers are punished: that does not mean that it is good for wrongdoers that they are punished, or good for anyone else. By contrast, to say that it is good for a wrongdoer that he is being punished is to give a specific kind of reason why it is a good thing that he is punished. It is to say: his being punished is to his advantage, and that is why he should be punished. To use Scanlon's terminology (to make a point he denies), to talk about what is good for someone is not to 'pass the buck'; rather, it is to advance a kind of reason in favour of some action.

My second linguistic remark is that whenever it is said that G is good for S, this can be rephrased so that it reads: it is good for S that P. Sometimes such rephrasing is the only way to make clear what is being affirmed. Suppose I say to you: 'It is good for you to stay with your children tonight.' That leaves it unclear whether I am saying that for you to stay with your children is good for you or for your children or for some third party. That unclarity can be resolved by reformulation: 'It is good for you that you are staying with your children tonight' is not particularly beautiful English, but it is the sort of formulation that philosophers love, because it disambiguates. I will continue to use the simpler schema 'G is good for S' in much of what I say, but everything said in this way could be formulated differently. 'Knowledge is good for human beings' means that it is good for human beings that they know.

With that much said, let us return to the conative approach to human well-being. It is a family of theories that maintain that what is good for human beings is the satisfaction of their desires, or achievement of their aims, or those among their desires and aims that are rational, or informed, or would survive careful reflection. The first point to note about this approach is its lack of generality. It does not seek a general theory of what it is for G to be good for S, for any arbitrarily selected S. Rather, it selects one particular kind of S – human beings – and proposes a theory about what is good for them. In doing so, it overlooks the appealing and reasonable idea that we should fit a theory about human well-being into a larger framework that accounts for the well-being of all living things whatsoever. 'What is good for plants and

animals?' is a fair question, and if we find our answers falling into a pattern, that pattern may recommend itself to us when we ask the same sort of question about human beings.

Now ask this question: what is good for a human infant? The answer we would all be inclined to give is: 'to grow, to develop physically and psychologically, to function properly, to successfully go through the life cycle of a healthy human being, to flourish'. That is very close to the answer we would give to the question 'what is good for any living being?' It differs only in that for most organisms we would drop the word 'psychologically'. Furthermore, we have no temptation to say that what is good for a newborn baby is to achieve her aims or satisfy her desires. These conative states are simply too rudimentary to play an important role in our conception of what is in a baby's interests. A baby has no goals or aims; she does have desires, but she has no desire for many of the things that are good for her, because she does not yet have the necessary concepts. She does not want to grow, to be loved, to learn – although this is what is good for her, not merely as a means to further ends, but because these constitute the proper functioning of a healthy human being.

Even when we choose an adult human being as our subject, and ask what is good for him or her, the conative theory faces serious difficulties. Consider a doctor who is indifferent to his own physical health, strength, stamina and pain. He knows a great deal about what health is and what it requires, but what he wants and aims at is the health of his patients, not his own. There is no irrationality here, no lack of information, and we may suppose, no lack of deliberation or reflection. A conative theory will therefore have to say that if his health suffers as a result of his indifference, that is no loss to him, because this is not something he wants or aims at. But it seems far more reasonable to describe such a doctor as someone who is indifferent to one component of his well-being.

Conversely, a conative theory must say that if someone rationally, thoughtfully and expertly aims at destroying his physical health, strength or robustness, or seeks to inflict pain on himself, then it must be good for him to succeed.

Consider a different sort of example: suppose someone's desires and aims are highly imitative. He waits until he sees what someone else, perhaps his father or his favourite brother, seeks; and then he does likewise. He has a dominant aim: to be like that other person. The conative approach holds that if he succeeds in this aim, and all of the subordinate desires he forms, in imitation of his father or brother, are satisfied, then all is going well for him. But how can we accept this conclusion, since we know nothing about the content of the desires and

aims of the person he is imitating? Might he not be imitating a person whose goals are foolish and worthless? The conative theory will have an air of plausibility if we think of human beings as mature, knowledgeable, independent, self-governing, reflective, informed and so on. The possession of these characteristics is likely to prevent the formation of foolish and worthless goals, and when someone meets these conditions, it is likely that he is in a better position than others to know what is good for himself. But that is because there is such a thing as what is good for him, independently of the formation of his desires and plans.

I turn now to the alternative that I would like to put in place of the conative approach. It is obvious that flourishing is a good thing – good for the thing that is flourishing. We can talk about a flourishing (that is, thriving) business or legal practice, but it is primarily a biological phenomenon: above all, it is plants, animals and human beings that flourish, when conditions are favorable. They do so by developing properly and fully, that is, by growing, maturing, making full use of the potentialities, capacities and faculties that (under favorable conditions) they naturally have at an early stage of their existence. Anything that impedes that development or the exercise of those mature faculties – disease, the sapping of vigor and strength, injuries, the loss of organs – is bad for them.

To say that something or someone is flourishing is both to evaluate and to describe it, her, or him. 'S is flourishing' entails 'S is doing well', and when S is a living thing 'S is doing well' entails 'S is flourishing.' But 'flourish' has rich empirical implications that are absent from the more abstract and non-biological term 'doing well'. If you say that S is flourishing, your statement will be put into grave doubt if it is then pointed out to you that S is sick, weak, mutilated, injured, stunted. Nothing so seriously impeded is flourishing. And therefore nothing so seriously impeded is doing well.

These statements, at any rate, are unobjectionable, when they are made about non-human beings. Do they not hold, however, in the human case as well? Consider someone who is *physically* sick, weak, mutilated, injured, stunted; he might nonetheless be in full possession of his *psychological* powers. If he is, his physical condition need not prevent us from saying that, on balance, he is flourishing and doing well, despite his physical disadvantages. The statement that a human being is fully flourishing is thrown into doubt if he is correctly described either as *psychologically* or as *physically* unhealthy, weak, damaged and stunted. Certainly, if he suffers from *both* kinds of disabilities, the claim that he is flourishing, or that he is doing well, is impossible to sustain. For human beings, no less than other living things, it is always good to

flourish; and if a human being is flourishing in all ways, both physical and psychological, he is doing very well indeed. In fact, it is difficult to conceive how he could do better than that.

Human flourishing, I have said, requires not merely the development of physical powers, but of psychological powers as well. Which powers are these? Using the categories of common sense, we can say at least this much: a flourishing human being is one who possesses, develops, and enjoys the exercise of cognitive, affective, sensory and social powers (no less than physical powers). Those, in broadest outline and roughly speaking, are the components of human well-being.

We take for granted not only a static classification of the faculties that are good for each human being to have, but also a dynamic and normative story about how a human life should go, from the earliest days through maturity and into old age, when it is a life that is good for the person who is living it. It is good for us to receive loving attention as children, to acquire linguistic competence and the ability to communicate with others, to grow physically and make use of our sensory capacities, to mature sexually, to learn the complex social skills of adulthood, to enrich and develop greater mastery over our emotions, to learn how to assess reasons and deliberate with an independent and open mind, and thus to interact with others as full members of the community. It is good for our powers of perception, natural curiosity about our environment, and receptivity to beauty to grow. When we are children, it is good for us to develop the ability to form bonds of friendship, to enjoy the company of others, and to devote ourselves to the well-being of others.

The central principle of the conception of well-being that I am proposing is that everything that is good for someone either promotes or is part of his flourishing. That holds true, I believe, for every subject whatsoever – even for artifacts. What is good for an artifact like a car is what promotes flourishing – not the flourishing of the car, of course (since there is no such thing), but the flourishing of human beings. Other artifacts promote the flourishing of animals or plants: an animal shelter, or a greenhouse, for example. By contrast, what is good for a living being, as opposed to an artifact, is what promotes or is part of the flourishing of that same living thing. The good of an artifact looks to the good of something beyond it. Not so for living things: in their case, what is good for S is the flourishing of S, or what leads to it. I also propose that when S is a human being, nothing is non-instrumentally good unless it is enjoyed. Learning a branch of mathematics, for example, is not on its own good for anyone; but if one enjoys such learning, then doing so is good, because it develops or activates one's cognitive powers. Pleasure on its own is not good, but when it takes as

its object one of the elements of flourishing, that complex whole is precisely what is good for a human being.

This barest of sketches requires elaboration, but rather than undertake this task, I will call attention to one of its limitations. Even if we knew everything there is to know about what is best for every being whatsoever, having such a theory would not by itself tell us anything at all about what to do. Before we can act with a view to the good, we have to determine not only what is good, but *whose* good we should aim at. A theory of well-being does not itself contain an answer to that question.

Utilitarianism is one familiar way to fill this gap. It is really two theories rolled into one: it tells us both what is good, and whose good to care about. Most utilitarians do not restrict the universe of beings whose good is to be promoted to human beings. There is such a thing as what is good and what is bad for an animal, and so when we maximize the good, we must not neglect the brutes. But if it is really what is good for S, whoever the S may be, that the utilitarian promotes, then the good of plants must not be neglected. I take that to be an embarrassment for the utilitarian. Forests, I believe, should not be wantonly destroyed, because they contain living things; but the fact that it would be good for a plant to be rid of a disease does not by itself give any human being a reason to do anything. Gardeners love tending to their gardens, but it is for the good of human beings (and perhaps animals as well) that we tend to the plant world. That is because the only kind of good a plant can have is inferior by far to the kinds of goods that human beings can enjoy. When a human being grows to the full height and weight that proper nourishment allows, and is free of physical disease, he attains the kind of good that a plant too is capable of. But if that were the only kind of good human beings could have, our lives would be far less rich than they are. That is all that plants can achieve – and it is not enough to make it worthwhile for us to take action merely in order to make them better off. There are much better things for us to do.

Since utilitarianism is not a satisfactory way of answering the question ‘Whose good is one to promote?’, what should we put in its place, as the correct answer to this question? Certainly not egoism. There is no reason why the only being with whom S should have a direct concern is S. In fact, it is no defect to lack a direct concern with oneself, but to care for oneself only because doing so helps one minister to others.

Inspired by the work of Thomas Nagel, many philosophers who reject utilitarianism nonetheless believe that a portion of that theory’s universal concern should be preserved. The utilitarian, according to this way of thinking, is wrong to suppose that the total amount of pain

in the universe should be minimized, but right to claim that we have reason to minimize each person's pain, or each animal's pain, simply because the occurrence of pain is a bad thing. But that assumes that if B is bad for S, there must be someone who has reason to do something about B, or to want B not to happen – the only question being: who has that reason? Merely S? Or everyone? Or something between these extremes? But many bad things happen – the diseases of plants, for example – that no one has reason to do anything about. Even when the bad thing in question is pain, there may be no reason for the person who feels it to want it to stop – that desire may only make the pain worse.

Since utilitarianism, egoism, and other general attempts to answer the question 'Whose good should one promote?' are unsatisfactory, we should infer that this is one of those overly abstract questions that philosophy should stop trying to answer. Whose good someone should promote is a matter that varies enormously according to circumstance, temperament, training and so on. If you have made a promise that should be kept, then there is a certain good that you should deliver, and someone to whom you should deliver it. You have voluntarily taken on a certain social role, and you owe it to this person to deliver that particular good. If you are a parent, then you occupy a rather more long-standing social role, and the kinds of goods you are responsible for delivering, and the people to whom they should be delivered, are elements of that role. If you are in the vicinity of someone in great danger, you should give some assistance. If you are trained and employed as a doctor, you have carved out a different terrain of goods and recipients of goods. And so on. The social world into which we are trained or fall offers us endless ways of doing what is good for others and for ourselves. There is no need for philosophy to try to rethink all of this from the ground up, by devising some formula that abstracts from social roles and tells us, quite apart from them, whose good we should be serving. That does not mean that our current division of labour is sacrosanct. It is legitimate to ask: should there be professional politicians, professional athletes, professional philosophers? The answers must be found by seeing whether these roles enhance or detract from the well-being of those who occupy them and those whom they supposedly serve. Even the family is fair game: if we could devise a system of caring for children that would be better for them than the one we commonly use, which relies heavily on the love of biological parents, that would be worth considering.

Social norms and moral rules are other ways of protecting certain goods or diminishing harms. Whenever it is claimed that a certain kind of act is morally wrong, we expect there to be a feature of the act that

grounds its moral wrongness. When one wants to condemn an act, it is not enough to say that it violates a socially accepted norm or rule. The rule that is cited can always be called into question, and so it must be shown to be a good rule. One way to do this – the only way, I believe – is to show that the rule serves some element of human flourishing, and its violation would undermine the good in question. To take a small but especially clear example: the codes of academic honesty adopted by universities are good rules because of the good they protect. Students cannot develop the elements of well-being that universities promote – creativity, imagination, understanding, knowledge – without such codes. The rules against cheating are in a sense categorical imperatives because the case for obeying them does not depend on the desires of those who are expected to abide by them, or for that matter of those who enforce them. Kant was right to insist that morality cannot be regarded as an instrumental means to individual or collective happiness. A student is not released from his duty to comply with the code of academic honesty by citing the unhappiness it brings him. But it would be a mistake to leap, from this concession to Kant, to the conclusion that social rules can be evaluated in a way that entirely bypasses a theory of human well-being. The most familiar examples of wrongdoing – killing, torture, rape, slavery – have devastating consequences for the well-being of their victims. Conversely, when an act does no harm to anyone, or threatens no harm, and is no offence against a just allocation of good and harm, no case against it can be made. If, for example, I promise my wife to give up smoking, and we both discover that smoking is actually quite healthy, the reason for me to keep my promise has disappeared, because the point of making the promise has been lost.

The example of chattel slavery is worth discussing more fully. There is now a universal consensus that we are well rid of this institution, or would be well rid of it (for something similar to the old systems of chattel slavery persists in some places). But precisely what is the objection to slavery? To say that it is morally wrong to own slaves is not illuminating, because we want to know what feature of slavery justifies calling it morally wrong. One answer that leaps to mind is that it is unjust. When that answer is more fully developed, by attaching itself to Rawls's theory of justice, it amounts to the claim that slavery violates the principles that would be chosen by the free and equal persons who occupy the original position. But that way of answering our question is disappointing, because it takes the moral illegitimacy of the master–slave relationship as one of its starting points. The parties in the original position are equals; none has an attitude of subservience to the others, or occupies an inferior decision-making position. It is not

surprising that the principles they choose to regulate their common social institutions leave no room for slavery. Those who have the moral psychology of free and equal persons, and who view the standard political liberties as goods that must be secured, will agree to a system of liberties that rule out slavery.

But that makes the case against slavery circular, and it employs too few resources in its condemnation. For it overlooks the most important fact about slavery, a fact that cannot be ignored in any normative discussion of that institution: slavery, at least in its most typical forms, is extremely bad for slaves. A conative conception of well-being does not adequately explain why this is so. According to this way of thinking, if slaves expected little from their lives, and achieved what little they wanted, there was nothing in their lives that was bad. And if, as a matter of historical fact, they wanted more than they had, it remains the case that slavery would not have been bad for them, had they wanted less. But when we think of what is good and bad in terms of flourishing and its opposite, the case against slavery is precisely the one that is now widely acknowledged: many of the central ingredients of a flourishing life were denied to slaves. Typically, a slave's cognitive powers – to make important decisions, to read and write, to learn – were not allowed to develop; his affective and social life were vulnerable to severe disruption; the physical labour he engaged in was menial; he was vulnerable to disease and physical dangers.

It might be objected: if we are making the case against slavery by considering all of the harm it did to slaves, we should not overlook the question of whether slavery did any good for anyone. The utilitarian insists that we ask that question. One way to react against utilitarianism is to insist that we not look at slavery from the perspective of good and harm at all, but base our condemnation of it on grounds that are entirely different. But that would be too drastic a reaction, because it would not allow the grave harms of slavery to figure in our thinking. Instead, we should think along the following lines: first, we can ask what the alleged benefits of slavery were. If there were any, they must be counted as benefits by a satisfactory theory of well-being. The wealth and power that some accumulated as a result of slavery cannot be counted as things that were good for those who possessed them, unless wealth and power are necessary means to or ingredients of a flourishing life. Second, even if some benefited from slavery, we are not forced to ask whether the benefits to some outweighed the losses of others. Since we are not utilitarians, we can say that the distribution of benefits and burdens was unjust: some people endured all of the burdens, and others enjoyed all of the benefits – what benefits there were.

To be sensitive to considerations of justice in one's thinking is to recognize that sometimes if one does what is good for one person one should also do good for others as well. This is why a parent of two children should not devote all of his love and attention to only one of them. Similarly, a business that offers certain benefits to its heterosexual partners should make those benefits available to its homosexual partners. Justice is an appropriate distribution of benefits and burdens: it is part of our way of answering the question 'Whose good should I promote?', and it does so by calling attention to the pattern and not merely the quantity of good.

Rawls, by contrast, does not think of justice as a consideration that must be taken into account, when we do what is good, but rather as a factor that should be given priority over the good. He takes a conative conception of the good to be common ground between his system of thought and that of the utilitarian. Justice, so conceived, does not consist in the proper distribution of what is non-instrumentally good (namely the satisfaction of rational desire) but in the distribution of items regarded as good for the purpose of choosing principles that govern basic social institutions. When we assess the justice of our institutions, we are not to ask what in fact is good for the people who live under them, what is bad, and whether there is some proper balance in all of that. We look rather to what is right, and this is a matter of what would be chosen. If an institution is unjust, it simply does not matter how much good it does or how little harm: we are not to take these considerations into account at all. For Rawls, even if slavery did nothing but good for masters and slaves, because each member of the social hierarchy achieved his aims, it is a system that should be dismantled, because it would be rejected in the original position.

Rawls's conception of the constituents of well-being requires him to downgrade its practical significance, and to put some other consideration in its place as the factor that must have our first allegiance in practical reasoning. He thinks it is good for people to get whatever it is that they want – so long as their desires pass some simple tests of rationality. But he sees what the utilitarian does not, that the good, so conceived, must not be assigned a role in the design of our most far-reaching social institutions. If masters want to dominate, and slaves want to be submissive, so be it: that is what is good for both of them. The critique of their institution must be based on its wrongness, not on anything to do with the good or harm it does.

It is more plausible to say that the case against slavery has everything to do with the great harm it does, and to work with a theory of well-being that explains what it is about slavery that is so harmful. If we have a satisfactory theory of what is good and what is bad – if we think of

it in terms of flourishing – we will not be tempted to look for something to elevate above these sorts of considerations, that is, to figure in our reasoning as an entirely separate and higher source of justification.

Rawls sees the priority of justice in political deliberations as part of a general pattern: justice, as he sees it, is one component of moral rightness. The rules of justice are only some of the rules that would be adopted in the original position. So he affirms not merely the priority of justice but the priority of the right over the good. When one breaks a promise that should be kept, or wantonly kills another person, or breaks some other moral rule without adequate justification, one's act shares with slavery the property of moral wrongness – the property that consists in being a violation of a rule that would be chosen by certain kinds of people. But our reflections about slavery raise the question whether there really is such a property – that is, whether we need to think with that concept, if we are to guide our thinking well. Once one has seen how much harm slavery does, and how little good, and how maldistributed these factors are, the entire case against slavery has been made. One does not need to add: 'and slavery is also morally wrong' – if that is meant as an additional reason why we are well rid of slavery. The same point applies to breaking a promise, wanton killing, and the like. To reason well about what we should do, we need to know what is good, better, best; what is bad, worse, worst; and we need to know whose good we should be serving. We can use 'morally wrong' as a designation for certain kinds of acts that people should generally not engage in, because of the harm they do. But it is not the name of a sort of consideration that operates in a way that is entirely independent of what is good or bad.

I conclude that Plato was, in a way, right. Although practical reasoning has many concepts at its disposal, properly adverting to what one person owes another, to considerations of merit, reciprocity, justice, virtue and so on, there is unity as well as diversity in all justified practical thinking. The conceptual tools we bring to bear on practical life are not a hodgepodge, but are focused on a central theme. Good must be 'thickened' by being interpreted as the flourishing of a living thing – that is the contribution of Aristotle – and then we must test everything we do and care about by asking: what is the good of that?

8

IS PLATO'S CONCEPTION OF THE FORM OF THE GOOD CONTRADICTORY?

Gerhard Seel

One thing is sure: we don't know what Plato's conception of the Form of the Good was, exactly. If we knew, the fourth A. G. Leventis conference would probably not have taken place, and if it had the papers given would have looked quite different. However, as is well known, Plato gave us some indications of how he conceived of the Form of the Good. For what we find in the *Republic* in the three famous figures or similes, i.e., those of the Sun, the Line and the Cave, is a kind of wanted poster we can use in order to identify the Form of the Good.

Wanted posters normally contain a certain number of characteristic features of the individual being looked for. And if these features taken together are sufficiently specific there should be – in the ideal case – only one individual who corresponds to the given description. However, imagine that the characteristics the police have at their disposal aren't consistent. In this case they have no chance of running a successful investigation. Now, exactly this seems to be the situation we find ourselves in when we start our investigation of Plato's Form of the Good, or so some scholars in the field believe. In order to see whether there is such a contradiction in Plato's characterization of the Form of the Good, let me first give a summary of these characteristics.[1]

I wrote the paper from which this chapter derives during my stay at the Centro di Studi Ligure per le Arti e le Lettere in Bogliasco, near Genoa, in spring 2005. I wish to thank the Center and its Foundation for supporting this research project.

1 Santas 1983 did something similar, giving a list of the main characteristics of the Form of the Good we find in the *Republic*.

I PLATO'S WANTED POSTER

1 Characteristics established on the basis of Plato's *Republic* without any use of the similes

I Characteristics concerning the knowledge of the Form of the Good

1 The Form of the Good is the greatest object of study (*megiston mathêma*) (505A).

1.1 Without knowing in virtue of what just and beautiful things are good it is impossible to know these things themselves (506A).

1.2 The knowledge of all other things is useless without the knowledge of the Form of the Good (505A–B).

1.2.1 Nobody will care for just and beautiful things if he does not know that they are good things (506A).

1.2.2 Someone who wants to conduct his private or public affairs intelligently/prudently (*emphronôs*) must have knowledge of the Form of the Good (517C).

1.2.3 The city-state will be perfectly well organized if the persons who are in charge know that just and beautiful things are good (506B).

1.3 Nobody has sufficient knowledge of the Form of the Good (505E), not even Socrates (505A, 506C).

1.3.1 Socrates has a belief about the Form of the Good (506E).

1.4 The analogue of the Form of the Good according to the three similes (those of the Sun, the Line and the Cave) is characterized as the 'offspring' of 'the Good itself' and 'very similar' to it (506E, 507A). Compare also 517C.

II Characteristics concerning the axiological role of the Form of the Good

2 The Form of the Good or the Good itself is one form in comparison with the many good things and is the principle that determines what each of the many (good) things is (507B).

2.1 The Form of the Good is the principle that makes just things, and the things used in order to establish them, useful and beneficial (*chrêsima kai ôphelima*) (505A).

2.2 No gain is useful and beneficial without the Form of the Good (505B).

2.3 Without the possession of good things no possession is beneficial (505B).

3 We do all things we do for the sake of good things (505E).
 3.1 No one is content with any possession that is only apparently good, but everybody seeks the really good things (505D).

2 Characteristics of the Form of the Good established on the basis of the three similes

A The Sun

4 The Form of the Good is the source of a medium that establishes a link between our faculty of knowing and the things known by that faculty (508C–E, 509A).
 4.1 This medium is called 'truth' and 'reality' (*on*) (508D).

5 The Form of the Good is the cause of our possession of the faculty of knowing (508E, 509A).
 5.1 Knowledge and truth resemble goodness, but are not identical with it.

6 The objects of knowledge in the realm of the thinkable owe their existence (*einai*) and their essence (*ousia*) to the Form of the Good (509B).

7 The Form of the Good is not an essence, but is situated beyond the essence (*ousia*) because of its majesty and power (509B). Compare, however:
 7.1 The Form of the Good is the brightest of beings (*tou ontos*) (518C).

8 On the scale of value the Form of the Good occupies the highest ranking, higher than knowledge and truth (508E–509A) and higher than being (*ousia*) (509B).

B The Line

We cannot be sure that the simile of the Line adds a new element to the already established characteristics of the Form of the Good, though the simile is meant to complete the comparison between the Sun and the Form of the Good (509C). Actually neither the Sun nor the Form of the Good is mentioned in that simile. As (a) the simile of the line clarifies the relations among the realm of the objects of the senses and the objects of thought and the specific ways we come to know them, and (b) the Sun is a part of the former and the Form of the Good is a part of the latter, the Form of the Good must be situated somewhere in the latter realm. However, it is impossible to decide on the basis of the simile of the Line where exactly it is situated. Some scholars[2] have identified the Form of the Good with the non-hypothetical principle of all,

2 Cf. Ferber 1989; Santos, 1983: 252–6.

reached by the dialectical method and grasped by reason itself (*autos ho logos*) (510B, 511B). This is doubtful; however, if we admit this conjecture we may add one further characteristic of the Form of the Good:

9 The Form of the Good is the highest principle presupposed by everything else and having no other entity as its principle (511B).
  9.1 The Form of the Good can be known following the dialectical method, i.e., by asking in each case what is presupposed in order to accept a hypothesis made by a science (511B).
  9.2 Taking the Form of the Good as starting point, reason can reconstruct and 'deduce', as it were, all the former hypotheses (511B).

C The Cave

The simile of the Cave does not give us much new information on the Form of the Good, because in the part concerning this topic it is a kind of enlargement of what has already been said in the simile of the Sun. Most of the new elements in the allegory of the Cave concern our way of knowing the Form of the Good.

10 The knowledge of the intelligible world is not our 'normal' way of knowing.
  10.1 In order to get knowledge of the intelligible world we must turn our minds away from the things in the sensible world (515E).
  10.2 The first attempt to know the things of the intelligible world is painful and unsuccessful (515E–516A).
  10.3 This is so because the medium necessary for the knowledge of those things, i.e., truth and reality, is so strong that it 'overwhelms' our faculty of knowing (515E–516A).
  10.4 Therefore we need a gradual adaptation to the new situation starting from the objects placed at the beginning of the third section of the Line, continuing with those placed in the fourth section of the Line and ending with the knowledge of the Form of the Good itself (516A–B517B).
11 We are able to know the Form of the Good itself by itself (516B).
  11.1 We are able to know the place the Form of the Good occupies in the intelligible world (*en têi hautou chôrai*) (516B).
  11.2 We are able finally to reach conclusions about it (516B). These conclusions are as follows:

13 The Form of the Good is the principle of the order and organization of everything in the intelligible world (516B).
14 The Form of the Good is in a certain way the cause (*aition*) of all things in the intelligible world (516B).
15 The Form of the Good is the cause (*aitia*) of everything that is right and fine (517C).
16 The Form of the Good produces the sun and the light in the visible world (517C).
17 The Form of the Good is the master (*kuria*) of the intelligible world; as such it provides truth and knowledge (517C).

II USING PLATO'S WANTED POSTER

1 The criticism

This is – in outline – the wanted poster for the Form of the Good that Plato gives us in the *Republic*. As we have seen, it is rather long. Nevertheless, when we try to use it we see that it is far from allowing a doubt-free identification of the entity we are looking for, and, what is worse, it seems to be contradictory. These real or apparent shortcomings gave rise to severe criticism of Plato's theory by ancient and modern philosophers concerning the following points:

1. Plato affirms that the Form of the Good is the aim of human action.[3] However, the Form of the Good is empty and therefore it cannot be the aim of human action.
2. Plato holds that the Form of the Good has effects in the sensible world. However, the Form of the Good belongs to the intelligible world and therefore cannot have causal effects in the sensible world.
3. Plato says that the Form of the Good can be known by the intellect (*nous*). He affirms also that only what exists can be known. He affirms further that the Form of the Good lies 'beyond the essence'. If this means that it has no existence, he runs into a clear inconsistency.[4]
4. On the other hand, Plato calls the Form of the Good the 'most brilliant of all beings'. This would guarantee its knowability, but at the price of contradicting the former thesis that it is 'beyond the essence'.
5. However, Plato has to affirm that the Form of the Good is 'beyond the essence' to avoid another contradiction. In fact – as

3 Ferber 1989: 51 holds this.
4 Halfwassen 1992: 221f. calls it the 'most sublime paradox'.

> Ferber has argued[5] – if the Form of the Good were an essence (*ousia*) superior to the essence (*ousia*) of the being, the higher class, i.e., the 'Form of the Good', would contain itself as lower class. This, however, leads to a contradiction analogous to the set-theoretical paradox discovered by Russell.[6]

Let me try to explain and – as far as possible – rebut these criticisms point by point.

2 Can the Form of the Good function as the aim of human action?

In the famous passage in *Nichomachean Ethics*, A.4. 1096B34, Aristotle already made the objection that Plato's Form of the Good could not be the aim of human striving and acting. He actually tried to catch Plato on the horns of a dilemma. Either nothing other than the Idea of the Good is good in itself – in which case the Idea of the Good in itself is empty and therefore cannot be the aim of human striving – or things like intelligence, sight, certain pleasures and honors are also good in themselves. Then the definition of the concept of good must be an identical part of the definitions of these goods. But Aristotle had already shown that this is not the case.

Ever since, this objection has been repeated time and again.[7] However, none of these critics makes the slightest effort to prove that Plato himself conceived of the Form of the Good as empty. They seem to take this for granted. We shall come back to this question later in this chapter.

However, this is not the decisive point in the present debate; what is decisive rather is the question of whether Plato ever meant the Form of the Good to be an aim to strive towards. Aristotle is silent on this point. He seems to admit that Plato could have meant that the Form of the Good is not itself the aim of human striving but a pattern that allows us to recognize the possible aims of our actions as goods.

Some of today's philosophers have no doubts that Plato holds that the Form of the Good is an aim. Ferber, for instance, affirms that 'according to Plato as well the Good is *telos* (*Gorg*. 499E) and *skopos* (519C)' (my translation).[8] Though in the former passage we find literally the thesis that 'the Good is the *telos* (aim) of all actions', I do not think that this can be used to back Ferber's position. For it is more than doubtful that here Plato is talking about the Form of the Good. It is

5 Ferber 2003: 135–7.

6 Cf. Ferber 1989: 62.

7 E.g., Cross and Woozley, [1964] 1980: 260; Popper 1970: ch. 8, n.32; Ferber 1998: 53, where Ferber calls this objection a 'nontrivial truth'.

8 Ferber 1989: 51.

more plausible that he is using the term in the same sense as he does in the immediately following passage, where he says that 'it seems that we have to do everything somehow for the sake of good things (*heneka tôn agathôn*)' and 'For the sake of the good things must we (do) the other things' (500A). This suggests that in the former passage as well 'the Good' refers to a good thing, i.e., something that is good in the sensible world.

The passages from the *Republic* quoted by Ferber in support of his thesis (505D–E, 519C) do not back his position either. In the first passage Plato says that people who do not have knowledge of the Form of the Good do not have a single target for their actions, but this does not imply that the Form of the Good functions itself as this target. In the latter passage (519C) Plato says that the future rulers of the city should be forced to strive to see the Good, not to gain it. So Plato never says that the Form of the Good is the aim of human striving.[9] It has a different role in the establishment of the overall aim of our private and public affairs.[10] Which one, we shall see in our next paragraph.

3 How can the Form of the Good have causal effects in the sensible world?

Plato emphasizes that the Form of the Good has effects in the sensible world. According to (15) in the list of characteristics above, it is the cause of everything that is right and fine in the sensible world; according to (15) and (16), it is the cause (*aition*) of the sun and its light; and according to (5) it is the cause of our possession of the faculty of knowing. On the other hand it is characterized as an entity that belongs to the intelligible world. How can something intelligible have effects in the sensible world, given the strict separation of the two worlds?[11]

The obvious answer to this question is that the Form of the Good is – in Aristotelian terms – the formal cause of the good things in the sensible world. More precisely, it is the formal cause of the goodness of other forms that function in turn as the formal causes of good things.[12]

9 The story could be different concerning the Form of Beauty. For in the *Symposium* Plato seems to argue that we strive for Beauty. However, as Beauty is finally something to look at and to admire (*Symposium* 211B–D), in this case as well we do not find the thesis that the Form of Beauty is something human beings should realize in their actions.

10 In this point I agree with Ebert 1974: 140–2.

11 How strong this separation is conceived of is a point of debate among scholars. Ferber holds that the separation is radical throughout the dialogues; Sayre and Frede see a weakening of Plato's position in the later dialogues.

12 As we see in *Nichomachean Ethics* 1096B, Aristotle already envisaged this interpretation of Plato's theory.

We will return to this point later. However, in order to have this function the Form of the Good depends on the cooperation of – again in Aristotelian terms – some efficient cause, i.e., a divine and or a human mind, which on the one hand is a part of the sensible world and therefore has a causal efficiency in it and which, on the other hand, has access to the intelligible world by its faculty of thinking.[13] This explains, why – as in (1.2.2), (1.2.3) and (10.1) – Plato emphasizes the importance of the knowledge of the Form of the Good so much. As we see in the *Timaeus*, the whole sensible world including the lesser gods and the humans is the work of a divine mind, which imprints intelligible forms on what Plato calls *chôra*, i.e., space as the primary matter. Thus the Form of the Good plays a role in the creation of the empirical world, and it plays a more prominent role in the creation of what is the best in this world. No doubt, the best in this world is the soul (cf. 37A). As Myles Burnyeat (2000: 51) has rightly emphasized, in the *Timaeus* the soul of the world is created according to 'an elaborate scale or attunement of 27 notes', thus establishing its harmonious structure. If – as we shall argue later – concord and attunement (*symphonia kai harmonia*) are implications of the Form of the Good, the creation of the world soul and all the other souls (*Timaeus* 41D, 43D) is guided by the Form of the Good. This explains affirmations (14) and (15).

We can also easily see how Plato thinks that the mediation of divine and human minds works. Concerning this question the fundamental thesis is theorem (3). Plato is convinced that – according to human nature – human beings aim at the realization of good things. There is, however, a difference between things that are only believed to be good (the 'apparent goods') and the things that are really good. Therefore Plato strengthens his position. According to (3.1), nobody is content with things that are only apparently good; everybody aims at things that are really good.[14] According to (2) the latter are really good because of the Form of the Good. In (2.1) Plato seems to mean that the good things are good because they participate in the Form of the Good, the latter functioning as the one form that determines what the many things participating in it are. However, as the context of the theory of justice and (2.2) indicate, this relation seems to be mediated as well. As we shall see later, there is a relation of participation in the realm of the intelligible as well. The forms (essences) – or at least certain forms like the form of justice – are good because of their participation in the Form of Good. It is, then, the participation of things

13 Cf. *Philebus* 26E–27C, where among the four genera of being thinking is characterized as efficient cause.

14 Cf. *Symposium* 204E–205A, where Plato says that a person who wants good things wants the possession of them and this possession is tantamount to happiness.

of the sensible world in the good forms that makes them what they are – for instance, just – and therefore good as well. Now, as soon as the human mind grasps the Form of the Good it is able to recognize the goodness of the good forms. This in turn enables it to distinguish the good things from the apparently good things in the sensible world, and it will strive to gain the former instead of the latter.[15] At least, this is the way most scholars explain Plato's claim that the rulers of the city need knowledge of the Form of the Good.[16]

4 Can the Form of the Good be known?

As we have just seen, in order to exercise a causal influence in the sensible world the Form of the Good must be grasped by a divine or a human mind. Consequently Plato affirms that the Form of the Good can be known (cf. (1), (10.4), (11), (11.1), (11.2)).[17] However, this affirmation is somehow qualified by the concession that so far nobody, not even Socrates, has at his disposal such knowledge (1.3). Though this is a real problem, it is not the greatest problem Plato has to cope with. In Book V (476E–477A) he makes it clear that what is (*to on*) and only what is can be known, and what is not (*to mê on*) is not knowable. He makes the same statement in the *Sophist* (262E). Now, according to (7) the Form of the Good is not an essence and lies beyond the essences. This seems to mean that the Form of the Good is not something that exists (*on*). In fact, some scholars have drawn that conclusion.[18] If they are right, Plato runs into a contradiction. For in this case he affirms the knowability of something that according to his own criteria cannot be known.[19] Now, according to 526E, 507B, 532C and 534A, the Form of the Good is something that exists. Plato calls it the 'brightest' (*phanotaton*) (518C) and the 'happiest of the beings' (*eudaimonestaton tou ontos*) (526E) and even 'the best among the beings' (*to ariston en tois ousi*) (532C). This position would of course resolve the problem of the knowability of the Form of the Good, but at the price of a new

15 This seems to be Aristotle's interpretation too. Cf. *Nichomachean Ethics*, 1096B.

16 However, if the entities of the intelligible world need a mind in order to have effects in the sensible world, the question arises where this mind comes from. Either it exists from eternity or it is created itself. If the former is the case, Plato has to admit that there is at least one eternal and never-changing being in the sensible world; if the latter, he has to face the problem of infinite regression. So the thesis that the entities of the intelligible world have effects in the sensible world gets Plato into trouble. He has a real problem here, but this is only a problem, not a contradiction.

17 Cf. Baltes 1997: I quote the text from the later publication in *Dianoemata* 1999, here p. 353. Baltes quotes further passages that confirm this point.

18 Cf. Ferber 1989.

19 Cf. again Baltes 1997 (1999: 357), who asks concerning this point 'Is this not a contradiction?', and later sets out to solve this apparent contradiction.

contradiction, i.e., the contradiction between saying that the Form of the Good is the happiest of the beings and affirming that it is not an essence (*ousia*) and consequently not something that exists.

This is one of the contradictions Rafael Ferber has found in Plato's theory. However, he transforms this contradiction into a deep insight. According to Ferber, Plato's conception of the Form of the Good as the third principle that links the knowable with the knowing subject is an effort to bridge the so-called 'split between subject and object'. But this effort has no chance of succeeding. For, according to Ferber (1989: 151–2), the bridge between subject and object is located not only beyond the object (being) but beyond the subject (thinking) as well. As soon as we try to think and to know this bridge, it is transformed into an object and therefore has to be a being. So – according to Ferber – Plato reaches here the deepest metaphysical or meta-metaphysical insight, which later gave rise to Neoplatonism and Hegelianism.

Do we need such a metaphysical interpretation in order to clear Plato from the charge of inconsistency? Everything depends on whether we accept the following five theses that underlie Ferber's interpretation:

1. In the realm of the intelligible, essences (*ousiai*) and only essences (*ousiai*) have existence, i.e., are *onta*.[20]
2. The essences (*ousiai*) participate in the Form of the Good; they are good-like (*agathoeidê*).
3. The only objects of knowledge in this realm are essences (*ousiai*).[21]
4. The aim of the dialectical method is to let us know the non-hypothetical principle of everything.[22]
5. This principle is the highest (most abstract) essence, i.e., the Form of the Good.[23]

Let us start with the examination of the last two theses.

5 What do we come to know when we follow the dialectical method?

We cannot ignore how much emphasis Plato places on the dialectical method. In the simile of the Line the dialectical method is associated with the highest form of human intelligence (*nous*) (511D–E), i.e., the knowledge of the things situated in the last section of the Line. In the *Philebus* he calls it 'a gift of the gods' (16C) and he implies (57E) that

20 Cf. Ferber 1989: 40.
21 Cf. Ferber 1989: 44, 50, 67.
22 Cf. Ferber 1989: 97.
23 Cf. Ferber 1989: 100–6.

we should not prefer any other method to dialectic, and in the *Sophist* he says that it is 'most likely the greatest' science (253C). In the *Phaedrus* as well this method receives the attribute 'divine' (266B). What does this divine method look like and what does it achieve?

In the literature we find much discussion about what this method consists of and especially whether it is applicable to eternal forms only or to generated things as well.[24] However, the last point does not interest us here, because we are only concerned with this method insofar as it is applied to the intelligible world. Most scholars agree[25] that it is nothing else than Plato's usual method of constructing a complete and adequate system of genera and species that allows each item of inquiry to be defined appropriately by bringing it under the proper concept. This excludes all confusion and allows the different items to be distinguished correctly. In the *Republic* Plato says that the dialectical method consists of an upward and a downward movement. The upward movement starts from certain hypothetically admitted concepts or definitions, for instance the definitions arithmeticians and geometers take for granted and use as the starting points of their demonstrations (510C), but instead of using them as such starting points, it asks what other, more general concepts and definitions these premises presuppose (511B, 512B). In this way it reaches more and more general concepts until it comes to a concept – or a couple of concepts – that presupposes no other concept and thus is the starting point for everything else. From this non-hypothetical highest genus the dialectician then proceeds downwards by division (*dihairesis*) until he reaches the infima species, thus reconstructing the whole system of concepts that determine everything there is (512B–C).

Where in this system lies the Form of the Good, if anywhere? It is not easy to answer this question. The traditional answer is that it is identical with the unhypothetical principle reached at the end of the upward movement.[26] However, this is not the only possible answer. In the simile of the Line the Form of the Good is not mentioned at all. However, in the seventh book, where Plato resumes the description of the dialectical method, he mentions the Form of the Good on several

24 Cf. Frede 1997: 130–46. Cf. also Ferber 1989: 101–11.

25 See again Frede 1997: 130–46. For a different view see Robinson [1941] 1953, and Andrew Mason's chapter in this volume. See also Karasmanis 2005, who thinks that the dialectical method is an evolution of the hypothetical method. See also Nehamas 1989.

26 This is also the opinion of Burnyeat 2000: 45–6, who holds that dialectics is a kind of meta-mathematics, testing and securing mathematical definitions, and that it leads to the 'unhypothetical first principle of everything, the Good'. See also Karasmanis 2005: 121 who says 'This principle is presumably the idea of the Good.'

occasions. The first is the famous passage 532A–B. Here, after alluding to the simile of the Sun, Socrates affirms:

> In the same manner as [in the simile of the Cave] our person reached the end (*telos*) of the visible world [i.e., the Sun] somebody [the dialectician] reaches the end (*telos*) of the thinkable world (*tou noêtou*), when he endeavors dialectically and without any sense perception to pursue by means of definitions what everything is and does not give up until he has grasped with his intellect that which is itself the Good.

What is Plato actually saying here? The Form of the Good is clearly described as the end and the aim of the dialectical movement. However, where exactly does this movement end? Does it end when the highest genus is reached in the upward direction or does it rather end when, following the downward movement, the entire system of the *ousiai* is finally established? Plato's insistence on the endeavor to know by means of definitions what everything is speaks rather in favour of the latter. However, only if it ended with the highest genus could we identify the Form of the Good with the non-hypothetical highest principle.[27]

What can we learn in this regard from the other passages? The next passage where the Form of the Good is mentioned, though only indirectly, is 532C. Here the Form of the Good is called 'the best among the existing things (*en tois ousi*)' and the way we know it is called 'seeing (*thea*)'.[28] This will be important when we discuss the relation of the Form of the Good to the essences (*ousiai*). However it gives us no new information concerning the question of whether the Form of the Good is identical with the non-hypothetical most general principle. In 533B–E we find further characterizations of the dialectical method: (1) it is the only method that endeavors to find out what everything is following a procedure that deals with the totality of beings (532B); (2) it is the only method that goes to the beginning itself in order to make it stable, taking away the hypothetical character of the presupposed principles (532C–D).

27 Sayre 1983: 198 sees three objections to this identification: (1) there is no explicit identification of the two items; (2) it makes little sense to give an account of the idea of the Good by tracing it back to itself, but Plato would do exactly this if the Form of the Good were identical with the non-hypothetical principle; (3) the Form of the Good could not be – as the non-hypothetical principle actually is – the basis of mathematical postulates. Notwithstanding these objections Sayre does not clearly declare against this interpretation, for he sees difficulties for the other as well.

28 This – among other points – has let Robinson [1941] 1953, Cornford 1932 and others believe that the knowledge of the Form of the Good must be conceived as a kind of intuition.

However, these characterizations, though important for the characterization of dialectics, do not have any importance for our question either.

The last and most important passage of all is 534B–D. At the beginning (534B) Plato gives a definition of the dialectician that in a way sums up the characteristics of the dialectical method seen so far: he grasps the definition (*logon*) of the essence (*ousias*) of everything. It seems to me that only a combination of the upward and the downward movement can really achieve this. This is also perfectly in line with the affirmation made in 537C: 'The man who is able to have an overview of all that can be known is a dialectician; who is not, is not.' The overview Plato speaks about can only be reached by completing the system of genera and species in an upward–downward procedure. This is a clear indication that dialectics does not stop when it has reached the highest genus. So, if we see the Form of the Good only at the end of the dialectical procedure, the Form of the Good is not identical with the highest genus, but rather with the whole system of genera and species or with the logical structure of this system.

