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# On Pleasure and the Human Good: Plato's *Philebus*

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Plato's *Philebus* is said, under the encouragement of its subtitle, to be about pleasure; but how far it is from being simply about pleasure, or even primarily about pleasure, may be seen from the development of the argument toward and then vastly beyond the problem of species as that problem is brought to sight by the variety concealed within the apparent unity of "pleasure" itself. The discourse unfolds through the themes of finitude and infinity, of mind and cause in the whole, and eventually to the meaning and status of Good. *Philebus*'s disclosures about Good emerge without thematic reference to regimes and politics or to virtues and morality. The Good, of course comprehending the human good, is brought to light in so comprehensive a way as to induce or compel an insight into the articulation of human existence with the nature of the whole in which man is fated to know, experience, and perform good and its privations. Man, Good, and the Whole are within the scope of *Philebus*.

The dialogue begins without indication of its setting in time or place and without any suggestion of a reporter who had participated in it or who had received the report of it from some other who had. It belongs to the world as a whole; and it is the effectually avowed product of its author, in the most emphatic sense Platonic, as a dialogue "reported" by Socrates himself is in an emphatic sense Socratic. There are three interlocutors, of whom *Philebus* is by far the least active. The exchanges, with few exceptions, are between Socrates and Protarchus, a young man associated with and influenced by *Philebus*. *Philebus* is a technical hedonist who says very little, having resigned from the discussion before the work itself begins, explaining himself as afraid of offending Aphrodite, most truly called Hedone, whose preeminence is about to be assaulted. The dialogue is named after the participant who has next to nothing to say and who contributes to the argument the proposition—pleasure is the good—which is edifyingly exploded by Socrates. As the discourse will make clear, though, the devastation of the claims of pleasure is not absolute, and in the resolution of the wider problem of the good, means will be found to harmonize conflicting claims, to produce a kind of *philia* on the plane of good that will reflect or repeat a reconciliation of opposites on the plane of the whole, a reconciliation indispensable to the constitution of the universe. Tentatively, one might explain the peculiarity of the title as an adumbration of Plato's view of the whole as a

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scene of indispensable concession to cosmic forces that enter into good but that can make their contribution as long and so far as they are subordinated to Measure. Thus Measure, or Number, will enter our field of view and will from time to time dominate it, as Number and the Numberless, Finite and Infinite, are drawn in their arrays into the search for Good.

Casual remarks (16ab) reveal that the discussion is taking place before an anonymous audience of young males who seem to be pupils, friends, or associates of Philebus. Their youthful openness to hedonism would be understandable; so also their youthful enthusiasm for worrying the similarities and differences among things, to the distraction of everyone around them, gently ridiculed by Socrates but shown by the end to have a solemn significance. The youthful audience is a paradigm of apparent contradiction: out of the vitality of humanity spring the twin impulses toward pleasure or eros and reason or dialectic.

Socrates opens the conversation by stating for Protarchus's benefit the root of the difference between Philebus's position and Socrates' own: Philebus says that pleasure is the good for all living things while Socrates maintains the superiority of noetic facility, roughly wisdom, for all those to whom it is available. Philebus thus proposes a good that strongly draws to itself every living thing, the untaught and the unteachable alike, in a testimony to the unity of all animate existence and perhaps, as later speeches of Socrates himself suggest (42c*ff.*), the unity of all corporeal existence; while Socrates' conception of good points to disjunction, disparity, and fracture, humanity set apart and mankind itself divided against itself to a degree that becomes measureless when all "who are and will be" are had in mind as those who may or may not to one extent or another share in Good.

Socrates now proposes the general line of inquiry that will in fact shape the entire investigation: to consider whether enjoyment or thinking is most conducive to man's happiness, or whether it is not rather some combination of the two that is best; and in the latter case, whether pleasure or thought is more nearly related to the combination of the two of them. The form of this odd question should be noted carefully because it will reappear when Socrates joins the Finite and the Infinite in a combination without asking which of the ingredients more nearly resembles the sum of them, though the answer is clear and crucial. At any rate, Protarchus accepts this formulation of the terms of the argument and Socrates proceeds to the criticism of pleasure, apotheosized as Aphrodite—the name preferred by Philebus and the goddess—or as Hedone, the name by which she is most truly known. Socrates argues that the impression of unicity given by the word "pleasure" is illusory, concealing differences that verge on contradiction among the concrete pleasures. He might have made a similar point by referring to the two names of the goddess, but he tactfully refrains from doing so. Protarchus insists that pleasure is pleasure, regardless of differences which he evidently considers accidental. Protarchus's position is

troublingly similar to the one we might expect to be taken by Socrates the proponent of the eternal Ideas: pleasure is One, the pleasures are Many, and the way to know the being and the nature of the Many is through the way in which they are One. For the first and not the last time in *Philebus*, the strong drift of Socrates' argument is away from the simple sovereignty of One and towards the serious authority of multiplicities even if those include mutual contradictions.

Socrates now makes plain that the importance of the differences among the kinds of pleasure lies in the fact that some are good and some are bad, thus tacitly indicating a reason for overriding the familiar issue of being and intelligibility conventionally associated with Socrates' teaching on the Ideas. (Compare this "Parmenidean" concession to the arguments against Socratic Idealism with the speech of the Eleatic [Parmenidean] Stranger in *Statesman* 263 on *eidos*, *genos*, *meros*.) More important for the purposes of man's happiness than participation in a single *eidos* or class is participation in Good. But is not Good itself a One in which all contradictory multiplicities will come to a harmonious beatitude through participation in it? It is worth knowing, at the beginning of one's reading of *Philebus*, that Good itself is left at the end as an amalgam of discrete ingredients dependent on a principle of combination (measure) by whose alchemy Good is constructed. There will be no uncompounded unity that dominates the universal pyramid of multiplicities by standing at its apex.

In order to elicit Protarchus's agreement that pleasure is heterogeneous with regard to its goodness and badness, Socrates offers to subject wisdom too to the question regarding its multiplicity. Protarchus is deceived and charmed by the appearance of equal treatment, not noticing that Socrates' concession regarding wisdom is limited to its possibly consisting of unlike parts, even mutually contradictory parts, with no reference whatever to the possibility that any of them could be bad. This small duplicity on behalf of mind passed over, Socrates continues by declaring that their purpose now must be to determine whether pleasure or wisdom or neither of these but rather some third is the good. He proceeds by bringing to the surface the wondrous (*thaumaston*) assertion, implicit in what they have been saying, that one is many and many are one. He dismisses as commonplace the illustration of unity and multiplicity in one thing's being both heavy and light, or its being compounded of many parts; but the dismissal itself appears problematical because at a later point the issue of the heavy and light or the great and small will loom in the form of the more and less, the Infinite or Numberless, while the composition of a presumptive One, namely, Good, out of a recognizable multiplicity will be at the peak of the dialogue's achievement. Still, for the present it suits Socrates' purpose to focus on the conception of unity not as it arises from things that come to be and pass away but as it comes to view when applied to such things as man, ox, beauty, and good. More striking in this selection of examples of eternal things than the inclusion of animal species is the obtrusive jumbling of things high

and low, on the principle referred to in so many words by the Eleatic Stranger (*Statesman* 266d) when he speaks of the search for truth without heed to the dignity of the things considered. Of course the possibility must be faced that what will come to light through an investigation of the unities or even the Ideas will have a morally neutral cast, reflecting a neutrality of the whole itself regarding a matter of great