However, we should not rush to this conclusion before considering carefully the following lines that seem to exclude it.

> Someone who is incapable of giving a definition (*logos*) of the Form of the Good separating it from all the other things, and who does not make his way in all these matters on the basis of an unshakable argument, as in a battle going through the objections intending to refute them, not on the basis of belief, but on the basis of essence; you will not say that someone who behaves like this knows the Good itself or any other good thing. (534B–C)

In this text three points are important:

1. The Form of the Good is the object of a definition that allows us to distinguish it from every other thing.
2. This definition must survive all attempts to refute it.
3. This defence must be made not on the basis of belief but on the basis of essence (*ousia*).

Now this has been taken as a clear proof that the Form of the Good must be an essence. For doesn't Plato affirm again and again that the dialectical method aims at the definition of all the essences? So if the Form of the Good is the object of a definition it must be an essence as well. And doesn't Plato say explicitly that the defence of the definition of the Form of the Good must be made on the basis of essence? Doesn't this mean that the Form of the Good itself has the status of an

essence? Further, if it is an essence, it must be the most general and abstract of all, i.e., the one reached in the upward movement of the dialectical method.

Though this line of argument is very tempting, I am not sure that it is convincing. First, Plato never says that the only items that can be defined are the essences. As Gerasimos Santas has argued,[29] there is a difference between 'proper' and 'ideal' attributes of an essence.[30] Proper attributes of an essence are the concepts that define it. Its ideal attributes on the other hand are the properties it has in common with all essences. They are a kind of second-order attributes and form what may be called the 'Form of Essence'. All the essences participate in the Form of Essence insofar as they are essences. However, at least some of them[31] participate in the Form of the Good as well. Therefore the Form of the Good could be a second-order form as well. In fact, Santas thinks that the Form of the Good is identical with the Form of Essence. To be sure, this could explain why Plato could call the Form of the Good the cause of the existence of the essences. However, as we shall see, there are other and better explanations of this. Santas's position is at least questionable, for Plato never says that the Form of the Essence and the Form of the Good are identical. If there is a difference between them, this difference must be made explicit in their definitions. In any case, if Plato actually conceived of such second-order forms, it is most plausible that he would have considered them as proper objects of second-order definitions. So in this case there would be a definition of the Form of the Good as well.

On the other hand, if the Form of the Good is not a second-order form but the highest of the first-order essences, it seems that it cannot be defined at all. For the highest point reached in the upward movement of the dialectical method is the supreme genus, i.e., the most general of all essences. This should be something like the essence of

29 Santas, 'The Form of the Good in Plato's *Republic*', first published in *Philosophical Inquiry* 1980, 374–403, quoted from Santas, 1983.

30 The distinction is used by Vlastos 1971 (the Two-Level Paradoxes) and Owen 1970 (Dialectic and Eristic); the terminology was introduced by Keyt 1969. Concerning this distinction Santas puts the question whether 'Plato ever made (it) explicitly' (1983: 245); his answer is negative. One could, however, evoke Plato's distinction of *pros heauto*- and *pros ta alla*- predications in the *Parmenides* (136B6–C5). The first clearly correspond to the proper attributes; the second may be understood as the class of predications of which ideal attributes are a subclass. See also Meinwald 1991: 46–75.

31 Ferber 1989: 30–1 has argued that all forms have a positive value. However, he does not analyse *Republic* 476A, where Plato seems to affirm that there is a form of the Unjust and the Evil as well. Could he possibly hold that these forms participate in the Form of the Good as well? If not, some forms do not participate in the form of the Good. See also White 1979: 41.

beings in general,[32] while all the other essences are essences of more special beings. However, the highest genus cannot be defined, because this would presuppose that there is a higher genus under which it falls. So, if the Form of the Good were identical with the highest genus, it could not be defined at all. The thesis given in our passage that the defence of the definition of the Form of the Good against all possible objections must be made on the basis of essence does not imply that the Form of the Good is itself an essence. For the contrast made here is a contrast between 'belief' and 'essence'. So the expression 'essence' is in this context tantamount to 'truth'.[33]

Plato insists that the Form of the Good can only be seen at the very end of the dialectical process. If we take this to be the result of the upward *and* the downward movement, what we get at the end of the dialectical procedure is not the highest genus but the whole system of genera and species including the highest genus and the infima species. The expression *kat'ousian* in 534C might just mean this. So what do we see when we get the ultimate overview over this system?

In his paper mentioned above,[34] Gerasimos Santas says that what we see in the upward and downward movement is just the forms and their ideal attributes, i.e., the attributes all the forms have in common. He argues that each form is 'ungenerated, indestructible, not subject to increase and decrease, must exist by itself and must always be the same, the same in every respect, the same no matter compared to what, and the same to all who apprehend it no matter from where' (1983: 254–5). Consequently he holds that the Form of the Good is just the set of these ideal attributes and that in virtue of this it is the cause of the knowability and the being of the other forms. Thus, according to Santas, the Form of the Good is a higher-order form, a kind of 'metaform'.

I think that this is an important step in the right direction. However, Santas doesn't go far enough. According to him, what the Form of the Good contains are – in modern terms – one-place second-order predicates. I want to argue, however, that it must contain two-and-more-place second-order predicates, i.e., relations, as well. For the answer to our question cannot simply be that at the end of the dialectical movement we see that all the elements of the system of forms are essences insofar as they have the ideal attributes of essences in common – this fact we knew right from the beginning. What we rather see are the logical relations among the essences that allow us to define them, and finally the organisation and the perfect, thorough-going regularity and

32 Cf. *Sophist* 259A, where Plato says that 'Existence and Difference pervade all (essences)'.

33 Cf. Sayre 1983: 205.

34 Cf. Santas 1983: 255.

clarity of the system, an organisation and regularity that deserve the predicate 'beautiful'. If this conjecture is right, the Form of the Good would be either the system of the logical relations between the essences itself or the set of the properties of this system. In the latter case we would have to identify it with the form of order, systematicity and logical clarity which is produced by the dialectical method, i.e., by assigning to each essence its due place in the system according to the relation of genus and species. In other words, the Form of the Good would be a set of third-order properties of this system. If we could prove this we would already have refuted Ferber's third and fourth theses and, as a consequence, his fifth would lose ground as well. However, so far it is only a conjecture.

Nevertheless, our conjecture can explain perfectly why, according to the simile of the Sun, the Form of the Good allows us to know everything in the realm of intelligible objects and why it is said to be 'beyond the essences'. Just as the light of the sun allows us to distinguish one thing from the other in the visible world, the logical structure of genera and species allows us to distinguish each essence from the other and to know their mutual relations as well. The essences have their 'truth' and their 'being' in nothing else but in these relations. And the Form of the Good would be the principle that makes the knowledge of these relations possible. This would also explain why Plato says that the Form of the Good lies beyond essence.

As we have seen, Santas gives a different explanation of Plato's affirmation. He argues that the Form of the Good contains the 'ideal second order attributes' of the essences, i.e., the Form of Essence, and as such it is 'beyond the essences' (1983: 238–41). My point is that while the Form of Essence is the form of each element in the system, Goodness is the form of the system itself or a set of properties of this form. This gives Plato an even stronger reason to affirm that the Form of the Good lies beyond the elements of the system.

To be sure, this solution of the puzzle presupposes that in Plato's famous saying the term *ousia* means 'essence' and not 'being'.[35] If it meant the latter, there would not be any solution to the puzzle. For – as Matthias Baltes has convincingly shown in his 1997 paper (1999: 353–60) – the Form of the Good cannot transcend being. The main reason for this is that it must have being in order to be the cause of

35 No doubt, the term *ousia* sometimes means 'being'. For instance in *Republic* 534A *ousia* is opposed to *genesis* and therefore may be translated as 'being'. However, whenever in the *Republic* or elsewhere the term is used to denote the very entity empirical things participate in and have their names from, the term must mean 'essence'. I take it to mean exactly this in *Republic* 509B. See also Mason's chapter in this volume.

being. However, Baltes's own arguments lead to the conclusion that it does not transcend *ousia* either. For according to him it is the highest *ousia*. On the contrary, I hold that it is not the highest genus and therefore not an essence at all. Finally, my conjecture can explain the important role of mathematics in the discovery of the Form of the Good. It is not only the starting point for the investigation of higher principles (the way up), but it is needed on the way down as well when it comes to clarifying the formal relations between mathematical entities.[36]

6 What is the role of the Form of the Good in the intelligible world?

So far we have only dealt with Ferber's last three presuppositions. We shall critically examine the first and the second as well when we now come to the role the Form of the Good plays in the intelligible world. Under (6) we have seen that Plato conceives the Form of the Good as the cause of the existence and of the essence of all the beings in the intelligible world. How do we have to understand this? Some scholars – pushing the analogy with the Sun too far – have taken this to mean that the Form of the Good is the efficient cause of the generation of the essences. This would, however, be in clear contradiction to the thesis that the essences are eternal, neither generated nor destroyable. To defend Plato against this charge Kenneth M. Sayre[37] tried to show that in his late dialogues Plato conceives of a kind of generation of the essences. He is not completely wrong in this point, as we shall see later.

Those who hold that the Form of the Good is identical with the item reached in the upward movement, i.e., the non-hypothetical principle, explain Plato's affirmation as follows. The Form of the Good is the highest genus in the hierarchy of the essences. It is 'being in its purest and simplest form – *to on* per se (508D)', to use Baltes's 1997 (1999: 360) formulation. As such it imparts being to all the other essences, which participate in it. However, while all the other essences depend on it in their being, the Form of the Good does not depend on anything else. Therefore it transcends the other essences 'in dignity and power'. This is the interpretation Baltes gives of Plato's formula *epekeina tês ousias*. However, this interpretation encounters the following objections.[38] First, according to this interpretation the Form of the Good would be itself an *ousia*, but Plato explicitly says that it is not an *ousia*. Second

36 Cf. Myles Burnyeat 2000: 76–7: 'The realm of mathematics is "intelligible with the aid of a first principle" (511D), because in the light of the Good you see mathematics for what it really is.'

37 Cf. Sayre 1983.

38 Ferber discuses and criticizes Baltes's arguments is more detail in his 2005. I agree with some, though not with all, of his points.

and more importantly, the highest genus is much too abstract and too weak to establish the whole system of essences. In order to do this the dialectician needs the apparatus of the logical relations among essences and the *differentiae specificae*.

The last remark leads me to my alternative answer to the question of in which sense the Form of the Good can be said to be the cause of the essences. If the Form of the Good contains or is the form of the logical principles according to which the system of the essences is construed, and if following the dialectical method we reach that which truly is, the reality of the intelligible world must rest on the very same principles. This is confirmed in *Parmenides* 133c–d, where Plato says that certain forms have their essence in the relations to each other. In the *Republic* he does not give a precise description of these principles, but in the *Sophist* we find sufficient indications of how Plato conceived of these principles. There is first the principle according to which a species implies all its genera, but a genus does not imply its species, and second the principle that species of the same genus exclude one another.[39] To be sure, Plato's characterization of these relations is not always completely clear, but there is no doubt that he already had the very same conception of them as his followers (Aristotle, Porphyry). Obviously the system of the essences will collapse if you take these principles away. For in that case each of the essences would lose both its identity as different from each of the others and its relation to the others in forms of implication/participation and exclusion/opposition. In this sense, then, the Form of the Good is the cause of the existence of the essences.[40]

We now have sufficient insights at our disposal to deal with Ferber's position and the presuppositions it relies on. We have already shown that the third, the fourth and the fifth presuppositions are unfounded.

39 It should be noticed that in the *Phaedo* 103d–105b we find the thesis that certain forms are contrary to each other and that certain forms imply one the other.

40 Our explanation comes very close to Gail Fine's interpretation (2003: 98). She holds that the Form of the Good is 'the teleological structure of things; individual forms are its parts, and particular sensible objects instantiate it'. However, I disagree with her on the following points. (1) The Form of the Good is not the teleological structure itself, i.e., the system individual forms are a part of, but the basic principle that underlies its construction and the properties thereof. (2) She holds that 'each form is good in that it has the function of playing a role in that [the teleological] system'. I agree again that each form has this function, but that doesn't mean that each form is good. As we shall see later, there are forms of different levels of value and even forms of bad things. (3) She holds that the first principle reached in the upward direction of the Line is 'plainly the form of the good (or a definition of, and perhaps further propositions about, it)' (2003: 100). If she were right in this, the form of the good would be the highest genus and not – as she argued before – the teleological system of genera and species as a whole. According to Sayre 1983, the Form of the Good is the cause of the essences even in a much more fundamental sense: it is the principle of the unity of each single form as such.

We can easily show now that the same is true of the second and the first. Ferber believes that the only things that exist in the intelligible world are essences. If we take the term 'existing' (*einai*) in a specific strong sense he is perfectly right about this. Plato uses this term, however, in a weaker sense as well. In this weaker sense 'existence' can be also predicated of the things in the sensible world and even of the not-existing, as Plato shows in the *Sophist* (238B–259B). So when Plato says that the Form of the Good is the most splendid among the beings, he may simply mean 'among the things that participate in the form of being'. So there is nothing contradictory in affirming that, on the one hand, the Form of the Good lies beyond the essences and that, on the other hand, it is the most splendid of the beings. This obtains for the simple reason that not all the entities that are to be found in the intelligible world are essences. Furthermore, if the Form of the Good is not the highest genus then there is no reason for holding that all the essences are 'good-like'. As we shall see later, there are in fact bad essences too.[41]

III SUMMONING WITNESSES

Using Plato's wanted poster we found a suspicious item and brought it in for questioning. The next step should be to summon some witnesses to testify for or against our suspicion. In the best case these testimonies will confirm our conjecture; in the worst case, however, they might contradict it or contradict each other. We should look for these testimonies not in the unwritten doctrine but in the other dialogues of the middle and the late period.[42] The first place to look is the *Sophist*.

1 The testimony of the *Sophist*

Though in the *Sophist* the Form of the Good is never mentioned, this dialogue is very important for our inquiry, for three reasons:

1 We find here an exemplification and explication of the dialectical method that confirms our conjecture.
2 We learn in this dialogue what – according to Plato – should be considered as the highest genus, i.e., the end-term of the upward movement of dialectics.

41 One of the scholars who admit this is White (1979: 41–2).
42 Our procedure presupposes that what Plato says in the later dialogues is not a radical revision of what he says in the *Republic* but rather a consequent elaboration and clarification of his theory. Elaboration and clarification may lead to a doctrinal change in some specific points, but not in the overall theory. Of course, this view of Plato's development is not commonly accepted.

3 We see that the intelligible world is not limited to *ousiai*; it contains also forms of relations among *ousiai*, which could for this reason be characterized as lying beyond the *ousiai*.

Let me elaborate on these.

1 It is well known that the attempt to find a valid definition of the sophist is a very convincing exemplification of the way the dialectical method proceeds. It consists of establishing the tightest possible web of genera and species in order to catch the sophist in the appropriate infima species. But here Plato not only gives an example of dialectics, he also tries to explain its salient features. We will analyze this under the following point.

2 After having established in 249D that the universe (*to pan*) consists neither exclusively of things that undergo change, nor exclusively of unchangeable things, but of both, the Stranger tries to clarify the relation in which these two genera stand to the concept of being. On the one hand, change and rest exclude each other (*enantiôtata allêlois*) in such a way that the genus of the changeable and the genus of the unchangeable form an opposition (250A); on the other hand, both are said to exist. Therefore being must be considered as a third essence (*ousia*) shared by both, but identical with none of them (250B). This third essence embraces the two others, but implies neither of them (250C).

In this context, Plato does not speak of the highest genus. Nevertheless we can draw some conclusions concerning this from the affirmations established before. It is clear from the context that all that exists is divided into the changeable and the unchangeable. The changeable are the things in the sensible world; the unchangeable are the things in the intelligible world. So, the two highest genera so far are the genus of the changeable and the genus of the unchangeable. So far Plato has only mentioned the forms or essences as examples of unchangeable things. So we can conclude that one of the highest genera is the essence of essence and the other is the essence of changeable beings. Because both participate in the essence of being, there is a higher genus above them, i.e., the essence of being.[43] One might think that there could still be an even higher genus above the genus of 'the being', i.e., the thinkable. However, if Plato had conceived of such a genus, he would have been obliged to admit that the genus of 'the being' stands in logical opposition to the genus of 'the not being'. But, as we see in the following passages of the dialogue, he clearly denies this, affirming that 'when we speak of the not-being we do not speak of

43 Cf. 250B, where Plato speaks of *tês ousias koinônian*, meaning that the essence of the changeable and the essence of the unchangeable participate in the essence of being (*to on*).

something that is opposed to the being but of something that is only something else than "the being" ' (257B). So, if the genus of 'the being' has no other genus to which it stands in opposition, it must be the highest genus. This then is the natural endpoint of the upward movement of dialectics and not the Form of the Good, unless the latter were identical with the former. To be sure, it is always risky to draw conclusions *ex silentio*. But it would still be strange that Plato did not mention the Form of the Good in this context, if he believed that this were the highest genus. However, according to what we have seen in the *Republic*, the Form of the Good must have a place in the system of genera and species. If so, where should we look for it?

3 In 251D the Stranger argues that the system of the genera and species is organized in such a way that some of the forms have relations of mixture or participation among themselves, while others are – according to their nature – unable to enter into these relations. This means that a full account of the system must include not only the essences but also their relations. Therefore an essential task of dialectics consists of elaborating the forms of those relations. We have already encountered some of these forms: opposition and unilateral and mutual participation. If two essences stand in the first relation, one cannot be predicated of the other, while an essence can be predicated of another essence if and only if the one participates in the other. So far the only essence that can be predicated of all other essences is the essence of 'the being', for all other participate in it. In 254D the Stranger adds two other forms that can be predicated of every essence: the form of identity (being the same as) and that of non-identity (being something else than). For every essence and every form is identical with itself and non-identical with any other essence or form. Though Plato says that this too is a relation of participation (cf. 255B), it is obvious that this form of participation is different from the form of participation that links a species to its genus. For clearly identity and non-identity are themselves relations. So we have in the intelligible world the essences on the one hand and the forms of their possible relations on the other. Both participate in being; the latter, however, are not essences, but beyond the essences.[44]

This is important for our conjecture, because it makes room for forms other than essences. In fact, if the Form of the Good were the form of a relation among essences, it could be correctly characterized as 'beyond the essences' and nevertheless participate in the essence of 'the being', insofar as it is the most splendid among the beings.

44 It should not bother us too much that Plato calls these relations 'genera'. He clearly means that they are genera different from the essences.

Whether this is really so, the *Sophist* does not tell us, for, as we have already remarked, this dialogue does not mention the Form of the Good. It only mentions the form of beauty and its opposite (257Dff.) and the form of justice (258A) and its opposite, emphasizing that in each case both participate in the essence of 'the being', while, insofar as they are non-identical, one can say that each of them is not (the other). However, Plato does not explicitly say that these forms are forms of relations. That they are forms of relations is nevertheless clear from the *Republic* and will become even clearer from the dialogues that we shall address now.

2 The testimony of the *Politicus*

We have seen at the outset that some scholars have criticized Plato for his – in their eyes implausible – thesis that the rulers of the city have to learn such disciplines as mathematics and dialectics. These are completely theoretical matters that have no practical use, or so they argue. Consequently there is a contradiction between his conception of philosophy as contemplation and his claim that this is useful for the politician.[45] The dialogue where Plato explicitly addresses this question is the *Politicus*.[46]

In the first place, he makes clear that science (*epistêmê*) has two parts: practical (the arts) and contemplative (*gnôstikê*) (258E); he then divides the latter into the science that only makes judgements and the science that gives orders (260B). The science of the politician is of the latter species. Plato makes clear, however, that it does not differ from the former in its scientific content. Thus Julia Annas is perfectly right when she says that 'he would reject any distinction of practical and theoretical reasoning' (1997: 163). But she is convinced that this conception 'will not do'. To see whether this criticism is right we have to analyze Plato's conception of the order-giving science.

In 283C he considers the art of measurement, distinguishing two kinds of it: one that measures greatness and smallness relative to each other and one that measures greatness and smallness in relation to a fixed norm (283D). Then he declares that without the latter there would not exist any art or statecraft (284A) and that these arts achieve effectiveness and beauty by using a due measure in each production. So

45 Cf. Annas 1997. She argues that Plato does not achieve a reconciliation of what she calls 'the practical and the contemplative philosopher'. See also Burnyeat 2000: 53–6, who argues that the qualities of concord and attunement, both qualities of things that have parts, are the grounds of the unity and existence of these things and therefore are values in Plato's view.

46 See Cooper 1999.

the art of measurement (*hê metrikê technê*) used by the politician consists of measuring the more and the less in comparison with an intermediate mark, which Plato calls the *metrion*. In this context the right measure is clearly determined by the function of the thing in question.[47] It only fulfills its function well if it avoids the extremes and implements the right measure. Plato then says (284D) that this clarification is 'necessary for the demonstration of the exact itself' (*peri auto t'akribes apodeixin*). How can we understand this? We know that the empirical art of measuring has its *a priori* foundations in mathematics and geometry. In the simile of the Line the hypothetical principles of these disciplines were presented as the starting points of dialectics, the latter leading finally to the sight of the Form of the Good. So, couldn't Plato's remark – presented as a strongly justified hypothesis (284C) – mean that, in the very same way as in the simile of the Line, geometrical and mathematical considerations lead to dialectics and in virtue of the latter to the discovery of the Form of the Exact? In this case the 'exact itself' of the *Politicus* would be identical with or an element of the Form of the Good.[48]

However, so far we have no decisive evidence for this thesis. The context of the *Politicus* makes it plausible that the 'exact itself' is the form of exactness in which all the different measures (due manner, due time, due action; 284E) participate, as when a craftsman applies a due measure in his work. In this case the 'exact itself' is the form of a relation, i.e., the relation of correct mean between two extremes, which has the effect that the thing possessing it is useful, beautiful and good.[49] But the field of application of the 'exact itself' must not be limited to this. We remember that Plato speaks of exactness in connection with the dialectical task of defining as well. So, when describing the errors of the Pythagoreans in 284D–285C Plato shows that they miss the due mean in dialectics, either confusing what is really different or distinguishing what in reality falls under a common genus. So the achievement of the true dialectical method would be the mean between these extremes, i.e., the exact definitions of every essence.

47 In this sense Gerasimos Santas is right to emphasize the 'functional method' in the *Republic*.

48 This is in fact Rafael Ferber's thesis: he speaks of a 'plausible hypothesis' (cf. Ferber 2002). Ferber argues that 'the royal man with insight' (*Politicus* 294A) is identical with the philosopher-king of the *Republic*, and that both have to gain insight into the Form of the Good in order to rule well. Therefore the Form of the Good must play a role in the *Politicus* and, as it is not mentioned explicitly, there must be an equivalent of it in this dialogue; and that equivalent must be *t'akribes*.

49 Burnyeat 2000: 8, argues that 'the content of mathematics is a constitutive part of ethical understanding'. I agree. See also White 1979: 5, who calls this interpretation of Plato 'Pythagoreanizing'.

3 The testimony of the *Philebus*

There are many questions left open after the weighing of the testimony of the *Politicus*. Where else but in the *Philebus* should we look to get them answered, if at all? The first point to be noticed is that here again exactness (*akribeia*) plays an important role in the argument. It first appears – though not literally – in the context of the fourfold distinction of beings (23cff.): the indeterminate, the determinant, mixture (the unit formed by combining the two) and cause. It is not completely clear whether this distinction applies to the intelligible world as well.[50] However, as Plato uses examples from this realm, we can say that it does so, at least partly.[51] So we get in this realm: (1) simple forms and simple mathematical units; (2) forms of relations these simple units can have; (3) combinations (mixtures) that result from applying those forms of relations; and (4) (though questionable)[52] the efficient cause that produces these combinations. According to 26a–c, the mixtures become 'measured and commensurable', 'beautiful' and 'virtuous' in virtue of the second class, which is called (in 26c) 'law and order'. Finally in 26d Plato adds that 'anything comes into being from the measure effected by the determinant'. If we apply this to the essences and their ordering, we find that they are built as combinations (mixtures) of other (simpler) forms according to their definitions. The definitions in turn get their exactness from the logical relations they apply.

In 55cff. Socrates embarks on an examination of the different kinds of knowledge in order to determine which one occupies the highest ranking on the value scale. He uses three criteria: (a) exactness (*akribeia*), (b) stability (*bebaiotês*) and (c) truth. Having argued that the pure kinds of the study of number and measurement 'are miles ahead of the rest so far as precision and accuracy of measurement and calculation are concerned' (57d), Socrates emphasizes that dialectics must occupy an even higher rank, for it is 'about "the being" and the really being and things that according to their nature are always the same' (58a). He insists against Protarchus that the criterion for this ranking is not its usefulness but the fact that it investigates 'clarity (*to saphes*), exactness (*t'akribes*) and the highest level of truth (*to alêtestaton*)' (58c). If we take this literally, dialectics does not only establish the most clear, precise and true system of genera and species, it also has an insight into the forms of clarity, exactness and truth themselves in

50 For this dispute see Frede, 1997: 205–10.

51 Concerning this point I follow Frede 1997: 210.

52 It is questionable because it would involve there being an efficient cause in the intelligible world that is responsible for the existence of essences (mixtures). This seems to contradict the fact that essences are eternal. However, in *Republic* X 597b, Plato says that the god creates forms. For the problem linked to this see Sorabji 1983: ch. 8.

which the system participates. Now, if clarity, exactness and truth were constituents of the Form of the Good we could get from this passage a partial confirmation of our conjecture. That this is exactly Plato's conception can be seen in the famous passage 65A, where Socrates says:

> If we cannot catch the Good in one form only, taking it together with these three, beauty, proportion (*symmetria*) and truth, let us say that, as a kind of unity, it [the trio] can most correctly be held responsible for [the stability of] those things that consist of a mixture *and* that for the sake of it [the trio], insofar as it is good, the mixture was generated.

We learn four important things from this passage:[53]

1. The Form of the Good cannot be conceived of as one single Form, but as a combination of several forms. Therefore the Form of the Good cannot be empty.
2. The Form of the Good is the property of a relation (mixture) or of relations (mixtures). Proportion clearly is such a property, but so also are beauty and truth.
3. The properties that are associated with the Form of the Good in this way can be predicated one of the other. Goodness, for instance, can be predicated of proportion.
4. Proportion (right measure) is the cause of the generation and the stability of the things consisting of mixtures, i.e., of relations among parts.

We are now able to understand, though only in a sketchy manner, Plato's reasons for his unitary conception of practical and theoretical knowledge. The very same properties of formal relations that are responsible for the clarity and exactness of the system of essences and of mathematical entities, and thus of their existence and of the knowledge thereof, are also responsible for the generation and existence of the stable empirical things. The essences are the patterns of mixture that make empirical things exist, and in order to make their existence last, these patterns need to have the properties of proportion, beauty and truth. So there is no gap between the two realms to be bridged by intermediate principles.[54] What makes something good in the intelligible world and in the sensible world is the fact that its parts stand in the right relations to each other.

53 I do not agree with Ferber 1989: 79, who argues that Plato does not speak about the Form of the Good in the *Philebus*, but only about the Good that is immanent in pleasure and knowledge. See also Frede 1997.

54 Cf. Ferber 2002: 191, who holds that the 'appropriate' has such a role of mediation, according to the *Politicus*.

IV CONCLUSIONS

So far I have only shown that Plato's conception of the Form of the Good is not contradictory, but I haven't shown that it makes sense as a philosophical theory. In order to demonstrate this, however, I have to do something a prudent scholar should never engage in: to make affirmations Plato, at least explicitly, never made, but which he should have made as a consequence of what he explicitly said.

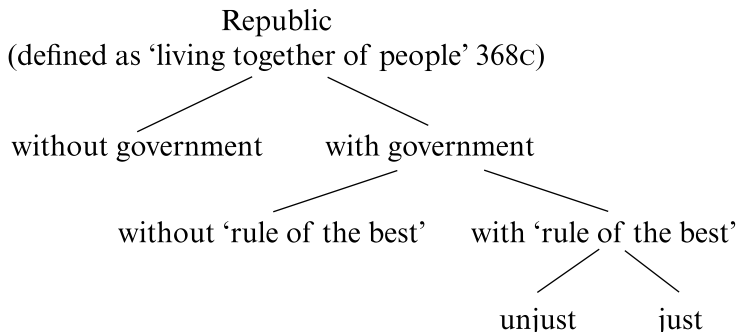
1 The first concerns the knowledge of the Form of the Good. According to my interpretation we come to know the Form of the Good when, after achieving the system of genera and species, we finally discover that the relations it consists of are perfectly ordered, are disposed in due proportions, provide truth, and thus are beautiful. Then we abstract from this matter of fact the forms of order,[55] proportion, truth and beauty and combine them under the heading 'Form of the Good'. These forms are, to be precise, not relations, but properties of relations. As a consequence, the predicate 'good' cannot be applied to something that does not consist of relations, and it can be applied to something only insofar as it consists of relations. Its role is to distinguish good and bad relations or good and bad mixtures.

2 Let's now show how the predication of the term 'good' works in the context of Plato's ontology. For brevity's sake I will take only two examples. The first concerns the highest genus and its species that we encountered in the *Sophist*, i.e., the genus 'the beings' and the species 'the changeable beings' and 'the unchangeable beings'. The changeable beings are, of course, the beings in the empirical world. They can be classified according to genera and species insofar as they participate in these forms. The unchangeable beings are of four kinds: essences, mathematical entities, relations of essences and mathematical entities, and finally properties of relations. Both the changeable beings and the unchangeable beings form a system of relations. However, while the relations of the former are always changing, risk losing their balance and are only subjects of belief, the relations among the latter are stable, balanced and subjects of knowledge. So, when it comes to giving preference to one over the other, clearly the system of the unchanging entities deserves preference, i.e., the predicate 'good'. This, however, does not mean that all the elements in the system, i.e., the essences, deserve this predicate as well. We shall see why in our next paragraph.

3 The relations between the unchangeable beings are, as it were, logical and mathematical relations. This explains their balance, stability

55 Cf. *Philebus* 64A–B, where Plato speaks of an immaterial order (*asomatos kosmos*) that rules over a living body. See also Frede 1997: 354–6.

and truth. Some of the entities that stand in these logical relations, i.e., the essences, are relations themselves. Although they are defined in virtue of logical relations they are not logical relations themselves, for the entities that stand in these relations are changeable beings. Nevertheless, insofar as they are relations, the predicates 'good' and 'bad' can be applied to them as well. Let us explain this using the essence of 'republic (*polis*)' as example. If we sum up Plato's theory as given in the *Republic*, we can draw the following tree of genera and species:



Now, it is evident that on each level the relation among the members of the community is improved if it has the property displayed at the right-hand side. We reach the best possible relation on the third level, when not only do the best (the philosophers) rule, but also each of the other classes of the population does its own business well. This is the definition of justice Plato reaches in 433a–b (cf. 441d). So justice is defined as a certain relation between the members of a state. This relation has the properties of order, measure, equilibrium, stability and beauty. Therefore justice is good and a just state is good. But this implies also that the other forms of the state are less good. Or, as Plato emphasizes in *Republic* IV 445c, there is only one form of virtue, but infinitely many forms of vice. This shows that according to Plato there are bad forms. This is a further point that speaks for my interpretation. For, if the Form of the Good were the highest genus, all the essences would participate in it and this would exclude any bad form.

So what the future philosopher king learns when he studies dialectics are the right logical relations among the parts of the system of the essences and why exactly these relations are responsible for its stability, beauty and truth. If, as we conjectured, the possession of the very same properties enables the patterns, i.e., the essences, that are responsible for the relations between the parts of empirical things[56] to

56 See again *Philebus* 25b–26d, where Plato shows that the empirical things are mixtures, and 25a–b, where he shows that right measure in this mixture is needed to give these things stability.

give stability to and guarantee the well-functioning of these, the philosopher-king is well prepared for establishing these relations in the empirical world. One might still find this conception very strange and unconvincing. However, it implies no contradiction and makes perfect sense.

FINAL REMARK

We are finally able to answer Ferber's most important objection. According to him all the essences participate in Goodness, but the Form of the Good is an essence itself, so it participates in itself. This, however, would create a set-theoretical paradox, as soon as one interprets essences as sets. For then the set of the good would have itself as a subset. To avoid this, Ferber holds, Plato said that the Form of the Good was, as it were, beyond the essences. However, by doing so he runs into a new contradiction. For how can the essences be 'good-like' when Goodness is beyond the essences?

To answer this objection we have to say, in the first place, that it is simply not the case that all the essences participate in Goodness. Second, we have shown that there is no contradiction in holding that Goodness is beyond the essences. So the set-theoretical paradox does not occur for the set of good things. However, we considered the Form of the Being as an essence participating as such in Being. So we have the same problem here as long as we consider essences as sets. The answer is that Platonic essences are not to be interpreted as sets. Self-predication and the third man are finally not really a problem for Plato, for, as the *Sophist* shows, he can take what looks like self-predication as an identity judgement. 'The Form of the Good is identical with the Form of the Good.' That's it.[57]

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57 Meinwald 1991: 155–7 resolves the third-man problem in a different way. Relying on the distinction of *pros heauto* and *pros ta alla* predication as developed in 136B, she argues that self-predication taken as *pros heauto* predication does not lead to the third-man paradox. I agree. However, even if we take it as a *pros ta alla* predication, as in the case of an identity statement, the paradox does not follow either.

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9

THE GOOD, ESSENCES AND RELATIONS

Andrew S. Mason

I sympathise with many of Gerhard Seel's claims in his chapter, particularly about the practical significance of the Good and about how it can have effects in the sensible world; and I am attracted by his view of what sort of thing the Form of the Good is; so my response will be largely concerned with some points of detail. I want to raise a number of questions about the steps by which Seel reaches his conclusion.

1 THE METHOD OF DIALECTIC

Seel says (p. 178) that most scholars agree that the method of dialectic discussed in the *Republic* is the same as the method of collection and division expounded in the *Phaedrus* and other dialogues, which constructs a system of genera and species, and aims at definition of each item, by locating it within this structure. However, there is a long tradition among Anglo-American scholars of rejecting this identification. This tradition was initiated by Richard Robinson,[1] who points out that the discussion in the *Republic* makes no mention of genera and species, while conversely the discussions in the *Phaedrus* and elsewhere make no mention of hypotheses and the search for a first principle. Indeed, it is often held that the method of collection and division is introduced for the first time in the *Phaedrus*, which is standardly dated later than the *Republic*, and that it is meant in some way to replace the method discussed there; and sometimes that it depends on a view of communion of Forms which is not present in the *Republic*.[2]

I would not go so far. I think that it is possible to find traces of collection and division in the *Republic* and in earlier dialogues, and that there is no essential conflict between the two methods; it could be typical of dialectic *both* to seek to do away with hypotheses and reach

1 Robinson 1953: 162–5.
2 This position is defended by Moravcsik 1973: 324–7.

an unhypothetical first principle, *and* to aim at a classification of entities by genus and species. Moreover, it is reasonable to think of the two methods as moving, in general, in parallel; if there is a *single* first principle for all the sciences, it is plausible that this would be a principle of very general relevance, and therefore the move towards it would be accompanied by a move from specific to more general concepts, while the move back from the first principle, deriving the various truths of the sciences from it, would be accompanied by a move from the general to the specific. However, it does not follow that the two processes must always be exactly parallel, or that the unhypothetical first principle must be the highest genus; indeed it is not clear that there must be a single highest genus.

Seel argues (p. 179) that the Form of the Good is perceived at the end of the *downward* path, and so cannot be identified with the uhypothetical first principle. He bases this argument on 532A–B, where Plato says that we reach the Good through a process which seeks 'to pursue by definitions what everything is'; if we identify dialectic with collection and division, it would seem that it is this process as a whole which establishes the natures of things, and hence we cannot arrive at definitions until both the upward and the downward path have been completed. However, if we reject this identification, it seems possible that both the upward and the downward path are concerned, at least partly, with definition; the difference between them may lie not in the kind of information they provide but rather in the status which they give it. On the upward path we may be aiming to *discover* definitions, though at first affirming them only hypothetically until the first principle is reached; on the downward path we are aiming to *justify* them in the light of that first principle. In this case the discovery of the Form of the Good need not wait until the downward path is completed, and so the identification of the Form of the Good with the first principle will still be possible.

Seel also claims (p. 179) that according to 532A–B the Form of the Good is the end of the dialectical movement; and this would seem to generate problems for its identification with the unhypothetical first principle, independently of the question of just what the method of dialectic is, since dialectic certainly does not end with the discovery of the first principle, but proceeds to derive other truths from it (511B). However, Plato does not in fact say that the discovery of the Good is the end of dialectic, but only that in discovering the Good we are brought (by dialectic) to the end of the intelligible world; this makes sense if the Good is the last intelligible reality to be discovered, on the upward path, and after this, although dialectic continues, we are retracing our steps, looking again at entities of which we were already aware.

2 THE CONCEPT OF ESSENCE

Seel translates *ousia* as 'essence' and proposes that there is a significant difference between essences and other Forms. I take essences to be the kind of Forms which might provide the essence of a thing, e.g., the Form of human being. However, it is not clear that *ousia* need be understood in this way. Seel, I think rightly, argues (p. 182) that at 534c, where *ousia* is contrasted with *doxa*, it cannot be read as 'essence' but rather as 'truth'; this, I take it, is not truth as a property of statements or beliefs, but reality, what truly exists or is the case. But then it seems possible to read *ousia* simply as 'reality' in other places as well; it need not be seen as having acquired the technical sense of 'essence', but rather serves as the verbal noun from *einai*, simply standing for being, though in this context it is used specifically to denote being in the full sense as opposed to becoming.

Seel argues (n.32) that while *ousia* can sometimes mean simply 'being', it must mean 'essence' in passages where it used to designate 'the very thing empirical entities participate in and have their names from'. This, however, is not clear; Forms *are* the things which empirical entities participate in and take their names from, and Forms are known as *ousia*, but it is not obvious that *ousia* is used to express this relationship with empirical things; it may simply be applied to Forms because they are supreme examples of being, by contrast with the becoming of sensible things. Certainly the contrast with *genesis* is present at 509B, the passage which Seel cites in support of his reading of *ousia* as 'essence', just as much as in other passages.

On this reading, how can we interpret the claim at 509B that the Good is not *ousia*, consistently with passages which seem to indicate that the Good is something which exists? The simplest way would be to take this as a denial of identity; not 'the Good is not a being' but 'the Good is not Being'; i.e., it is not the same as the Form of Being. This seems to be the line taken by the majority of translators, and it fits well in the context; it parallels the statements that the sun is not sight (508B) and is not generation (509B), and that the Good is not knowledge (508e), all of which seem easiest to read as denials of identity. (Note that the Good is said to be *epekeina tês ousias*, 'beyond being', not 'beyond the beings'. This claim should be read in the light of the following words 'in dignity and power'; it need not be read as meaning that the Good does not participate in Being, only that it is more honourable and more powerful than Being.)

In this case the Good need not be as different from other Forms as Seel proposes. There need be no distinction between essences and other Forms; all Forms are *ousiai*, in the simple sense of 'realities', but the Form of the Good has a special place among them.

3 THE GOOD AS A RELATION

Seel claims that the Form of the Good is the Form of a relation, and I do not want to dispute that conclusion, but again I do not think that this means there is such a radical difference between the Form of the Good and other Forms as Seel suggests. Saying that something is a relation is ambiguous. On the one hand it might be an attribute that a thing has only in relation to another thing; one which in modern logic would be represented by a two-place predicate. The examples introduced in the *Sophist*, sameness and difference, are of this kind; it does not make sense to say 'this is the same', or 'this is different', without specifying what it is the same as or what it is different from. It is reasonable to contrast relations in this sense with essences, since it is hard to see how a relation in this sense could be the essence of anything.

On the other hand a relation can mean a property which one thing has – represented in modern logic by a one-place predicate – but has in virtue of a relation; this could be a relation in which it stands to something else, or a relation between its parts. If 'good' is a relation it must be in this latter sense; we can say 'this is good', and this claim will not be incomplete as it stands, though it may depend on a relation of some sort. Seel seems in fact to introduce both ways in which a property may hold in virtue of a relation; he refers to the Good as a mean between extremes (p. 190), which suggests a relation in which something stands to something else, but he also claims that 'what makes something good . . . is the fact that its parts stand in the right relations to each other' (p. 192); and the suggestion that the Form of the Good is the Form of order, systematicity and logical clarity (p. 183) also suggests a property that something has in virtue of the relations between its parts. But it seems possible that very many Forms are relations in this sense, that a relation in this sense could be the essence of a thing, and that recognising the Good as a relation in this sense does not separate it from other Forms.

Seel identifies the Form of the Good with the order and regularity which the system of Forms possesses in virtue of the relations between its parts. However, it is worth noting that there is a difference between knowing the order of the system, in the sense of knowing that the system has this order, and knowing the nature of the order which it possesses, that is knowing what order, regularity and so on are. Seel seems sometimes to identify knowledge of the Form of the Good with the former; thus he says on p. 182f., that in coming to know the Form of the Good we see 'the organisation and the perfect . . . regularity and clarity of the system'. But it is perhaps more plausible to identify it with the latter. It would seem that the Good cannot be identified with the order

and regularity *of the system of Forms*, if by this we mean the specific order possessed by that system and by nothing else; for things other than the system of Forms can be good. Rather, the Good may be identified with the properties of order and regularity of which the system of Forms is a supreme example, but which other things (such as healthy bodies and well-ordered states) can possess as well.

Now, knowing that the system of Forms has a particular order certainly seems to imply knowing the individual Forms, and cannot be achieved until all the individual Forms are known. But knowing the nature of the order which the system possesses may yet precede knowing the individual Forms, and perhaps be a prerequisite for knowing them. If the Form of the Good is identified with the properties of clarity, regularity, etc., which the system of Forms possesses, it may be that we need to know the nature of clarity, regularity etc. before we can trace out the system; and in this way the Form of the Good may serve as a first principle for gaining the knowledge of the other Forms.

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10

THE IDEA OF THE GOOD AND THE OTHER FORMS IN PLATO'S *REPUBLIC*

Fritz-Gregor Herrmann

In one respect at least, the *Republic* holds a special place in the development of Plato's ontology: in the *Republic*, Plato lets Socrates talk about forms apodictically. There is neither the tentative searching and allusive adumbration of the earliest dialogues, some of which end in *aporia*; nor the reasoned demonstration and laboured introduction that can be seen in the *Meno*, *Euthyphro* and, most of all, the *Phaedo*; there is no need for divine or *daimonic* revelation, as in the *Symposium* through the mouth of the priestess Diotima; nor yet is there any explicit questioning or criticism of the notion of forms as such, as in the *Parmenides*. In one respect, the *Republic* is thus marked by the confidence which underlies all the caution and all the provisos with which Socrates is made to build up the tension on the way to the eventual unveiling of the greatest thing that can be learned, the idea of the good. This confidence is reflected not least in the way Plato uses the philosophical terminology which he had developed from the *Gorgias* onwards. In this chapter, an attempt is made to distinguish the way in which Plato in the *Republic* talks about the good itself from the way in which he talks about the just, the temperate, the brave, etc. I shall suggest that the obvious respect in which the idea of the good differs from the other forms points not so much to a revision of views expressed about the forms earlier, for example in the *Phaedo*, as to an explication in light of which the *Phaedo* and other earlier dialogues should be re-read. On the basis of this investigation, some tentative conclusions will be drawn concerning the development or, respectively, the systematic nature of Plato's ontology in the dialogues up to and including the *Republic*.

I have greatly benefited from discussion at the fourth Leventis conference. I should like to thank in particular Terry Penner for friendly comments on a draft of this chapter, and Antony Hatzistavrou for stimulating and constructive as well as cautioning discussion of points of detail, and for extensive comments on a draft of the whole.

I

Before embarking on this interpretative task, and in order to understand Plato's usage in the *Republic*, I shall first provide a brief sketch of the philosophical terminology Plato introduces in the *Phaedo* and *Symposium*; this historical sketch is based on extensive semantic studies of Plato's dialogues in the context of Greek literature and to some extent challenges some common views about Forms in the *Phaedo* and the *Republic*.[1] After tentative preparation in the *Gorgias* and previews in the *Meno* and the *Euthyphro*, the *Phaedo* introduces the philosophical terminology which Plato will employ, with some modifications, in expositions of his ontology for a number of decades. At the same time, Plato presents his own philosophy as building on elements taken from his predecessors Anaxagoras, Philolaus and Democritus. The *Symposium* supplements this report with a presentation of the beautiful as the source of all striving. And in describing the beautiful, Plato implicitly refers to Parmenides in a way parallel to the acknowledgement of his debt, and to the assertion of his superiority, to the thought of those other predecessors who stood behind the *Phaedo*. The philosophical terminology that emerges from the discussion in these dialogues consists of words which are, almost all of them, found in the common literary Greek of the prose and verse authors of the fifth century. But the way in which those words are employed as quasi-technical terms in the context of Plato's ontology owes a particular semantic debt to the technical usage and semantic innovation of a small group of pre-Socratic philosophers of quite disparate provenance and disparate views and explanations of the world.

In brief, the many beautiful, just and equal things in this world are said to *metechein*, to 'share' or 'participate, in the beautiful itself, the just itself, the equal itself, etc., in the same way everything was said by Anaxagoras to 'share' in everything else. Only *nous*, 'mind', was 'itself by itself' for Anaxagoras; for Plato, what Anaxagoras said of 'mind' obtains for the multitude of ultimate constituents of the world which are: the beautiful, the just, the equal, etc., i.e., a discrete multitude of incorporeal things which are eternally the same, while what is visible 'participates' or 'shares' in what is invisible and knowable, what cannot be seen but can be thought. Thus, while there is 'participation' in Anaxagoras and Plato, and while there is something 'itself by itself', Plato's picture of the world and of the relationship the things in the world have with themselves and with one another could not be more different. But at the same time, Plato is at pains to point out what of

1 Cf. Herrmann 2007.

Anaxagoras' explanation can be adopted, and how it must be adapted to make sense. The refutation of Anaxagoras proceeds not by rejection but by assimilation: Plato does not dismiss the views of Anaxagoras altogether; rather, by apparently accepting a large number of elements from the system of his predecessor, he transforms them so much that in reality an entirely new system has been put in place of the old one.[2]

Similarly, Plato responds to certain Pythagoreans, among them notably Philolaus who, like Anaxagoras, is mentioned in the *Phaedo* by name. Aristotle reports at *Metaphysics* A5, 986a, that certain Pythagoreans explained the world by pairs of fundamental oppositions, among them light and dark, good and bad, odd and even. Stobaeus (*Eclogae* 1.21.7c = DK44B5) reports that Philolaus said that 'number has two proper types, *eidê*, odd and even'. In the *Phaedo*, Socrates states (79D) that there are 'two types of beings, on the one hand the visible, on the other hand the invisible'. By extrapolation, one may conclude that those Pythagoreans, like Philolaus, said that 'there are two types of things, limited and unlimited; there are two types of things, odd and even; one and two; right and left; male and female; still and moving; straight and curved; light and darkness; there are two types of things, good and bad; square and oblong'. And as does Phaedo at *Phaedo* 102, those Pythagoreans could then refer to these prime constituents that made up the world simply as 'the types', the *eidê*.[3] But while the *eidê* of Philolaus and the other Pythagoreans were disparate – and to a degree random – pairs of opposites the ontological status of which was at best left vague, and their explanatory force obscure, the *eidê* of Socrates in the *Phaedo* are the beautiful, the good, the just, etc., and not, or at least not necessarily, their opposites. And their ontological and logical as well as their epistemological and 'aetiological' status is defined as part of a coherent and consistent system, not least by recourse to a newly interpreted method of *hypothesis*, which likewise seems to be a reinterpretation of something Philolaus himself had employed in his philosophical system.[4] This is true to an even greater extent of another key term of Plato's ontology, *ousia* or 'being'; the term is commonly regarded as Plato's coinage, by way of an etymologisation of the Attic word for 'property', *ousia*. But while this is certainly so, *ousia* is at the same time a calque, or loan-translation, of the Philolaan technical term *estô*, used in the sense of 'being' in DK44B6, 'the being (*estô*) of things, being eternal, . . .'.[5] As was the case with Anaxagoras, so also with Philolaus: what has been adopted by Plato

2 The argument for these claims is provided in Herrmann 2003.
3 The detail of the argument is supplied in Herrmann 2006b.
4 See Huffman 1993: 78–92 for Philolaus' use of *hypothesis*.
5 For a discussion of *ousia*, see Herrmann 2006a.

has been transformed to such an extent that its original function as part of a different explanation of the world is no longer recognisable.[6] Unlike the *eidê* of the Pythagoreans, Plato's *eidê* are not, or at least are not confined to, opposites. And unlike the *eidê* of the Pythagoreans, Plato's *eidê* are not selected and arranged according to hallowed tradition, but are, in principle already in the *Phaedo*, conceived of in the context of explanation in terms of what is best. But the Pythagorean language and terminology – which is telling to the educated contemporary reader in the Greek world of the fourth century who is acquainted with the major works of philosophy – has been preserved in that transformation.

Lastly, for present purposes, there is one term in particular which Plato has taken over from Democritus. What is invisible, unchanging, eternal, making up the entirety of the world by combination at times in one way, at times in another, was simply and paradoxically called an 'appearance', a 'figure', by Democritus; the Greek word he uses is *idea*; these figures, which were the prime constituents of his system, were 'indivisible figures', they were *atomoi ideai*. Plato saw the challenge of the model of the world constructed by Democritus, who was the first to describe the world not simply in terms of *archai*, 'beginnings or principles', but in terms of cause, reason and explanation, *aitia*; Plato thus took the name of 'figure' which Democritus had employed for his non-composite, eternal, invisible prime constituents and applied them to his own non-composite, eternal, invisible prime constituents, to wit, the beautiful, the good, the just, etc. The difference, though, between Democritus' prime constituents and Plato's was that the latter were non-corporeal, non-spatial, non-physical, and that the things they constituted received their characterisation not epiphenomenally from the combination of these 'figures', but from the very *ousia*, the 'being', of these 'figures' or *ideai* themselves. And this difference between Democritus' atoms and Plato's *ideai* is all-decisive, both for an understanding of Democritus and for an understanding of Plato.[7]

The *Phaedo* thus presents, for the first time in Plato's oeuvre, the vocabulary of Plato's ontology: *eidos*, *idea*, *ousia*, *metechein* and *metalambanein*, *aition* and *aitia*, *hypothesis*, and many more.[8] And in creating

6 Though it would be pertinent in the context, it is impossible here to determine whether Plato was the first to think of anything really non-spatial, non-corporeal and not subject to the passage of time, or whether some Eleatics or some Pythagoreans had, at least to some extent, anticipated him in that respect.

7 For fuller support of this claim see Herrmann 2005.

8 For a convenient overview, out of date in its interpretation, but fairly complete in its presentation, see Ross 1951: 225–30. The *communis opinio* concerning Plato's philosophical terminology is expressed by Kahn 1996: 332–5. A study of the key terms and their history is provided by Herrmann 2007.

his own usage, Plato is at once emancipating himself from the dictates of pre-Socratic natural philosophy. It remains for him to clarify the relationship to Parmenides. This is achieved in the *Symposium*, a dialogue in which Parmenides is named twice.[9] In the ontologically and psychologically central section of the *Symposium*, 199C–212C, esp. 210A–212A, Socrates on the one hand uses, without need of definition, verbs like *metechein*, 'sharing', and phrases like *ho esti*, 'what is' (211C), which had to be defined, i.e., which had still been in need of definition, in the *Phaedo*; on the other hand he provides a description of 'the beautiful itself' which – in its diction – is strongly reminiscent of Parmenides' description of his 'being', notably in the line *auto kath' hauto meth' hautou monoeides aei on*, 'itself by itself with itself always being of a single type' (211B).[10] The beautiful itself which Socrates describes is eternal, unchanging, ungenerated, like Parmenides' 'being'; in addition, it is *one*, like Parmenides' 'being'. And in the *Symposium* at least there is no suggestion that there are other *eidê* besides.[11] Leaving this contentious issue to one side for the time being, it may be observed that the beautiful itself in the *Symposium* is at 210A–212A described in terms which have as much a technical ring to them as what is said about the beautiful, the just, the equal, etc., in the *Phaedo*.

II

With these preliminary remarks, we may turn to the *Republic*. The first question in comparing the idea of the good and the other forms in the *Republic* should be: what *eidê*, what forms, are there in that dialogue? The answer to this question cannot be a simple one. And in addition, any correct answer to this question will only be informative if one is able at the same time to show of what sort these *eidê* are, what role they

9 Parmenides is mentioned otherwise only in the *Parmenides* (thirty times), the *Theaetetus* (four times) and the *Sophist* (seven times).

10 See Solmsen 1971, in light of which Vancamp 1996 may need slight modification. Parmenides is, in different ways, behind Anaxagoras, Philolaus and Democritus; but there are few direct echoes of Parmenides in the *Phaedo*; one could think of the occurrence of *monoeides* at 78D, 80B, 83E, if the text of Parmenides reads *mounogenes* at DK28B8.4, and if the two adjectives are equivalent, which is less than certain, as *mounogenes* should mean that there is no other born with it or as its sibling (a deliberate paradox on Parmenides' part, as his 'being' has not come into being at all), while *monoeides* should suggest uniformity in appearance or type or the like.

11 This may not be decisive, though, as the five occurrences of *eidos* and the one of *idea* in the *Symposium* are instances of the words in the common, everyday meanings of 'appearance' or 'type', without any overt philosophical overtones; i.e., not even the beautiful itself is referred to as an *eidos*. It is significant, though, that we do not hear of the just itself, etc. Cf. the acute observations by Kapp 1968: 58f., 115–30.

play and what function they serve. To narrow the field of possible answers, I therefore rephrase: bearing in mind what was referred to as *eidê* at *Phaedo* 102, what *eidê* of that sort are there in the *Republic*?[12] Burnyeat (2005: 140) has recently drawn attention again to Smith (1917), who forcefully argues against a common reading of *Republic* X, 596A6–8, that suggests there is a form corresponding to every common name.[13] If this simple answer can thus not be taken for granted, one must read the *Republic* from the beginning to see where *eidê* make their first appearance. Excluded from consideration will be, *inter alia*, all those places at which *eidos* or *idea* are applied to people or objects with the meaning of 'appearance (of something)' or 'type (of something)', the former the original meaning of the two words, the latter the one developed among ethnographers and scientists of the early fifth century, which had entered the common language by the end of that century.[14]

Taking this into account, the first passage in the *Republic* which has been, and might reasonably be, thought to make reference to 'forms' is 402C. Socrates has just finished a description of the musical education of the guardians to be. He compares it with the learning of reading which has as its foundation the learning of letters. Whoever wants to learn how to read must be able and willing to recognise the letters, few as they are, everywhere, in everything and in any combination, not neglecting even what may seem insignificant. But once one has mastered that, one will be able, by the same token, to recognise also pictures or images of letters, such as reflections in water or mirrors. By analogy, Socrates says, we shall not be musical

> before we recognise the *eidê* of *sôphrosynê*, 'moderation', *andreia*, 'courage', *eleutheriotês*, 'liberality', *megaloprepeia*, 'magnanimity', and whatever be related to them, and again their opposites,

12 A complete answer to this question would, especially in the light of Book X, have to include a discussion of artefacts. This would require discussion in particular of the role of use and need, the origin of these concepts in pre-Platonic thought, and the elaboration of these themes in the *Protagoras*, the *Gorgias*, the *Euthydemus* and the *Cratylus*, as well as interpretations of passages in the *Sophist*, the *Politicus* and the *Phaedrus*; I shall confine myself in this chapter to a discussion of forms and ideas in the central books of the *Republic*.

13 Smith's suggestion must be a possible reading, not least in the light of the juxtaposition of *hekaston*, 'each', with *hekasta*, 'each', which is a formula Plato uses in lieu of variables already at, e.g., *Phaedo* 101C; cf. *Republic* VI, 493E; note also that the phrase *onoma epipherein* does not mean 'call by a name' but 'name; give a name': the phrase corresponds to the use of *epônymia*, 'benaming, designation', at *Phaedo* 92D, 102B, C, 103B (twice), and of *eponomazein* at 103B: the many particulars get their names, their 'benamings', from the forms.

14 Just as, in looking for discussions of 'true being', one would disregard places at which *ousia* is used in the sense of (physical) 'property', 'possession'.

> occurring wherever they occur, and perceive them, being in whatever they are in, themselves and their images, and neglect them neither in small things nor great, but regard that as belonging to the same skill and occupation.

As to what these *eidê* are, it is instructive to quote Shorey (1937: 260 n.*a*):

> It is of course possible to contrast images with the things themselves, and to speak of forms or species without explicit allusion to the metaphysical doctrine of ideas. But on the other hand there is not the slightest reason to assume that the doctrine and its terminology were not familiar to Plato at the time when this part of the *Republic* was written. *Cf. Unity of Plato's Thought*, pp. 31 ff., 35. Statistics of the uses of *eidos* and *idea* (Peiper's *Ontologica Platonica* [*sic*: Shorey means: Peipers' *Ontologia Platonica*], Taylor, *Varia Socratica*, Wilamowitz, *Platon*, ii. pp. 249–253), whatever their philological interest, contribute nothing to the interpretation of Plato's thought. *Cf.* my *De Platonis Idearum Doctrina*, pp. 1, 30, and *Class. Phil.* vol. vi. pp. 363–364.
>
> There is for common sense no contradiction or problem in the fact that Plato here says that we cannot be true 'musicians' till we recognise both the forms and all the copies of, or approximations to, them in art or nature, while in Book X. (601) he argues that the poet and artist copy not the idea but its copy in the material world.

Against this, one may hold the view which had already been expressed succinctly by Adam (1902: 168):

> 402C . . . *ta tês sôphrosynês eidê ktl.* Are the *eidê* Plato's Ideas? So Zeller (II^4 1 p. 560 *n.*), and many other critics, understand the word; nor can it be denied that the language of Plato, *if interpreted in the light of Book VII*, can bear this meaning. Nevertheless we are bound in the first instance to interpret this passage by itself, and not by Book VII, the more so as the doctrine of transcendent or separate (*chôristai*) Ideas appears nowhere else in I–IV, and seems to be expressly reserved for his philosophical, as distinct from his musical education (see IV 435D and VI 504B *n.*). What is meant by the words *eikonas autôn*? The context shews conclusively that *eikones* refers to copies (sc. of the virtues *sôphrosynê* etc.) represented in poetry and the fine arts (so also Krohn *Pl. Frage* p. 47). On any other interpretation the introduction of these *eikones* is

> irrelevant in a discussion on the rules which imitative art must obey. This being so, if *eidê* means the Ideas, Poetry will be a direct imitation of the Ideas, which is inconsistent with X 595C–598D. Or does Plato mean to suggest that Poetry and Art in his ideal city are really to imitate the ideas directly? This is a bold and attractive solution, and there are several hints elsewhere to the same or nearly the same effect, but Plato speaks expressly of the *eidê* here only as immanent, and not transcendent (*enonta en hois enestin*), and we must therefore suppose that the artist copies from the life (cf. *en tê$_i$ psychê$_i$ kala êthê enonta* D). The word *eidê* is repeatedly used by Plato without reference to transcendent Ideas, as has been amply proved by Krohn (*Pl. St.* pp. 65, 66), Pfleiderer (*Zur Lösung* etc. p. 17), and Campbell (II pp. 296 ff.). Here it does not mean 'varieties' (as if there were more than one variety of *sôphrosynê*), but simply 'forms' or 'kinds,' in the sense in which the immanent reality which every general notion attempts to express is a 'form' or 'kind' – a genus or species – of the totality of things. Cf. IV 435B *n*. The genitives are genitives of definition. The use of *eidê* in the sense of 'immanente Seinsformen' (Krohn) is interesting as a harbinger of the Ideal theory of VI and VII – a sort of half-way house between the Socratic *logoi* and Plato's ideas. It recurs in IV 434D, 435B, 437D. See further Krohn *Pl. Frage* pp. 54–58, and cf. VI 504 d *n*. But although the separatists have (as I think) made out their claim that transcendent Ideas do not appear in Books I–IV, I agree with Hirmer (*Entst. u. Komp. d. Pl. Pol.* p. 645) in thinking their deductions from this fact unwarrantable.

One can follow Adam and those of his predecessors and successors who are on his side in the rejection of a reading that sees 'Platonic Forms or Ideas' at work at 402, without endorsing oneself the positive part of his interpretation in every detail. The idea of a 'half-way house', often adduced in the interpretation of the terminology of Plato's ontology, here presupposes either a developed and systematised ontological classification of the world and the positing of multiple ontological levels or a gradual development of Plato's ontology from Socrates to Books V–VII of the *Republic*, which had not yet reached its final form by the end of Book III. Neither is attractive. The roots of the application of the noun *eidos*, or rather its plural *eidê*, here at 402C lie elsewhere. And since for an interpretation of what there are forms of in the *Republic* much depends on a proper understanding of this context, digging out these roots now is a worthwhile pursuit.

At *Lysis* 221E, two pages from the end of the dialogue, Socrates proposes to the youths Lysis and Menexenos as conclusion to an argument

about the nature of desire as the cause-and-reason of friendship: 'And if thus any one of two desires the other, . . ., or loves, he would not ever desire or love or be friend if he did not somehow happen to be akin to the beloved, either in respect of the soul (*kata tên psychên*) or *kata ti tês psychês êthos ê tropous ê eidos*.' The meaning of this last phrase is contested.[15] It can be translated as 'in respect of a habit of soul or [a person's] ways or appearance'. Translating the sentence in this way, taking the genitive *tês psychês* in the phrase *tês psychês êthos ê tropous ê eidos* as depending on and thereby qualifying only *êthos* and not *tropous* and *eidos* as well, could make sense if one thought of Diotima's speech, reported by Socrates in the *Symposium*. There, at 209B, C, it is indeed the case that the one who loves and desires, and therefore wants to beget in what is beautiful, first looks at beautiful bodies, *sômata*, and then at beautiful souls; this is repeated and extended in what follows in the *Symposium*. So one may be led to see the same thought in reverse order in the *Lysis*, a dialogue akin to the *Symposium* in more than one respect. There is, however, an alternative way of understanding Plato; Socrates says: 'And so, if anybody desired anybody else, said I, children, or were enamoured, he would not ever desire or be enamoured or love, if he did not somehow happen to be familiar to and with the beloved, either as to soul or any habit of the soul or wonts or way (of the soul).'[16] This way of construing the syntax is supported, for example, by the connection of *êthos* and *tropoi* with the soul at *Symposium* 207E1. Diotima has asked Socrates for the reason why man and all the animals would risk even their lives for *erôs*, 'love' and 'desire'. She explains that behind that is a wish to be immortal, and that this immortality can only be achieved through procreation, through leaving something young in the place of what is old and passes away. Throughout life, a man is called the same from early childhood to old age; and Diotima continues (207D6):

> That man who certainly does not ever have the same [things] within himself is yet called the same, always, however, becoming young, yet again losing [things], as regards (*kata*) his hair and flesh and bones and blood and the whole body (*sôma*); and not only as regards (*kata*) the body, but also as regards the soul (*kata tên psychên*): its wonts (*tropoi*), its habits (*êthê*), opinions and beliefs, desires, pleasures, pains, fears – of all these each one never is by each one of us as the same, but the one comes about, the other passes away.

15 See the appendix to this chapter, 'An *eidos* of the soul in Plato's *Lysis*'.
16 See the appendix to this chapter, 'An *eidos* of the soul in Plato's *Lysis*'.

There are *tropoi* and *êthê* of the soul in the *Symposium*; likewise at *Lysis* 222A, where the one who loves is said to be familiar to and with the one who is loved 'either regarding the soul, or some habit of the soul, or some wonts of the soul, or some way of the soul'.

What is 'a way of the soul'? In the *Republic*, in response to different stimuli and different situations, different parts of the soul are active and at work: but the concept of a part of a soul, a soul with parts, is a complex one, and one which is, for example, not present in the *Phaedo*; it does not seem to be present in the other early dialogues either. But the soul is active in one way in one situation, in another in another. To cope with different things, with each different sort of situation, something different in the soul is called upon: and that, in each case, is one *eidos*, one *way*, of the soul; use of *eidos* in this sense is frequent in the early books of the *Republic*, especially before the soul is construed as tripartite, but also afterwards, albeit potentially in a slightly different manner.

At *Republic* 400D, Socrates had asked Glaucon: 'And what of the manner (*tropos*) of the diction, and the speech? . . . Do they not follow and conform to the disposition (*êthos*) of the soul?'[17] This usage of *êthê tês psychês* is resumed at 402D, immediately after the passage quoted above. Having obtained Glaucon's agreement, Socrates continues: 'Then, . . ., if the fine dispositions [*êthê*] that are in the soul and those that agree and accord with them in the form [*eidei*] should ever coincide in anyone, with both partaking of the same model [*typou*], wouldn't that be the fairest sight for him who is able to see?'[18] The phrase 'fine dispositions that are in the soul' seems to refer back to what has just been mentioned at 402C: moderation, courage, liberality, magnanimity. These virtues are *eidê* and *êthê* of the soul, 'ways' and 'habits'. Not much depends, for our purposes, on which of 'ways, wonts, habits, dispositions, characteristics' or the like is chosen to translate *eidê* and *êthê*, as long as it is understood that it is those things (i.e., moderation, etc.) and their manifestations and depictions that Socrates is here talking about.[19] There is thus indeed nothing in this context that presupposes Platonic Forms in the sense of the 'forms' of *Phaedo* 102ff. That is to say, if there are Platonic Forms in Plato's *Republic*, they do not make their appearance before the central, 'metaphysical', section of the

17 Translation Shorey 1937: 255.

18 Translation Bloom 1991: 81. In this sentence, *eidos* indeed refers to the person's appearance or 'physical form'; note that the noun is preceded by the definite article.

19 Were there to be reference to a Form of Justice here, something one could see elsewhere (e.g., 476A) being referred to as (*to*) *dikaion*, one would also have to accept a Form of Moderation, a Form of Liberality and a Form of Magnanimity; it should prove difficult to find parallels elsewhere in Plato to the latter two at least.

work. This must be emphasised since the context of *Republic* 402C is often taken as evidence for the claim that there are forms of justice, moderation, etc., in the *Republic*, without the potentially crucial distinction between 'the just', 'the good' and 'the beautiful' on the one hand, and on the other a human soul's justice or excellence, etc. But the claim that 'justice' as a 'way of the soul' and 'the just (itself)' are identical would – if anybody were inclined to uphold it – require further proof and argument.[20]

III

The next context in the *Republic* usually associated with Platonic Forms is found on the last pages of Book V, 475E–480A. Socrates has introduced the notion that for the fictional city to become reality, kings would have to become philosophers or philosophers kings. Glaucon has challenged him by introducing a group of people who could conceivably qualify as philosophers on Socrates' definition of a philosopher as someone who is a lover of any sort of learning and of getting to know things, but of whom he correctly expects that Socrates would not want to count them as philosophers.[21] Socrates reacts as expected and Glaucon asks whom Socrates calls the genuine philosophers. Those, Socrates begins his answer, who are eager to be spectators of the truth. When prompted to explain this further, Socrates sets out to provide an answer by obtaining agreement from Glaucon that as beautiful and ugly are opposed, they are two, and as they are two, that each is one. Once he has obtained agreement on that, Socrates continues (476A3): 'And the same account holds concerning just and unjust and good and bad and all the *eidê*, that on the one hand each itself is one, on the other hand each appears as many which make their appearance everywhere through their communion [*koinônia*] with actions and each other.' Adam (1902: 335) comments:

> 476A2 *kai peri dikaiou ktl.* This is the first appearance of the Theory of 'Ideas' properly so called in the *Republic*. It should be carefully noted that Plato is not attempting to prove the theory: Glauco, in fact, admits it from the first. The Theory was approached from two directions, from the side of Mind or

20 I do not think this proof and argument can be found in or derived from Plato's dialogues.

21 Though Glaucon's qualification at 475D that those lovers of sights and sounds steer clear of *logoi* or arguments should in itself be sufficient to exclude these people, as it is incompatible with an interest in all objects of learning.

> Thought (*hoi logoi hoi ek tôn epistêmôn* Arist. *Met.* 1 9. 990b 12), and from the side of Existence (*to hen epi pollôn* l.c. Cf. Zeller[4] II 1, pp. 652 ff.). It is the first of these methods which is followed throughout the present investigation. The *eidê* provide objects for Knowledge, as opposed to Opinion, and they are capable of being known: see 476c, e ff., 478a, 479e. Throughout a large part of the following discussion, we are not much concerned with the Ideas as strictly transcendent entities or *chôrista*, existing apart not only from particulars but also from the knowing Mind, for it is only in so far as he knows the Ideas that the philosopher-king can make use of them (cf. VI 484c, d): he cannot possibly frame political institutions on the model of Ideas which he does not know. We must admit that the philosopher's apprehension of the Ideas is the relevant consideration here (cf. VI 484c *enarges en tê*$_i$ *psychê*$_i$ *echontes paradeigma*), . . . The further specifications of the Ideal Theory in this passage are as follows. Each Idea is, in and by itself, one (476a), changeless (479a, 479e), and perfect (VI 484c, d), contrasting, in each of these respects, with the phenomena which 'partake' of or 'imitate' it (476d n.). Plato does not now touch on the question how it is that Mind has knowledge of a perfection above and beyond what can be derived from observation and experience. This faculty of Mind is elsewhere – in the *Meno* and the *Phaedo* – explained by the pre-existence of the Soul. See on 476c.
>
> Krohn has pointed out (*Pl. St.* p. 96) that the examples of *eidê* now cited by Plato are all of them attributes – *dikaion*, *adikon*, *agathon*, *kakon*, etc. It does not however follow from this that the theory of Idea is still in process of formation: on the contrary, the appeal to Glauco just above (475e) implies that it was already a recognised dogma of the Platonic school. The simple explanation is that Plato wants to cite relevant examples. The *eidê* of *dikaion*, *agathon*, *kalon* etc. are precisely those which it is the philosopher's duty to introduce into the practical administration of the State: cf. VI 484c and X 596a *n*.

Adam's comment is constructive and useful in giving a fair overview of the context and highlighting the main features of the *eidê* which Socrates discusses here.[22] For purposes of analysis, it may be best to consider Adam's note in conjunction with the prefatory statement with which Cross and Woozley introduce their discussion of 475e to 480a

22 For acute observations on what is not implied concerning *eidê* at *Republic* 475e–480a, cf. Penner 1987: 62–3, with n.30, 373f.

under the heading 'The distinction between the philosopher and the non-philosopher' (1964: 139):

> The argument falls into two parts, (1) 475E–476D which is addressed to Glaucon, as a disciple of Plato [*sic*!] who already shares Plato's general philosophical view; and (2) 476D–480 which is addressed to a wider audience, and in particular to the lover of sights and sounds, the counterfeit philosopher. The outcome of the whole discussion is that the latter does not possess knowledge, does not really know anything, but has only belief (*doxa*), is a *philodoxos*, i.e. a lover of belief, whereas the genuine philosopher possesses knowledge, is able to apprehend the truth, and thus alone merits the name of philosopher. In both sections two parallel distinctions are brought out.

It is important to recognise a division in the argument in order to see which of the descriptions of the things themselves singled out by Adam fall into which section, and in what relation this distribution stands to the supposed targets of the two parts of the argument. In 475E–476D, we read that each of these *eidê* is one (476A) and visible to and seen by the intellect, *dianoia* (476B), as being by itself (476C); the many things which are like (*eoiken*) that which is itself by itself are referred to as participating or sharing (*metechonta*) in that which is itself by itself, for example beauty or the beautiful itself. This train of thought ends indeed at 476D with the observation of a difference between knowledge and opinion, and the next part of the argument begins with the imagined angry reaction of the one who has thus been branded as having opinion only, without knowledge. The next section, however, in which Socrates attempts to establish that knowledge, ignorance and, in-between the two (*metaxy*), opinion correspond to what is, what is not and, in-between the two, what is and is not, that section ends at 478e. From the end of 478E onwards, conclusions are drawn on the basis of the two preceding sections, and now more is said about the beautiful, etc. The opening words of Socrates' statement at 478E7 indicate that a new section begins:

> Now, with this taken for granted, let him tell me, I shall say, and let him answer – that good man who doesn't believe that there is anything fair in itself [*auto men kalon*] and an *idea* of the beautiful itself [*idean tina autou kallous*] which always stays the same in all respects [*aei men kata tauta hôsautôs echousan*] but does hold that there are many fair things [*polla de ta kala*] this lover of sights who can in no way endure it if anyone asserts the fair is one

> [*hen to kalon*] and the just is one and so on with the rest. 'Now, of these many fair things, you best of men,' we'll say, 'is there any that won't also look ugly? And of the just, any that won't look unjust? And of the holy, any that won't look unholy?'[23]

By the end of Socrates' conclusions, what was first labelled *eidê* in 476A has all the attributes the reader of the *Republic* is acquainted with from Socrates' discussion of the things themselves in the *Phaedo* (95E–107B), and there is, moreover, a significant overlap between the *eidê* named in the two dialogues: the beautiful, the good, the just, the holy and their opposites, the half and the double, the big and the small, the light and the heavy (479B).

In explaining the world in the *Phaedo*, Socrates had recourse to a particular method of *hypotheseis* which seems to involve starting from the beautiful itself, the good itself, etc., and then testing what is compatible with these assumptions. Part of this assumption concerning the beautiful itself by itself is (100C) that 'if anything other is beautiful apart from the beautiful itself, it is beautiful through no one other thing than because it shares (*metechei*) in that beautiful', the beautiful itself; and further, says Socrates (100D), that if something is beautiful, 'nothing other makes it beautiful than of that beautiful either the presence (*parousia*) or communion (*koinônia*)[24] or in whatever manner or way it be called; for,' says Socrates, 'I do not further insist on that [i.e. the manner in which the beautiful makes beautiful], but [rather, I only insist] that through [or: 'by'] the beautiful all the beautifuls are beautiful; . . . through the beautiful the beautifuls become beautiful.'[25] This is then extended to *megethos*, 'size', or as the Greek word suggests, 'bigness'. Subsequently 'big' and 'small' and relationships between numbers and 'double' and 'half' are discussed. And Socrates closes this section of his 'explanation' with dismissive remarks about *antilogikoi*, 'antilogicians' or quarrellers, who would not be convinced and would not understand. 'But,' he says, turning to Cebes, 'if really you are "of the philosophers" (= from among the philosophers), I believe that you may well be able to understand what I say.' And it is at this point in the dialogue that Echecrates the Phlian Pythagorean interrupts for a second time, and at this point that Phaedo then resumes and, for the first time in the *Phaedo*, refers to the things themselves about which Socrates had

23 Translation Bloom 1991: 160.

24 The important issue of what is meant and what is implied by *koinônia* at 476A cannot be discussed at this stage; the occurrence of the term here, though, is yet another echo of the terminology of the *Phaedo*.

25 The barbarism 'beautifuls' is meant to be a literal rendering of the Greek neuter plural of the (nominalised) adjective, (*ta*) *kala*.

been talking as '*eidê*'. It has been suggested above that this usage of *eidê* here has a Pythagorean origin, in that (some) Pythagoreans may have referred to *their* opposites, big and small, odd and even, good and bad, etc., as *eidê*.[26]

Eidê are thus introduced, and referred to as '*eidê*', both in the *Phaedo* and in the *Republic*, at places at which the true philosopher is contrasted with someone else. And the examples of *eidê* provided in both dialogues are, as has often been observed, opposites. In both cases, those present agree with what Socrates says with astonishing speed, as noted by commentators on the *Phaedo* and on the *Republic*. This would not be surprising if these particular *eidê* were the Pythagorean *eidê* which as such were already well known. For the *Republic*, one can, of course, get by without this assumption and assume instead that Glaucon agrees with Socrates at the level of the dialogue because the reader of Plato would have been familiar with that part of the discussion from reading the *Phaedo*. Be that as it may, what is introduced into the discussion of the *Republic* at 475E–480A is very similar indeed to what was talked about at *Phaedo* 95E–107B.

And there is a further potential parallel: in the *Phaedo*, Plato was at pains, from 102A onwards, to introduce in quick succession the technical term *eidê*, taken from one philosophical context as denoting the prime constituents of the world there, and then, shortly afterwards, the word *idea*, taken from the atomistic system of Democritus, in which *ideai* denoted *his* prime constituents, the atoms. In the *Phaedo*, Plato then let Socrates use these two terms interchangeably.[27] At *Republic* 475E–480A, too, the plural *eidê* is introduced as a technical term first, at 476A. Then there is a complex ontological and epistemological argument, 476D–478E. After that, the term *idea* appears for the first time as a technical term. At stake in the argument of 476D–478E is the Parmenidean distinction of 'being', 'not being' and 'being and not

26 It should also be noted that when in the *Phaedo* reference is being made to 'philosophers', or even 'genuine philosophers', there is always an overtone, not of mocking, but of ironic solemnity. 'The philosopher' is Pythagoras, and 'the (genuine) philosophers' are, it seems, what Pythagoreans see themselves as. This is compatible with the emphatic reaction of both Simmias and Cebes, who are not themselves Pythagoreans, but are acquainted with at least some of the doctrines of the Pythagorean Philolaus, at 102A; and compatible moreover with Echecrates the Pythagorean's enthusiastic intervention.

27 This view is controversial; it would be safer to say: 'In the *Phaedo*, Plato then let Socrates use these two terms, together with *morphê* as a third, and to some extent *ousia* as a fourth, in such a way that interpreters to this day are not in agreement whether *eidos* and *idea* are meant to be synonyms or rather subtly referring to different aspects of Plato's new ontological system, a confusion not helped by the fact that, in the *Phaedo*, the discussion of ontological matters is on the surface subordinate to proving the immortality of the soul of the individual.' For a recent discussion of *Phaedo* 102A–105B, see Ebert 2004: 372–89. Cf. further Herrmann 2007.

being', concerning which Parmenides had stated that one should steer clear of the second and the third and assert only the first, 'being' or 'is'. Against this, or at least against this background, Leucippus and Democritus had stated that 'being is' and 'not being is', by positing atoms and void. In addition, Democritus had stated (DK68B11 = Taylor D22 = Sextus Empiricus, *Adv. Math*. VII. 139): 'There are two forms of judgement, genuine and bastard. To the bastard form belong all these, sight, hearing, smell, taste, touch, but the other is genuine and separate from this. When the bastard form can no longer see anything smaller or hear or smell or taste or perceive by touch, but to a finer degree . . . .'[28] Democritus had thus posited a different ontology from that of Parmenides, and he had introduced a different epistemology, to some extent on similar lines with Parmenides' 'truth', *alêtheia*, and 'opinion', *doxa*, the first of which was genuine, the other false but respected by all. Democritus speaks of two types of knowledge and understanding, the one connected with the senses, the other genuine and noble and trustworthy. The report by Sextus[29] suggests that Democritus contrasted what we arrive at by sense perception, as 'by convention', with reality, which is atoms and void. At *Republic* 476D–468E, a threefold ontology and epistemology are suggested: not only 'being' and 'not being', but 'being', 'not being' which should be called 'nothing', and 'being and not being'. But 'being' and 'being and not being' are connected in a necessary and systematic way, by participation, so that while knowledge is of 'what is', opinion, *doxa*, is not wholly unconnected, nor is it just 'by convention'. Plato may have written this part of the argument with, at least among other things, Democritus in mind. At any rate, it is only after this argument that the term *idea* is used at 479A, and that at first with reference to beauty itself, before Socrates returns a few lines later to the opposites. In this context, it should be noted that the opposites named from 479A onwards, the beautiful and the ugly, just and unjust, holy and unholy, half and double, big and small, light and heavy,[30] are all said to be in the realm of appearance; strictly speaking, at this stage in the *Republic*, no *idea* of 'the ugly itself' is being posited or mentioned or implied that could be set against the *idea* of beauty itself, while there were, of course, the *eidê* of just and unjust, good and bad, and so on at 476A,[31] a circumstance that may become relevant later. But leaving aside that potential

28 Translation Taylor 1999: 13.

29 Sextus Empiricus, *Adv. Math.* VII, 135–40, DK68A = Taylor 179a.

30 Light and heavy as a pair of opposites is not often at the centre of Plato's concerns; as a pair of opposites, it does not figure in the *Phaedo*; if Theophrastus, *De sensu*, 49–83 (DK68A135 = Taylor 113) can be trusted, it was of central concern to Democritus.

31 The usage of *idea* at *Euthyphro* 5D–6E is discussed in Herrmann 2007.

distinction, what Socrates says about the *eidê* at the end of *Republic* V, and indeed at 484, the opening page of Book VI, is most certainly meant to invoke what had been said about the beautiful itself, the good itself, the just itself, etc., in the *Phaedo*. Whether the two parts of the argument at *Republic* 475E–480A are indeed directed to two different constituencies in the way Cross and Woozley intended is a different question.

IV

As soon, however, as a comparison is drawn between the two passages in the *Phaedo* and the *Republic*, one notes a difference: at *Republic* 475E–480A, the *eidê* are not said to be 'cause-and-reason', *aition*, or explanation, *aitia*.[32] That, however, had been one of the great innovative features of the theory of Socrates in the *Phaedo*.[33] Indeed, according to Socrates, it had been the motivating force to develop a new method: the other philosophers, notably Anaxagoras, do not satisfy him, because they cannot show how things are arranged for the best; and that, for Socrates, is giving the cause-and-reason, the *aition*. At *Phaedo* 95E–107B, it was the search for explanation and cause-and-reason which Socrates wanted to undertake, and because of his inability to complete this task successfully, he used the second-best way of travelling, which involved the method of hypothesis, and then both the naive and the more sophisticated explanation in terms of *eidê* and participation. What is said about *eidê* in *Republic* V thus falls short in an important respect of what had been said about the things themselves and their relation to the many of the same name that share in them in the *Phaedo*. The *eidê* of *Republic* V are not explanations, cause and reason in the way required by Socrates in the *Phaedo*. The question here is not whether that makes them more or less useful, or more or less acceptable to modern ways of thinking. But one may legitimately ask what has happened to Socrates' search for an explanation.

This leads straight to 505A, to the *idea* of the good as the greatest thing to be learned, in the similes of the Sun and the Line, and the allegory of the Cave, culminating in Socrates' exegesis of his image at 517A–C, which ends with the words that

32 To what extent *aition* and *aitia* may or may not be synonyms in the *Phaedo* cannot be discussed here.

33 There are some forty instances of words of the stem *aiti-* at *Phaedo* 95E–102A; there are none at 102B–107B. The literature on causes in the *Phaedo* is vast. For a possible connection of *aitia* in the *Phaedo* with pre-Socratic thought, cf. Herrmann 2005.

> in the knowable the last thing to be seen, and that with considerable effort, is the *idea* of the good; but once seen, it must be concluded that this is in fact the cause [*aitia*] of all that is right and fair in everything – in the visible it gave birth to light and its sovereign; in the intelligible, itself sovereign, it provided truth and intelligence – and that the man who is going to act prudently in private or in public must see it.[34]

The ethical-cum-epistemological coda of 517c is taken up once more in Socrates' description of the dialectician, the *dialektikos*, as someone capable of giving an account of a thing at 534b, c:

> Isn't it also the same with the good? Unless a man is able to separate out the *idea* of the good from all other things and distinguish it in the argument, and, going through every test, as it were in battle – eager to meet the test of being [*ousia*] rather than that of opinion [*doxa*] – he comes through all this with the argument still on its feet; you will deny that such a man knows the good itself, or any other good? And if he somehow lays hold of some phantom of it, you will say that he does so by opinion and not knowledge.[35]

Here, knowledge of the *idea* of the good is again claimed to be the prerequisite to, and thereby cause-and-reason of, knowing anything else that is good.[36]

It is not necessary to repeat here and paraphrase in detail the content of the similes of the Sun and the Line and the allegory of the Cave. In fact, Plato is hardly ever as lucid as he is on these central pages of the *Republic*, as he lets Socrates provide an explanation of what the various analogies are analogies of: Plato provides his own interpretation. A couple of points may be worth noting, though. After the *idea* of the good has been mentioned as the greatest thing that can be learnt at 505a, Socrates at first is reluctant to say more on the issue. But when he eventually sets out to give his exposition, with a description of the so-called offspring of the good in the so-called

34 Translation Bloom 1991: 196.

35 Translation Bloom 1991: 211.

36 This statement, incidentally, entails either that Plato is indeed thinking of a *koinônia* or community of *eidê* to the extent that the dialectician knows other *eidê* which are good, or it implies that there are good things to be *known*, independent of whether they are *eidê* or not. Alternatively, Plato, as any speaker of a language, uses the verb 'know' here in a colloquial way, without recourse to the philosophical distinction between knowledge and opinion; that in itself would be instructive.

simile of the Sun, he begins, or so he reports, by establishing as common ground at 507B:

> 'We both assert that there are,' I said, 'and distinguish in speech, many fair things, many good things, and so on for each kind of thing.' – 'Yes, so we do.' – 'And we also assert that there is a fair itself, a good itself, and so on for all the things that we then set down as many. Now, again, we refer them to one *idea* of each as though the *idea* were one; and we address it as that which really *is*.' – 'That's so.' – 'And, moreover, we say that the former are seen but not intellected, while the *ideas* are intellected but not seen.'[37]

This is very similar to the statement at the beginning of Book X which introduces the criticism of *mimêsis* or 'representation' (596A):

> 'Do you want us to make our consideration according to our customary procedure, beginning from the following point? For we are, presumably, accustomed to set down some one particular form for each of the particular "manys" to which we apply the same name.[38] Or don't you understand?' – 'I do.' – 'Then let's now set down any one of the "manys" you please; for example, if you wish, there are surely many couches and tables.' – 'Of course.' – 'But as for *ideas* for these furnishings, there are presumably two, one of couch, one of table.'[39]

So far, so good. But the two passages are also distinctly similar to the discussion of 474D–476E, the distinction between the lover of sights and sounds, who recognises many beautiful sounds and colours and shapes, but fails to see beauty itself and the other *eidê*, and the philosopher, who does recognise the beautiful and the ugly, justice and injustice, good and bad, and all the *eidê*.

The point I should like to emphasise here is that, in all three passages – least so in the first, where the opposites are taken as starting points, but in the final analysis even there – the many things enter the equation. In that, the philosophers of the end of Book V, of the beginning of the simile of the Sun, and of the beginning of Book X, are like

37 Translation Bloom 1991: 187.

38 As indicated at the beginning of section II above, there is an alternative, and dialectically more satisfactory, way of construing the Greek. But Plato has phrased the sentence deliberately in this ambiguous fashion. The irony and the *mise en abyme* of this example cannot be discussed here; but it is clear from the context, not least 601C–603B, that Socrates is speaking in jest here; on the status of 'forms of artefacts' see below.

39 Translation Bloom 1991: 268.

the mathematicians of 510B–511E: they somehow operate with the *eidê* and with the many particulars, but they have not reached that *archê* or beginning of 510B that lies beyond all *hypotheseis*. They are philosophers, *philosophoi*, and they do believe in *eidê* or forms, but they are like released prisoners who walk about outside the cave without ever relating anything of what they see to the sun, only comparing the animals themselves and the plants and whatever else they see to the puppets and their shadows in the cave.[40] It does not matter who these philosophers were, whether they were an identifiable group of people a generation older than Plato, some of Plato's contemporaries, be it in Magna Graecia, or the Peloponnese, in the Megarid or in Athens, a group within the Academy, or Plato's aunt Sally, called on for the occasion.[41]

By contrast to all the ordinary people, but also by contrast to those philosophers, their mathematics and their talk of *eidê*,[42] as even Glaucon understands and is capable of summarising at 511C, D, by contrast to those philosophers who have understanding, *dianoia*, as something between opinion, *doxa*, and insight, *nous*, there are those others who get to 'what is', *to on*, and 'what can be thought', *to noêton*, through 'dialectic', *tês tou dialegesthai epistêmê*. And it is only those who have knowledge of the *idea* of the good who, as we have seen, are called 'dialecticians', *dialektikoi*, at 534B, C.[43] The difference between

40 To that extent I agree with Szlezák 2003: 63–6.

41 NB Huffmann 2005: 84: 'Archytas' conception of the sciences was thus the foundation of his moral and political philosophy. It is not surprising, then, that the Platonic text which makes the clearest allusion to Archytas is Plato's account of the sciences in Book VII of the *Republic*. What is not commonly noticed, but what emerges from the account of Archytas presented above [in Huffman], is that Plato and Archytas were in serious disagreement. Scholars have typically emphasized the continuities between Plato and the Pythagoreans (e.g. Kahn, 2001: 49ff.) and overlooked the fact that the only mention of the Pythagoreans in the Platonic corpus turns out to be a criticism of them for seeking numbers in heard harmonies rather than ascending above the phenomena in order to consider which numbers are inherently concordant and which not and why (*R.* 530D ff.). Plato's criticisms of the nascent science of stereometry similarly take Archytas to task for focusing on individual problems posed by the phenomenal world rather than studying the geometrical solids for their own sake (see A15). Although the central books of the *Republic* are clearly in part directed at a very broad audience of philosophers and would-be philosophers, it is seldom recognised that one of their primary functions is to persuade a specific group of philosophers, the Pythagoreans and especially Archytas, of the errors of their ways and to convince them (1) that they must recognize the crucial distinction between the intelligible and sensible world, and (2) that because of a failure to make this distinction they have been mistaken about the true value of mathematics.'

42 These *philosophoi* could, in the famous phrase from *Sophist* 248A, be called *hoi tôn eidôn philoi*, 'the friends of the forms'; to what extent that is important for an interpretation of the *Sophist* cannot be discussed here.

43 The words *dialektikos* and *dialektikê* themselves occur in the *Republic* only at 531D–537C, altogether seven times.

the 'dialectician' and the other philosophers is that he alone has knowledge of the *idea* of the good, and is thus distinguished from the other philosophers as they are from the lovers of sights and sounds. But this knowledge is nothing other than knowledge that the good is both beginning-and-principle, *archê*, and explanation and cause-and-reason, *aitia*, of everything else.[44]

V

With this, let us return to the question posed at the beginning of section II: what *eidê* are there in the *Republic*? Considering the dialogue up to and including Book V, the answer, I think, must be: the same as in the *Phaedo*: the good and the bad, the beautiful and the ugly, the just and the unjust, and all the others. A safe way of giving content to 'all the others' would be to see what Plato is actually talking of in the dialogues up to and including the *Republic*, and which examples Socrates is actually using. In the first place, claims about the *eidê* of Socrates' discourse should start from the most prominent examples rather than the modern critic's favourite, the square and the triangle and the colours red and white, all of which play, to the best of my knowledge, no major part in Socrates' arguments.[45] As noted, the examples of things themselves Socrates adduces in Books V of the *Republic* are 'adjectives'. As in the *Phaedo*, these adjectives appear, on the whole, as pairs of opposites. These *eidê* or 'forms' are unchanging, always the same as themselves, where all the many things that bear their names are changing and not even the same as themselves, in addition to being one thing and its opposite at the same time. It would therefore not make sense to refer to the good, the beautiful, the just, the holy, the equal, the big, etc., as anything other than 'forms'.

It would, however, be equally wrong to assume that, in the *Republic* at least, these 'forms' are what Socrates was looking for at *Phaedo* 95ff. In the *Phaedo*, Socrates claims that it is necessary altogether 'to go through the explanation, cause and reason of becoming and coming to be and

44 For the connection of *archê* and *aitia* from the *Phaedo* onwards, see Herrmann 2005.

45 The *Lysis* is instructive concerning colours; but if anything can be concluded from *Lysis* 217C–E, it should be that colours, as closely tied to appearance and perception, are, on more than one level, not simple or straightforward examples. The square itself appears at *Republic* VI, 511D, where forms of 'mathematicals' are accommodated in the hierarchy of things; while *Meno* 82–5 is clearly a prelude, the geometrical examples there, while appearing in the context of *anamnêsis* or recollection, do not seem to form part of an ordered system of eternal forms; *Euthydemus* 390C is one of the many places in that dialogue which suggest its composition after the *Republic*. Pace Rowe p. 143, n.54 above.

passing away and perishing', *peri geneseôs kai phthoras tên aitian diapragmateuesthai* (95E), and when he subsequently explains that such an explanation can only be given in terms of what is best and what is better (97C–99C). Socrates himself declares in the *Phaedo* that he is not capable of providing such an explanation. He then proceeds to give an answer that he himself characterises as second best. In this answer, explanation, cause and reason play a part. But, strictly speaking, Socrates commits himself, even as part of this second-best answer, only to *one* form that fits his criteria, to wit, the beautiful itself (100). Subsequently, and in order to console his desolate friends, he *asks*, rather than claiming himself, as in the case of the beautiful, whether the same is true of the big and small. It is only on the basis of Cebes' belief that the case of the big and the small is indeed parallel to that of the beautiful that Socrates can then continue with his final proof of the immortality of the soul of the individual. But as his interlocutors *do* think that the other cases are parallel to the beautiful, the picture that emerges in the *Phaedo* is that of a multiplicity of forms that all alike have explanatory-cum-causal function and thus form part of an answer to Socrates' demand that an explanation is an account in terms of what is best and what is better. How the big and the small and the odd and the even are supposed to do this is left undiscussed in the *Phaedo*. We need not here decide what Plato was committed to when he wrote *Phaedo* 95–107.

We may state, though, that when he wrote *Republic* V, he did not ascribe to *these* forms such an explanatory-cum-causal role. Instead, these opposites themselves must be recognised by anyone who is not merely a lover of sights and sounds but a philosopher who wants to provide a reasoned account of the world only as a preliminary to further understanding. These forms have a necessary epistemological function, but their ontological status and role are not discussed.

The account of the ontology of the world in Books VI and VII, on the other hand, goes beyond that. The simile of the Sun introduces the Idea of the Good as *aitia* and thereby as the answer to Socrates' demand first made explicit in the *Phaedo*. The simile of the Line expands on what had been said about the causal role of the Good concerning not only the knowability but in the first place the *ousia*, the 'being', the 'what-it-is', of anything that can be known, and takes the form of a multi-layered epistemological system, while the allegory of the Cave sums up everything that had been said about education in the ideal city in a form that is applicable as much to the everyday world Socrates and Glaucon, but also Plato, and we, as readers, inhabit. In this context it is significant that there is no 'Idea of the Bad' corresponding to the Idea of the Good, no negative *aitia*. When the Idea of the Good is first explicated, the many beautiful and the many good

things are contrasted with the beautiful itself and the good itself and one *idea* of each (507B), and the context does not invite us to think of many ugly and bad things, or an *idea* of such things.

Concerning the status of these other ideas, ideas other than the Idea of the Good, Socrates' introduction to the similes may be as important as the similes themselves. After having introduced the Idea of the Good as the greatest object of learning, the *megiston mathêma*, at 505A, Socrates explains to Glaucon that all other knowledge would be useless or at least unreliable without knowledge of the good. To demonstrate that that is so even concerning what otherwise could be expected of sharing with the good this place of dignity and power, Socrates employs – in a manner different from, but reminiscent of, that of the discussion of the just in Book I – the distinction between being and seeming, by insisting at 505D–E that while people may be content with what seems just and beautiful, nobody will be content with what seems good without being good. And he continues (506A):

> I certainly believe that just and beautiful things concerning which it is not recognised in whatever way they are good would not have a guardian of themselves worth much in someone who has not recognised this: but I divine that nobody will recognise and know them sufficiently before [recognising in whatever way they are good].

Glaucon agrees with this cryptic remark, and the matter is left at that. In the simile of the Sun, the Idea of the Good is then said to be reason and cause for the growth and being of everything in the knowable realm, as the sun is in the visible, and in the simile of the Line the knowable realm is subdivided into that part with which those deal who have recourse to the visible world, and that other, higher part, which is self-contained in that it is not in need of any such recourse to the visible but operates with *eidê* alone (511 B–C). This seems to suggest that geometers as well as other philosophers who operate like them deal with both visible examples and *eidê*, namely the *eidê* which they use as *hypotheseis*. The geometer uses the square and the diagonal drawn in the sand as well as his 'mathematicals'; but in this, a philosopher who uses the many equal and unequal things as well as the equal and the unequal itself is in no way different from the geometer.

Socrates' suggestion seems to be that the philosopher who recognises the many just and unjust things, the many beautiful and ugly things, the many good and bad things, as well as, of course, the *eidê* of just itself and unjust itself, beautiful itself and ugly itself, and good and bad itself, good though he be, is not yet the dialectician who recognises and knows the Idea of the Good which is the ultimate *archê* of everything

(511B). This criticism of philosophers who operate with *eidê* and *hypotheseis* would be in line with everything said about criticism of Philolaus and certain Pythagoreans in the *Phaedo*; it would have added significance in the *Republic*, a dialogue in which Plato otherwise engages with the theories of the Pythagorean Archytas.[46]

As far as the ontological status of the forms other than the Idea of the Good is concerned, though, this is as far as Plato goes in the *Republic*. One must therefore resist the question whether the good itself, which appeared in the list of the *eidê* of the good and the bad and the beautiful and the ugly and the just and the unjust, is the same as or different from the Idea of the Good which is the *archê* of everything. And one must also resist the question of whether the Idea of the Beautiful and the Idea of the Just are the same as the *eidê* of the beautiful and the just in that list, or the same as the Idea of the Good, or independent of either, and if so, whether they are somehow in-between the many *eidê* and the Idea of the Good. Any attempt to systematise the 'forms' and 'ideas' into one neat hierarchy is in danger of introducing something that is as such not present in the *Republic*.

One may note, though, that Plato is far from using the words *eidos* and *idea* interchangeably in *Republic* VI–VII. While it is true that the two terms are not part of a fixed technical terminology which is employed to make systematic distinctions, and while there is fluidity in the application of the words, just as there is an irreducible ambiguity and incompleteness in Socrates' whole exposition, as indeed he announces at 506B–507A, *idea* does have a privileged status in connection with the good itself; this, in turn, ties *idea*, once again, more closely to the notion of *aitia*, just as was the case, as had been suggested above, with Democritus, whom Plato criticised in the *Phaedo*, and whose explanation of the world will come under renewed attack in *Republic* X, in the *Sophist*, the *Politicus* and the *Timaeus*.[47] Socrates' discussion of the Idea of the Good in the central books of the *Republic* is far from being Plato's final statement on forms and ideas.

APPENDIX: AN *EIDOS* OF THE SOUL IN PLATO'S *LYSIS*

(Cf. p. 210 with nn. 15 and 16.)

My contention is that Plato's usage at *Lysis* 222 can teach us something concerning his usage at *Republic* 402. It is thus worth quoting modern opinion at some length. There are, broadly speaking, two lines

46 Cf. Huffman 2005: 84, quoted in n.38 above.

47 NB: These are the very dialogues from which Gerhard Seel could adduce most of his testimonies; together with the *Philebus*, Plato's last, and greatest, effort to overcome 'Pythagoreanism'.

of interpretation. The first is to take *eidos* at 222A as referring to the external form or body as opposed to the soul (A); the second is to see it in parallel with the other nouns in the accusative and make the genitive dependent on all of them (B).

The first view (A) is represented as follows:

Jowett (1970: 96): 'either in his soul, or in his character, or in his manners, or in his form'; Watt (1987: 160): 'either in his soul, or in some disposition of his soul, or in his conduct, or in his looks'; Bordt (1997: 227f.): '222A2f. – in bezug auf seine Seele oder in bezug auf einen bestimmten Charakter seiner Seele, oder sein Verhalten oder sein Aussehen. Die Übersetzung von *tropous* mit "Verhalten" (statt, wie es eigentlich üblicher wäre, mit "Charakter" – n. 561: Vgl. z.B. *Rep*. 329D3.) legt sich an dieser Stelle deswegen nahe, weil Platon bei seiner Aufzählung von Dingen, in bezug auf die zwei Freunde angehörig sein können, zunächst bei dem ansetzt, was einen Menschen innerlich bestimmt, und damit endet, wie ein Mensch äußerlich aussieht. (n. 562: Platon gebraucht *eidos* in 222A3 nicht als ein [*sic*!] *terminus technicus* für die Idee, sondern im Sinn der sichtbaren äußeren Gestalt, die ein Mensch hat.) Insofern wird man unter *êthos* hier am besten den Charakter eines Menschen verstehen und unter *tropos* die Art und Weise, wie sich dieser Charakter nach außen hin zeigt.'

Bordt resembles Jowett closely both in taking the genitive *tês psychês* as depending on *êthos* alone, and in translating *tês psychês êthos ê tropous ê eidos* as 'Charakter seiner Seele, oder sein Verhalten oder sein Aussehen', mirroring Jowett's 'in his character, or in his manners, or in his form'.

The second view (B) is represented as follows:

Lamb (1925: 67): 'And in a case where a person desires another, my boys, or loves him, he would never be desiring or loving or befriending him, unless he somehow belonged to his beloved either in soul, or in some disposition, demeanor, or cast of soul'; cf. also Bolotin (1979: 50): 'And therefore, . . ., if someone desires another, boys, or loves him passionately, he would never desire, nor love passionately, nor love [as a friend] unless he happened to be akin in some way to his passionately beloved – either in his soul, or some of its ways, or some aspect [n. 83] of it.' I agree with Bolotin on syntax but not on semantics; *eidos*, in particular, although it has retained its strong visual connotations in some contexts, does not mean 'aspect'. Bolotin's n. 83, p. 61, reads: 'The word here translated by "aspect" is *eidos*. . . . The three "parts" of the soul, as delineated in Book Four of Plato's *Republic*, are also called *eidê* of the soul. See, for example, *Republic* 440E8–441A3.' Bolotin is right in

referring to the use of *eidos* in connection with the soul in the *Republic*, even though one can interpret this connection in a different way.

Recently, Penner and Rowe (2005) have done a great deal to clarify the matter. They translate (p. 349) 'either in relation to the soul or in relation to some characteristic of the soul, or ways or form'.

This is a working translation, designed to preserve a perceived ambiguity; they comment (p. 161, n. 13): 'The Greek word *eidos* here is ambiguous as between (1) *physical* "form", or beauty, and (2) "type", i.e. of *soul* (see below); "form" is our not very successful attempt to reproduce the ambiguity in English.'

As regards interpretation of the phrase at 222A2–3, they comment (p. 164): 'There is plainly nothing in the immediately preceding argument (i.e. since 216D6) that allows Socrates to add this qualification. So what licences the addition? We suggest that what allows it is rather the earlier, and cumulative, connection of the – true – object of love with *wisdom or knowledge*. If person *A* is said to love person *B*, *B*, will be somehow, in some way, *oikeios* to *A*. Why? Because, if genuine love is somehow involved in this relation, then *B* must have some connection with *A*'s good. Then, if *A*'s good is, or depends on, wisdom, *B* must have some role in *A*'s acquisition of wisdom. But in that case it must be in virtue of *B*'s soul, or some feature of his soul, that *B* is *oikeios* to *A*. (As to how *B*'s *body* will be relevant to *A*'s becoming wise, absent some special, undisclosed, theory of learning, e.g. through physical contact with beauty, that will surely be rather less clear.)'

The sentence in parenthesis could in itself be regarded as sufficient to exclude the possibility of any reference to 'body' or 'physical form' from this context. But Penner and Rowe continue (2005: 166, n. 18): ' "in relation to the soul" and "in relation to some characteristic of the soul", etc. . . . hardly seem to represent genuine alternatives . . .; the puzzling trio "characteristic . . . or ways or form" . . . perhaps, in Lysis' case, has the effect of saying "well, *something* to do with the soul (don't you see?)". Wisdom, and the love of it (*philosophia*), will plainly involve distinctive traits, habits of life, type of "soul", or mind (if, that is, "ways or form" does attach to "the soul" . . .).'

And further (p. 166f.): 'Here we should notice the potential ambiguity of the final word of the sentence in 222A3: *eidos*. "Form", we translated it, and supposed that for Socrates, and (probably) for Lysis, the reference would have been to "form", or "type", of soul ("wise"; or, for Socrates, just "philosophical"?). But in the context of Hippothales' passion, it is an *eidos* of a different sort that will be in question – Lysis' *eidos*, his physical form, or beauty, which was said at 204E5–6 to be spectacular: "Because I'm sure there's little chance of your not knowing what the boy looks like [his *eidos*]; he's good-looking enough

to be known just from that alone," said Ctesippus. So Hippothales, we speculate, and perhaps Menexenos (not, except maybe for a fleeting moment, Lysis?), will read Socrates as saying, in a roundabout way, that the lover will be *oikeios* to the object of love either in soul . . . or in *body*. (n. 21: Cf. 218B8–C2 for the pair soul/body.) For, we suggest, Hippothales will probably so read *eidos* as to make what Socrates says yield "either in relation to the soul or in relation to some characteristic of the soul, or ways or <*beauty of physical*> *form*". (n. 22: Some kind of confirmation of the ambiguity of *eidos* comes from the judgements of modern translators: it is "aspect" (of the soul) for Lombardo, but "l'aspect physique" for Dorion (who takes the sequence "either in relation to soul", etc. as referring to a hierarchy of types of "amitié").) That is, he will take Socrates' general statement as allowing in the full range of his own preoccupations, which are distinctly unlikely to be restricted to Lysis' soul. For Socrates, however, there can surely be no doubt that "form" is form ("type") of soul: "ways or form" in his phrasing are to be taken as parallel to "some characteristic", and so as being "ways or form" of (the) soul. (n. 23: This is by no means inevitable, from the mere shape of the Greek – the phrasing of which, as a whole, is rather curious (there seem to be no doubts about the text). But that perhaps in itself helps to confirm that Socrates is up to something.) . . . "either in relation to the soul . . ." seems partly designed to allow him to avoid spelling things out.'

Penner and Rowe thereby certainly mark an advance over previous discussions. I do not think, though, that *tropous ê eidos*, without definite article, possessive pronoun or qualifying genitive, could be taken as referring to the person's 'ways or form' in the sense desired by them. Nor do I agree that ' "form" is form ("type") of soul', if this is understood as contrasting one type of soul, belonging to one person, with another type of soul, belonging to another person. Rather, it seems to me that *eidos* is strictly parallel to *êthos* and *tropous* in referring to something that somehow belongs to or is part of a soul. While there may not be many extant parallels for this usage, and while *Lysis* 222A may constitute a slightly unusual turn of phrase which, as Penner and Rowe suggest, may have startled the reader, I nevertheless do not think that there is an ambiguity in reference that would allow Hippothales or the reader of the dialogue to see in this occurrence of *eidos* a reference to (the) body.

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THE *APORIA* IN THE *CHARMIDES* ABOUT REFLEXIVE KNOWLEDGE AND THE CONTRIBUTION TO ITS SOLUTION IN THE SUN ANALOGY OF THE *REPUBLIC*

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This chapter has two aims. In section I, I examine the *aporia* in the *Charmides* about a certain kind of knowledge (for short, reflexive knowledge): the knowledge of what one knows, that one knows it, and of what one does not know, that one does not know it. The *aporia* (stated, and referred to as an *aporia*, at 167B), is whether or not, first, it is possible that there should be such a knowledge as this, and, second, if this is possible, the possession of it would be of any benefit. I concentrate on the following questions. First, what is supposed to be the source of this *aporia*? And, second, what is supposed to be its positive upshot, especially in view of the fact that this dialogue ends not with a solution to it but on the contrary with a declaration of defeat in the face of it?

In section II, I examine Plato's account of the idea of the good in the Sun-analogy of the *Republic*. I begin by considering certain central features of this account in its own right, and argue that the idea of the good is characterised as the *joint* cause of precisely two kinds of thing: on the one hand, the being, truth and knowability of the things that are, are true

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and are knowable; on the other hand, the ability of the rational soul to know these things. Against this background I go on to argue that the account of the idea of the good in the Sun analogy provides the resources for an account of reflexive knowledge which holds out promise of solving the *Charmides aporia*, that is, showing how reflexive knowledge can be both possible and beneficial, and of doing so in a way that addresses both the source and the upshot of this *aporia* as treated of in the *Charmides*.

I THE *APORIA* IN THE *CHARMIDES* ABOUT REFLEXIVE KNOWLEDGE

1 What is temperance the knowledge of? Of one's knowledge and lack of knowledge? Or of the good and bad? Or of both together?

The question 'What is temperance the knowledge of?' emerges as perhaps the central question in the latter half of the *Charmides*. It does so from the point at which Critias proposes that temperance should be defined as a certain kind of knowledge, viz. the knowledge of oneself (164D3–4). That Socrates' concern is to determine what temperance, understood as a distinct knowledge, is the knowledge *of* is first indicated when (in the question at 165C4–6) he directly associates temperance's being a distinct knowledge (*epistêmê tis*) with its being the knowledge *of* a distinct thing (*epistêmê tinos*). That this is indeed a central concern is indicated later in the argument, when Socrates (apparently referring back to 165C4–6) says that each knowledge is distinguished by the thing that it is *of* ('Or was it not by this that each knowledge was distinguished (*toutôi hôristai hekastê epistêmê*) as being not only knowledge, but a distinct knowledge (*epistêmê tis*), namely, by its being of distinct things (*tôi tinôn einai*)?', 171A5–6). I think it is fair to say that this question, 'What is temperance the knowledge of?', occupies a central place in this, the latter half of the dialogue.

But how is this question answered in the dialogue? Two different answers are considered. On the one hand, Critias argues that the knowledge which is temperance is the knowledge of one's knowledge and lack of knowledge, and that this is *the only* thing that it is of. [1] What this means, when properly spelled out, is that the knowledge which is temperance is the knowledge of what one knows, that one knows it, and of what one does not know, that one does not know it,[2] and that this is *the only* thing that it is of. On the other hand, Socrates, on the basis of an argument that is premised on Critias' understanding of the

1 See below (section I.2, esp. n.14) for this additional clause, with the emphasis on the *only*.

2 For this formulation, to which we shall return, see 167B2–3 and 171D2–4.

knowledge which is temperance, infers that this knowledge is not of one's knowledge and lack of knowledge, but is the knowledge of the good and bad (see 173D–174E, esp. 174D4–6).

Should we, then, suppose that this is the overall answer of the dialogue in response to the question 'What is temperance the knowledge of?'; that is, temperance is not the knowledge of one's knowledge and lack of knowledge, but it is the knowledge of the good and bad?[3] There are a number of reasons against supposing this. I shall first, briefly and summarily, state these reasons. I shall then propose an alternative interpretation (which I shall defend in the remainder of section I) of the overall answer that emerges as the upshot of the dialogue. On this interpretation, while no positive conclusion is defended in the dialogue, the positive upshot is that the knowledge which is temperance is *both* of one's knowledge and lack of knowledge *and* of other things, including, in particular, the good and bad.

First, the dialogue concludes by Socrates' professing that the inquiry has defeated them and they have failed to discover to what this word, *sôphrosunê*, is rightly applied – failed to discover what *sôphrosunê* is (175B2–4). If, however, we suppose that Socrates takes himself to have shown that the knowledge which is temperance is not the knowledge of one's knowledge and lack of knowledge, but is the knowledge of the good and bad, the way in which the dialogue ends will clearly be incongruous, and we ought to have expected the very opposite, that is, some indication that they have succeeded in discovering both what temperance is not and what it positively is. I think it would be difficult to overcome this impression of incongruity. Any appeal to Plato's preferring to end the dialogue on a note of *aporia* and let the reader draw any positive conclusion for himself would be too general to militate against this impression. More promising would be to argue that Socrates' declaration of defeat is premised exclusively on Critias' understanding of the knowledge which is temperance. But that still leaves us with the question of why the conclusion of the dialogue should be premised exclusively on Critias' understanding, if this understanding has already been not only refuted, but also replaced by a perfectly clear positive alternative. The incongruity remains.

Second, Socrates objects to Critias' understanding of temperance that, if temperance is the knowledge of one's knowledge and lack of knowledge, and if this is *the only* thing that it is of, then *either* it is impossible that there is such a thing as temperance, *or*, if its possibility is conceded,[4] then the possession of temperance is of no benefit.

3 This is Terry Penner's view, defended in his 1973.

4 See *sunchôrêsômen* at 169D3 and *sunchôrêsantes* at 172C7; the term is repeated four times at 175B4–C7. More later.

On the other hand, however, he also claims that if the temperate person knew his knowledge and lack of knowledge, and if he were able to examine whether other people know this with regard to them, then being temperate would indeed be a great benefit (171D2–6; he defends this claim at some length, at 171D6–172C2 and 173A7–C7). But this means that if we suppose that Socrates' conclusion is that the knowledge which is temperance is simply of the good and bad, and not of one's knowledge and lack of knowledge, then we shall have done justice to only the one side of his reasoning and we shall have ignored the other side, that is, his argument in favour of reflexive knowledge being beneficial.

Third, Socrates' positive conclusion at 174D4–6 is derived from an argument that has the form of a *reductio ad absurdum* and is premised on Critias' understanding of the knowledge which is temperance.[5] The absurdity is supposed to be that, on Critias' understanding of the knowledge which is temperance, temperance is either impossible or, if its possibility is conceded (as it is here), of no benefit. On general grounds, therefore, we ought to ask whether or not the positive conclusion (at 174D4–6) is supposed to be detachable from the premise on which it is based. That is, we ought to ask whether we are entitled to move from 'on Critias' understanding of the knowledge which is temperance, it follows that temperance is not the knowledge of one's knowledge and lack of knowledge' to 'temperance is not the knowledge of one's knowledge and lack of knowledge'. We cannot simply assume that the positive conclusion is supposed to be detachable, just as we cannot in general assume that a positive conclusion can be derived from a *reductio ad absurdum* argument.

Moreover, if we simply assume that the conclusion is detachable, we shall in effect be supposing that Plato's reasoning is as follows: 'the view that the knowledge which is temperance is of one's knowledge and lack of knowledge, and that this is *the only* thing that it is of, leads to the absurd conclusion that temperance is either impossible or of no benefit; therefore, the knowledge which is temperance is not of one's knowledge and lack of knowledge, but of some other thing, in particular the good and bad'. But this reasoning is evidently fallacious, being of the form: 'it is not the case that (x is of y, and of y only); therefore, x is not of y, but of some other thing, z'. This would be to overlook that the claim 'it is not the case that (x is of y, and of y only)' is compatible with the claim 'x is not only of y, but also of some other thing, z'.

5 That it is premised on Critias' understanding is especially evident from the way in which Socrates responds to Critias' objection to it (see 174D8–E7). For Socrates' response is to appeal to Critias' view that the knowledge which is temperance is *only* of one's knowledge and lack of knowledge (see 174E6 for the *only*).

To decide whether or not the conclusion is, validly and without fallacy, detachable, we will need to determine exactly what in Critias' understanding of the knowledge which is temperance Socrates relies on when he derives the conclusion that, on this understanding, temperance is either impossible or of no benefit. We shall see that, if what he relies on is Critias' general claim that the knowledge which is temperance is of one's knowledge and lack of knowledge, then the conclusion will indeed be detachable; but if what he relies on is Critias' particular claim that the knowledge which is temperance is *only* of one's knowledge and lack of knowledge, then it will not be detachable. We shall see, moreover, that what he relies on is the latter, and the conclusion is not, therefore, detachable.

There are, we have seen, a number of reasons against the supposition that the overall answer of the dialogue, to the question 'What is temperance the knowledge of?', is that temperance is not the knowledge of one's knowledge and lack of knowledge, but is the knowledge of the good and bad. Perhaps these reasons are not conclusive, perhaps this supposition can be defended against them. However, I prefer to take account of them by proposing an alternative interpretation of the overall answer. On this interpretation, the knowledge which is temperance is *both* of one's knowledge and lack of knowledge *and* of other things, including, in particular, the good and bad. When I say both, I mean *both together*. That is, the knowledge which is temperance is a single kind of knowledge, not a compound of two independent kinds of knowledge, and this knowledge is such that it is *both* of one's knowledge and lack of knowledge *and* of other things, including, in particular, the good and bad.[6]

2 The *aporia* about the possibility and benefit of reflexive knowledge

Socrates states this *aporia*, and refers to it as an *aporia*, at 167B:

> 'Let us, then, make a new start and consider, first, whether or not it is possible that there is such a thing as this, viz. the knowing of what one knows and of what one does not know, that one knows it and that one does not know it; and further, if this is perfectly possible, what would be the benefit for us of knowing this.'
>
> 'Yes, we ought to look into this.'
>
> 'Come then, Critias, consider whether you turn out to be any less puzzled than I am about those things (*peri autôn euporôteros phanêis emou*); for I am indeed puzzled (*egô men gar aporô*). Shall

6 For a more careful formulation of the proposal, see the end of section I.

I show you in what way I am puzzled (*hêi de aporô, phrasô soi*)?' (167B1–8)

The knowledge whose possibility and benefit is at issue here – I shall for short refer to it as reflexive knowledge[7] – is of course the knowledge Critias has argued is identical with temperance.

What does Socrates mean when he says that he is puzzled about those things (*peri autôn*), that is, about whether or not reflexive knowledge is possible and beneficial? Evidently, he is not referring to the kind of puzzlement that results from the failure of a particular search, such as the search for the answer to the question 'What is temperance?' – the kind of puzzlement we will typically suppose is at issue at the end of the dialogue if we label it 'aporetic'.[8] For his present *aporia* is situated not at the end of a search, indicating its failure, but at the beginning of a particular search (viz. the one into the possibility and benefit of reflexive knowledge) and indicates its starting point. Perhaps he simply means that he is as yet undecided and in doubt about how to answer these questions, but that, as soon as he gives consideration to this, he will decide that reflexive knowledge is either impossible or, if its possibility is conceded, of no benefit. However, I think it emerges from the way in which Socrates goes on to show how he is puzzled, that his *aporia* is generated by a two-sided question, of the form *whether or not p*, with apparently good reasons on both sides.[9] His *aporia* is generated by an apparently credible contradiction – it is a dilemma and paradox.

The question that articulates Socrates' *aporia* is this: whether or not, first, it is possible that there is such a thing as reflexive knowledge, and second, supposing this is possible, the possession of this knowledge is beneficial. Both sides of this question (i.e., *whether* or *not* reflexive knowledge is possible, and, if so, beneficial) are defended by Socrates, and are, summarily, as follows. On the one hand, he argues that, on Critias' understanding of reflexive knowledge, *either* it is impossible that there should be such a thing, *or*, if its possibility is conceded,[10] its

7 I use 'reflexive knowledge' only as a convenient (but potentially misleading) shorthand for the formulation just quoted (167B2–3; see also 171D3–4), and also for what I take to be Plato's abbreviation of this formulation: 'the knowledge of [one's] knowledge and lack of knowledge' (*epistêmê epistêmês kai anepistêmosunês*). I note that, like 'knowledge' in English, *epistêmê* can refer to *a state* of knowing.

8 But we ought to observe that the term *aporia* and its cognates are not used at the end of the dialogue.

9 This is of course *aporia* as characterised by Aristotle in *Topics* VI. 145B16–20. I have argued elsewhere that this use of the term *aporia* occupies an important place already in the early Plato, and is clearly evident at, e.g., *Protagoras* 324D2–E2 (see my 2006).

10 See n.4 for the repeated reference to this concession.

possession is of no benefit.[11] On the other hand, he argues that, if it were possible that there is such a thing as this knowledge, its possession would be greatly beneficial.[12] Of course, there is no contradiction between the claim 'this knowledge is impossible' and the claim 'if this knowledge were possible, its possession would be greatly beneficial'. But there is a plain contradiction between the claim 'if the possibility of this knowledge is conceded, its possession is of no benefit' (argued at 169D2–171D2 and 172C4–175A8) and the claim 'if this knowledge were possible, its possession would be greatly beneficial' (argued at 171D2–172C2 and 173A7–C7; see esp. 171D2–6). Socrates defends both these conflicting claims – each belonging to each side of the question that he said his *aporia* is about. This is why he is in an *aporia*.

How can Socrates argue on both sides of a plain contradiction? He can appear to do so, I submit, because his argument on the one side is based on a particular and narrower understanding of reflexive knowledge, the understanding defended by Critias, whereas his argument on the other side is based on a more general and broader understanding of reflexive knowledge, which is compatible with Critias' but does not imply it. On Critias' understanding, reflexive knowledge is of one's knowledge and lack of knowledge, and this is *the only* thing that it is of. On the broader understanding, reflexive knowledge is of one's knowledge and lack of knowledge, but it is left open whether or not this is the only thing that it is of. This explains how Socrates can argue on both sides of the contradiction. Both sides can be true, for the one side says that if reflexive knowledge is of one's knowledge and lack of knowledge, and this is *the only* thing that it is of, then this knowledge is either impossible or of no benefit, whereas the other side says that the knowledge of one's knowledge and lack of knowledge (setting aside whether or not this knowledge is *only* of one's knowledge and lack of knowledge) would be greatly beneficial. Once we take account of the basis of the arguments on both sides, we overcome what is otherwise a plain contradiction.

Let me offer (within the brief confines of this chapter) some evidence for this interpretation. On the one hand, there ought to be no doubt that Socrates' arguments on the one side of the question depend for their validity crucially on Critias' understanding of reflexive knowledge (i.e., with the emphasis on the *only*). Thus Socrates objects, to the possibility of reflexive knowledge, that no other state of the soul (be it sense-perception, appetite, wish, love, fear or belief) can be *only* of itself

11 For the arguments for impossibility, see 167C4–169D2. For the arguments for no benefit, see 169D2–171D2 and 172C4–175A8.

12 For the arguments for its being beneficial, see 171D2–172C2 and 173A7–C7.

(167c4–168b1).[13] Likewise, he objects to the benefit of reflexive knowledge that, on the supposition that this knowledge is *only* of one's knowledge and lack of knowledge, its possession will only enable one to know *that* one knows something or *that* one does not know something; it will not enable one to know *what* one knows and *what* one does not know (169d2–170d4); and that it follows from this that the possession of this knowledge is of no benefit (170d5–171d2). Later he makes a different objection to the benefit of reflexive knowledge (173c7–175a8). He admits that the possession of this knowledge would enable us 'to act knowledgeably' (*epistêmonôs prattein*), that is, to act on the basis of what we know and to refrain from acting or to rely on the knowledge of others if we lack knowledge; but he questions whether acting knowledgeably, if based on reflexive knowledge as Critias understands it, implies acting well and living happily (173c7–d5). He clarifies and drives home this point at the end (174e3–175a8), when he argues that *benefiting* is not 'a peculiar function' (cf. *to hautês ergon*, 174e5) of reflexive knowledge, because the peculiar function of reflexive knowledge is *only* to know one's knowledge and lack of knowledge (see 174e5–7 for the *only*). On this understanding of reflexive knowledge, therefore, *benefiting* will be the peculiar function of another knowledge (*technê*), namely, the knowledge of the good and bad – which was the crucial positive conclusion at 174d4–6. In general it is striking that, each and every time Socrates argues on this side of the question, he makes sure to indicate that his argument is premised on a particular *supposition*, namely, that reflexive knowledge is *only* of one's knowledge and lack of knowledge.[14]

It seems to me, moreover, that if we examine carefully his arguments against Critias we can identify what Socrates diagnoses as the root source of the threat to the possibility and benefit of reflexive knowledge. The source is the threat of a dissociation between, on the one hand, the knowledge of (the fact) *that* one knows, or does not know, something, *o*, and, on the other hand, the knowledge of *what* it is that one knows,

13 We should note that Critias admits this but makes an exception of knowledge (see his *phamen gar* at 168a9); so he does not think this argument, which is by induction or analogy, is conclusive. Nor does Socrates think it is conclusive, for he shifts to a different argument (168b2–169a1). Moreover, he adds (at 169a1–c2, esp. a8–b3) that he does not think these arguments have been conclusive, and this is why he goes on to propose that they 'concede' (*sunchôrêsômen*, 169d3) that reflexive knowledge is possible, in order to examine whether, supposing it is possible, its possession is beneficial.

14 The relevant passages are: 167b10–c2, 170b7–8, 170c6–7, 171c4–5 and, at the very end, 174e5–7. Socrates' statements here are consistently of the form: *if* (*ei* [in two of the passages], *ean, eiper*) this knowledge is *only* (*ouk allou tinos*, *monon* [in four of the passages]) of one's knowledge and lack of knowledge, then . . . (i.e., then it is impossible, or then it is of no benefit).

or does not know, viz. this thing, *o*. Critias' understanding of reflexive knowledge is, precisely, guilty of this dissociation, for he in effect understands reflexive knowledge as being *only* of (the fact) *that* one knows, or does not know, something, *o*, and, *not also* of *what* it is that one knows, or does not know, viz. this thing, *o*. (Accordingly, we have proposed that the positive upshot of the *aporia* is that the knowledge which is temperance is *not only* of one's knowledge and lack of knowledge, i.e., of (the fact) *that* one knows, or does not know, some thing, *but also* of *what* thing one knows, or does knot know; and that, on the supposition that reflexive knowledge is the knowledge which is temperance, these things include, in particular, the good and bad.) It is as if Critias thinks acquiring reflexive knowledge is a matter of looking into one's soul, and no further, and inspecting its items for the marking KNOWLEDGE.[15]

It is all the more striking, therefore, that when, on the other hand, Socrates claims that the possession of reflexive knowledge would be greatly beneficial (171D2–6; he defends this claim up to 172C2 and again at 173A7–C7), he characterises reflexive knowledge as the knowledge of what one knows, that one knows it, and of what one does not know, that one does not know it (171D2–4), and without indicating whether or not this is *the only* thing that it is of. This characterisation refers back to the one at 167B2–3 (cf. *ho ex archês hupetithemetha*, 171D2–3), and it is once again notable that in that earlier passage, when Socrates formulated the *aporia*, he characterised reflexive knowledge in the exact same way, and without mention of the *only* (see quotation at the opening of this subsection).

Why, then, does Plato carefully include the *only* in a number of passages, but not state it in these other ones? Of course, he may simply be eliding it when it is not stated. But let me propose a different explanation. On the one hand, he includes the *only* when his aim is to show what follows from Critias' understanding of reflexive knowledge; for Critias has not only supposed, but argued that reflexive knowledge is *only* of one's knowledge and lack of knowledge.[16] On the other hand, he deliberately omits the *only* when his aim is either to ask quite generally whether reflexive knowledge is possible and beneficial (as in 167B1–4; also 169B5–C1) or to argue that this knowledge does indeed appear to be greatly beneficial.

That he should include the *only* when arguing against Critias is, we have seen, wholly appropriate. But it is also, I think, appropriate that he

15 I suspect we may find views effectively similar to Critias' in Descartes or Locke (this is of course a bold claim). In the 'aviary' of the *Theaetetus* (197D–200C) Plato appears to target his objections against a similar view.

16 For Critias' argument, in response to Socrates' questioning, see 166A3–C6. I summarise it below.

should omit it when he wants to ask quite generally whether reflexive knowledge is possible and beneficial. For this indicates that his general question (especially at 167B1–4, the question to which he refers as an *aporia*) is not only whether or not reflexive knowledge, on a particular understanding of it (and a rather subtle one at that), is possible and beneficial; it is, simply, whether or not reflexive knowledge is possible and beneficial. It seems to me this is quite appropriate. For I can see no good reason why Plato (or anybody else, for that matter) should be interested in the question of whether reflexive knowledge, on a particular understanding of it, is possible and beneficial (and certainly Plato is interested in this question), unless he is also interested in the more general question of whether reflexive knowledge is possible and beneficial.

Finally, it is appropriate that he should omit the *only* when he argues that this knowledge does indeed appear to be greatly beneficial. It is natural, and I think ought to be unobjectionable, to reason as follows (modelled on 171D2–6): if I but knew what I know, that I know it, and what I do not know, that I do not know it, and if I were but able to examine others with regard to this, this would indeed be greatly beneficial both to me and others. For, if it were objected against this reasoning that, if this knowledge is understood as being *only* of one's knowledge and lack of knowledge, then, even if it is possible, it would be of no benefit – then surely I would be justified in responding: I wasn't understanding this knowledge in this particular way, I wasn't thinking of the *only* at all.

Let me briefly address a few possible objections and misunderstandings.

There is no indication (apart from the inclusion and omission of the only*) that Plato is at all sensitive to an understanding of reflexive knowledge other than Critias', i.e., sensitive to any issues that may hang on the omission of the* only. But there is such indication. For it is not the case that Critias assumes from the start that the knowledge which is temperance is *only* of one's knowledge and lack of knowledge. Rather, Socrates, having argued that other kinds of knowledge are of something other than themselves (166A3f., e.g., calculation is of the odd and even), asks what, other than temperance itself, temperance is the knowledge of (166B5–6). It is in response to this question that Critias argues that temperance is different from and unlike all other knowledge, for while all other knowledge is of something other than one's states of knowledge, the knowledge that is temperance is unique (cf. *monê*, 166C2) in that it is, precisely, the knowledge of one's states of knowledge, including this state of knowledge, temperance, itself (166B7–C6).[17] This is just what

17 The addition *kai autê heautês* ('as well as of itself') raises issues I cannot take up here. Suffice it to say that this addition is motivated by Critias' earlier insistence that one cannot be temperate without knowing that one is (164C7–D3).

Socrates refers to when he says (at 167B10–C2) that, according to Critias' view (*ei estin hoper su nundê eleges*), there is a distinct knowledge 'which is *only* of' (*ouk allou tinos estin*) itself and the other (states of) knowledge and lack of knowledge – a formulation of his view that Critias readily accepts. This shows that Plato is wholly sensitive to the question: is the knowledge that is temperance *only* of one's knowledge and lack of knowledge? He, practically expressly, raises this question (at 166B5–6); Critias argues in the affirmative; and Socrates goes on, at length and with great care, to show that, on Critias' answer, it follows – absurdly – that temperance is either impossible or of no benefit.

There is further indication that Plato is sensitive to the possibility of denying the *only*. When Socrates concludes (at 174D4–6, on the basis of his argument for no benefit) that the knowledge which is temperance is not of one's knowledge and lack of knowledge, but is of the good and bad, Critias objects that temperance, understood as the knowledge of one's knowledge, can indeed be beneficial, if we suppose that this knowledge 'rules over' (*epistatei, archei*) all other knowledge, including the knowledge of the good (174D8–E2). This in effect amounts to the proposal: the knowledge which is temperance is *primarily* the knowledge of one's knowledge, and, *by implication*, the knowledge of the good – which means that it is *both* of one's knowledge *and* of the good. Socrates dismisses this otherwise crucially important objection by reminding him that they agreed that this knowledge is *only* of one's knowledge and lack of knowledge (174E3–7).

Socrates refers to Critias' view sometimes with, sometimes without stating the only*; but if omitting the* only *made such a difference, this would be quite inappropriate*. I agree that Socrates refers to Critias' view in both ways,[18] and I have argued that omitting the *only* does make an important difference. But there need not be anything inappropriate in Socrates' referring to Critias' view in both these different ways. We ought to recall that the formulation without the *only* (as we have understood it) states a broader understanding of reflexive knowledge, which, though it does not imply Critias' narrower one, is compatible with it. In general, a broader formulation includes, though it does not imply, a narrower. But there is no logical inappropriateness in using a broader formulation to refer to a narrower (only the converse is logically inappropriate). Moreover, there is good reason to refer to Critias' understanding of reflexive knowledge also in this broader way, for this serves to indicate that the question that both Socrates and Critias are debating is not simply whether or not reflexive knowledge, on a particular

18 At 167A, for example, when Socrates prepares for the statement of the *aporia*, he refers to Critias' view without stating the *only*.

understanding of it, is possible and beneficial, but quite generally whether or not reflexive knowledge is possible and beneficial.

On our interpretation, Socrates is trading on an ambiguity, for he is using the same form of words now for the narrower, now for the broader understanding of reflexive knowledge. If the charge of having Socrates trade on an ambiguity were true, I grant this would be unattractive. But there is no ambiguity. When Socrates uses the formulation of reflexive knowledge with the *only*, he intends the narrower understanding, so he means just what he says; and when he uses the formulation without the *only*, he intends the broader understanding, so again he means just what he says.[19]

Let us draw to a conclusion. What, on our interpretation, is the upshot of Socrates' *aporia* and the diagnosis of its source? And is there a positive upshot? The immediate conclusion is this:

> *A*. If we suppose that reflexive knowledge is the knowledge that is *only* of one's knowledge and lack of knowledge, then this knowledge will be either impossible or of no benefit.
>
> If, therefore, we want to defend the possibility and benefit of reflexive knowledge, we must suppose that it is not the case that this knowledge is *only* of one's knowledge and lack of knowledge.
>
> Moreover, there is reason to think that reflexive knowledge would indeed be beneficial, so there is reason to want to defend the view that it is not the case that it is *only* of one's knowledge and lack of knowledge.

So far, this conclusion looks largely negative. But it requires no more than elementary appeal to the logic of statements of the form 'x is only of y', and their denial, to derive a more positive conclusion:

> *B*. If we want to defend the possibility and benefit of reflexive knowledge, we must suppose that this knowledge is *both* of one's knowledge and lack of knowledge *and* of other things.

Furthermore, if we think that reflexive knowledge is the knowledge which is temperance, and if we recall that temperance, to be properly and essentially beneficial – as befits its being temperance – must be of the good and bad, we may conclude the following:

19 One may object that Socrates' statement at 167B10–C2, which includes the *only*, contains a back-reference (*ei estin hoper su nundê eleges*), and that this is to Socrates' summary at 167A, which does not include the *only*. I respond that the back-reference may be rather to Critias' statement at 166B–C, when he concluded that, unlike all other knowledge, the knowledge which is temperance is not of anything other than one's states of knowledge. Not only is this perfectly possible; it is also natural that the *hoper su nundê eleges* should refer to a passage in which *he*, Critias, said something.

> *C*. If we want to defend the possibility and benefit of reflexive knowledge, and if we think that this is the knowledge which is temperance, we must suppose that this knowledge is *not only* of one's knowledge and lack of knowledge, *but also* of other things, and that these things include, in particular, the good and bad.

This, I submit, is the upshot of the *Charmides aporia* about temperance understood as reflexive knowledge.

A last question: if this is the upshot, why does Plato not say so? *A* is, I think, an immediate and obvious consequence of what he says. But why does he not state *B* and *C*? The following reason suggests itself. Consider the following account of temperance, derived from *C*:

> *C**. Temperance is the knowledge that is *both* of one's knowledge and lack of knowledge *and* of other things, including, in particular, the good and the bad.

This account of temperance, however, fails to indicate whether or not the two conjuncts in it are supposed to be independent of each other, and, if they were independent, the account would not be acceptable. It would be unacceptable, not only on general grounds relating to Plato's requirement that definitions be unitary, but also because the first conjunct will in effect refer to the knowledge that is *only* of one's knowledge and lack of knowledge, since any reference to any other thing that temperance is of will come under the second conjunct. So, alas, temperance would be either impossible or of no benefit after all. To begin to make *C** acceptable, Plato would need to argue that the knowledge which is temperance is a single kind of knowledge, not a compound of two independent kinds of knowledge, and this knowledge is such that it is at once of one's knowledge and lack of knowledge, on the one hand, and of other things, including, in particular, the good and bad, on the other. But this is a large and difficult task, and it is not surprising that, in the *Charmides*, he does not even touch on it.

II THE ACCOUNT OF THE IDEA OF THE GOOD IN THE SUN ANALOGY OF THE *REPUBLIC*, AND ITS CONTRIBUTION TO THE SOLUTION TO THE *CHARMIDES APORIA* ABOUT REFLEXIVE KNOWLEDGE

The *Charmides* ends with a declaration of defeat in the face of the *aporia* about the possibility and benefit of reflexive knowledge. But the account of the idea of the good in the Sun analogy of the *Republic*,

I want to argue, provides the resources for an account of reflexive knowledge which holds out promise of solving the *Charmides aporia*, that is, showing how reflexive knowledge can be both possible and beneficial, and of doing so in a way that addresses both the source and the upshot of this *aporia* as treated of in the *Charmides*. First, however, we must examine in its own right the Sun analogy's account of the idea of the good.

1 The idea of the good as the joint *aitia* of, on the one hand, the things that are, are true and are knowable, and, on the other hand, the ability of the rational soul to know them

In the Sun analogy the idea of the good is characterised as an *aitia*, or 'cause' ('explanation', 'that which accounts for'). But it is characterised as the cause not of one thing, but of two different, though apparently mutually related, kinds of thing. On the one hand, it is the cause of the being, truth and knowability of the things that are, are true and are knowable (that is, at least primarily, forms); on the other hand, it is the cause of the ability to know these things by the things that have this ability (that is, rational souls).

> That, then, which provides the truth to the objects of knowledge and provides the ability[20] [to know] to the knower, you must assert to be the idea of the good. And though it is the *aitia*[21] of knowledge and truth, you must conceive of it as [itself] an object of knowledge.[22] (508D10–E3)

> Therefore, you should also say that not only do the objects of knowledge owe their being known to the good, but their being is also due to it.[23] (509B5–7)

20 All references are to the new Oxford Classical Texts edition edited by S. R. Slings. I translate 'ability' for *dunamis*. The question is what accounts for the ability to know and to be known. We may note that, as the analogy is set up, the relation between the idea of the good and the ability to know and to be known was likened (at 507E5–508A1) to the relation between the light of the sun and the sense of seeing and 'the ability to be seen' (*hê tou horasthai dunamis*, where *dunamis* clearly means 'ability', neither 'power' nor 'capacity' making sense here).

21 'the *aitia*' rather than 'an *aitia*', for *aitian*. This is a gloss on the previous sentence, which says that it is precisely the idea of the good that provides for this (*touto toinun to tên alêtheian parechon*).

22 Reading *hôs gignôskomenên* rather than (as Slings does) *hôs gignôskomenês*; and taking *hôs gignôskomenên* to qualify *tên tou agathou idean* and not (as, e.g., Schleiermacher and Shorey do) *alêtheias*.

23 I cannot take up the question of what distinction is intended here between *the being of the things that are* and *the truth of the things that are true*; or the question of what is intended by the characterisation of things as *true*.

But how are we to understand the claim that the idea of the good is the cause of these two things? I think it is crucial to recognise that the idea of the good is understood as the *joint* cause of, precisely, these two things. That is, there is a single thing, the idea of the good, and it is the cause of, precisely, these two things, and of both of them together.

If this is indeed the claim, it is important to distinguish it from the following, significantly different claims. First, Plato's view is not that there is something about the idea of the good and this is the cause of the one thing (viz. the being, truth and knowability of the things that are, are true and are knowable), and there is something else about the idea of the good and this is the cause of the other thing (viz. the ability of the rational soul to know these things). On the contrary, there is a single, unitary thing, and it is the cause of these two things.

Second, Plato's view is not simply that the idea of the good is the cause of each of these two things. For that would be compatible with thinking that it can be the cause of the one without being the cause of the other; that is, with understanding the idea of the good as having two causal roles that are independent of each other. Rather, the idea of the good is the cause of both these things *together*; that is, it is such that it cannot be the cause of the one without being the cause of the other.

Third, Plato's claim is not simply that the idea of the good is the cause of a number of things, and that each of these is either a form (which is, is true and is knowable) or a rational soul (which has the ability to know forms). Rather, the idea of the good is the cause of, precisely, two things. That is, the things that the idea of the good is said to be the cause of are distinguished into, precisely, two.

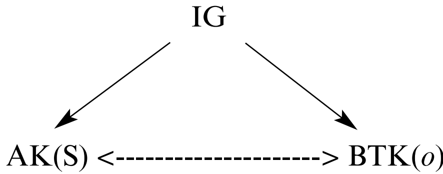
Why should we think that this is Plato's understanding of the idea of the good as a cause? First, that the idea of the good is something single and unitary ought to be uncontroversial, and likewise uncontroversial is that its causal relation to other things is a single and unitary relation – this is indicated by the choice of the image of the light of the sun for this relation.[24] Second, that its causal relation to the two things is not understood as a compound of two independent causal relations is indicated by the image of the 'yoke' that 'yokes together' the ability to see and the ability to be seen – that is, by the analogy, yokes together the ability to know and the ability to be known.[25] Third, that the things

24 It is notable that when, in the *Parmenides*, doubt is cast on the unity of the ideas or forms in relation to the things that partake in them and in general depend on them, Socrates tries to resist this doubt precisely by likening this relation to the light of day (*Parmenides* 131A8–B6).

25 507E5–508A2: 'The yoke (*zugos*), then, that yokes together (*zugôei*) the sense of seeing (*hê tou horan aisthêsis*) and the ability to be seen (*hê tou horasthai dunamis*) is in no small way more precious than that which yokes together the other things yoked together (*suzeuxeis*) – if indeed light is not without honour.'

whose cause is the idea of the good are distinguished into, precisely, two is indicated by the repeated juxtaposition of the pair: ‘ability to know’ (‘to hear’, ‘to see’) – ‘ability to be known’ (‘to be heard’, ‘to be seen’). It is also, and I think significantly, indicated by the reference to the light of the sun (hence, by the analogy, the idea of the good in relation to what it is the cause of) as a *triton genos* (‘a third kind’; see 507c10–d2 and d10–e1), implying that the abilities to know and to be known are conceived as, precisely, two kinds.

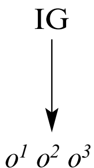
If this interpretation of the idea of the good as a *joint* cause of, precisely, these two things is correct (and of course a fuller defence is needed), it may be useful to illustrate the relation of the idea of the good to the things of which it is the cause through the following, ‘triangular’ structure:



x ⟶ F(y) : x is the cause of y’s being F
AK(y) : y is able to know things
BTK(y) : y is, is true, and is knowable
IG : the idea of the good
S : the rational soul
o : a thing that is, is true, and is knowable

AK(S) <---------> BTK(*o*) : S has the ability to know *o* and *o* has the ability to be known by S

And it may be useful to distinguish this structure from the following, ‘vertical’ structure, which I think misrepresents the relation of the idea of the good to the things of which it is the cause:



o : a thing that is either a form (which is, is true, and is knowable) or a rational soul (which has the ability to know things)

2 Implications for the question of the possibility and benefit of reflexive knowledge

I want to argue that it follows, from this account of the idea of the good as cause, that if a person knows the idea of the good, and if he knows its causal role,[26] then he knows of what he knows, that he knows it, and of what he does not know, that he does not know it – or at least he has the ability to come to know this. And it is because he knows the idea of the good and its causal role that he can know this. The argument relies on a number of premises, but in particular the premise that the idea of the good is the *joint* cause of things and our ability to know them, i.e., this is its causal role. If the argument succeeds, it shows that the knowledge of the idea of the good is what accounts for both the possibility and the benefit of reflexive knowledge. It accounts for its possibility, because the knowledge of the idea of the good and its causal role is what explains how we can possess, or have the ability to come to possess, reflexive knowledge. It accounts for its benefit, because, of course, knowing the idea of the good is supremely beneficial (e.g., 505A6–B1).

Consider, first, the implication of a person's knowing the idea of the good in respect of its *one* causal role. If a person knows the idea of the good, and if he knows that it is the cause of the being, truth and knowability of any thing that is, is true and is knowable, then he knows of anything, *o*, that is, is true and is knowable, *why* it is, is true and is knowable; and it is because of his knowledge of the idea of the good and its causal role that he knows this. This follows directly from the plain fact that to know the cause, or *aitia*, of a thing's being F is to know of the thing why it is F.

Consider, next, the implication of a person's knowing the idea of the good in respect of its *other* causal role. If a person knows the idea of the good, and if he knows that it is the *aitia* of the rational soul's ability to know things, then he knows of any soul, *S* (including, not least, his own), that has this ability, *why* it has this ability; and it is because of his knowledge of the idea of the good and its causal role that he knows this.

Consider, finally, the implication of a person's knowing the idea of the good in respect of *both* its causal roles, that is, understood as the *joint* cause of these two things. It follows that if a person knows the idea of the good, and if he knows that it is the *joint* cause of these two things, then he knows of any thing, *o*, that is, is true and is knowable,

26 I set aside the question of whether or not one can know the idea of the good without knowing its causal role.

not only *why* it is, is true and is knowable, but also *why* any rational soul, *S* (including, not least, his own), that has the ability to know *it* has the ability to know *it*. And it is because of his knowledge of the idea of the good, and its *joint* causal role, that he knows this.

We ought to observe that this last step depends on the premise that the idea of the good is the *joint* cause of things and our ability to know them. For suppose we ignore this premise, and suppose we think that the two causal roles are independent of each other. In that case, a person who knows the idea of the good and its *one* causal role will know something about the things that are, are true and are knowable; and a person who knows the idea of the good and its *other* causal role will know something about the ability to know things. But, precisely because these two causal roles are independent of each other, we have no grounds for thinking that a person who is in possession of both these pieces of knowledge must be able to combine them in a single piece of knowledge about a single thing – the *it* mentioned previously. In general this person need not be able to relate his knowledge of the ability to know things to his knowledge of things, or relate his knowledge of things to his knowledge of the ability to know things. The person in our last step, by contrast, must able to do so, since he knows that the two things have a single, joint cause, and knows what the cause is. For it is plain that, quite generally, if a person knows that two things have a single, joint cause, and if he knows what the cause is, then he must be able to relate the two things and indeed link them together.

My argument depends on three further premises.

1 If a person knows of anything, *o*, that he has the ability to know, *why* he has the ability to know it, then he knows *what* this ability is (its essence).[27]
2 If a person knows *what* an ability is (its essence), then he knows *how* this ability is appropriately exercised.[28]
3 If a person knows all these things (i.e., knows (a) of anything, *o*, that he has the ability to know, *why* he has the ability to know

27 This is a consequence of the general principle, famously defended in the *Phaedo* (100B1f.), which says that causation/explanation (*aitia*) and essence/form (*ousia*, *eidos*) are inseparably connected. When spelled out, the principle is that the cause/explanation (*aitia*) of why anything that is F is F is that it is appropriately related to (it partakes in) the essence and form of the quality F. It follows from this principle that if one knows why a thing that is F is F, then one knows the essence of the quality F. In our present argument, F is: *the ability to know anything that is, is true and is knowable*.

28 This involves the plausible supposition, specifically about abilities, which says that if one knows, and knows adequately, what an ability is, then one knows how this ability is appropriately exercised. Plato certainly thinks knowledge of the essence of F is adequate knowledge, indeed the most adequate knowledge possible, of F.

> it; and (b) *what* this ability is (its essence); and (c) *how* this ability is appropriately exercised), then he knows, or at least he has the ability to come to know, whether or not, in each particular case, he has appropriately exercised this ability.[29]

Now, suppose Plato holds these premises (I recognise of course that this needs more defending than I have provided in the notes above). It follows that if a person knows all these things (i.e., (a), (b) and (c)), then he knows, or at least he has the ability to come to know, whether or not, in each particular case, he knows any of the things that he has the ability to know. This person, therefore, has reflexive knowledge, or at least the ability to acquire it. And he has this, ultimately, because of his knowledge of the idea of the good. This, for present purposes, concludes my argument.

3 The question of fit with the *Charmides aporia* about the possibility and benefit of reflexive knowledge

The fit ought to be evident, and is I think striking. The upshot of the *Charmides aporia* was that, if we suppose that reflexive knowledge, understood as the knowledge which is temperance, is both possible and beneficial, then we must suppose that it is the knowledge *both* of one's knowledge and lack of knowledge *and* of other things, and that these things include, in particular, the good and bad. The account of the idea of the good in the Sun analogy of the *Republic* provides the resources for an account of reflexive knowledge that satisfies this condition for its possibility and benefit. For it is a consequence of the Sun analogy's account of the idea of the good that there is a kind of knowledge which is *both* of the good (since it is of the idea of the good)[30] *and* (by implication) of one's knowledge and lack of knowledge.

Furthermore, it followed from the upshot of the *Charmides aporia* that the two conjuncts in the conjunctive account of reflexive knowledge must not be independent of each other – otherwise reflexive knowledge would not be possible and beneficial after all. Again, the

29 This depends on the general principle of Plato's (it may also be plausible in its own right) which says that if one knows the essence of F, then one has a way of telling whether or not any particular thing is F.

30 I am assuming that Plato holds, quite generally, that if one knows the essence of a quality F, then one knows the quality F. (But I note that this does not imply that there is no distinction between *the quality F* and *the essence of the quality F*.) In the present case, the quality F is, of course, the good. In the introduction to the Sun-analogy it is indicated that the knowledge of the idea of the good, if it were adequate rather than simply analogy-based, would be the knowledge of the essence of the good (cf. *auto men ti pot' esti t'agathon easômen to nun einai*, at 506D7–8).

account of the idea of the good provides for this. For it is a consequence of the account of the idea of the good that there is a kind of knowledge which is *primarily* of the good and, *by implication*, of one's knowledge and lack of knowledge. The one, then, is an implication of, and, therefore, dependent on the other.

Finally, the root source diagnosed in the *Charmides* of the threat to the possibility and benefit of reflexive knowledge was the threat of a dissociation between, on the one hand, the knowledge of (the fact) *that* one knows, or does not know, some thing, *o*, and, on the other hand, the knowledge of *what* it is that one knows, or does not know, viz. this thing, *o*. The account of the idea of the good ensures that the threat of such a dissociation is obviated. If one's ability to know things were simply one among the many things that the idea of the good is the cause of (i.e., if what we called the 'vertical' structure were Plato's intention; see diagram at end of section II.1), then the threat of such a dissociation would be very real. For the vertical structure is compatible with one's knowing (on the basis of one's knowledge of the idea of the good) one's ability to know things, but without thereby knowing, or at least being able to know, any particular thing. But the 'triangular' structure – which is simply an illustration of the idea of the good being the *joint* cause of things and our ability to know them – ensures that this cannot happen. That the idea of the good is the *joint* cause of both the things and our ability to know them implies that it is impossible to know (on the basis of one's knowledge of the idea of the good) one's ability to know things without also thereby knowing, or at least being able to know, particular things.

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12

THE GOOD AND MATHEMATICS

Christopher Gill

I SCYLLA AND CHARYBDIS

I begin by citing two important pieces of evidence for Plato's thinking about mathematics and the good, both based on Plato's (or Platonic) unwritten teachings. The relevance of this evidence for understanding Plato's dialogues, especially the *Republic*, is brought out later. The first item is a report of Plato's famous lecture on the good, given in the Academy:

> Everyone came expecting they would acquire one of the sorts of thing people normally regard as good, on a par with wealth, good health or strength. In sum, they came looking for some wonderful kind of happiness. But when the discussion turned out to be about mathematics, about numbers and geometry and astronomy, and then, to cap it all, he claimed that Good is One (*kai to peras hoti agathon estin hen*), it seemed to them, I imagine, something utterly paradoxical. The result was that some of them sneered at the lecture, and others were full of reproaches. (Aristoxenus, *Elementa Harmonica* 2.1, p. 30.20–31.2 Meibom)

The second item is a comment by Aristotle responding to discussions in the Academy:

> They [members of the Academy] ought in fact to demonstrate [the nature of] the Good itself in the opposite way to the way they do it now. At present, they begin with things that are *not* agreed to have goodness and proceed to show the goodness of things which

I am grateful for helpful responses to the version of this chapter given at the Edinburgh conference, especially those of my respondent, Rachana Kamtekar; also to Myles Burnyeat, for oral and written responses to a draft of an earlier paper on this subject (Gill 2004b), and to this chapter.

> *are* agreed to be goods. For example, starting from numbers they show that justice and health are goods, on the grounds that justice and health are types of order (*taxeis*) and numbers (*arithmoi*), while numbers and units possess goodness because unity is the Good itself (*dia to einai to hen auto to agathon*). They ought rather to start from agreed goods such as health, strength, temperance, and argue that the beautiful is present even more in unchanging things, which are all examples of order (*taxis*) and stability (*êremia*). Then, if the former are goods, *a fortiori* the latter must be goods, because they have order and stability to a greater degree. (Aristotle, *Eudemian Ethics* 1.8, 1218a15–24) [1]

These passages bring out the kind of philosophical issues to be explored in this discussion. These issues derive from the project of analysing ethical ideas, or at least ideas of value, in mathematical terms. What does it mean to say that the One (or unity) is the Good? What kind of linkage is involved between mathematical and ethical concepts and from what standpoint or direction is this linkage made (an issue raised with special force in *Eudemian Ethics* 1.8)? In what sense can 'order' (*taxis*) serve as a mediating concept between mathematical ideas and what Aristotle calls 'agreed goods'?

In considering these questions, I refer to two competing (but related) dangers, which I call 'Scylla' and 'Charybdis'. These dangers are:

Scylla: that the mathematical (or metamathematical) ideas involved are so little integrated with ethical ones that they are detachable or can be applied equally to almost any ethical theory or position.

Charybdis: that the mathematical (or metamathematical) ideas are so fully integrated with ethical ones that they become, in effect, just another way of formulating the ethical argument and are to this extent dispensable.

These dangers apply to both of the leading ideas highlighted in the passages just cited, the idea of good as One and as order. The Scylla-type danger is that the key notion (One or unity, order) is conceived in such abstract or technical terms that it cannot be deployed in a philosophically meaningful way in debating questions about value, particularly as regards human affairs. The Charybdis-type danger is that the ideas of unity or order, when transferred from the mathematical sphere to debate about values, lose any determinately mathematical character

1 Translations as in Burnyeat 2000: 78–80.

and become, in effect, just another way of characterising ethical ideas. The challenge for someone who wants to make philosophical sense of Platonic thought on this subject is to show how ideas of this type, while still remaining determinately mathematical (or at least metamathematical), can still play a genuinely significant role within debate about values such as good.[2]

Dangers similar to 'Scylla' and 'Charybdis' seem also to be highlighted in the course of Aristotle's famous critique of the Platonic idea of good in *Nicomachean Ethics* 1.6.

> What sort of goods would one call goods in themselves? Is it those that are pursued even when isolated from others, such as intelligence, sight, and certain pleasures and honours? Certainly, if we pursue these also for the sake of something else, yet one would place them among things good in themselves. Or is it nothing other than the Idea (*idea*) good in itself? In that case the Form (*eidos*) will be empty. But if the things we have named are also things good in themselves, the account of the good will have to appear as something identical in them all, as that of whiteness is identical in snow and in white lead. But of honour, wisdom, and pleasure, just in respect of their goodness, the accounts are distinct and diverse. The good, therefore, is not something common answering to one Idea (*idea*).[3]

Aristotle's concern in this passage (by contrast with *Eudemian Ethics* 1.8) is not with what is problematic in the relationship between the mathematical and ethical conception of good. Rather, it is with the relationship between the Form or Idea of Good in general and other goods, as is brought out in a recent discussion by Heda Segvic (2004). But the two types of danger he highlights here are comparable with 'Scylla' and 'Charybdis'. The Scylla-type danger is that *only* the Form of the good will be good in itself, thus placing it in a class with a membership of one with no connection with other candidates for the status of goods in themselves. In this event, Aristotle claims, the Form becomes empty or useless (*mataion*). The Charybdis-type danger is that the Form of Good will become identical with that of the other goods (in themselves) – and thus, one might add, an empty or useless notion in another way. So, although Aristotle's target here is not the mathematical conception of good, he highlights similar types of problems as regards the Form of Good.

2 On 'Scylla' and 'Charybdis', see also Gill 2004b: 167–9. On 'metamathematical' (i.e., relating to the theory of mathematics, cf. 'metaphysical'), see Burnyeat 2000: 46 and discussion below.

3 Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* 1.6, 1096b16–26, trans. Barnes 1984.

But are these dangers really relevant for ancient thought – and, more specifically, for Plato? It might be argued that my characterisation of 'Scylla' and 'Charybdis' presupposes certain distinctively modern assumptions. In particular, it might seem to rely on the claim that ethical (or, for some theories, *moral*)[4] ideas cannot be grounded on accounts of nature or reality. There are, of course, famous modern statements of this claim by, for instance, Kant, Hume and G. E. Moore.[5] In ancient thought, by contrast, it could be argued, ethical naturalism of one kind or another is a prevalent assumption, and Plato's use of mathematical ideas to provide a grounding of some kind for ideas of value reflects this approach.[6] Hence, there is no fundamental gulf, in ancient thought, between ethics and mathematics (or nature), and so the alleged dangers of 'Scylla' and 'Charybdis' do not arise.

There is some force in this objection, though Aristoxenus' report, cited earlier, of the baffled and contemptuous responses of the audience to Plato's reported assertion that 'Good is One' should bring home to us that at least some ancient thinkers found the linkage between mathematical ideas and standard 'goods' highly problematic. But the implication of 'Scylla' and 'Charybdis' is not that mathematical ideas and ideas about human goals and values *cannot* be linked, because they belong to fundamentally different categories. 'Scylla' and 'Charybdis' are introduced here as ways of underlining certain, more precisely defined, demands. These are, first, that the nature of the linkage between mathematical and ethical ideas be explained in a way that is fully intelligible in both mathematical and ethical terms (to avoid 'Scylla'). A related demand is that the explanation, while establishing common ground, should also leave the relevant ideas determinately mathematical or ethical (to avoid 'Charybdis').

Aristotle's responses indicate that those demands correspond to at least some ancient concerns. The comments quoted from *Eudemian Ethics* 1.8 show that Aristotle does not reject the idea of linkage as such between mathematical ideas and conceptions of value ('agreed goods'). Indeed, in a related passage, Aristotle actually defends, against criticism, the idea that mathematics can, at least by implication, convey ideas about the good and the beautiful.

> Now since the good and the beautiful are different (for the former is always found in action, whereas the beautiful is present also in

4 'Moral' (as distinct from ethical) is sometimes used to denote thinking centred on obligation or duty and altruistic motivation; see, e.g., Williams 1985: ch. 10.

5 See, e.g., Kant 1948 (Prussian Academy edn): vol. 4, 451–61 (noumenal–phenomenal distinction); Hume 1969: section 3.1.1. (is–ought distinction), Moore 1903: ch. 1 (rejection of 'naturalistic' approaches to 'good').

6 On the relationship between ancient and modern thinking about ethical naturalism and objectivity, see Gill 2005.

> unchanging things), those who assert that the mathematical sciences say nothing about the beautiful or the good are wrong. For these sciences say and demonstrate the most about them. Just because they do not speak of them by name, but demonstrate their effects and ratios (*logous*), that does not mean they say nothing about them. The chief forms of beauty are order (*taxis*), and proportion (*summetria*) and definiteness (*to hôrismenon*), which the mathematical sciences demonstrate most of all. (Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 13.3, 1078a31–b2)[7]

Here, as in *Eudemian Ethics* 1.8, Aristotle is wholly open to the possibility of connection between mathematical ideas and conceptions of value. But both passages imply the demand that the linkage be explained in terms that are intelligible from each of the two standpoints (mathematical and ethical). In both passages, he presupposes that the link is best explained by reference to a shared intermediate concept, such as that of 'order' (*taxis*). In *Eudemian Ethics* 1.8, he also argues, in effect, that the linkage must be intelligible in ethical terms and not just in mathematical (or metamathematical) terms. The connection should be established by showing that ideas of both types exhibit common features such as order, proportion and definiteness, and the argument should be framed, in the first instance at least, from the ethical standpoint. Aristotle does not in either discussion quite identify the dangers I am calling 'Scylla' and 'Charybdis'. But his comments can be seen as implying the stipulation that those dangers be avoided. Without the linkage he specifies (through an intermediate idea), the gulf between the two types of idea is unbridged and the danger of Scylla looms. The linkage should also be made in a way that makes sense in terms of both categories; otherwise the Charybdis-type danger appears and one type of idea is submerged in the other.

But Plato – it might be maintained – differs from Aristotle in crucial respects which render irrelevant the distinction between ethical and non-ethical discourse and thus neutralise the alleged dangers of 'Scylla' and 'Charybdis'. On the one hand, Plato's writings precede the demarcation of the 'ethical' as a distinct area of philosophy by Aristotle. On the other, Plato is explicit, at least according to reports of the unwritten teachings, that 'Good is One', and so, if he recognises these dangers, he must think that they can be overcome or transcended. There is, of course, something in this objection. However, I do not think we should be too quick to assume that his conceptual framework is so different from Aristotle's as to make these dangers irrelevant.

7 Translation as in Burnyeat 2000: 79–80.

Aristotle's ethical writings can be seen as a continuation, in their core subject matter (virtue and happiness) and in their dialectical approach, of – in a broad sense – the 'Socratic' dialogues of Plato, and their continuation in a modified form in the *Republic* and *Laws* or *Philebus*. The Platonic dialogues, in general, certainly do not draw a systematic distinction between ethical and non-ethical subjects. But, when ethical questions are combined with those regarding the natural universe, as in the *Phaedo* or, in a different way and a later period, the *Timaeus*, the shift or combination of topics is strongly signalled, implying a deliberate extension of boundaries of discourse.[8] To this extent, the Platonic dialogues demarcate, by implication, a category of 'ethical' discourse, and contain markers for the extension of this type of discourse. The idea that 'Good is One' is explicit only in the unwritten teachings; and, if this idea underpins written dialogues, such as the *Republic* or *Timaeus*, it is not presented as a starting point or assumption but, at most, as an implicit conclusion. Also, as I bring out later (section IV), some rather complex and intricate moves are made in the dialogues – and, presumably, the unwritten teachings too – to establish links between the idea of good in the ethical, natural and mathematical spheres. For reasons of this kind, I think we cannot take it for granted that the dangers of 'Scylla' and 'Charybdis' would have appeared to Plato to be irrelevant or invalid. It is, therefore, reasonable to ask whether, in practice, these dangers are averted by Plato and if so how, a question pursued in the rest of this discussion.

II BURNYEAT ON MATHEMATICS AND THE GOOD

I explore this issue, in the first instance, by outlining the account given of Plato's thinking on mathematics and the good by Myles Burnyeat in two discussions (1987, 2000). Burnyeat's standpoint on this subject is of special interest in this connection because he has taken up a distinctive position on two related questions that have been much debated in recent scholarship. One question bears on the type of evidence we should treat as more important in determining Plato's thought on this question: that of the unwritten teachings or the written dialogues. Another is whether we should take what one might call a maximal or minimal view of the significance of mathematical ideas for understanding the good. The main difference is that, for the minimal view, mathematics provides a conceptual instrument for analysing ethical ideas (seen as different in

8 See, e.g., *Phaedo* 96A–100A; on *Timaeus* and other dialogues combining ethical and cosmic themes, see section IV below. As regards Platonic chronology, I am presupposing the validity of the three-part grouping in Kahn 2002, and I take as 'Socratic' in a broad sense all dialogues in Kahn's group 1 (roughly, all pre-*Republic* dialogues).

kind), whereas, for the maximal view, mathematical and ethical ideas are seen as being, in some fundamental sense, one and the same. Roughly speaking, esoteric scholars have tended to give greater weight to the evidence for the unwritten teachings and have taken a maximal view of the role of mathematical ideas – more precisely, metamathematical ones such as One and Indeterminate Dyad – in Plato's thinking about the good.[9] Analytic scholars have mostly been inclined to do the opposite, giving priority to the arguments of the written dialogues and adopting, at most, a minimal view of the significance of mathematical ideas for Plato's thinking on the good.[10] Burnyeat's contributions to the debate are of special interest because, although his general approach is analytic, he shares certain key features with esoteric scholars. Like them, he maintains that the evidence for the unwritten teachings should inform our interpretation of the dialogues,[11] and he takes a maximal view of the significance of mathematical and metamathematical ideas for understanding Plato's conception of good. Hence, for those approaching Plato from an (at least broadly) analytic standpoint, as are most of the contributors in this volume, Burnyeat's discussions provides an exceptionally valuable resource for reflecting on the implications, both exegetical and philosophical, of the maximal view.[12]

I outline the main features of his view and then consider their implications. Burnyeat's earlier treatment (1987) suggests that the central books of Plato's *Republic* can be seen as expressing ideas which Aristotle criticises in *Metaphysics* Books 13–14 (M and N). In particular, the images of Line and Cave convey (though not in fully argued form) the Platonic claim that mathematical entities are 'intermediate' in ontological status between Forms and physical objects (1987: 227–32). This suggestion, in turn, provides a plausible role for Plato's lecture on the good, namely explaining in more abstract and technical terms ideas which are presented in a more rhetorical and contextualised way in the *Republic* (1987: 232–4). These ideas include that of mathematical entities as 'intermediate', but also, more broadly, ideas about the linkage between mathematics and the good which are also assumed in the *Republic*, especially in the central books. The educational programme described there implies that 'goodness resides in

9 See, e.g., Gaiser 1968; Krämer 1959; Findlay 1974. For recent examples, see Reale 2002; Szlezák 2002.

10 For extreme statements of this approach, see Cherniss 1944, 1945; Vlastos 1981. For a more moderate one, see Sayre 1983. See further *Methexis* 6 (1993) (Special Issue on Unwritten Teachings), and Reale and Scolnicov 2002.

11 See further Burnyeat 1987: 232–4.

12 Another important treatment of the good and mathematics, Ferber 1989, though written from the esoteric standpoint, offers insights which can inform analytic interpretation; it is discussed fully by Gernard Seel in his chapter in this volume.

abstract mathematical harmony and proportion' (*Republic* 531c) 'and that these are the bonds of unity'(443d–e) (1987: 238).This idea is reinforced by the fact that the *Republic* 'chooses and commends institutional arrangements which will maximize unity, on the grounds that unity is the greatest good for a city' and that 'it dwells on the importance of harmony in the individual soul'.[13] Whereas the *Republic* illustrates 'the value of unity and harmony . . . from below, by the rich detail of Plato's social and psychological theory', the lecture on the good seems to have proceeded from above. 'The goodness of justice and health was demonstrated from the fact that they are structures of order and of numbers, the assumption being . . . that goodness is a property of numbers and units, because the One is the Good itself.'[14]

Burnyeat's more recent discussion (2000) explores in more detail the links between mathematical ideas and the good just illustrated. He begins from three puzzling or enigmatic features in the argumentation of the *Republic*. These enigmatic features are (1) the role allocated to forming a synoptic view of mathematical knowledge, (2) the idea of the astronomy of the invisible, and (3) the idea of ratio as intrinsically concordant. These enigmas bear in different ways on the role of mathematics as a preparation for gaining knowledge of the Form of the Good, a role which Burnyeat analyses by reference to related ideas in the *Timaeus*, as well as the unwritten teachings.[15] His thesis, in summary, is that

> the structures abstractly studied [in this mathematical programme], especially harmonics, are the very structures that the rulers are to establish in the ideal city and the souls of its citizens. [This in turn implies that Plato has] a vision of the world as it is objectively speaking. Value is out there as part of 'the furniture of the world' because mathematical proportion is there, and mathematical proportion is the chief expression of the objective goodness of the design of the Divine Craftsman [in the *Timaeus*].[16]

In other words, what mathematics studies, in the *Republic*, are manifestations of the ordered and structured relations that are also taken to show the goodness of the universe in the *Timaeus* and which reflect in

13 Burnyeat 1987: 239, citing *Republic* 422e–423d, 462a–b, and 431e, 441e–442a, 500c, 591d.

14 Burnyeat 1987: 239, referring to Aristotle, *Eudemian Ethics* 1218a15–24, cited earlier.

15 On these enigmas and their implications, see Burnyeat 2000: 1, 12–14, also 19, 46–7, 56, 64–7, 74–81.

16 T. Smiley, editor of the volume in which Burnyeat's essay appears, summarising (pp. ix–x) the main thesis of Burnyeat 2000: esp. 6–9, 66–7, 70–1.

turn the thinking about unity (and structure) as goodness indicated in our reports of the unwritten teachings.

In considering Burnyeat's views, my aim is not, primarily, either to criticise or endorse his approach. Rather, I want to use his account as a basis for seeing how far the maximal view of the significance of mathematics for Plato's conception of good can meet the demands stated earlier. Can it show how mathematical and ethical ideas are linked, indeed (on this view) integrally connected, while still remaining distinctively mathematical (or metamathematical) and ethical? In other words, can this approach avoid both 'Scylla' and 'Charybdis'? I pursue this question by juxtaposing Burnyeat's version of the maximal view to two other ways of understanding the relationship between mathematical and ethical views of the good in Plato. One line of thought identifies a *structural analogy* between ethical ideas and mathematical ones. The second presents the good as a *transcategorical norm* which applies equally to different branches of inquiry, including those of ethics or human values, the study of nature, and mathematics. Both these lines of thought, like the maximal view (and unlike some other views), accept that mathematical ideas contribute in some way to the content of the understanding of the good and are not merely instrumental to this understanding. However, they do so in a way that maintains more of a distinction between the categories of the mathematical and the ethical than we find in the maximal view; and it is this point of distinction I especially explore. Overall, the aim is to provide three different but related ways of conceiving the mathematical–ethical relationship and to appraise, at least in a provisional way, their credibility as exegesis of Plato and on philosophical grounds.

III STRUCTURAL ANALOGY

The first line of thought explored is that there is a structural analogy between mathematical or metamathematical ideas and ethical ones, by contrast with Burnyeat's claim that the good is 'one and the same' in both areas (1987: 238). I develop this contrast with reference to the interpretation of the educational programme of the *Republic*, beginning with central features of Burnyeat's account. Burnyeat (2000) stresses that the role played by mathematics in gaining knowledge of the Good is not merely 'instrumental' in training the mind in abstract thought to engage in dialectic – though this is a common view of the role of mathematics in the educational programme.[17] Rather, Burnyeat claims that 'the content

17 For versions of the instrumental view, see, e.g., Shorey 1933: 236; Gadamer 1986: 82–4, 100; Irwin 1995: 301–2: see further Burnyeat 2000: 3–5.

of mathematics [is] a constitutive part of ethical understanding' (2000: 6). He argues, on the one hand, that the ten-year mathematical education which is such a striking feature of the educational programme for the future Guardians is ethical in content: it provides 'the lowest-level articulation of objective values' (2000: 45; cf. 42). He also suggests, though more briefly, that the dialectic leading up to knowledge of the Good takes the form of a 'meta-mathematical inquiry' so that the 'education of the rulers is mathematical, in one sense or another, all the way to the top'. Hence, 'dialectical debate about the conceptual foundations of mathematics' – presumably, of the kind reported in the unwritten teachings – 'is itself, at a very abstract level, a debate about values like justice' (2000: 46).[18] Burnyeat cites various aspects of the *Republic* in support of this view. One is Socrates' comment that the overall aim of mathematical education is to form a synoptic view of all the mathematical disciplines 'in their kinship with each other and with the nature of what is'.[19] Also, in the interpretation of the images of the central books of the *Republic*, Burnyeat argues for a very close linkage between the third level of the Divided Line, the movement out of the Cave, and the ten-year training in mathematics. 'These [mathematical disciplines]', he maintains, 'are the studies that will effect the conversion *and* the ascent to the objects on the wall *and* the journey out of the cave as far as the reflections outside (532B–D).'[20] Similarly, he suggests that 'this whole business' (*pasa hautê hê pragmateia*), 532C3–4, meaning the educational programme that leads the best part of the psyche to recognise the best thing among those that are real, that is, the Form of Good, refers to mathematics.[21] Burnyeat also argues that 'only the last stage' of this process is 'reserved for dialectic', though he also understands this dialectic as itself 'meta-mathematical' in character (2000: 45–6). What underlies this view of the educational programme is the idea that 'the goodness which resides in mathematical relationships is *one and the same* with the goodness that one needs to know to govern oneself or others'.[22]

I now highlight certain questionable features in Burnyeat's reading and outline an alternative interpretation, based on the idea of structural analogy between mathematical and ethical ideas. Striking features of Burnyeat's reading include not just his rejection of the 'instrumental' view of mathematics but also his lack of emphasis on

18 Burnyeat 2000: 45 links the 'What is this?' question (515D, on the way out of the Cave) with the question 'What kind of numbers are the mathematicians talking about?' (525D–526B). See also Burnyeat 2000: 30, 78–81; 1987: 227–32, 238–40.

19 See Burnyeat 2000: 1, referring to *Republic* 537C, and 19, referring to 531C–D.

20 Burnyeat 2000: 45; on the basis for this linkage, see also 43–4, referring esp. to *Republic* 517B4–5.

21 Burnyeat 1987: 227, n.37.

22 Burnyeat 1987: 238, citing *Republic* 505A–B, with added italics.

two features of the educational programme that might also seem important. One is the fact that the first stages of education do not only consist in the pre-reflective patterning (or 'harmonisation') of the psyche through music, dance and athletics – an aspect Burnyeat does note.[23] They also consist of the formation of appropriate beliefs about the right or fine thing to do, an aspect closely linked with the 'harmonisation' of the psyche.[24] A second dimension de-emphasised in his account is the role of Socratic-style dialectic, framed as interrogatory analysis of ethical ideas, such as the virtues or good (discussed under this description). On the face of it, 'dialectic' or 'giving and receiving an account' (531E4–5) in the final stages of the educational programme means Socratic-style dialectic, as indicated, for instance, in this characterisation of the dialectical definition of the form of the good: 'Then do you call someone who is able to give an account (*didonai logon*) of the being of each thing [to himself or another] dialectical . . . ? Unless someone can distinguish in an account the form of the good from everything else, can survive all refutation (*elenchôn*), as if in a battle . . . you'll say that he doesn't know the good itself or any other good.'[25] It is plausible to connect these two features of the educational programme with each other by suggesting that the pre-reflective development of virtues involves forming beliefs (about courage, for instance) which constitute part of the material used for dialectical analysis of the good.[26] Some at least of the features stressed by Burnyeat seem more naturally interpreted as referring to one or other of these aspects of the educational programme. This is the case with the 'What is this?' questions put to the prisoners released from the chains in the Cave, which Burnyeat takes as being about the status of the mathematical objects whose images have been seen in the Cave.[27] Also, the phrase 'this whole

23 Burnyeat 2000: 53–6: *Republic* 401C–D, 410A–412B, 441E–442A, 430E, 431E, 432A–B, 442C–D, 443D–E.

24 See, e.g., on the formation of ethical beliefs through poetry 386C–388D, also 379D–380C, 392A–B; on (pre-reflective) virtues as involving beliefs, e.g., about 'what sort of things are to be feared', see 429C7–8. See further, on the combination of belief formation and 'harmonisation' of character, Gill 1996: 267–71, 1998: 201–2, 207–9, 2003: 38–46.

25 *Republic* 534B3–6, B8–C2, C4–5, trans. Grube, rev. Reeve in Cooper 1997. For readings stressing the Socratic (exploratory, non-deductive) character of the dialectic in this passage, see, e.g., Gadamer 1986: 85 (taken with Gill 2002: 213); Rowe 2005: 223–4.

26 A close linkage between the outcomes of the two stages (the production of pre-reflective and post-reflective 'order' and 'harmony') is strongly implied by the combination of *Republic* 401D–402C and 500C–501B, taken with the stress on the beliefs produced in the first stage (n.24 above). See further Gill 1996: 268–71, 280–3, 1998: 196–202.

27 See n.18 above. These questions (*Republic* 515D5) seem designed to recall Socrates' 'What is X?' questions in the early Platonic dialogues; 516E–517A evokes Socrates' trial and execution.

business' in 532C is more plausibly taken as consisting in (Socratic-type) dialectic, which is what seems to be described in some detail in 532–4,[28] than as referring to the kind of metamathematical inquiry described in the reports of Plato's unwritten teachings.

The points just made might seem to support the view of mathematics as merely 'instrumental' to dialectical analysis of ethical ideas – the view Burnyeat seeks to replace. But I think an intermediate approach is possible, which gives a substantive role to mathematics and metamathematical inquiry, but does not make those aspects, in effect, co-extensive with the ethical dimension of education, as they are for Burnyeat. The central thought is that there is a deep-level or structural *analogy* between ethical and mathematical (or metamathematical) ideas rather than *identity* between them.[29] There are various ways in which this approach might be developed. One line of thought is suggested by the use of the ideas of unity or number and ratio or proportion within the (admittedly, non-ideal) dialectic represented in the discussion of the *Republic* between the figures of Socrates and Glaucon or Adeimantus.[30] For instance, a parallel is charted between the fourfold set of virtues in the psyche and in the city, and these sets of virtues are correlated with a threefold analysis of the parts or basic elements of the psyche and city.[31] The goodness of the ideal psyche and city is defined by its unity and order, and the contrasting non-ideal versions of psyche and city are characterised by the absence or dissolution of this unity and structure.[32] The use of mathematical ideas in this way might seem merely 'instrumental' to the real business of ethical analysis, the dialectical examination of verbal accounts of the virtues or the good. But these features may point to at least two more fundamental types of linkage between mathematic and non-mathematical ideas.

We can suggest, for instance, that post-mathematical dialectic in the educational programme includes the explicit recognition of analogies between mathematics, conceived as a system of ideas, and the belief-set about the virtues developed through pre-reflective education. The analysis of mathematics as an interconnected system of concepts may

28 See *Republic* 532A5–7, 532B4, 532D8–E1, 553C7–8, 534B3–D1; also text to n.25 above.

29 It is suggestive, at least, that the idea of 'analogy' plays a major role in the central books of the *Republic*; the three great images (Sun, Divided Line and Cave) can all be regarded as interconnected types of analogy; on the related idea of ratio or proportion, see following note.

30 See, e.g., the use of the ideas of ratio or proportion in the account of the final stages of education, *Republic* 507B–509B, esp. 508B13; 509D–511E, esp. 510B and 511A; 531D–534D, esp. 532A–C; 533B–C; 534A.

31 *Republic* 427D–434D, 441C–444B; also Gill 2003: 47–8.

32 *Republic* 433A–444D, 443C–E; also 462A–B, 547B–C, 550A–B, 551D, 554D–E, 556E, 559E, 561D, 573A–B; also Gill 2004b: 168.

go hand in hand with, as well as enabling, the analysis of the set of beliefs maintained about the virtues, conceived as an analogous interconnected system.[33] The linkage between the ideas of unity, harmony and order, in the psychological and social structures developed by the early stages of education, and mathematical conceptions of unity, harmony and order (a linkage noted by Burnyeat) can be interpreted as implying this kind of connection.[34] The claim that the later stages of dialectic involve a movement from hypothesis-based theory to an 'unhypothesised' principle' (511B5–7) might be taken as implying not just metamathematical inquiry (as Burnyeat suggests) but the understanding of the structural analogy between mathematics as a system and ethical belief-structures.[35] This kind of process will make more sense if, like Aristotle in passages cited earlier, we see ideas such as order and unity as intermediate or mediating terms between the two categories, which enable significant links to be established while recognising the distinct character of each category.[36]

Some at least of the passages taken by Burnyeat to support his view can also be interpreted in the light of this approach, for instance these two comments by Socrates:

> if inquiry into all the subjects we've mentioned brings out their community (*koinônia*) and their kinship (*sungeneia*) with each other and enables us to reason out how they are related (*oikeia*) to each other, it will contribute something to the goal of our inquiry (knowledge of the good, 532A). (531C9–D2)

> After that time, those who are selected out of the twenty-year-olds will have greater privileges than the others; and the subjects they studied in no set order as children they must now bring together to form a unified view (*sunopsis*) of their kinship (*oikeiotês*) with each other and with the nature of what is (*to on*). (537B8–C3)[37]

Burnyeat takes these passages as supporting the view that mathematics and knowledge of the good (as a key feature of 'what is') are integrally linked and that metamathematical inquiry is thus, at the same time, an analysis of core ethical ideas.[38] Alternatively, one can see these

33 For material that might support this suggestion, see text to nn.30–2 above; also Gill 2003: 45–9.
34 See, e.g., *Republic* 401C–D, 410A–412B, 432A–B, 441E–442D; also Burnyeat 2000: 47–56.
35 *Republic* 511B–D, 533B–C; Burnyeat 2000: 33–42.
36 Aristotle, *Eudemian Ethics* 1.8, 1218A15–24, *Metaphysics* 13.3, 1078A31–B2.
37 All translations not otherwise ascribed are mine.
38 Burnyeat 2000: 1, 19, also text to nn.15, 17–22 above.

comments as suggesting that the educational programme itself involves the recognition of a structural analogy between ethical and mathematical ideas. The developing guardians may be seen as recognising (through forming a 'unified view') forms of interconnection and system (*koinônia*, *sungeneia* and *oikeiotês*) both *within* each area and *between* them. The second passage cited (537B–C) refers only to childhood education prior to eighteen in 'music and gymnastic', including pre-reflective ethical beliefs, which the more able members of the group will synthesise and systematise as a basis for knowledge of the good.[39] The first passage (531C–D) may have mathematics primarily in view (outlined in 525A–531C); but it refers to *all* the subjects previously studied (531C9), and thus may be intended to convey the synthesis of *both* previous stages. The recognition of analogous patterns in pre-reflective ethical beliefs and in mathematics may here be presented as, taken together, the material for the dialectical analysis of 'what is', that is, ultimately, the form of good.

This line of thought may also help to explain what are sometimes seen as competing features in the presentation of the final stages of coming to know the Form of the Good. One famous passage stresses the exceptional and fundamental status of the Form of Good in relation to the objects of knowledge: 'not only do the objects of knowledge owe their being known to the good, but their being is also due to it, although the good is not being, but superior to it (*epekeina tês ousias*) in rank and power'.[40] On the other hand, a later passage, cited earlier, stresses that the form of good is an object of dialectical analysis 'in just the same way' (*hôsautôs*) as other ideas, and thus seems to present it as on the same level of intelligibility and being.[41] These two passages can be interpreted by reference to the idea that dialectic builds, progressively and explicitly, on analogies between mathematical and ethical ideas. The first passage may be seen as reflecting a common feature of the Form of the Good, on the one hand, and the One, on the other, namely that both entities are *superordinate* and in some sense the *source or ground* of other entities. In the unwritten teachings, as reported in our sources, the One is presented as being radically different in kind from other entities, and the source, with the Indeterminate Dyad, of the other mathematical entities by a process

39 For this stage as combining the 'harmonisation' of character with belief-sets, see nn.23–4 above.

40 *Republic* 509B6–10, trans. Grube, rev. Reeve in Cooper 1997. This text, together with 534B–C, cited below, is a key contested passage in Reale and Scolnicov 2002 (see their *index locorum*).

41 *Republic* 534B–C, especially B7; also text to n.25 above. On the apparent tension between these passages, see Gill 2002: 213–15, discussing Gadamer 1986.

of 'categorical reduction'.[42] The passage cited from *Republic* 504B may be taken as ascribing an analogous status to the Form of the Good, and we may suppose that the parallel between these two ideas contributes to making each of them intelligible. The second passage (534B–C) can be taken as identifying the kind of dialectical process by which the Form of Good (and, conjecturally, the One also) was analysed and compared. The status of the entities is conceived as superordinate and fundamental; but the understanding of this status depends on a dialectical process in which these entities are examined 'in just the same way' (534B7) as the others in the respective system of ideas (ethical or mathematical).

What are the relative merits or demerits of this line of thought, as compared with Burnyeat's view that the ethical and mathematical entities are finally shown to be 'one and the same' (1987: 238)? Exegetically, I have highlighted certain ways in which the interpretation based on structural analogy offers a more natural reading of the *Republic* or is, at least, equally compatible with this text. Philosophically, this interpretation also explains how ethical and mathematical ideas can be shown as integrally linked and mutually informing, in a way that makes sense from both standpoints, while still remaining distinctly ethical or mathematical. (That is, the interpretation shows how Plato's theory avoids both 'Scylla' and 'Charybdis', whereas this is more open to question on Burnyeat's maximal view.) A demerit of this reading, arguably, is that it fails to bring out the full force of Plato's thinking about mathematics and the good, as reported in the lecture on the good, for instance. The climax of this lecture was not that the Good was *like* (or structurally analogous to) the One but that it actually *was* the One. Although the precise meaning of this claim is conjectural, it seems to be a rather stronger claim than is suggested here.[43] This still leaves open the possibility that structural analogy best explains the chronological phase or type of theory we find in the *Republic*.[44] But this gives an additional reason for considering an alternative line of approach, in additional to Burnyeat's maximal view, namely that of the Good as a transcategorical norm.

42 For a lucid survey of the unwritten doctrines in relation to the good, see Berti 2004, including 39–41 on categorial reduction and the virtues. For 'One-centred' readings of Platonic philosophy, made from an esoteric standpoint, see, e.g., Reale 2002: 40–1, 2004; Szlezák 2002: 58–62.

43 See the passages of Aristoxenus and Aristotle cited at the start of this essay; see further Berti 2004: 37–41.

44 There is uncertainty (and much debate) about how to correlate the date of the unwritten teachings, especially the famous lecture on the good, and Plato's dialogues; some scholars link the unwritten teachings with Plato's later dialogues (e.g. *Philebus*); see, e.g., Sayre 1983: ch. 2.

IV TRANSCATEGORICAL NORM

The second line of thought explored here is that the good is conceived as a transcategorical norm or principle. The content of this norm, as in the maximal view represented here by Burnyeat, is the idea of unity or order. But this is not seen specifically as a metamathematical idea but as one which spans or transcends the spheres of mathematics, ethics and physics, and is thus *trans*categorical. However, this idea arises out of a synthesis of the understanding of good and related notions in those spheres and, even when understood *as* transcategorical, it has a continuing significance within those spheres, though it is now understood from an enlarged perspective. Hence, a premise of this line of thought is that the idea of good is both transcategorical and intertranslatable into the various spheres in which it functions as a norm or principle. As so understood, Plato's thinking prefigures, and might have helped to suggest, the Stoic conception of good. As I interpret Stoic thinking on this topic, the good is conceived as a transcategorical norm, whose meaning is that of order, structure or wholeness. A complete understanding of the good arises out of a synthesis of understanding of good (as order, structure or wholeness) in the three Stoic branches of knowledge – ethics, physics and logic.[45] The Platonic version of this idea – if it is a genuinely Platonic idea – may also have helped to shape the suggestion in Aristotle, *Eudemian Ethics* 1.8 noted earlier, that the idea of order, for instance, serves a mediating role between the ideas of 'good' or beautiful and those grasped by the mathematical sciences. Aristotle's suggestion is not identical with the Platonic idea posited here, since Aristotle's conception of good seems to remain ethical (though comparable with mathematical ideas) rather than being fully transcategorical. But the theme common to Plato and Aristotle is that 'order' is shared by ethics and mathematics; hence, 'order' is transcategorical for both thinkers, though in the Platonic framework, transcategorical order or unity actually *constitutes* the good.

This is, in certain ways, a more radical line of thought than that of structural analogy between ethical and mathematical ideas. What advantages does this approach have as exegesis of Plato's dialogues and the unwritten teachings or on philosophical grounds? One merit is that it is easier to see how this idea, as developed in Plato's lecture on the good, could be reported as the claim that 'Good is One', rather than that the Good is *like* One. Unity or order, in this view, actually constitutes

45 See further, on this feature of Stoicism, Gill 2004c: 113–14, 2006: 164–6; on relevant links between Stoicism and Platonic thought, Gill 2004b: 170–3.

the good, both in a transcategorical sense and in the various branches of inquiry from which this sense is derived. Admittedly, the reports of the unwritten teachings present the One as a principle established by metamathematical inquiry rather than as a transcategorical norm and as the outcome of synthesis of several branches of knowledge.[46] But the lecture on the good, for instance, may have presented simply one way of moving to this higher-level concept (from the mathematical or metamathematical to the universal or transcategorical), although other routes are possible, as is clear from some of the written dialogues. In any case, the idea of the good as transcategorical is significantly closer to the Good as One of the unwritten teachings than is the idea of structural analogy between Good and One.

The idea of a type of good, or related conceptions of value, spanning different branches of inquiry figures recurrently in a number of Platonic dialogues, and can also be used to explain key features of Plato's educational programme in the *Republic*.[47] One very striking, though theoretically undeveloped, version of this idea figures in Plato's *Gorgias* (507E6–508A7):

> [Socrates speaking] 'The wise say, Callicles, that community, friendship, order, self-control and justice hold together heaven and earth, and gods and humans, and this is why they call this whole universe a cosmos (*kosmos* = order) and not disorder or dissolution. You seem to me not to pay attention to this . . . and you've failed to realise that proportionate equality has great power among gods and humans and you think you should try to get more than your share; that is because you neglect geometry.'

The relevant feature of this comment is the assumption that order (*kosmos*) operates in a transcategorical way, which spans ethics and physics (and which also applies to gods and humans and, presumably, god–human relationships). The second sentence also seems to imply that 'proportionate equality' applies equally in the ethical sphere (at the human and divine level) and in the mathematical.[48]

A more fully developed version of this type of idea can be seen as underlying central themes in the *Timaeus-Critias* and in *Laws* 10. The 'transcategorical' character of the project of the *Timaeus-Critias* is indicated by the formal linkage made at the start of the *Timaeus*

46 See references in n.43 above.

47 See Gill 2004a for similar points to those made in the next three paragraphs.

48 As noted by Burnyeat 2000: 79, the idea of proportionate equality is developed by Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* 5.3–5, in his analysis of justice; see also Plato, *Laws*. 5, 744B–C, 7, 757.

between the ethico-political ideal of the *Republic* (and the narrative realisation of this ideal in the Atlantis story) and Timaeus' account of the creation of the natural universe. One of the implications of this linkage is that virtues and the good will be manifested in both aspects of the *Timaeus-Critias*.[49] In the creation account, the goodness of the universe is one of Timaeus' central claims (29E–31D), which can be seen as realised in two key aspects of the account. One is the pervasive role at every level of mathematical ideas expressing the presence of unity, order, structure and harmony.[50] The other is the idea that component aspects of the universe, including humankind, are (to a high degree at least) 'good' in the sense of consisting in psychophysical structures that are providentially designed to achieve their natural functions.[51] For human beings, a central function is that of living the kind of physical and psychic life that will embody the order and structure that is more fully instantiated in the universe as a whole.[52] These features can be seen as expressing Burnyeat's view that the good is understood by Plato, primarily, in mathematical (or metamathematical) terms: as he puts it, 'mathematical proportion is the chief expression of the Divine Craftsman's beneficent design' (2000: 66–7). But it can also (and, I think, more plausibly) be taken as conveying the broader idea that goodness, as unity and order, is a transcategorical norm that can be realised, in different forms and degrees, in mathematics, in the natural universe and in human life and society.

A similar idea is implied in *Laws* Book 10, which also bridges ethics and physics in seeking to counter the claim that the universe is a random, non-purposive entity which cannot provide a religious or cosmic context for ethical life within a community such as that envisaged in this dialogue (889B–890D). The orderliness of the universe is characterised, in part, in mathematical terms. A typology of ten types of motion is set out and the heavenly bodies are said to display the type of rational and ordered motion which is incompatible with the idea that the universe functions randomly (893B–899D, especially 897C–D). The dominant theme is not that the universe as a whole, or the heavenly bodies, display goodness because they embody mathematical relations, but that they do so because they express order, structure and

49 See further Pradeau 1997: 235–313; Johansen 2004: ch. 1; stressing links such as the representation of goodness (as structure and rationality) in the creation story and the Atlantis story.

50 See, e.g., *Timaeus* 30C–31A (universe as unified and complete), world-body bonded by ratio and unity (31B–32C), world-soul as a system of ratios (36A–D); see also Burnyeat 2000: 66–7.

51 See *Timaeus* 44D–45B, 45C–47E, 69C–72D; see further Steel 2001; Johansen 2004: ch. 7.

52 See *Timaeus* 88C–90D; also Sedley 1997; Gill 2000: 70–7.

rationality. A key claim is that the ordered movements of the heavenly bodies show the controlling presence in each body of the good type of soul, marked by rationality and care for goodness of the whole, a soul identified in each case with a god (898c–899c).[53] The implication, again, is that 'good' as order is conceived as a transcategorical norm; hence, it can be instantiated in cosmic terms in a way that provides an ethically normative conceptual framework for a political community.

One of the most explicit statements of the idea that 'good' should be conceived as 'order' comes in the *Philebus*. The most valuable element in any mixture is identified as measure (*metriotês*) and proportion (*summetria*), which is associated closely in turn with beauty (64c–e). This leads to an analysis of good, as that which gives order and structure to the entities in which goodness is present.

> [Socrates speaking] 'Well, then, if we cannot capture the good in *one* form, we will have to take hold of it in a conjunction of three: beauty, proportion, and truth. Let us affirm that these should by right be treated as a unity and held responsible for what is in the mixture, for its goodness is what makes the mixture a good one.'[54]

The immediate context of this passage is not transcategorical but ethical in a more familiar sense, bearing on the adjudication between the value of competing types of human life. But it is natural to link this characterisation of goodness in terms of order with the more universal framework of analysis outlined earlier in the *Philebus* (the 'god-given method'), in which systems and structures in general are understood as the imposition of the one on the many and limit on the unlimited (16c–8d). Both passages are sometimes taken as expressing the (metamathematical) core ideas of the unwritten teachings, particularly the role of the One and the Indeterminate Dyad as the fundamental principles of reality. But the passage, taken at face value, seems, rather, to be suggesting that the idea of good can be analysed in universal, transcategorical, terms, as order and the element that gives structure in any compound.

How might this idea bear on the questions debated here in the *Republic*? Unlike some of the other dialogues just noted, the *Republic* is not explicitly concerned with the idea of 'goodness' in the natural universe. However, the role of mathematics here, as in the unwritten teachings, can be conceived as a bridge towards a universal or transcategorical conception of goodness as unity or order, rather than a specifically

53 On this argument, see further the chapters by Halper, Parry and Santa Cruz in Scolnicov and Brisson 2003.

54 *Philebus* 65a1–5, trans. D. Frede in Cooper 1997.

metamathematical one. Some of the features of the educational programme taken earlier as expressing the idea of a structural analogy between ethical and mathematical ideas can also be interpreted as support for this approach. Take, for instance, the two passages (531c–d, 537b–c) considered as referring to the synthesis of pre-reflective education in ethical beliefs and character and mathematical sciences. Earlier, I suggested that the stress on a 'synoptic' view and on the internal 'kinship' of the material viewed could be seen as conveying the idea of analogy between two systems of ideas, mathematical and ethical. However, a yet more cogent reading might be that the synoptic view, in seeing the coherence and systematicity of the two areas, thereby recognises what is *constitutively good*, that is, unity and order. The synoptic view recognises good as unity or order *both* in each of the two areas *and* in the structural analogy between the two types of system. This would give added point to the suggestion that this synoptic process plays a special role in contributing 'to the goal of our inquiry', that is, gaining knowledge of the good, or of 'what is', in the strongest sense.

This line of thought can also provide an alternative, and perhaps more convincing, explanation for some other features taken earlier as supporting the idea of structural analogy. For instance, the movement from hypothesis-based theory to an 'unhypothesised principle' (511b–c, 534c–d) was taken earlier to refer to a cognitive process, achieved through dialectic, that synthesises and transcends both types of prior education, the pre-reflective development of beliefs about value, and systematic study of mathematics. The idea of an 'unhypothesised principle' takes on additional point if it refers to an idea (the good as unity or order) that has a universal, transcategorical significance, in addition to the significance it has within specific branches of inquiry. A further element that can be explained in this way is the combination, noted earlier (text to nn.40–2), of two seemingly contrasted emphases regarding the idea of good. These are that it is ontologically superordinate to everything else and that it is, none the less, an idea that is the object of dialectical analysis 'in the same way' as other ideas. Understanding the good as a universal, transcategorical idea requires us to go beyond accepted categories of being, including the mathematical and 'ethical' (in the sense of human values and goals). But making sense of this transcategorical status, and of the idea of good as consisting in unity and order, also depends on the application of Socratic-style dialectic, in which the idea of good is analysed in relation to other ideas and to the informing contexts (human values, mathematics) through which its meaning have been established.

How, overall, does this line of thought relate to the idea of structural analogy considered earlier? The idea of structural analogy might seem

to be a half-way house to that of good as a transcategorical norm. The former approach presupposes that analogical relationships are recognised as existing (at a fundamental or structural level) between different branches of inquiry, namely ethical and mathematical. But the idea of good as a transcategorical norm is more radical in its implications, in that the key value notion (the good) is not treated as (solely) ethical but as spanning different spheres of inquiry, including the mathematical and the cosmic or natural. The fact that the central value notion is not (solely) ethical might lead one to reappraise the status of the category of the ethical in Plato. There are certainly grounds, offered earlier (section I), for recognising in Plato a category of debate about human goals and values (which we can call 'ethical'), and one in which the notion of the good figures as a central one. But, as in Stoicism (n.45 above), there is also reason to think that a definitive understanding of the good depends on the synthesis of different branches of inquiry; hence, the most profound understanding of goodness is not limited to the 'ethical' sphere of inquiry. The idea of the good as transcategorical is closer than that of structural analogy to the metamathematical view, exemplified here by Burnyeat.[55] But differences remain, above all, that his view sees knowledge of the good as identical with a complete grasp of metamathematical principles, whereas on the view considered here, this will only be one aspect of a more universal type of knowledge.

Do 'Scylla' and 'Charybdis' reappear in full force if we take the good to be a transcategorical norm? Is there not a danger that such a norm will be either so generalised as to endorse *any* ethical ideal or, if made more specific, will merge with ethical norms of a more recognisable type? I characterised these dangers earlier (section I) in connection with the mathematical or metamathematical norm posited by the 'maximal' approach to Platonic thinking. It is still a matter of argument whether or not the metamathematical norm can avoid these dangers. But, although the idea of a transcategorical norm is similar to that of a metamathematical one, there are also some relevant differences. The key move made in the maximal approach is to posit that the ethical norm is *explained* by metamathematical theory, in the sense that the Good is analysed as, fundamentally, One. Hence there arises the danger, as I see it, that the ethical sense of good may be lost or detached from the metamathematical one. In the line of thought explored here, the key point is that the transcategorical norm *spans* different areas, and arises out of the synthesis of the meaning of good (understood as unity and order) in different branches of inquiry

55 Burnyeat 1987: 214, n.2, refers to the 'transcategorical idea of "good" ', though in connection with Aristotle, whom he sees as having a 'cosmic' or metaphysical conception of good, by contrast with Plato's metamathematical one.

including ethics. Thus, the ethical sense of good retains its own validity in this framework, despite the similarity of content with good (as unity and order) in other areas, and as a transcategorical norm. In Stoic thought, for instance, I think the ethical sense of good (conceived in terms of wholeness, order and structure) is parallel to that in other areas (physics and logic) and yet still retains a distinct function and significance within the ethical context.[56] Analogously, in the *Timaeus-Critias*, one can see how 'goodness' is ascribed both to the universe and to human beings or communities in a way that reflects the core, transcategorical meaning (unity or order) but is still contextualised by being significant in cosmic or ethical terms.[57] In the *Republic*, as discussed here, the transcategorical good (as unity or order), the understanding of which is the ideal outcome of the educational programme, is derived from the synthesis of ideas of good (as unity or order) in the ethical and mathematical spheres and also informs those meanings from a larger perspective. Obviously, this issue (like others in this essay) could usefully be explored further. But I hope these remarks are sufficient to indicate how the idea of the transcategorical good can be conceived in a way that avoids both 'Scylla' and 'Charybdis'.

In this discussion, I have considered key features of Burnyeat's version of the maximal view of the significance of mathematics for the Platonic idea of good. I have identified certain dangers to which I think this kind of view is potentially subject ('Scylla' and 'Charybdis'); and I have also outlined two alternative ways of understanding the relationship between ethical and mathematical ideas, both of which seem to me better equipped to avoid those dangers than the maximal view. The first line of thought, centred on structural analogy, is clearly different from Burnyeat's, though it is closer to his view than the 'instrumental' view which he rejects (n.17 above). The second line of thought, based on the idea of a transcategorical norm, is different at least in formulation from Burnyeat's view (and in more clearly avoiding 'Scylla' and 'Charybdis'), but is closer to his approach than that based on structural analogy. I have indicated certain ways in which, as it seems to me, these alternatives have advantages either as exegesis of the *Republic* or in giving a more convincing account of the relationship between ethical and non-ethical senses of goodness. Burnyeat's statements of the maximal view are conceptually powerful and thoroughly argued, and I cannot pretend in this context to have worked out these alternative acounts in comparable depth. What I have tried to do, rather, is to isolate and explore certain important conceptual issues

56 See further Gill 2006: 145–66, esp. 164–6.
57 See text to nn.49–52 above.

which arise from the notion of a mathematical or metamathematical idea of good, and to have offered some formulations by which scholarly examination of this idea can be taken forward.

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13

THE GOOD AND ORDER: DOES THE *REPUBLIC* DISPLAY AN ANALOGY BETWEEN A SCIENCE OF ETHICS AND MATHEMATICS?

Rachana Kamtekar

In his chapter in this volume, Christopher Gill discusses three ways in which to understand the elusive relationship between ethical ideas and the mathematical terms in which Plato describes them in the *Republic*. According to Gill, a satisfactory explanation of this relationship should both account for Platonic texts on mathematics and ethics and avoid the twin dangers Gill calls 'Scylla' and 'Charybdis': on the one hand, so technical an account of the mathematical terms as to make them inapplicable to ethical matters, and on the other hand, an account of the mathematical terms as merely metaphorical, that is, as having no determinately mathematical character. (Gill's worry that in the 'Scylla' case the mathematical ideas 'can be applied equally to almost any ethical theory', p. 252, is misleading since the problem is one of the mathematical terms' *inapplicability* to ethics rather than of their overapplicability.) Avoiding Scylla and Charybdis requires, then, that the relationship between mathematical and ethical ideas be intelligible in both mathematical and ethical terms, while the ideas remain determinately mathematical or ethical.

According to the first of the accounts of the ethical–mathematical relationship discussed by Gill (Myles Burnyeat's), mathematics studies in abstraction the very same structures, such as concord and unity, which make a soul and a city and the cosmos good. This is why a mathematical education is at the same time an education in value. Gill faults Burnyeat for not taking sufficient account of the fact that Plato's programme of education begins with the formation of appropriate beliefs about right or fine action, and concludes with Socratic-style dialectic about virtues and the good – discussed in these, rather than in metamathematical, terms (pp. 260–2).

Gill's first alternative proposal is that the structures of mathematics and ethics are analogous (rather than identical). So, for example,

mathematics and ethics may each be conceived of as interconnected system of concepts or beliefs (the one about mathematical entities, the other about such things as the right, the fine and the virtues), each of which seeks unity, order and harmony internal to its system and an unhypothetical first principle. One shortcoming of this view is that it restricts the Good to ethics, whereas Plato describes the Good as not only the cause of the goodness of the virtues and other good things (504E–505A), but also of the existence and intelligibility of all objects of knowledge (509B). Gill acknowledges that this proposal falls short of Plato's claims when he notes that according to Plato the Good *is* the One, rather than being *like* the One (p. 265).

Consequently Gill proposes another, closer, relationship between the mathematical and the ethical: the Good is a 'transcategorical' norm (of unity or order), itself neither ethical, mathematical or physical, but 'intertranslatable' into the ethical, mathematical and physical spheres for which it is a norm. (Gill's mention of translation [p. 266] notwithstanding, the mathematical, ethical and physical are not different discourses that describe the same reality; rather, they are distinct branches of knowledge which range over distinct domains.) On this view both the transcategorical Good, and the good within the various branches of inquiry, are constituted by unity or order. And the transcategorical Good or One is known through a synthesis of the senses of good or unity internal to the various branches of knowledge (rather than, as Burnyeat proposes, through mathematical and metamathematical inquiry).

An initial problem with this proposal as well as the previous one is that Plato mentions no separate science of ethics subordinate to dialectic or on a par with mathematics. It seems un-Platonic to think of ethics as a branch of anything.

Because Gill's proposals remain at such a great level of generality, it is difficult to judge whether or not they meet the demands of Scylla and Charybdis, that is, the demand for mutual intelligibility between mathematical and ethical ideas, along with determinate mathematical and ethical content. In physics, it may be that things being good 'in the sense of consisting in psychophysical structures that are providentially designed to achieve their natural functions' (p. 268) provides a bridge to the notion of good in ethics. But perhaps this is because we are physical, or natural, creatures, and ones that have a point of view from which to value a certain natural condition. What related sense of 'good' do we find within mathematics? What reason do we have to think that what we will get is mutual intelligibility rather than homonyms? And why (and this is Charybdis) think that the mathematical ideas, *qua mathematical*, illuminate the ethical?

How, for example, is the coherence of someone's belief-set illuminated by a mathematical understanding of unity? Consider what the *Republic* tells us about mathematicians' understanding of unity:

> [calculation] leads the soul forcibly upward and compels it to discuss the numbers themselves, never permitting anyone to propose for discussion numbers attached to visible or tangible bodies. You know what those who are clever in these matters are like: If, in the course of argument, someone tries to divide the one itself, they laugh and won't permit it. If you divide it, they multiply it, taking care that one thing never be found to be many parts rather than one. (*Republic* 525E–26A, trans. Grube-Reeve)

If the mathematician is reasoning about a diagram, he will stipulate that a given quantity is a unity rather than specifying conditions under which something is a genuine unity, and if he is reasoning about real (non-physical) mathematical entities, he will assume that there are genuine units and that other quantities are to be measured by them. Mathematicians are credited with knowing how to deal properly with a unit, but that is not to say they have an account of unity. The parallel in ethics would be knowing that the good cannot be at the same time bad or a cause of anything bad and taking care not to assert anything that conflicts with this – but that is not the same as having an account of the good.

Perhaps, however, it is not arithmetic but mathematical harmonics that provides the relevant notion of unity: In the *Division of the Canon*, Euclid defines consonant notes as notes in the ratio n:1 or n+1:n, which make a *single* blend of sound out of both notes.[1] Certainly, we find the idea of making one out of many in a number of ethical and political contexts: the happy city is a unity, which means it has no faction between rich and poor (*Republic* 422E–423A), but instead a community of pleasure and pain among the citizens (462AD); moderation consists in shared beliefs as to who should rule (in the city, 431E; in the soul, 442CD). But what is determinately mathematical about the notion of 'one' or even 'harmony' or 'consonance' in any of these examples?

Obviously, when Plato wrote such things as that geometry, and in particular proportionate equality has great power among gods and humans (*Gorgias* 507E–508A), or that the philosopher's life is 729 times happier than the tyrant's (*Republic* 587DE), he was not trying to avoid Scylla and Charybdis. Gill is right that Plato could have recognized these as dangers, once presented with them, but trying to determine

1 Barbera 1991: 116.

what Plato's ideas were while trying to avoid Scylla and Charybdis may be distorting. Aristotle's criticism of positing a universal 'good' when things are said to be good in as many ways as they are said to 'be' (*Nicomachean Ethics* 1096A20–5) is evidence that in bringing number and value to bear on one another, Plato or his followers may very well have run into one or both of Scylla and Charybdis.

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14

INQUIRY AND JUSTIFICATION IN THE SEARCH FOR THE HIGHEST GOOD IN PLATO AND ARISTOTLE

Mariana Anagnostopoulos

I QUESTIONS ABOUT THE GOOD

Aristotle was convinced that there is a singular highest good. He provides, in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, formal features of the good, a complex analysis of its nature, and an explanation of the ways in which the good human exemplifies goodness, intellectually and in action. Plato's contrasting conception of the highest good is striking in part because of the metaphysical nature he attributes to the good, and the relationship he thereby envisions the good to bear to other good things in the world. When we consider varying conceptions of the highest good, we notice their points of insight, error and difference, and perhaps come to a different kind of question, that concerning the justification for declaring one conception of the highest good to be *correct*. Sarah Broadie, in various works addressing the nature of the search for the highest good, raises several important and challenging questions for those who attempt this project.[1]

Broadie reveals features of the contest between rival candidates for the title 'highest good,' in particular by illuminating features of *another*

I am very grateful to Terry Penner for the opportunity to take part in the Leventis conference and the present volume, for valuable suggestions for improving and continuing to explore this project, and for always alerting me to aspects of the analysis of the good in Plato and Aristotle that require further scrutiny.

1 My present aim is to elaborate upon some questions and thoughts that I had the great honour of presenting in a brief comment to Sarah Broadie's paper, 'What should we mean by "The highest good"?', at the fourth A. G. Leventis conference. Broadie's paper centered on an exploration of distinct kinds of contests whose resolution characterizes the search for the good, while identifying different possible roles the highest good might be taken to play, given the type of 'winner' it is in the relevant contests. Her analysis led me to consider the ways in which Plato and Aristotle conceive of the search for the highest good, both in general form and with respect to the specific features of the real good, and the nature of the persons who are likely to succeed in discovering it.

contest: that between different conceptions of *what it would take* for an entity to be granted the title 'highest good'. This contest must be decided first, as it is not possible genuinely to judge a contest or to confer a title whose content and significance one does not understand. In specifying conditions necessary for the question 'what is the highest good?' to be a substantive one, Broadie highlights the importance of agreement 'on the second-order question of what is meant by regarding X as the highest good, whatever X may be'.[2] The answer to this higher-level question specifies, if only in outline, what sort of thing a highest good must be, by determining at least several of its formal features.[3] Possessing this answer, we are able to search for the entity that satisfies the criteria in which it consists.

The two contests, then, are these: it is possible to contrast differing formal conceptions of the good, and also, subsequently, to adjudicate between goods that potentially fulfill the conditions specified by one (winning) formal conception. Aristotle was certainly working on the latter project; having set out several formal features of the good, he tests various goods (and forms of life) to determine which constitutes the content of the good, judging, for example, that contemplation, if only it could be sustained over a complete life, would be the human good. To make this determination, Aristotle must already have in mind, roughly, the role of the good: it is, in his view, complete, self-sufficient, the ultimate end of desire and action, and, as Broadie emphasizes, 'the first principle and cause of things good'.[4] If one way of life is judged best at fulfilling this role, it must be possible to justify this judgment, as Aristotle is well aware (he explains why several forms of life fail).

However, it must also be possible to ascertain on what basis the logically prior judgement, about the formal features of the good, is accurate. Why must the good be self-sufficient, for example? How exactly does it confer goodness on other goods, and why must it do so? It is not at all clear that Plato or Aristotle attempted directly to answer this question fully. That is, it is not evident that either Plato or Aristotle took himself to offer a justification of his basic conception of nature and role of the good – one that would prove, rather than assume, the *most* fundamental metaphysical and epistemological roles of the ultimate good. In what follows I will explore some of the implications of

2 Broadie 2005: 41.

3 These would indicate whether the good is the 'highest' of all knowable things, the standard of action, that which confers being or some attribute(s) on other things, etc.

4 *Nicomachean Ethics* 1102A3–4. Broadie notes that Plato seems to have a similar idea about the good (2005: 50). References to Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* (hereafter *EN*) are to Broadie and Rowe 2002.

the ways in which Plato and Aristotle conceive and undertake the theoretical search for the highest good, with special attention to certain of Broadie's questions about this inquiry.

II THE TWO CONTESTS

The criteria involved in the higher-level competition are highly disputed, more so than for other contests, as we can see in some of the possible roles Broadie distinguishes for the highest good: it may be that which is intimately connected to *the right*, as a standard of right and wrong, that which one should maximize, that which is uniquely intrinsically good (with all other goods being instrumental to it), that which is a combination of all other intrinsic goods, that which makes all goods good, and so on.[5] Supposing *one* of these formal roles is chosen, we come to the second, lower-level competition amongst candidates that seem actually to play the role. In the higher-level contest, a conception of the good is chosen, and the lower-level contest determines what entity meets the criteria given in the conception. I find it noteworthy that the concept of being good is important to the lower-level competition, in that goods, ways of life or other entities are judged against one another: the 'best' of these is the one that gives content to a previously purely formal conception of goodness. The one that receives the accurately awarded title is the best in that it *is* the good.

There is something odd about this determination of the good itself to be *best* in some way. The oddity is apparent – and compounded – when we reflect again on the higher-level contest: the winner of that contest is the *best* formulation of the form of goodness, whatever that may be. It seems, then, that each winner fulfills certain criteria, formulated in part with reference to goodness itself – by being in some way the *best* (in the way specified in the parameters of the given contest). This leads me to question whether, when we determine the best contestant in either the lower- or higher-level contest, our concept of a winner is not thereby challenged. The question arises because we are not here searching for a candidate that is good at something (as in ordinary contests), but for *goodness itself*. When testing candidates at either level, we are seeking the best one; but being the *best* (at anything) seems obviously to involve participating in some relationship to *goodness*.

That is, the concept of a winner seems complicated by the unusual and unique nature of a contest in which *an idea about being best* is judged to be best, and *goodness itself* is in turn judged to *be good*, indeed *best* (when we judge the lower-level contest correctly, that is).

5 These roles are discussed, in this order, in Broadie 2005: 43, 45–6, 47, 48ff.

The winner of the higher-level contest is judged to be the best formal conception of the highest good, while the losers are judged to be flawed conceptions of the role of this good.[6] The winner of the lower-level contest is judged to be the good – that is, the true one – while the losers are judged to be lesser goods or, possibly, not goods at all. However, must not all of these judgements be informed at the outset by a conception of goodness? Though we are not here attempting to determine who any of the winners are, I am curious about how we come to specify the winners, or even the contestants, and how we must utilize an idea of the highest good while doing so.

III THE SEARCH FOR THE GOOD IN PLATO AND ARISTOTLE

Plato and Aristotle have much to say about the ways in which we acquire a conception of the role the good must fulfill, in particular when this is a *correct* conception. The correct conception of the good, in their accounts, would construe the good as that which *makes other goods good*. If this is true of the good, what does it entail with respect to the good person, and the successful human search for goodness? In the accounts of Plato and Aristotle, the *real* highest good bears a special relationship to the contestants and judges in each of the two aforementioned contests.

For example, Plato has available to him the idea that we come to the correct conception of the role of the good by understanding something about the good that truly fulfills that role. In this way, the good actually guides our search for the good. Supposing that Plato is correct, the good of the *Republic* is, even if not recognized, the real good, and thus fulfills roles that include imbuing with truth all judgements that are true, including judgements in either of the contests with which we are here concerned. If Socrates could fully understand the good, it would be the good itself that allows for that understanding, and its correctness.

In Aristotle's account, the good bears a different relationship to one who searches to understand it. Concluding his analysis of the human good, Aristotle tells us that 'what belongs to each kind of creature by nature is best . . . for each; for man, then, the life in accordance with intelligence is so too, given that man is this most of all. This life, then, will also be happiest.'[7] This affirmation of the relationship between the good life and the life of reason recalls Aristotle's claim very early in the *Ethics* that the one most qualified to undertake the study of ethics is

6 They are judged not to be accounts of goodness at all, but maybe of mere goods.
7 *EN* 1178a5.

the well-educated person who is also guided by reason when acting.[8] Taken together with the idea that the good is the ultimate object of study, this indicates that one who is good (in action and by pursuing knowledge) best understands goodness, and, of course, benefits from this understanding. Thus, being in a relationship to the good is most conducive to knowing it, though not, as Plato said, because the good 'illuminates' the objects of knowledge so that they may be apprehended.

For the ancients, then, the correct conception of the role of the highest good is possible because of the way in which that very good 'guides' knowledge, and this is also true of a judgment that one candidate for the title 'highest good' *truly* fulfills that role. It appears that, in each account, one's relationship to the object of the search guides one onto and down the path toward its discovery. What this assumes – of goodness or knowledge – may constitute a problem, in that it may render the accounts circular.

In particular, as part of its relationship to good lives, the good is known to good persons, and appears even to be responsible for its being recognized by those who know it. The additional fact that knowledge of the good is, in part, what *constitutes* the goodness of the excellent human then places this human in a special position as the 'measure' of the good. The way in which Plato or Aristotle explicates the concept of the good person as measure of goodness opens up, and may answer, some interesting questions concerning each thinker's justification for affirming one particular account of the highest good over another.

That is, do Plato and Aristotle avoid a full explanation of the nature of the good by focusing part of this explanation – indeed, the critical part – on the nature of the good, or fully *rational*, person, thus leaving it entirely unclear whether knowing the good allows us to identify the good person, or identifying the good person allows us to know the good? Another type of circularity would involve assuming that knowledge is, in some significant way, directed by the good, and then forming – and, more importantly, justifying – an understanding of the good by appeal to the very entity being explained.

IV THE GOOD PERSON AS 'MEASURE' OF GOODNESS

We have seen that we may ask distinct questions about our project of identifying one good as *the good*, and about what it means for something to be the good. Several of these spheres of inquiry are addressed

8 *EN* 1095a1–10.

in Aristotle's and Plato's analyses of the good person. As Aristotle develops his account, the importance of the idea of perfection becomes clear, in connection to a naturalistic approach, according to which he analyses patterns of aiming toward ends, and seeking the completion (and even some kind of immortality) appropriate to the kind of creature one is. In Aristotle's claim about the virtuous person as indicator, these elements unite. The importance of the goodness of the one undertaking to discover the good is suggested even in Aristotle's early claim that fine habits and upbringing correspond directly to an ability to judge and distinguish the fine in varying spheres of life.[9] The circularity suggested here becomes a greater threat in Aristotle's later claim at 1113A30 that 'what most distinguishes the good person is his ability to see what is true in every set of circumstances, much like being a carpenter's rule or measure for them'. This might seem to suggest both that those who search for the good would do well to identify and follow the good person, and that questions about the real nature of the good are not addressed directly, but instead referred by Aristotle to one exemplar of goodness, the good human. We must note, however, the difference between suggesting that our search for the good will conclude with an acquaintance with the life of the good person, after whose life we would then pattern our own, and suggesting that the truly good person will in fact be best able to identify goodness in the world. Without knowing exactly what makes the good person good, we can recognize that this person is in fact best situated to discern and promote goodness.[10] This implies neither that our inquiry can proceed no further, nor that Aristotle's more substantive claims about goodness itself are unstable because they assume this special role for the good person.

Suppose the wise and good person were to consult the sciences, along with Aristotle, and find them to confirm that the mean preserves while excess and deficiency destroy.[11] Is the wise and good person thereby assuming – or fixing – the nature of goodness to correspond to her own practices and ideals? Broadie articulates the idea that, because of Aristotle's claim that the good person is the 'measure' of what is good, a virtuous agent's taking the life of activity in accordance with virtue to be good indicates that it *is* so. This person, she explains, evaluates the pursuits of the less-than-excellent person and 'sees them as they are. *What* he sees is what leads him to form his judgment, and what he sees makes that judgment true. Thus, the so-called good things in the

9 *EN* 1095B.

10 In the same way, one who is good can appreciate and work from the 'starting point' of ethical inquiry, knowing '*that* it is so', and thus possessing a foundation, without yet knowing 'in addition *why*' it is so (*EN* 1095B7).

11 *EN* 1106B10.

contemplated life are not worthless because the person of excellence thinks so.'[12] Instead, what makes the good person correct about goodness is precisely what would make Aristotle correct about the good person as measure: the truth about goodness itself, good persons, and knowledge about the good.

In *our inquiry* about goodness, it is important to ask whether it is reasonable to suppose that living well and understanding what it takes to live well are related (or whether it could reasonably be thought otherwise). For Aristotle's claim is that it is *true* that the wise person lives well, and that living well is what the wise do; he is not simply referring those who seek an understanding of goodness to the good person. It is not our ability to identify the good person, or to understand goodness fully, that places the wise person in a particular relationship to the good itself. On the contrary, we couldn't know of such a relationship if none existed.

Plato construes the relationship between the good and the good person differently. There is much in Socrates' small step at 505E; the good, he states, is 'that, then, which every soul pursues . . . with an intuition of its reality, but yet baffled and unable to apprehend its nature adequately, or to attain to any stable belief about it as about other things'. Not fully apprehending it himself, Socrates thinks the good must be the kind of thing toward which every soul is oriented, in its pursuit of knowledge, happiness and the satisfaction of desire. Socrates can make references to the relationship that the true guardians of the state must bear to the good, without stating in any direct way the specific nature of this good. In one of the more illuminating of his obscure statements about the form of the good in the *Republic*, Socrates outlines the most fundamental of the roles he takes the good to play:

> This reality, then, that gives their truth to the objects of knowledge and the power of knowing to the knower, you must say is the idea of good, and you must conceive it as being the cause of knowledge, and of truth in so far as known. Yet fair as they both are, knowledge and truth, in supposing it to be something fairer still than these you will think rightly of it.[13]

This claim that the good is responsible for the being, truth and goodness of all reality is a rough conception of the roles and relationships in which the good is involved, one which Socrates attempts somewhat

12 Broadie 1999: 246.
13 508E. References to Plato's *Republic* are to Shorey 1935–7.

to clarify in the analogy between the Sun and the good. One comparison is particularly important: as the Sun allows us to see and recognize visible things, the good allows us recognize intellectual entities, including, presumably, itself. The good, then, makes possible the apprehension toward which we strive.

If we ask how we come to understand that this multifaceted role is the best (that is, correct) way to conceive of the *real* good, and thus appropriate to specifying further the nature of the good (the winner of the contest), Plato may be able to point to an answer that is contained within the conception: it is by *truly* approaching the good that we come to a correct understanding of the role it fulfills. As the good makes true all that is true, a glimpse of the good (which I take it to be the purpose of the Sun analogy to provide) will reveal, perhaps only partially, its primary features and roles; thus we come to understand, by grasping something about the *real* good, what it takes to be the good. Possessing knowledge of the good, the good soul will be equipped with an understanding the depth of which Plato is unable to convey: this person will only now comprehend the nature of her own goodness as well.

V ASSUMPTIONS AND JUSTIFICATIONS AT WORK IN PLATO AND ARISTOTLE

It is certain that both accounts rely on some significant assumptions about the good. It is helpful initially to put aside certain basic elements of a conception of the good, such as those identifying the precise relationship between the good and human desire, or specifying whether the good is complex or singular. Before they can get this far, Plato and Aristotle both make assumptions about the nature of *inquiry*, and the relationship it bears to those of its objects that have to do with goodness.[14]

I do not find these assumptions to be obviously problematic. The very notion of correct inquiry depends upon what can be argued to be an aspect of the notion of goodness, that concerning correctness. This is reflected in the increasing accuracy of faculties of cognition that are presented in ascending order in Plato's Divided Line model: understanding is not only related to the highest (most clear and true) objects; it is the most perfect exercise of human cognition. Thus, one's inquiry may take a good or a bad turn; in the attempt to discover the highest good, one obviously hopes to find the real thing. To be successful in this search – to have the best (that is, correct) conception of the good – would be to understand something about one's success, namely why it is a success.

14 'Goodness' is here intended very generally, not as a reference to 'moral' goodness of any particular kind.

While the general concept of correctness, or that of a 'winner' of a contest, however, relies upon the concept of goodness, it is not clear that it relies upon any *ethical* aspect of the concept of goodness. That is, it is not clear that I have necessarily done anything ethically good by succeeding in my inquiry; the way in which my inquiry is *good* may be just that it is *accurate*. This much seems true about inquiry in general.

An inquiry *about the good*, though, is a special case, *if there is any such thing as the good*. If the good exists, it is better to know it than not. To succeed in discovering the good, then, is to succeed in a special way; in addition to being *correct*, I am now, at the very least, establishing a foundation from which to be *ethical*. Even if knowing the good is far from *being good* (contrary to Socrates' idea), I am, in seeking to know the good, thereby bettering myself if only by positioning myself near the path toward an ethical life. It is possible, though, to construe the relationship between goodness and its apprehension in a more substantial way, which I take both Plato and Aristotle to do. Both insist upon the ethical goodness of correct inquiry, though in very different ways. For Plato, to be correct about the world is to participate in a relationship with the good that confers being, truth, *and* goodness. In Aristotle, it is virtuous, or excellent, to acquire knowledge and live by it, thus perfecting one's rational capacities and one's behavior.

It is significant that, in finally approaching an explanation of the good (which Glaucon and Adeimantus are impatient to hear), Socrates' two initial claims about the good specify elements of its relationships to human knowledge and to good things in the world: 'the greatest thing to learn is the idea of good, by reference to which just things and all the rest become useful and beneficial' (*Republic* 505A). Though one could not proceed further without a basic formulation of these roles, neither can one offer, at the outset of inquiry, a full defence of the idea that the good makes all other good things good.

Indeed, it is not obvious that one could do any such thing at all, as one must work from within some system of assumptions about knowable and/or ethical entities in the world. Plato, in filling out his metaphysical scheme, clarifies both the cognitive powers a human uses to ascend toward the objects that exist most fully, and the reality conferred by the topmost objects on those below them. In outlining the way in which the philosopher traverses the ultimate sphere of existence and cognition, Socrates thereby comments on the nature of inquiry:

> 'Understand then,' said I, 'that by the other section of the intelligible I mean that which the reason itself lays hold of by the power of dialectics, treating its assumptions not as absolute beginnings but literally as hypotheses . . . and springboards so to speak, to

> enable it to rise to that which requires no assumption and is the starting-point of all, and after attaining to that again taking hold of the first dependencies from it, so to proceed downward to the conclusion, making no use whatever of any object of sense but only of pure ideas moving on through ideas to ideas and ending with ideas.' (*Republic* 511B–C)

This explanation, however, is not accompanied by an attempt to *prove* that reality is constituted by such a structure, made real by the forms, and understood only through their apprehension. Instead, it contains an assumption (and hope) that one who reaches the pinnacle of understanding will behold the truth about reality, and know that it is true. Even from such a lofty height, it is not clear what the philosopher would be able to offer by way of comprehensive proof as to the nature of the entities she beholds; much less can one expect to have such a proof in hand as one begins the ascent.

Making a similar point early in the *Ethics*, Aristotle notes a distinction, whose recognition he attributes to Plato, between starting from first principles and reaching first principles. He uses a race-contest analogy to differentiate between whether 'the movement of the discussion was from first principles or to them, just as in the stadium the runners might be moving away from the race stewards towards the turn or in the reverse direction'.[15] As Broadie notes, the search to identify the highest good is a search toward the first principle of ethics, not one that assumes it as a starting point. Once it has been identified, it 'becomes, in turn, a new starting point for tracing the goodness – "transmitting" relations in which *the* good stands to other goods'.[16] I take Aristotle to be elaborating the same distinction when he adds that 'what is knowable' begins and concludes our search, but we must begin *this search* 'from what is knowable to us' and hope to arrive at 'what is knowable *without qualification*', which would be the first principles of ethics.[17] This does not mean that Aristotle ever attempts to justify the first principles, or assumes this would be a key task of one who has understood them. Broadie remarks that 'that major topic of modern ethics, "the justification of morality", is no part of his ethical agenda'.[18]

Because his focus is largely on the practical, Broadie explains, Aristotle 'is undisturbed by the ethical skepticism that fuels the demand for wholesale justification of moral judgments'.[19] We would be

15 *EN* 1095A30–B1.
16 Broadie and Rowe 2002: 266.
17 *EN* 1095B1–5.
18 Broadie and Rowe 2002: 17.
19 Broadie and Rowe 2002: 52.

wise, however, to question what we seek when we follow the inclination to press for such a justification, either at the outset of the inquiry or at its conclusion, and whether there is good reason to limit our expectations. For Plato, to attempt a full justification would be to question whether the epistemological ascent toward the 'highest' theoretical entities bears no relation to those entities, other than by taking them as objects. But in Plato and in Aristotle, the most perfect objects of knowledge are hardly metaphysically trivial; the good, in Plato, makes knowledge possible. Cognitive faculties and knowable things would not interact were it not for the existence of that whose place in the latter category is ultimate.

While mathematical or scientific inquiry utilizes objects of sense in order to apprehend the intellectual objects with which it is ultimately concerned, ethical inquiry takes us to the aforementioned highest realm of existence and cognition, in the account of the *Republic*. 'It is no slight task that you appear to have in mind', Adeimantus says to Socrates, 'but I do understand that you mean to distinguish the aspect of reality and the intelligible, which is contemplated by the power of dialectic, as something truer and more exact than the object of the so-called arts and sciences whose assumptions are arbitrary starting-points.'[20] It is not just that the form of the good is the most perfect of all good things; it is the most perfect and real of all entities. It confers upon correct inquiry not just goodness, then, but truth as well. It follows that one who discovers the real nature of the good is not simply accurate in his findings about ethics, but *participating in* goodness, through one's very inquiry. Thus, in Plato, to insist on identifying the good without allowing that any such identification depends on a relationship to the very good one seeks is seriously to undermine the conceptual basis from which one must begin the project.

Taking Aristotle's own search as an example, we see him trying to isolate the formal features of the highest good while testing his outline against common and relevant facts and concepts. He explains that happiness is thought to be 'honorable and godlike' because it is 'for the sake of happiness that we all do everything else we do'.[21] Aristotle finds the goal-directed nature of human desire, decision and action to be particularly relevant to his inquiry, and draws conclusions about their ultimate object by considering their other objects. Among lesser goods, one will be more complete than another, for example, and this may lead Aristotle to think that, given the concept of completeness, it is thereby better, and

20 *Republic* 511C.
21 *EN* 1102A2–4.

to expect maximal completeness of the highest good.[22] Furthermore, if the nature of choice is such as to specify means to ends, and human life is organized so as to pursue *hierarchies* (not simple chains) of means to ends,[23] then it will be true that the more nearly ultimate the end, the more 'complete' it will be. These are just the kinds of behavioral and conceptual analyses one will undertake if one assumes that good lives serve as any indication of the nature of goodness in the abstract.

Thus, in Aristotle's claims that 'it seems proper . . . to an intelligent person to be able to deliberate finely about . . . what promotes living well in general' and that 'the person who is without qualification the good deliberator is the one whose calculations make him good at hitting upon what is best for a human being among practicable goods', we find very reasonable assumptions about inquiry, ones less controversial than Aristotle's view that good character is helpful to deliberation about goodness.[24] The ability to see things as they are is beneficial in myriad ways, many of which Plato would relegate to the quite trivial world of appearances. The judgment of the excellent person corresponds to reality with respect to the 'bitter, sweet, hot, heavy, and every other sort of thing; for the good person discriminates correctly in every set of circumstances, and in every set of circumstances what is true is apparent to him'.[25] I imagine, however, that what is more interesting to Aristotle is the way in which the excellent person is a guide in the meta-level contest, by being able correctly to specify the formal features of the highest good.

So, in Aristotle's account, the highest good itself plays a role in correct judgements about the goodness that is found throughout reality: the good and intelligent person is a measure of what is good in matters of health, enjoyment, study, existence, goodness and so on. In fact, though he rejects Plato's conception of the intellectually blinding magnificence of the form of the good, Aristotle also sees the enlightened soul as uniting with its objects in a significant (though not easily understood) way: 'in the case of those things which have no matter, that which thinks and that which is thought are the same; for contemplative knowledge and that which is known in that way are the same'.[26]

22 Honour, pleasure, and intelligence are contrasted with happiness in that they are chosen for themselves, but also for the sake of happiness, while happiness is not chosen for the sake of any other thing. Aristotle combines this examination of human pursuits with a conceptual analysis of completeness, finding that 'what is worth pursuing for itself is more complete than what is worth pursuing because of something else' (1097A32–1097B4).

23 *EN* 1094A18–22.

24 *EN* 1140A26, 1141B13.

25 *EN* 1113A29–32.

26 *De Anima* 430A2–5. References to Aristotle's *De Anima* are to Hamlyn 1968.

Continuing, in his analysis of the soul, to differentiate two types of intellect, Aristotle claims that one kind is capable of 'becoming all things' and that 'actual knowledge is identical with its object'.[27] Most illuminating for our purposes are Aristotle's examples of objects of thought: the hollow 'in abstraction' or mathematical entities 'as separate': the soul is receptive to intelligible entities ('forms') and, in some manner, takes on their imprint, thus uniting with that which it knows.[28] When the object of knowledge is *goodness*, this will mean that the intellect does not simply turn its attention to the abstract idea or to examples of goodness bound to matter, but itself becomes goodness. While the present characterization of Aristotle's view of thought is far from comprehensive, I believe it may suggest another way in which understanding the nature of the real good is itself good.

We have found, then, that in Aristotle's view, the good person discovers the good, as 'anyone . . . can advance and articulate it' once in possession of a good outline.[29] One's outline, however, is not formulated in a vacuum; it will assume certain pathways of analysis, as we find in Aristotle's appeal to scientific methods of inquiry, but this does not make its product less substantial or accurate. To ask anew the questions 'How do we know there is a difference between good inquiry and bad?', 'Why must the good have any relation to the exercise of the rational faculties?' and 'Do good persons bear a special relationship to the good?' and then refuse to avail ourselves of any of our concepts or methods would be no kind of inquiry at all.

There is, of course, a difference between defending the pursuit of the good life to ordinary individuals who have some beliefs about what it is, and offering an account of the highest good that is justified wholly outside the constraints of the epistemological and metaphysical bases within which Plato and Aristotle work, even as they attempt to explain them. In judging whether one of their conceptions of the good is correct, we do not find ourselves outside such constraints either. Perhaps we are not able to say precisely why the good must be something in relation to which other things are valuable, and that the absence of the highest good makes the other so-called goods worthless and their pursuit 'completely pointless', if we believe this to be true.[30] For one can be correct about features of the good without being able fully to defend one's framework; but this is only to make the obvious point that the basic elements of a conceptual system from which the

27 *De Anima* 430A15, 430A20, and again at 431A1, 431B16: 'the intellect in activity is its objects'.
28 *De Anima* 431B13–16.
29 *EN* 1098A24.
30 Broadie and Rowe 2002: 10.

world is understood and explained place limits on the depth and completeness of the very understanding and explanation they allow.

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15

THE CARPENTER AND THE GOOD

Rachel Barney

My question is how good an argument Aristotle has at the end of *Nicomachean Ethics* I.6, in his final criticism of Plato's Form of the Good. Aristotle says (numbering is mine, for ease of reference later):

> [1] Even if there is some one good which is predicated of goods in common, or some separate good 'itself by itself', clearly it could not be realised [*prakton*] or attained [*ktêton*] by man; but we are now seeking something attainable. [2] Perhaps, however, someone might think it worth while to have knowledge of it with a view to the goods that *are* attainable and realisable; for, having this as a sort of pattern [*paradeigma*], we shall also know better the goods that are good for us, and if we know them shall attain them. [3] This argument has some plausibility, but seems to clash with the procedure of the sciences [*epistêmai*]; for all of these, though they aim at some good and seek to supply the deficiency of it, leave on one side the knowledge of the good. Yet that all the practitioners of the crafts [*technitai*] should be ignorant of, and should not even seek, so great an aid is not probable. It is hard, too, to see how a weaver or a carpenter will be benefited in regard to his own craft by knowing this 'good itself', or how someone who has viewed the Form itself will be more of a doctor or more of a general. [4] For a doctor seems not even to study health in this way, but the health of man, or perhaps rather the health of *this* man; for it is individuals that he is healing.[1]

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1 *Nicomachean Ethics* (hereafter *NE*) I.6, 1096B32–7A13; quotations from the *NE* are from the revised Ross translation, sometimes with further revisions (Aristotle

This *argument from the crafts* is by my reckoning the seventh, last and most promising argument offered in *NE* I.6.[2] Unlike most of the others, it seems to be a distinctively *ethical* argument, concerned with the bearing of the Good on practical reasoning.[3] And its immediate conclusion, that the Good is simply useless for the practice of the crafts, seems – if true – a very damaging one. For the Forms are, I take it, conceived by Plato as (broadly speaking) *explanatory* entities. That is, he affirms their existence not because he has encountered them in a state of revelation, or because his aesthetic preferences are the reverse of Quine's, but because they offer to do work of some necessary kind, by rendering intelligible the phenomena and, in the case of the ethical Forms, by informing rational deliberation and evaluation. Thus in the *locus classicus* of *Republic* VI, the Form of the Good is introduced because knowledge of it is essential to the expert ruler (504E–6A). The argument from the crafts claims that the Good fails to have any bearing on the crafts, which are uncontroversially the spheres of practical rationality *par excellence*; and the counterpart discussion in the *Eudemian Ethics* (I.8, 1218A33–B14) makes it explicit that this includes the craft of the ruler, political science (*politikê*) (1218A34). If the Form of the Good is quite generally useless for practical reasoning, Plato is not entitled to postulate its existence.[4]

(footnote 1 *continued*)
1980). Other translations from Aristotle are, except as noted, by various hands from the Revised Oxford Translation, sometimes with revisions: Barnes 1984.

2 I parse the arguments as follows: (1) 'good' is used in multiple categories, so there cannot be a single Form set over it (1096A17–23); (2) since it has as many senses as 'being', 'good' cannot be a simple universal (1096A23–9); (3) if there *were* a single Form of the Good there would be a single science of it as well (1096A29–34); (4) 'the X itself', used to pick out the Form, adds nothing (1096A34–B3); (5) neither does the claim that the Form is eternal (1096B3–5). If we are to restrict the scope of the Form to things which are good in themselves (1096B7–16), (6) we must say either that only the Form is good in itself, in which case it is 'empty', or that diverse things like honour and wisdom are good; but they are good in virtue of fundamentally different properties (1096B16–26). Just what unifies our application of 'good' is a question for another branch of philosophy (1096B26–31); and (7) the argument from the crafts as quoted above (1096B31–7A14). For other, largely similar divisions, see e.g. Broadie's commentary *ad loc.* in Broadie and Rowe 2002 and Gerson 2005: 261–2.

3 That the argument from the crafts is an argument from practical reasoning is signalled by Aristotle's introduction of it at 1096B31–2 with 'Likewise in the case of the Form', where the immediately preceding claim is that the question of how goods are one should be deferred to another branch of philosophy (1096B26–31). Thus the argument is presented as showing that the Form of the Good is not a suitable object of *ethical* inquiry, the end of which is action.

4 Earlier, Aristotle takes it to be a refutation of the Form to show that it would be 'empty', i.e., devoid of any participants and thus lacking any practical or explanatory role (1096B20). Given Plato's own commitment to the practical salience of the Good in the *Republic*, arguments against its practical relevance are tantamount to arguments against its existence.

I THE ARGUMENT FROM THE CRAFTS

However, it is far from obvious how the argument from the crafts is supposed to work. Aristotle both opens and closes the argument, in a kind of ring-composition, with the objection that the Good differs from the goods of the crafts in not being 'doable' (*prakton*), that is, achievable or realisable in action ([1] and [4] above, at 1096b34 and 1097a11–13; cf. *Eudemian Ethics* 1218a38). But as Aristotle almost concedes, the 'not doable' objection is a weak one. For it is one thing to say that the Good (or any more specialised norm) is not subject to *realisation* by some craft, and quite another to infer, invalidly, that the study of it is *useless* or irrelevant to that craft. Moreover it is strictly speaking only *particular* goods which are *prakta* anyway, as Aristotle himself notes (1097a10–14): if the 'not doable' objection were valid, it would apply equally to the human good as such, the end of *politikê* on Aristotle's own account. The argument from the crafts is evidently introduced to remedy the feebleness of the 'not doable' objection by independently proving a stronger claim: the Good is not merely unrealisable but *useless* to practical reason.

So I will take the argument from the crafts strictly speaking to be limited to [3] of the passage quoted above. It seems to have the following structure:

1 If there is a Form of the Good, knowledge of it must be of some practical use.
2 If knowledge of the Form of the Good is of practical use to anyone, it is useful to all craft practitioners.
3 If it is useful to all craft practitioners, it is useful to carpenters and weavers.
4 Knowledge of the Form of the Good is not useful to carpenters and weavers.
5 Therefore, knowledge of the Form of the Good is of no practical use to anyone. (2+3+4)
6 Therefore, there is no Form of the Good. (1+5)

Allowing for some roughness of phrasing, this is a valid argument; (1), as I have suggested, is accepted by Plato, and (3) seems indisputable. Premise (2) is advanced more clearly in the counterpart *Eudemian Ethics* argument, in the form of a plausible dilemma for the Platonist: the Good must be relevant to all the crafts or to none (1218a36–7). To support the all-important (4), Aristotle introduces the closely related pair of observations found at *Nicomachean Ethics* 1097a4–11; and here, it seems to me, we have the real heart of the argument from the

crafts. Aristotle's first observation is that the postulation of the Form 'seems to clash with the procedure of the sciences'. That is, it is highly implausible that there is a Good knowledge of which is required for the successful practice of all the crafts, and yet that none of their practitioners has ever noticed this fact or attempted to remedy the deficiency (1097A4–8). Second, it seems bizarre to claim that a weaver or a carpenter, or even a doctor or general, would perform his craft better by viewing the Form of the Good (1097A8–11). This comment is used to introduce the dead-end 'not doable' objection, but it makes a stronger point in its own right. Would a weaver who had studied at the Academy really weave differently from – and better than – his professional peers? How and why would that be? These observations are probably not so much sub-arguments as attempts to make the truth of (4) more vivid, thereby giving (2)–(3) the colouration of a *reductio*. Just imagine weavers and carpenters deciding they had to go to the Academy and study metaphysics to do their work! Ridiculous! Grotesque!

In order to repudiate the conclusion of the argument, Plato would have to reject at least one of premises (2) and (4), along with the reasoning which supports it. Which is it to be? We might be tempted to suppose (2), since in the *Republic*, knowledge of the Form of the Good is a closely guarded prerogative of the Guardians. However, a central feature of the ideal city of the *Republic* is the systematic supervision under which all the crafts are to be practised. Craftspeople will not need to know the Good themselves, but their practices will be thoroughly subordinated to and informed by the knowledge of the Guardians. The Guardians are to determine which lines of work are to be practised (imitative poets need not apply, 595A), how they are to be practised (medicine in the *kallipolis* will be of the brisk variety, 405A–8D), and who is to practise them on the basis of what education. Moreover, we are told that guidelines [*tupoi*] are to be provided for at least some craft practitioners (379A, 387C, 412B). Plato gives us a sense of what these *tupoi* will involve for the crucial case of poetry and music (377B–400E); and it is emphasised that all craftspeople, explicitly including builders and weavers, will be governed by similar requirements to produce what is fine and graceful, thereby contributing to an environment conducive to moral education (400E–2A, esp. 401A2–3). Moreover, it is clear that the options and incentives of craftspeople will be radically different in a society from which wealth and poverty are carefully excluded (421C–2A), and in which the ruling class practises communism to the point of not possessing private houses (416D–9A). In the *kallipolis*, there will be no *nouveaux riches* customers for vulgar cloaks or luxurious mansions, and no prospect for craftspeople themselves to get rich by pandering to such corruption. In sum, the practices

of weavers and carpenters will be very different in the *kallipolis*, where they will have neither the opportunity nor any incentive to deviate from *tupoi* informed by knowledge of the good.

Given Plato's picture of craft in the *kallipolis*, neither of Aristotle's observations holds any water. So what if craft practitioners in our society do not seem to worry about the Platonic Good? We are not entitled to assume that their practices are in good order; crafts in a society genuinely oriented to the good would look very different. And Plato's division of epistemic labour in the *kallipolis* shows that in such a society, crafts could be informed by knowledge of the Good without their practitioners having to study metaphysics themselves.

This response is all the more powerful because Aristotle himself accepts a deeply Platonic vision of society as naturally ordered in a hierarchy of crafts under an architectonic political science. The *Nicomachean Ethics* sets out this vision in its opening chapters:

> Now, as there are many actions, arts, and sciences, their ends also are many; the end of the medical art is health, that of shipbuilding a vessel, that of strategy victory, that of economics wealth. But where such arts fall under a single capacity – as bridle-making and the other arts concerned with the equipment of horses fall under the art of riding, and this and every military action under generalship . . . – in all of these the ends of the master art are to be preferred to all the subordinate ends; for it is for the sake of the former that the latter are pursued . . . the good and the best thing [*to agathon kai to ariston*] . . . would seem to belong to the most authoritative art and that which is most truly the master art [*kuriôtatê kai malista architektonikê*]. And political science [*politikê*] appears to be of this nature . . . the end of this science must include those of the others, so that this end must be the human good [*to anthrôpinon agathon*]. (*NE* I.1–2, 1094A6–B7)

This passage is a compendium of ideas taken from Plato. The idea of ethical knowledge as the architectonic craft, qualified to rule all the others, is introduced in the *Charmides*, under the name of temperance (165C–175A, n.b. esp. 171D–3D). (It is presented there as distinct from the knowledge of good and evil; but the dialogue ends in an *aporia* which is probably designed to show that the one must consist in the other.) In Plato's *Euthydemus*, the 'kingly craft' (*basilikê technê*) is ruler because it knows how to use the products of the other crafts correctly, just as in Aristotle's account of rider and bridle-maker (291C–E; cf. *Republic* 601C–2A, *Cratylus* 390A–E). And, as I have noted already, in the *Republic* the correct management of the crafts is presented as a

central task of government, one which must be informed by knowledge of the Good.

So an understanding of *politikê* as the architectonic art, oriented to the good and charged with the management of the ordinary crafts, is common ground between Plato and Aristotle. This means that the argument from the crafts can't simply be voicing an assumption that weaving and carpentry are untouched by any higher considerations about the good. Aristotle doesn't believe that; and he is right not to. On the traditional Greek understanding, a craft (*technê*) is a skilled practice which improves human life by achieving some specialised good or end;[5] and it can hardly do so in a normative vacuum. In fact, the practice of the everyday crafts raises deep normative questions, about goods which far outrun the particular good the craft provides. To take Plato's favourite example of craft: what *is* the end served by shoemaking? The production of good shoes; but is the good shoe a comfortable shoe, a beautiful shoe, an appropriate shoe for the wearer? Should Simon (the shoemaker friend of Socrates)[6] make pumps and stilettos, loafers and Birkenstocks, or jackboots and clogs? Or should he make whatever his customers will pay the most for? (What if that includes foot-binding for upper-class girls?) Tell me what you wear on your feet, the reflective shoemaker will argue, and I will tell you your theory of the good.

Shoemaking is, as I will say, *normatively insufficient.* Plato takes up the topic of normative insufficiency in a number of dialogues, and shows that it comes in several flavours. One which we have already noted relates to *understanding*. The shoemaker must grasp the end of his craft, and be able to give an account of his procedures in terms of it (*Gorgias* 500E–1B; *Phaedrus* 268A–9C). So he needs to understand what is good for feet; ultimately, this requires understanding the good of the body, which means understanding the good of the soul, which means understanding the human good as such and, for Plato, the Form of the Good as well. (It follows, somewhat problematically, that only the philosopher-king can be a truly expert shoemaker.) Then there is the question of *motivation*. The shoemaker might, it seems, know the end of shoemaking without having any particular motivation to attain it: notoriously in the ancient world, the doctor is also the most skilled poisoner, and in the *Hippias Minor* Plato explores the possibility that all crafts and skills might be bipolar in this way (cf. Aristotle, *Metaphysics* IX.2, 1046B6–7).

Plato's preferred stance is to conceive of craft in an enriched way, as incorporating both motivation and at least partial understanding. A

5 Cf. Nussbaum 1986: 94–8; Roochnik 1996: 17–63. A central ancient text on *technê* is Aeschylus (?), *Prometheus Bound* 441–506.

6 Diogenes Laertius II.122–4; cf. Kahn 1996: 9–11.

doctor, he points out in the *Phaedrus*, is not just anyone possessed of a bag of tricks to induce vomiting and so forth, but the person who knows when, how and why to apply medical techniques in order to attain the end of health (268Aff.). And in Book I of the *Republic* Socrates argues that the doctor *qua* doctor acts so as to serve the end of medicine, namely the health of the patient (341C–7A). This is intended, I think, as a claim about moral psychology as well as the metaphysics of descriptions. A doctor who works as a poisoner in the off-hours is only defectively a doctor; the full possession of a craft incorporates a fixed disposition to pursue its end.

There remains a further variety of normative insufficiency, one which it is hard to envisage the individual shoemaker or doctor transcending. This is what we might call the problem of *incompleteness*, stemming from the local and defeasible character of the end the craftsperson serves. Good shoes are in themselves good, but the normativity of their goodness, in any particular situation, can be overridden by the demands of the context – that is, by rival goods and by the greater good of the whole. This is part of what Aristotle means in *Nicomachean Ethics* I.1 (1094A14–16) when he says that the end of the higher, 'master' art is 'preferred' (*hairetôteron*) over the lower: it trumps the other whenever, exceptionally, the two come apart. There might be situations in which bad shoes are better for a person, by serving the higher good of his psychological health. As for medicine, Nicias points out in the *Laches* that it is no part of the craft of the doctor (or even of the seer) to tell whether in any particular case it will be a good thing for someone to live or die (195C–6A).[7]

In sum, on Plato's view the ordinary crafts, though they realise genuinely distinct goods, are not fully discrete or self-sufficient. For if the craftsperson is to have full understanding of the good of his craft, be rationally motivated by it, and grasp its relation to other goods, his craft-knowledge must be informed by a broader and more authoritative master art, and ultimately by knowledge of the human and civic good.[8]

7 This becomes a familiar thought in Stoicism, and crucial support for their claim that all 'goods' other than virtue are not really goods at all. See Menn 1996. Plato seems to vacillate between (1) the Stoic view; (2) the view that goods other than virtue are good only contingently on being possessed in conjunction with virtue, but are genuinely good when they *are* good; and (3) the view that the conventional goods are genuinely good in themselves, but that for bad people their goodness is outweighed by the harm to the soul involved in their acquisition and (mis)use. See *Meno* 87E–88E; *Euthydemus* 278E–81E; *Gorgias* 477A–8E; *Laws* 631B–D, 660E–1E.

8 I will assume for simplicity's sake that for both Plato and Aristotle the civic good pursued by the *politikos* is just the good of individual human beings writ large: I will use the phrase 'the human good' to include the collective good of the city as well. This obscures some important problems and distinctions, but I do not think they make any difference to the present argument.

Now Aristotle agrees that the ordinary crafts are normatively insufficient; as the opening of the *Ethics* shows, each is to be informed and supervised by a master craft, culminating in *politikê*, which knows the good, as ruler of all. And this may seem to leave him with no opening against Plato at all. What is the difference, after all, between saying that the carpenter should know the good, as Aristotle accuses Plato of doing, and saying (as Aristotle himself does) that he is to be supervised by a ruler with that knowledge? (There is of course a *political* difference between those two pictures, but since both Plato and Aristotle in fact opt for the latter – elitist and hierarchical – model, that is not in question here.)

I conclude that, at a first pass, the argument from the crafts fails. For one thing, Plato has every right to reject Aristotle's (4), and to deny the relevance of the observations offered to support it. The Platonic claim that the crafts are normatively insufficient is in no way vitiated by the fact that craftspeople in ordinary societies generally (with the exception of Simon) do not study the good; Plato can insist that in a well-governed society, they would be governed by rulers who do. Moreover, Aristotle himself seems to accept this central normative claim. And he is, I would suggest, right to do so: it is perfectly reasonable to suppose that the everyday crafts are in a better position to attain their ends if informed by a higher and broader understanding of the good.

None the less there is still a real and unresolved dispute in the vicinity. Where Plato and Aristotle really do part company is not over the weaver and carpenter, but over what the *politikos* must know to supervise them. And it is possible to read the argument from the crafts as a proxy battle over this very question (raised explicitly in the counterpart *EE* passage, at 1218A34–5) – as an attempted *reductio* of the Platonic claim that the expert ruler must know a Good above and beyond the human good. In that case, to make explicit the real stakes of the argument we would have to add an intermediate premise: (1b) if knowledge of the Form of the Good is of practical use to anyone, it is useful to the *politikos*; and an intermediate conclusion: (5b) therefore, knowledge of the Form of the Good is of no practical use to the *politikos*. So read, the argument from the crafts is Aristotle's attempt to turn the architectonic picture of the crafts which he and Plato share against the latter. For on this picture, the *politikos* is defined by his knowledge of how to manage and use correctly the particular goods provided by the crafts; and surely, Aristotle insinuates, it is ridiculous to suppose that this could be knowledge of anything over and above the human good.

Reading the argument in this way does not make it any stronger, since it can do nothing to bolster the fatally weak premise (4). But it does raise the possibility of an alternative strategy: the Aristotelian

could argue directly for the independence of *politikê* from any knowledge of the Form, and so indirectly for the truth of (4) as well. From here on I will construe the 'argument from the crafts' broadly, to include whatever arguments Aristotle might offer from the crafts, including *politikê*, to the practical irrelevance of the Form of the Good.

II THE HIGHER GOOD AND THE GOOD ITSELF

The real question at issue between Aristotle and Plato can now be put as follows: is knowledge of the human good normatively sufficient? Does the reasoning of the wise ruler terminate with the human good; or does it, like the knowledge of the weaver, need to be guided in turn by knowledge of something 'higher', such as the Form of the Good?

Now it might be objected that this way of putting the question actually elides the crucial difference between Plato and Aristotle. For (one might argue) on Plato's account the human good is not even an insufficient way-station; when the Guardians return to the 'cave' of political office, they put their knowledge of the Form of the Good itself directly to work. 'When you are used to it,' Socrates promises his Guardians, 'you'll see vastly better than the people there. And because you've seen the truth about fine, just, and good things, you'll know each image for what it is and also that of which it is the image' (520c3–5).[9] This might suggest that the job of the Guardians is to recognise, in a kind of immediate intuition, instances of the good, fine and just as they flicker past, unmediated by any science of the human good in particular. But I think this 'intuitionist' picture must be too simple. 'Good' as applied in the Cave will be a concept with many mediating layers, in the form of dialectically defensible *reasons* for deeming something good, and those reasons will converge on the Guardians' understanding of the human and civic good. Suppose, for instance, that a Guardian charged with educational policy decides that it would be good to select a certain poem for the primary education of the auxiliaries. The poem may be a good selection because it will help to make the young auxiliaries unafraid of death; and what makes them unafraid of death aids in making them courageous; and what makes them courageous helps the city to be courageous; and courage is a virtue; and virtue is essential to the happiness of the city and its people; and happiness is the good for individuals and their communities. For a Guardian to understand fully the goodness or badness of a policy is for her to grasp the chain of supervenient properties which constitutes it as such – or, more

9 Translations from the *Republic* are by G. M. A. Grube, revised by C. D. C. Reeve, with some revisions; translations of all Platonic dialogues are from the complete Hackett edition, Cooper and Hutchinson 1997.

Platonically put, to grasp the associated Forms in which it participates, up to the Form of the Good. And it is natural to suppose that the penultimate link in the chain, uniting all instances of goodness which are of interest to the *politikos*, is the good of human beings and their communities.

So Plato can agree with Aristotle that the reasoning of the expert ruler will always lead up to, and work down from, considerations about the human good. Where he will disagree is with Aristotle's claim that the ruler's reasoning can *end* there. (Alternatively, we could say that Plato has an 'enriched' conception of the craft of the *politikos*: his knowledge of the human good *is* normatively sufficient, but only because it necessarily includes knowledge of the Form of the Good. I will treat these as amounting to the same position.) To put it in more positive terms, Plato affirms and Aristotle denies[10] *the Higher Good thesis*: the claim that there is a Higher Good which stands to the human good in a position of explanatory priority, such that the expert pursuit of the human good can and should be governed by it.[11] For Plato, that Higher Good is of course

10 My concern here is with the views of the mature Aristotle in his surviving works. The *Protrepticus* explicitly endorses the Higher Good thesis, using *philosophia* to designate a wisdom which is at once theoretical, studying 'the good as a whole' (*hê to holon agathon theôrousa*), and, as such, qualified to use and give orders to all the other sciences (B9 Düring/ROT, fr. 4 Walzer/Ross). As Jaeger 1948: ch. 4 rightly emphasised, the *NE*'s contrast between *phronêsis* and *sophia* is a deliberate repudiation of Aristotle's own earlier position. My argument here is that this change is philosophically unfounded, given the philosophical merits of the case and Aristotle's other ongoing commitments – in particular, given his agreement (1) that there is a goodness *simpliciter* which is explanatorily prior to relational goodness (the conclusion of the argument from relational goods), and (2) that our happiness indeed depends on our association with objects which are good *simpliciter* in the highest degree (the incorporation model).

11 I will here treat the Higher Good thesis as a fuller specification of the claim that *politikê* is normatively insufficient. In principle, of course, one can distinguish between the claim of normative insufficiency and the further claim that there is a Higher Good, knowledge of which can remedy it. One might indeed accept the former and deny the latter. On that view, even the wisest *politikos* would be doomed to the condition of the unphilosophical shoemaker. The shoemaker makes shoes as well as he can; but he cannot explain and defend his conception of what makes a shoe a good shoe. He thus necessarily lacks a certain kind of rational motivation for making good shoes (even if he does make good ones), since he cannot know what is good about the shoes he makes; and we can imagine that his practices will be subject to instability (his conception of a good shoe will be easily changed), will lead to conflicts with other goods (the incompleteness problem) and so on. If *politikê* is normatively insufficient, the *politikos* will be unable to explain and defend his conception of the human good, and will be unclear as to what is good about it; he will thus lack both an important kind of support for his particular conception of the human good and an important kind of motivation for pursuing it; moreover, he will be unable to adjudicate rationally its claims in relation to those of any other good. I take it that both Plato and Aristotle are committed to a conception of *politikê* as a fully rational craft in a way which precludes this somewhat pessimistic

the Form of the Good, and to study it would be to study both the universal 'good' (as later philosophers would be inclined to put it) and the privileged instantiation of it which causes all the others.

Aristotle's most extended treatment of the Higher Good thesis is in *Eudemian Ethics* I.8. The occasion is an inquiry into the 'best' in relation to ethics:

> We must inquire what the best [*to ariston*] is, and in how many ways it is said . . . they say that the Good Itself [*auto to agathon*] is best of all, and that the Good Itself is that to which it belongs to be both first [*prôton*] among goods, and the cause [*aition*] by its presence to other things of their being goods. Both these things, they hold, belong to the Form of the Good. (1217B1–6)[12]

The Good Itself is supposed to be both the best thing or first good and in some sense a cause of goodness to other things. These roles are not much specified, but we learn that being a final cause (as happiness is in the human case) is a way of satisfying the latter. Presumably there are in principle other ways of satisfying it, or the Form of the Good could hardly get a fair hearing: if the Platonists claim that the Form holds the role of Good Itself, it must be as a formal cause or (setting aside Aristotle's classification of causes) as a kind of origin or source of goodness, as the sun is of light. Aristotle's discussion of its candidacy includes the counterpart passage to the argument from the crafts (*EE* I.8, 1218A33ff.), where the Form is decried successively as useless to political science; useful to no science, since it is not useful to all; and not realisable. (Perhaps these are intended as arguments that the Form cannot meet the criterion of being a cause: otherwise there seems to be no particular connection between these criticisms and the roles the Good is supposed to fill.) And Aristotle concludes that the human good, happiness, is the only 'Good Itself' there is. Hence my talk of a debate over the 'Higher Good' thesis, rather than over the 'Good Itself'; Aristotle *does* accept that there is an ethically relevant Good Itself, but he identifies it with the human good (from which a Higher Good, as object of a craft or science other than *politikê*, would *ex hypothesi* be distinct).

Strikingly, this is *not* because Aristotle denies the existence of a good in some sense 'higher' than the human. On the contrary, he is insistent that the heavenly bodies and their ultimate cause, the prime mover, are

option; hence my treatment of normative insufficiency and the Higher Good thesis as interchangeable.

12 Translations from the *Eudemian Ethics* (hereafter *EE*) are by Michael Woods 1992, with some revisions.

better than us; the latter may even win the title, reserved for human happiness in the *Eudemian Ethics*, of 'best' (*Metaphysics* 1075A11–15). What Aristotle denies is that the study of these higher and better objects stands in any kind of hierarchical relation to political science. In *Nicomachean Ethics* VI, Aristotle argues at length for an anti-Platonic separation of *phronêsis*, practical wisdom, and *sophia*, wisdom (*NE* VI.5, 7, 8, 12–13). The two are, he argues, distinct branches of knowledge, one practical and the other theoretical, so that they even belong to different parts (in some sense) of the soul (*NE* VI.1) and have two different kinds of object (one subject to change, the other eternal). And *sophia* does not stand in any kind of supervisory relation to *phronêsis* (or, as he is more concerned to explain, the other way around, 1143B33–6, 1145A6–11). One obvious reason for this is that a theoretical science has no *end* in the manner of a practical one; and according to *Nicomachean Ethics* I.1, it is by reference to its end that a master art guides the crafts subordinate to it. Strictly speaking, no theoretical knowledge could qualify as a master art in Aristotelian terms.

Still, this argument does little to settle the question. Aristotle's formal strategy for distinguishing practical and theoretical sciences is dubious: the *Nicomachean Ethics* itself belongs to the practical science of ethics, yet deals with general and unchanging features of human nature. Medicine likewise must either be thought to have a heavy theoretical component itself or to be in some way governed by the theoretical sciences of biology and physiology. So the Platonist might well dispute that there is a deep difference in kind between theoretical and practical sciences, such that the one could not properly supervise the other. And if, as the Platonist insists, the human good *is* normatively insufficient, and there *is* a Higher Good, knowledge of which can supply its deficiencies, then some room must be found for that knowledge to count as a master art in a broad sense. If this result is blocked by Aristotle's distinction between practical and theoretical sciences, or by his understanding of how a master art must be constituted, so much the worse for his views on those points.

So I now want to consider who is right about the Higher Good thesis: in other words, is the human good normatively insufficient or not? In the next two sections I will develop two lines of argument for the Platonic position – and will argue that Aristotle himself seems to be largely committed to them.

III THE ARGUMENT FROM RELATIONAL GOODS

Why might Plato, or anyone else, think that the human good is an insufficient terminus for practical reasoning? Well, we can imagine a

challenge to the Aristotelian stance easily enough: granted that some craft ultimately serves the human good, *what's so good about that?* That is: 'What's so good about the human good?' This is superficially at least a sort of 'open-question' argument. But where Moore's open-question argument was supposed to point to a gap between the concept 'good' and anything one might use to define it, this question seems to point to a conceptual gap between the good *of* someone or something – even the human good as such – and the good *simpliciter*.[13] That there is such a gap is suggested by the familiar cases in which the good *for* or *of* doesn't seem to translate into the good *simpliciter*. I might say, for instance, that the fact that something is good for the Mafia, good for the spread of cholera or good for the Republican Party doesn't make it *good*. What the distinction seems to amount to is as follows. Talk of what is good *for* a thing involves a descriptive claim in relation either to the good *of* a thing or to its being good *as* the kind of thing it is. Plant food is good for plants because it promotes healthy growth, which is the good of plants. (I am for the sake of argument taking 'good of' to be unproblematic, and setting aside all puzzles about how we are to identify a thing's good.) Sharpening is good for knives because it contributes to making them good knives, i.e., good as knives. I will refer to goods which are *of*, *for* and *as* as *relational goods*. (I speak of different goods here for convenience; properly speaking, of course, these are different ways of being good, which can be instantiated by the same things.)[14] In general, talk of relational goods has commending force only in conjunction with a concern for things of the relevant kind; when we affirm that a relational good is really good, we're affirming that in this case the commending force does go through. Talk of the good of a plant, for instance, only gives me a reason to buy plant food if I happen to care about plants; what is good for the Mafia would motivate me only if I valued the Mafia. By contrast, to say that something is simply good, or a 'good thing', is evidently to endorse or commend it – apparently

13 On 'good', cf. Moore [1903] 1988: secs 1–17; Ross 1930: chs 3–4; von Wright 1963; Korsgaard 1983; Zimmerman 2001; Thomson 1997; as well as the other works listed in n.16. However, most of these works have little if anything to say about the precise distinction which concerns me, between the good *simpliciter* and all relational goods; though I cannot properly argue the point here, I doubt that this distinction is reducible to any of the others more often discussed, such as that between intrinsic and extrinsic, final and instrumental, or conditional and unconditional.

14 Indeed, it might be that something can only be good *simpliciter* if it is also good in some relational way. In that case, Thomson would not be far wrong in claiming that things are good by virtue of being good in some particular way. (Her 'first-order ways' of being good overlap significantly with the varieties of relational goodness, though the categories are not quite the same.) But it still would not follow that 'all goodness is goodness in a way', if this is intended (as it is by Thomson) to mean that 'there is no such property as goodness' (1997: 276).

unhypothetically and without reference to any particular context – as an appropriate object of desire or approval. So by goodness *simpliciter* I will mean a way of being good which is *not* reducible to goodness *for*, *of* or *as*, and which is represented by the purely commending use of 'good' – as in the second occurrence in: 'The good of the Mafia isn't really good.'

It is worth asking what makes one relational good commendable and another not. If the good of the rainforest (say) gives us a reason for action where the good of the Mafia does not, this suggests a general principle: if the relational goods related to some x are also good *simpliciter*, it must be because x'es are in some way good themselves. There must be something *good about* them, as we say. And what is good about something cannot gain that status, circularly, from its being or contributing to the good *of* that thing. It might consist in contributing to the good of something else (of a larger whole, for instance); but about this in turn one can ask: what's so good about that? It seems to me that on pain of infinite regress or circularity, 'goodness about' will ultimately require explanation in terms of a goodness *simpliciter* not reducible to any relational good.[15] If this is right, then the good *for*, *of* and *as* are dependent for their value – their normative standing, their being really good – on the right kind of relation to the good *about*, while that good *about* is either an instance of or (if its goodness is conditional on its relation to something else) depends upon the good *simpliciter*.

Of course, some philosophers have argued that the good *simpliciter* is a phantasm.[16] 'Good', the argument goes, is always either explicitly 'attributive' or short for some relational phrase, for it is always applied

15 Admittedly, one might deny that such a circularity would be a vicious one. Perhaps what is good about frogs is their ability to contribute to the good of a healthy ecosystem, and the good of snakes and fish in particular; what is good about snakes is their contribution to the good of a healthy ecosystem, and to the good of frogs in particular; and so on. On this conception the 'good of' is taken as the primary value in terms of which the 'good about' is understood, so that it offers no answer to the question of why we should care about the good of frogs, snakes and fish in the first place: it simply shrugs off the question, 'what's so good about the good of x?' But I doubt that this sort of coherentist conception of the good is what either Plato or Aristotle has in mind. Cf. Thomson 1997, who at 289ff. takes benefit to underlie the various 'first-order' ways of being good; and Terry Penner's reading of Plato's Good as Advantage (cf. n.20).

16 The *locus classicus* is Geach 1956. Similar attacks on the good *simpliciter* include Thomson 1997 and Foot 1985, which is more particularly an attack on the concept of a good state of affairs. Foot is right, I think, to point out that 'the idea of the goodness of total states of affairs played no part in Aristotle's moral philosophy' (1985: 209). But the part of the concept that is missing from (or unimportant to) Aristotle is that of a total state of affairs, not goodness *simpliciter*. More or less effective refutations of Geach include Hare 1957; Pigden 1990. *Contra* Jarvis Thomson, see Zimmerman 2001: ch. 2.

in some context which provides an implicit normative standard. I think this has some plausibility as a claim about our everyday uses of the term. When we ask whether the good of the Mafia is good *simpliciter*, there's an implicit relational context of evaluation, provided, ultimately, by the human good writ large. The good of the Mafia is not good inasmuch as it is not good for the broader human society to which the Mafia belongs. The good of the rainforest, on the other hand, is good for various human societies in a wide range of ways. This suggests an objection to our question, 'What's so good about the human good?' For if the human good is *always* the terminus for explanations of relational goodness, then it is the final, most authoritative context of evaluation: there is no higher standpoint from which we could call its value into question.

But there are two problems with this objection. First, whether the human good *is* the most authoritative of normative contexts is a substantive question of normative ethics, not something we can expect to discover by inspecting the term 'good'. (So the question 'What's so good about the human good?' would at worst turn out to be like 'Is the pope Catholic?' – a question with an obvious answer, but not illegitimate.) Second, it isn't obviously true that the human good *is* the most authoritative of normative contexts. It isn't, after all, the broadest context: it doesn't embrace all the relational goods that there are, as any ecologist will point out – or any Aristotelian who recognises each species of organism as possessed of its own *telos* or end. So the human good cannot claim authoritative status on the formal grounds of completeness.

Indeed, nothing in our ordinary ways of thinking about 'good' gives us any reason to suppose that the human good is uniquely exempt from reflective questioning – that is, from the question 'What's so good about it?' A proponent of 'deep ecology' might perfectly well ask that question, meaning 'Why should I pursue the good of my species, as opposed to that of any other, or of some larger whole?'[17] And a possible answer would be that she has *no* good reason to do so.

It might be objected that the status of the questioner as a human being gives the human good a special status: my good cannot be of questionable normativity *to me*. But that response begs the question at least twice. First, my own good might or might not be normatively compelling to me (as in the case of the deep ecologist), and for good reasons

17 See for instance the Deep Ecology Platform (www.deepecology.org): '1) The well-being and flourishing of human and nonhuman life on Earth have value in themselves (synonyms: inherent worth; intrinsic value; inherent value). These values are independent of the usefulness of the nonhuman world for human purposes. 2) Richness and diversity of life forms contribute to the realization of these values and are also values in themselves.' Cf. more fully, e.g., Attfield 1987.

or bad ones: there is nothing in the nature of ethical reflection that makes an egoistic perspective mandatory even part of the time. Second, it begs the question in favour of something like Aristotelianism: even supposing that I do care about *my* good, it is not obvious that I must care about my good *qua* human being, as opposed to my good *qua* member of my family, community, religion and so on as the case might be. Species membership is only one of many identities from which we may draw our reasons for action, and quite a lot of philosophical theorising (in an Aristotelian or Kantian vein, most likely) must be accepted before it has any kind of trump status.

The more general objection could still be pressed, of course, that apparent instances of the 'good simpliciter' are always tacitly relational. When the ecologist says that a rainforest is a good thing, it will be insisted, she must *really* mean that it is good for the creatures in it; or for the other ecosystems around it; or for the aesthete, ecologist or creator God who rejoices in it. Still, some ecologists and aesthetes will flatly deny that this is what they 'really' mean: rather, they will insist that their rejoicing in the ecosystem expresses their belief that, quite independently of them, *it really is a good thing*.[18]

Intuitions divide sharply as to whether this position is commonsensical or absurd; and at this point it seems to become impossible to keep questions about the logic of 'good' distinct from more substantive questions: the meta-ethical question of whether there is objective value and the normative question of the moral standing of non-human beings. Without venturing into these vast realms, it is important to note that the good *simpliciter* offers powerful advantages to practical reasoning, not least for the task of identifying, evaluating and adjudicating the claims of various relational goods. In complex cases it is not always obvious what the good of something (or goodness as that kind of thing) consists in. There are deep normative puzzles, for instance, as to what is good for a nation state, what makes a nation state a good one, and what its good (its 'health', as we might say) consists in. We can best answer such questions in the light of an account of what is good *about* nation states – their end or *raison d'être* – in the first place. (The disbeliever in the good *simpliciter* will of course insist that this is to be reduced in turn to the various relational goods which nation states may serve.) The putative goods for and of nation states can then be assessed by their tendency to realise that 'goodness about'. Such an explanation of the good about something can at once provide or confirm an understanding of the relevant relational goods, give us reason to pursue those goods (by

18 Cf. Moore [1903] 1988: 83–5. Cf. also David Wiggins's point that an activity of incorporation (as discussed in the next section) may depend on our taking its object to have a value which outruns that activity: Wiggins [1976] 1998: esp. secs 5–6.

displaying what makes them genuinely commendable), and supply a common currency (goodness *simpliciter*) for adjudicating their claims against competing relational goods.

In other words, a case can be made for the claim that relational goods are as such normatively insufficient, and that a grasp of the good *simpliciter* is the cure for that insufficiency. For to understand such goods fully, to be motivated rationally by them and to adjudicate their claims in relation to each other, we need to see them in relation to the associated 'goods about' and, ultimately, what is good *simpliciter*. If this is so, then any craft which is oriented to a relational good must ultimately be governed by a 'master art' which is not. *Politikê*, which has the human good as its constitutive end, must be governed by some higher study able to reveal what is good about human beings, why we should be motivated to pursue the human good, and how that good is related to whatever other goods there are. This is the first argument I have to offer on the Platonist's behalf, which I will refer to as the *argument from relational goods.*

Nothing much like the argument from relational goods appears in Plato's writing. But this is, I suspect, because Plato takes it as *obvious* that there is such a thing as goodness *simpliciter*, and that it stands in this kind of explanatory priority to merely relational goodness.[19] Thus the demiurge constructs the cosmos so as to be good, with no suggestion that its goodness could be resolved into the merely relational kind (*Timaeus* 29A, 29E–31A). Moreover, the *Philebus* offers a sketch of the good in terms of beauty, reality and proportion (64E–5A) – properties which, though they may supervene on relational states, are not relational in themselves (cf. also the account of the Beautiful at *Symposium* 211A–C). And of course in the *Republic*, the claim of the philosopher-king to govern is grounded on his or her vision of the Form of the Good: on his or her grasp, in other words, of a perfectly comprehensive science of value, and in particular of an object which, transcending the

19 One factor in this may be Plato's insistence that we desire the good – meaning what really is good, not what we happen to *think* good (*Gorgias* 467A–8E*; Meno* 77B–8B; *Republic* 505D–6A). Of course, this is still compatible with the view that the human good, correctly understood, is the end of the evaluative story. But it may have prompted Plato to suspect that this would not be a genuinely independent and explanatory option. Either our good is good *simpliciter*, and that is *why* it is good for us, or the phrase 'our good' is being used, misleadingly, to smuggle in some relativistic or subjectivist notion ('good from our point of view'). This move is much more tempting if we conceive value in aesthetic terms, as Plato so often did, treating the *kalon* (beautiful, noble or fine) as an adequate proxy for the good (*Philebus* 64E). The *kalon* is always *simpliciter*, though how it gets realised depends on the nature of its bearer. I suspect that on Plato's view the good for us is just that portion of the good *simpliciter* which is fitted to us, which falls within our grasp. What is good for us is so *because* it's good *simpliciter*, and we are (in a weaker way) good ourselves.

merely human good, both exemplifies and is identical with goodness as such.[20]

Does Aristotle accept the argument from relational goodness? Officially, so to speak, his denial of the Higher Good thesis entails that he rejects it. At the same time, he has a clear answer to our question, 'What's so good about the human good?' A human being, he affirms, *is* a good thing – or more precisely, as he says in the *Eudemian Ethics*, 'one of the things which are *spoudaios* [worthwhile, valuable or serious] by nature' (1237A16–17).[21] And he is very explicit as to what is good *about* us, namely our rationality. Aristotle invokes this 'good about' in *Nicomachean Ethics* X, in order to explain and thereby support his account of human happiness and virtue. Understanding, *nous*, is, he declares, the best thing 'in' us (*NE* X.7, 1177A13–21, 1177B34–8A3). Thus its virtue, wisdom, is the best virtue open to us, and its activity, contemplation, is the best activity *for* us: 'If happiness is activity in accordance with virtue, it is reasonable that it should be in accordance with the highest virtue; and this will be that of the best thing in us' (1177A12–13). The life of contemplation also provides a standard for the possession of other goods, determining the extent to which they are really good for us (*EE* VIII.3, 1249B16–23). In sum, all the different relational goods involved in human life turn out to be organised around what is 'good about' us – rational intellectual activity – which is evidently good *simpliciter*. Thus Aristotle's theory in fact embodies, however tacitly, the argument from relational goods.

Moreover, this is not the only important occasion on which Aristotle relies on goodness *simpliciter*.[22] The natural scientific works contain

20 So I take it that the argument from relational goods would rule out the conception of the Platonic Good as advantage proposed by Terry Penner in his chapter 5 in this volume. If Plato (like Aristotle) recognises a goodness *simpliciter* which is not reducible to relational goodness, and if the natural understanding of this good *simpliciter* is in terms of the more or less aesthetic conception of the *Philebus*, then 'advantageous' is not even coextensive with 'good'.

21 Cf. also the *Protrepticus*: human beings are the 'most honourable' (*timiôtaton*) of animals (B16 Düring/ROT, fr. 11 Walzer/Ross; and note the collocation of *beltista kai timiôtata* just above).

22 I here bypass Aristotle's discussion of the distinction between the good *haplôs* (= *simpliciter*) and the good 'for someone' in *NE* VII.12: in this context the good *haplôs* is just the human good in general. I also set aside, as ambiguous, the opening statement of the *NE* that 'every art and every inquiry, and similarly every action and pursuit is thought to aim at some good' (I.1, 1094A1–2). Richard Kraut (n.d.) has argued that this must be short for 'aim at something good *for someone*' rather than an invocation of the good *simpliciter*. But I suspect that Aristotle's inexplicitness here is deliberate. For one thing, he is here presumably invoking an *endoxon* (note the *dokei* in 1094A2), and it is unclear that pre-philosophical intuition really distinguishes between the two possible claims. Moreover, to say that all crafts and actions aim at the good for someone would immediately invite the question *for whom*, and this is a tricky question: given that the practice of *technê* is as such disinterested, the

numerous invocations of the good, fine and honourable as non-relational values, invoked to supplement teleological explanations of the phenomena. Nature generally places 'the better and more honourable' part of an animal above rather than below, on the right rather than the left, and in front rather than at the back; for these are the more honourable positions, and nature is always a cause of what is better from among the possibilities (*De Partibus Animalium* 658A23–4, 665A23–6; cf. *De Incessu Animalium* 706B10–16).[23] Moreover, in *Nicomachean Ethics* VI.7 Aristotle makes it clear that this evaluative *scala naturae* has ethical implications. For he relies on it in arguing for the central anti-Platonic claim that wisdom, *sophia*, and practical wisdom, *phronêsis*, are distinct. *Phronêsis* studies the human good, whereas wisdom must be of the highest objects of knowledge: 'Of the highest [*timiôtata*] objects, we say; for it would be strange to think that the art of politics, or practical wisdom, is the best knowledge, since man is not the best thing in the world' (1141A20–2). The heavenly bodies are better than us, by virtue of the eternal order and regularity of their motions (1141A35–B1; cf. *EE* I.7, 1217A33–5). There is also the crucial, if sadly opaque discussion of the good in *Metaphysics* XII.10 (1075A11–15):

> We must consider also in which of two ways the nature of the cosmos contains the good and the best [*to agathon kai to ariston*], whether as something separate and by itself, or as the order of the parts. Probably in both ways, as an army does; for its good is found both in its order and in its general, and more in the latter; for he does not depend on the order but it depends on him.[24]

answer cannot be 'for the agent'. Whatever Aristotle is claiming here, it is not identical with (or entitled to any plausibility accruing from) the egoistic principle that all action aims at self-benefit. And taken in detachment from that principle, 'all action aims at some good for someone' seems no more endoxic than 'all action aims at some good' (the 'bare desirability' claim, as Kraut calls it). In any case it seems to me reasonable to suppose that the meaning of 'good' gains a more determinate content as the *NE* proceeds; the disqualification of the good *simpliciter* as an end is part of the point of *NE* I.6, and so should not be presupposed earlier.

23 Such explanations are criticised by Theophrastus' *Metaphysics* (11A5–7–12) and seem to be renounced (either fleetingly or later in life) by Aristotle in *Physics* II.7, where he says that teleological explanations must show how 'for this reason it's better this way – not *simpliciter* [*haplôs*] but in relation to the nature of each thing' (198B9). But elsewhere, degrees of betterness *simpliciter* pervade and structure the natural world on Aristotle's account: 'soul is better than body, and the living, having soul, is thereby better than the inanimate, and being is better than not being and living than not living. These are the reasons for the generation of animals' (*De Generatione Animalium* 731B28–31; cf. *De Generatione et Corruptione* 336B25–35).

24 Cf. also the critical discussion of the good as principle at *Metaphysics* XIV.4–6. The dialectical context here makes the extraction of Aristotle's own views problematic, but he seems to assume that it is appropriate to include the Good (*simpliciter*, evidently) among philosophical first principles (cf. XIV.5, 1092A9–11).

Here, *contra* Aristotle's findings in the *Eudemian Ethics*, there does seem to be a Good Itself distinct from the human good: namely God, the prime mover. God satisfies both criteria for the Good Itself set out in *Eudemian Ethics* I.8, by being both the best thing and, as Aristotle here claims, the cause of goodness to the rest. The only way to reconcile this text with *Eudemian Ethics* I.8 is, I take it, to read the latter as tacitly restricting the discussion to candidates for an *ethically relevant* Good Itself – what I have been calling a Higher Good. But then Aristotle seems to owe us an argument for his assumption that this would exclude God.

At any rate Aristotle has no qualms about the claim that some things are good *simpliciter*, and to a higher degree than ourselves. So far as I know, Aristotle never quite explains exactly why this goodness should be constituted by rationality. Perhaps the fact that god engages in – or rather, *is* – rational intellectual activity (*Metaphysics* XII.7) is the ground of its goodness: rationality is good in us by being an imitation or approximation of the divine. More likely, rationality has properties which are good in themselves (such as beauty, order and honourableness, perhaps), and it is in virtue of these that it is appropriate to the divine (cf. *Metaphysics* XII.7; *NE* X.8). Ultimately, the value of rationality may derive from highly formal metaphysical grounds. Being is better than not being, according to Aristotle (*De Generatione et Corruptione* 336B25–35; *De Generatione Animalium* 731B24–30); and since it can take the form of a pure and eternal actuality, rational activity is the most perfect mode of being.

For our purposes, the main upshot is that Aristotle has left himself with very little room to manoeuvre in response to Plato. His rejection of the Higher Good thesis cannot depend on any claim that there is no such thing as goodness *simpliciter*; or that all goods must be derivative of the human good; or that since human beings are the best things our good is necessarily the highest good there could be; or that though there is such a thing as goodness *simpliciter* – and a cosmic Good itself and Best to boot – it is irrelevant to the good for us. For Aristotle believes none of these things. On the contrary, he himself accepts the crucial move in the argument from relational goods, the claim that relational goods need to be understood in relation to what is good about their subjects (in our case, rationality), where that 'goodness about' is good *simpliciter*.

IV THE ARGUMENT FROM INCORPORATION

This still does not bring us to anything very much like the Platonic Form of the Good. In principle, the argument from relational goods as

I have presented it shows only that there must be such a thing as goodness *simpliciter*, and that some science which studies it is appropriately a master art over the arts which provide relational goods. And this is compatible with any number of substantive positions.[25] It is compatible, for instance, with what we might call Brute Pessimism: the Good *simpliciter* is some property which nothing instantiates – non-existence, perhaps – so that nothing, including the human good, has any goodness *simpliciter*. As we have already seen, Plato and Aristotle, far from embracing this possibility, assent as well to some reasonable-sounding corollaries to the argument: goodness *simpliciter* is instantiated; human beings are good *simpliciter*; other things are so to a higher degree; and some instances of goodness *simpliciter* do not depend on any kind of relational goodness. Still, to support the candidacy of the Form as Higher Good, a different kind of argument is required. This is what I'll call *the argument from incorporation*. Simply put: the human good plausibly consists in activities of incorporation; the value of such an activity is determined by the value of the object incorporated; so the human good, to be really good, must consist in the incorporation of things which are good *simpliciter* in the highest degree.[26]

For Plato, those goods are of course the Forms, and a recurrent project of his, notably in the *Phaedo*, *Symposium*, *Republic* and *Phaedrus*, is to work out what it means for them to be incorporated into our lives. To abstract and oversimplify, incorporation seems to have three aspects. One is *association*. The good is the object of our desire, which seeks, as Plato says in the *Meno*, 'to possess or secure' its object for oneself (77c7–8). But in coming to understand what really is good, we must also ascend to a more refined conception of what its 'possession' amounts to. To understand the real good is, among other things, to grasp that we benefit not from owning it, ruling it, eating it or wearing it, but simply from being together with it (*sunousia*); which, given the kind of thing the Forms are, can only mean contemplation of it in thought. The second aspect of incorporation is *assimilation*. The company you keep shapes your character. The Forms, being beautiful,

25 The argument as I have presented it is also compatible with a range of conceptions of the 'master art' in question. Perhaps it would simply have for its object the universal 'good', or as Aristotle puts it *to koinon*: what all good things have in common. (Aristotle considers *to koinon*, the 'common' or universal good, and rejects its claim to be the Good Itself, in *EE* I.8.) But the master art could also be conceived as studying a particular set of objects which are good *simpliciter* in a privileged way, so as to be explanatory of the human good. The philosopher-king's knowledge of the Good would combine these conceptions; Aristotle strenuously rejects the former but is, I argue, largely committed to something like the latter.

26 My discussion of Platonic incorporation is very much influenced by the excellent account given by Richard Kraut 1992.

are naturally attractive; human behaviour is naturally plastic and imitative; so association with the Forms is continuous with coming to resemble them (*Phaedo* 79C–E, 81A–D; *Theaetetus* 176E–17A; cf. assimilation to the divine in the *Phaedrus* 252D–3C and to the heavenly bodies at *Timaeus* 47A–C). The third moment of incorporation is *generation*. To associate with the Forms and become assimilated to them is a fertile business: its effects naturally overflow the individual to sprout new manifestations (*Symposium* 212A–B). For all such purposes, the incorporation model seems to require that the objects incorporated are or behave like *individuals*. We are to spend time in company with the Forms as we do with our friends; admire and imitate them as we do our heroes; generate together with them as we do with lovers.

So where the argument from relational goods is, as it were, a matter of meta-ethical principle, tending to establish only the universal goodness *simpliciter*, *incorporation* belongs to moral psychology – we could almost say to physics – and goes naturally with a conception of an individual Higher Good. It's a theory about the mechanisms by which we interact with objects better (*simpliciter*) than ourselves, in order to attain what is good for us. And as Richard Kraut has argued, Plato is on to something intuitively powerful here, if seen at a high level of generality: namely the principle that 'the goodness of human life depends heavily on our having a close connection with something eminently worthwhile that lies outside of ourselves'.[27] Kraut points out that something like this principle can also be found in various religious traditions and in the Romantic conception of the value of nature.

Why Plato adopts this incorporation model of happiness, and how it could be supported, are huge questions which could take us far afield. For present purposes I will just note that, as I suggested at the outset, Platonic Forms are above all solutions to explanatory problems; and this seems to apply to the role of the Forms in happiness. Introducing the Form of the Good in *Republic* VI, Socrates observes that the good is the most important object of knowledge, for it's by its relation to the good that justice and everything else becomes beneficial (505A6–B1). But what *is* the good? The two obvious and leading candidates are pleasure and knowledge: 'the majority believe that pleasure is the good, while the more sophisticated believe that it is knowledge [*phronêsis*]' (505B5–6). Both claims run into immediate difficulties: the partisans of pleasure must admit that some pleasures are bad, and the proponents of knowledge lapse into circularity: they 'can't tell us what sort of knowledge it is, however, but in the end are forced to say that it is knowledge of the good' (505B8–10). And though Plato does not here

27 Kraut 1992: 329.

press the point, these two inadequacies share a common denominator. For neither 'knowledge' nor 'pleasure' is a complete description of an experience or state. More fully specified, both are as I've called them activities of incorporation: knowledge is knowledge *of* something, pleasure is pleasure *in* or *from* something. And as Plato will emphasise in Book IX (and Aristotle likewise in *NE* X.3) pleasures in different things *are* very different things. Likewise, not all knowledge is equal because not all objects of knowledge are equal. So to say that happiness consists in pleasure and/or knowledge is to say nothing useful until you have said pleasure *in what* and knowledge *of what*. Thus neither candidate is acceptable as presented. It isn't that they're wrong: in the *Philebus*, the happy life will indeed be described in terms of both pleasure and knowledge (20c–2c, 61a–7b), and roughly the same seems to be true in *Republic* Book IX (see esp. 580d–8a). But here in Book VI, the two candidates can serve only to propel the introduction of the Good, as the best object of knowledge and truest source of pleasure.

Now Aristotle too accepts a version of the incorporation model. For he shares the Platonic view that our happiness depends on activities involving other things which are good *simpliciter*, including both knowledge (broadly speaking) and pleasure. He also agrees that activities of incorporation are dependent for their value on the object incorporated. Pleasures 'differ in kind: for those from noble things are different from those from shameful things' (*NE* X.3, 1173b289). And in the case of knowledge, we have already seen that it is definitive of wisdom that it relate us to the best and most divine objects. The best human life is best by virtue of its engagement with the things which are best *simpliciter*.

At this point Aristotle's rejection of the Higher Good thesis begins to look *ad hoc* and perhaps untenable. If it is the job of the *politikos* to promote the human good; and if that good consists in engagement with objects which are better than ourselves, then it is hard to see how his work can be done without being informed by a grasp of those objects. And how full an understanding of contemplation and its objects can the *politikos* have, without understanding those objects himself? Again, according to Aristotle, contemplation provides us with a yardstick for the acquisition of wealth and worldly goods: we should pursue such things only so far as they promote contemplation of the divine (*EE* VIII.3, 1249b16–23). But how can the *politikos* apply such a yardstick without knowing in some detail what contemplation consists in and therefore requires – or accepting the guidance of someone who does? Aristotle is free to stipulate that, given the formal difference between *sophia* and *phronêsis* as theoretical and practical sciences, the former cannot quite count as a 'master art' within the terms of

Nicomachean Ethics I.1–2. But such formal considerations do nothing to counter the substantive point that the promotion of the human good, as Aristotle himself understands it, must be informed by a grasp of wisdom and its objects: and a full grasp of wisdom and its objects just *is* wisdom. Aristotle's own commitments seem to leave him with no principled grounds for objection to the Higher Good thesis: as he practises his craft, the Aristotelian *politikos* will need a Platonist metaphysician looking over his shoulder.[28]

V RESULTS

I have tried to show that the argument from the crafts stands as a somewhat misleading proxy for a much deeper quarrel. Given his own commitment to a Platonic hierarchy of the crafts, Aristotle cannot mean to argue that carpentry and weaving are untouched by higher normative considerations. Rather, his claim must be that those higher considerations are closed off at the human good. Aristotle invokes carpentry and weaving to give a tinge of *reductio* to his rejection of Platonic *politikê* – more precisely, to his rejection of the possibility that the knowledge needed by the *politikos* might require traffic with a Higher Good.

Without wanting to claim that they settle the matter, I have sketched two lines of counterattack open to the Platonist. First, the human good, like the more specialised goods of the subordinate crafts, is not a natural or inevitable terminus for practical reasoning. As a relational good, it must be understood in relation to something 'higher' (even if this is only the universal, goodness *simpliciter*, taken as the object of a comprehensive science of value): such a Higher Good is a necessary postulate of *politikê* understood as a fully rational craft. For to grasp fully and pursue successfully our good, the *politikos* must understand what it consists in and *why* it is good; and to do this he must understand what is good *about us*, which in turn means grasping the nature of goodness *simpliciter* and our relation to it. Second, on a plausible and widespread understanding of our good (the incorporation model), it consists in engagement with objects which are good *simpliciter* in the highest degree. In that case, it seems reasonable to suppose that the *politikos* only really understands the human good to the extent that he himself understands those objects.

In principle, these two lines of argument seem to generate different kinds of good. The argument from relational goods can be taken as generating only the universal (as we would take it to be) goodness

28 Cf. Lear 2004: 111–12: 'whereas the practically wise person takes the nature and value of happiness as given, the student of cosmology understands why human happiness is ordered in the way that it is'; see also the whole of her ch. V.

simpliciter; and though that is plausibly the object of a broader and more authoritative science than *politikê* it does not look much like the Platonic Form. The incorporation model, on the other hand, requires the instantiation of that goodness *simpliciter* in objects with which we can have 'association' (*sunousia*). It is striking that Aristotle takes this further Platonic step. Since his heavenly bodies and divine movers are good *simpliciter* in a more powerful way than ourselves, they can play exactly the role required by the incorporation model – the kind of role in our lives which other people more usually play, as objects of love, emulation and fertile interaction.

Where Aristotle does depart from Plato is of course in holding these two kinds of goodness *distinct*. The prime mover may be the best thing, but he is certainly not identical with the universal goodness *simpliciter* (on Aristotle's view a cross-categorical monstrosity to begin with). And the text of the argument from the crafts in *Nicomachean Ethics* I.6 suggests that Plato's refusal to distinguish the two is – as so often – the real root of Aristotle's critique. For the designation under which Aristotle attacks the Form here is as a 'pattern', *paradeigma* (1087A2). This is the term Plato himself invokes when he speaks of the bearing of the Forms on practical reasoning: as Socrates tells Euthyphro, 'Tell me then what this form itself is [the form of piety], so that I may look upon it, and, using it as a model [*paradeigma*], say that any action of yours or another's that is of that kind is pious, and if it is not that it is not' (6E4–7). *Paradeigma* is itself a concept from the crafts, and building in particular: among other things, a *paradeigma* is a sample capital which the builder uses as a model for production of all the others.[29] Aristotle's reference to the Platonic Form as a *paradeigma* points to its role as the model to which a craftsman looks in shaping his materials, including the divine craftsman who creates the cosmos and the *politikos* who creates a just city. It is as a *paradeigma* that the Form is at once a universal essence (conceived as a standard, or a set of specifications, or a blueprint imposed on its instances), a best instantiation of that essence, and the cause of it to the other instances.

So examination of the argument from the crafts brings us back, in the end, to a very familiar place. The only criticism in the vicinity which remains genuinely open to Aristotle, given his own commitments, turns out to be his old favourite: namely, that Plato's Good, as a *paradeigma*, is required to do the metaphysically impossible by serving as both the universal goodness *simpliciter* and a causally active instantiation of it. (I am not at all sure that this is a fair criticism either, but that is a subject for another day.) I conclude that the argument from the crafts fails – or

29 See Patterson 1985: ch. 2 esp. 13–14.

at any rate fails to be what we and Aristotle might have hoped for, namely a genuinely independent argument against the Platonic Good as a postulate of practical reason. If the Form of the Good *is* misconceived, it is for reasons which have wholly to do with the metaphysics of universals and particulars, and nothing to do with what practical reason might legitimately want from a theory of value. And the real source of the dispute about the Good between Plato and Aristotle is, as it turns out, Plato's excessive ontological parsimony.

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16

CONVERSION OR CONVERSATION? A NOTE ON PLATO'S PHILOSOPHICAL METHODS

Timothy Chappell

Plato scholarship often tends to lead us in the direction of a very general choice about the nature of philosophical inquiry. The choice – which can emerge, for example, from thinking about the contrasts between the *Republic* and the *Euthydemus* – is one between two very different conceptions of what should be the product of the best philosophical activity: a choice, as we might crudely put it, between conversion and conversation.

No one (Richard Rorty and some other postmodernists possibly excepted) will deny that philosophy aims at the prizes of truth, understanding and wisdom. But there is a choice between conceptions of these ideals – a choice which not just the student of Plato, but anyone who wants to do philosophy, will apparently need to make.

The *Phaedrus*, the *Phaedo*, the *Symposium*, the *Meno* (at times) and above all, of course, the *Republic* present the conversional conception of the aim of philosophy. *Republic* 518C–D, for instance, is a passage that might have created the very concept of conversion:

> 'But what our present argument shows,' I said, 'is that this inherent power in the soul of each of us, this instrument by means of which each of us learns, is like an eye that cannot turn from the darkness to light unless the whole body turns as well. In just that way, our power of understanding, and the entire soul with it, must have its whole scene shifted (*periakteon einai*, a studiedly theatrical image), to the point where the understanding becomes able steadily to contemplate Being and the utmost radiance of Being (*tou ontos to phanotaton*); and this, we say, is The Good.'[1]

1 All translations are my own unless otherwise indicated.

The point of philosophy, on this view, is to grasp a mystical vision, a transcendent insight into the Cause of Things. Plato stresses again and again that no one else can have this vision for you – that sight cannot be put into blind eyes, that each person must bear his own intellectual offspring, that (contrary to what our universities' administrators seem to think) knowledge does not come in bales that a fork-lift truck could shunt around, and so cannot simply be 'delivered' from one mind into another, as it were (in another image, *Symposium* 175D) by a siphoning process.

The true understanding, Plato also stresses, is ineffable. Socrates tells us again and again that he cannot speak directly of the Forms, that his only access to them is by way of metaphor and imagery, that no serious person would put his most serious thoughts in writing (or even in words?), that in plain fact, when he tries to talk of them, he literally does not know what he is talking about.

On this conception of philosophy, conversation – dialectic – can have only instrumental value. It leads you up, if all goes well, to the point where you are rightly oriented, and ready for the vision of truth. But once you climb to this point, you might as well kick away the ladder that brought you there; for without the transforming vision of the transcendent truth, nothing else can go right. That a visionary experience alone can set us surely on the path to philosophical truth seems to be one of the most important morals we are supposed to draw from the intractability of Socrates' disputes with opponents like Polus, Protagoras or indeed Euthydemus. (It is not intelligence, sharpness of mind, that these men lack; so what is it?) It is also, I take it, part of the reason why so many excellent Athenians failed to have excellent sons. You can lead Hippocrates to water, but you can't make him drink (*Protagoras* 313A). Philosophical truth cannot be inflicted on the unwilling; it has to be imbibed, willingly, by minds that are already thirsty.

Contrast the Socratic dialogues – the *Euthydemus* is the example I shall focus on most closely here – all of which present or imply the conversational conception. (I shall use the label 'Socratic' without implying anything about the chronology of the dialogues.) These dialogues take philosophy to consist in the back-and-forth of conversation, in the social and intellectual interchange of friends (and sometimes not-so-friends: consider Thrasymachus or Polus, or Ctesippus' acrid aggression towards Dionysodorus and Euthydemus), in the struggle (usually unsuccessful) to define a key term, in the delights of unarmed verbal combat, in what Nietzsche, with his usual memorable venom and spot-on unfairness, called 'the knife-thrust of the syllogism'.

Both conceptions have their advantages and disadvantages. The conversional conception is a vision of where philosophy might take us of

such gripping, breathtaking loftiness that to call it merely ambitious or far-reaching would seem a *phortikos epainos* (a praise that falls inelegantly short). It answers to impulses that are surely in all of us, even if we are not so used, today, to expressing those impulses through philosophy.

The key disadvantage of the conversional conception is, of course, its obscurity (a word which some will be quick to amend to obscurantism). Enthusiasm, as Dr Johnson said, is a very horrid thing. The dangers of basing our thinking on some kind of special illumination, some mystical revelation that obviously has not been granted to all and can barely even be described to those who have not experienced it, are patent:

> the Love of something extraordinary, the Ease and Glory it is to be inspired and be above the common and natural ways of Knowledge so flatters Men's Laziness, Ignorance, and Vanity, that when once they are got into this way of immediate Revelation; of Illumination without search; and of certainty without Proof, and without Examination, 'tis a hard matter to get them out of it. Reason is lost on them, they are above it; they see the Light infused into their Understandings, and cannot be mistaken; 'tis clear and visible there; like the Light of bright Sunshine, shews it self, and needs no other Proof, but its own Evidence. (Locke [1687] 1998: IV.19, 'Of Enthusiasm')

As for the conversational conception of philosophy, this has in its favour – in stark contrast to the conversional picture – its studied sobriety, rationality and restraint: all appealing characteristics, especially to philosophers such as we are likely to be today. It is also, unlike the virtual mystery-religion that the conversional conception draws us into, noticeably egalitarian. In principle almost anybody present can win the argument or score a palpable hit, and sometimes (like Cleinias at *Euthydemus* 290B–C) almost anybody does. It is also, like all the best forms of academic activity, a stringently rationally disciplined enterprise: the rules for dialectic (in this sense of the word) are fully and canonically laid out by Aristotle in the *Topics*, but much of the substance of those rules is already at least implicit even in such small-scale examples of dialectic as the Socratic interrogation of Anytus in the *Apology*. Dialectic as conversation is demanding, and intellectually stretching; it is also, let us not forget, fun. The signs of pleasure and excitement in this sort of philosophical activity are everywhere in the cues and stage-directions of Plato's great dramas. Of course dialectic as conversation can involve pains like those of childbirth, and other

sorts of negative experience that I'll come on to in a moment. But surely one of the reasons why we go on reading Plato, and why we go on doing something that Socrates, the main advocate of dialectic as conversation, would have recognised as philosophy, is simply because we enjoy it.

And the disadvantages of the conversational conception? Well, first, practising dialectic as conversation can make you enemies, and not for entirely unrespectable reasons. Surely Socrates' accusers were right at least about this: that the willingness to practise dialectic on just anything, even on a society's most revered and hallowed ethical or religious beliefs, is a dangerous willingness. Although of course (as Plato is at pains to show) Socrates had a piety that his accusers entirely missed, they were not wrong to see his maxim 'Follow the argument wherever it goes' as a potential threat not only to shibboleths that deserve to be overthrown, but also to beliefs that are rightly held sacred.

Second, the conversational conception does not require sincerity. We all know the problems about distinguishing the authorial voice in Plato's works – if there is one there at all. Plato, the sometime would-be dramatist, famously decries mimicry and imitation; yet he himself is a master of mimicry and imitation. The *Symposium*, the *Phaedrus*, the *Cratylus*, the *Theaetetus* are full of parodies of other ways of thinking, talking and arguing; there is even a Platonic dialogue, the *Menexenus*, which contains almost nothing at all but parody. The *Euthydemus* too constantly provokes in the reader John McEnroe's protest – 'You cannot be serious.' The dialogue is dominated by parody (and self-parody), pretence and insincerity, joking and mockery. Its favourite verbs are *paizein* (to play), *skôptein* (to mock), *apistein* (to disbelieve), *katagelan* (to ridicule); thematically, its key adverb is *eirônikôs* (disingenuously). The arguments presented by the sophistical brothers Euthydemus and Dionysodorus are, in almost every case, so outrageous that the question immediately arises whether we can possibly be meant (by the sophists? By Plato?) to take them seriously. Almost Socrates' last word to Euthydemus and Dionysodorus is to tell them (303d2–4) that most debaters would think it more shameful to win by their methods than to lose to those methods; his very first response when he sees their eristic at work, in their 'two-wave' discomfiture of Cleinias (276a–277c), is to butt in to compare them to the sort of buffoon who finds it funny to whip away the chair as someone sits (278b–c). On one possible reading, almost the only thing in the main dialogue of the *Euthydemus* that we should take fully seriously is Cleinias' protest (291b–292e) about the failure of generalship to be a *technê* (craft) with ends sufficient to itself, which leads us to wonder whether even statesmanship can be accounted a *technê* with ends

sufficient to itself, unless we revise our conception of the knowledge that it involves. And it is notable that even this most important point is one that Plato instantly cloaks in a swathe of ambiguities. What was the point, exactly? How did the hearers respond at the time? And was it really Cleinias who made it, or some divinity? For my money, it sounds as though Plato is hinting here that the person who made this point in the original conversation was actually himself. But the present point is not whether this conjecture is right. It is rather that conjecture is, here as so often elsewhere, the best we can offer when we are trying to decide, of any conversation in the Socratic dialogues, 'which side Plato is really on'. As I say, the second disadvantage of dialectic as conversation is that you are very often not quite sure how seriously it is meant, or where it is meant to take us.

That brings us to the third and most notable disadvantage of the conversational conception of dialectic: which is that mere conversation, whether internal or external, private or public, doesn't necessarily have to take us anywhere in particular. Why should the fact that you and I, starting from certain premises that we both take to be true, have together reached certain conclusions that we now think those premises entail – why should this entail anything whatever about the truth of our conclusions?

Here the contrast between the failings of the conversional and the conversational models of philosophy may remind us a little of another well-known contrast, that between correspondence and coherence as models for the nature of truth. The correspondence requirement – that our beliefs should match up with the facts – seems perfectly fitted to spell out the naive notion of what truth is, yet turns out to involve us in a commitment to the reality of mind-independent facts which some have thought as mysterious, and almost as inexpressible, as Plato's Forms. For what could it be to come face to face with a fact, aside from believing in it, so as to be able to tell that one's belief in that fact corresponded with it?

By contrast, the coherence requirement – that our beliefs should match up with each other – seems free from these difficulties: coherence is not a particularly mysterious relation, and talk about coherence enables us to abstain from any mystery-mongering appeal to things without the mind. Yet just because of this abstension, coherence alone seems inadequate for truth in a different way from correspondence – a way which resembles a failing that we might see in the *Euthydemus'* account of dialectic. For just as a conversation can lead to agreement as neatly as you like, and yet not lead to truth, so a set of beliefs can be as coherent as you like, and yet untrue.

The tendency of all this is to suggest that our initial idea of a choice between the conversional and conversational accounts of philosophy

that we find in Plato is a poor one, since there are serious problems in taking either without the other. It looks, then, as though we need some way to reconcile the two models. At the end of a fine unpublished paper[2] on the *Euthydemus* and *Republic*, Mary Margaret McCabe offers four suggestions about how to do this. In brief she suggests, about the body of thought that the *Republic* offers us, (1) that 'If perception proper is discursive, intellection may be no less'; (2) that 'to spectate may be, not so much to be passive to the spectacle, as to survey it, to take it in, integrate it, see how it all fits together into a whole'; and (3) that 'perhaps the form of the good is not so much a singularity, as an expression of the completeness of the system it embraces'. Then, with respect to the *Euthydemus*, she adds (4) that 'philosophical conversation' will be 'done well', and 'issue in knowledge', only

> if the lesson of the *Republic* is learned: wisdom may be the good itself by itself if it is a system of knowledge informed and completed by the good, and if the synoptic view is somehow constituted by the goodness of what is understood. Could we say that the form of the good, in explaining how there can be knowledge of knowledge, and how the knowledge is constituted, does indeed turn out, for the *Euthydemus*, to be the final *mathêma*?

Do McCabe's suggestions do justice both to the conversational model of philosophy, and to the conversional model, as these are found in Plato (and beyond)? Or do they really reduce one of these models (the conversional) to the other (the conversational)?

That's not a rhetorical question, because I am genuinely unsure of the answer. When Professor McCabe proposes (in her third suggestion) that the form of the good is 'not so much a singularity, as an expression of the completeness of the system it embraces', and when she similarly proposes (in her fourth) that seeing the form of the good may be a matter of 'explaining how there can be knowledge of knowledge, and how the knowledge is constituted' – when I hear these suggestions, I do suspect that something crucial to Plato's conversional model is being lost to Professor McCabe's accommodations of the conversational model. For of course the vision of the Form of the Good enables a synoptic view of the rest of the system. Yet still, I want to insist, it isn't understood by Plato as identical with this synoptic view. Would McCabe agree with this? I am not sure.

2 McCabe (n.d.); McCabe 2006 is a revised version of this, concentrating on the *Republic*. The material in that paper on the *Euthydemus* will be incorporated in McCabe (forthcoming).

What I am sure of – reasonably sure of – is these two points, which I'll make in closing.

First, I am reasonably sure that the gap between the conversional and conversational models of philosophy is deep, unbridgeable and historically perennial. Plato is not the only philosopher to think that an element of simple vision, of recognition of ultimate truth, must underlie all our ingenious arguings if they are to be worth anything – and to admit that this element of simple vision may well stand in severe tension with our inclination towards ingenious argumentation. The vision of the sun, after all, is a vision that blinds (*Phaedo* 99D–E). Maybe the vision of the Form of the Good too is something that puts us beyond the level where ingenious argumentation is any longer appropriate, or even possible, for us; that raises us, indeed, to a level where words simply run out.[3] So Aquinas finally came to think: 'I cannot [return to philosophical work], because all that I have written seems like straw to me.'[4] So Plotinus affirms (for all his many words about the One): 'Thus it is in truth ineffable; for whatever you say about it, you say of a something' (*Ennead* V.3.13.1). So also Pseudo-Dionysius tells us that God 'is a mind beyond the reach of mind and a word beyond utterance' (*On the Divine Names* ch.1); and yet goes on talking about God and his attributes for another thirteen chapters. So (to return to him) Plato himself, the author of so many philosophical dialogues (how many have we perhaps lost?), yet also tells us in the Seventh Letter (344C) that 'whatever any serious person has written, that is not his most serious production' (cf. *Phaedrus* 275C–E). Again and again we reach the same distinction: the purpose of the effable, or one of its principal purposes, is to draw us on to the *in*effable. The conversational and the conversional models of philosophy both have their places; but in Plato's thought, I strongly suspect, it is the conversional model which goes deeper.

Still, second, I do think that Plato recognises and makes room for both models. Moreover, Plato sees the two models as correctives to each other. The conversional model's directedness, its piety and its sincerity, correct for the dangers of aimlessness, irreverence and light-mindedness that attend the conversational method. By contrast the conversational model's clarity, rational discipline, egalitarianism and sense of fun correct for the conversional model's obscurity, its 'enthusiasm' (in Locke's sense), its tendency to define an elite, and what Plato himself would call its *semnotês* – its high-minded earnestness. You cannot, as I put it above, kick away the ladder once you're up; for

3 So long at least as we remain at that level: but cf. *Republic* 520C2–3.
4 Quoted in Davies 1992: 9.

human nature being what it is, you won't stay up. We go on needing the rational discipline of the conversational model, even once initiated into the conversional model.

Take the conversational method on its own, and you'll never get anywhere (or even if you do, you won't be able to tell: compare Meno's paradox). Take the conversional method on its own, and you'll get somewhere all right: but much too quickly, in just the way that Locke decries in the enthusiast – the way that leads to 'Illumination without search' and 'certainty without Proof, and without Examination'. Plato unites a hard head with a warm heart; the vision of the Form of the Good, it seems to me, really *is* a matter of mystical insight which (quoting Locke again) 'like the Light of bright Sunshine, shews it self, and needs no other Proof, but its own Evidence'. But for Plato, in contrast to Mr Locke's 'Enthusiasts', this mystical insight, while it cannot fully be described by way of the conversational model, has none the less to be earned by way of that model. The philosopher's education, and his vision of the Form of the Good, are two separate things, and in the end, of course, the latter is the 'higher'; yet it is only the first that can prepare the philosopher for the second.

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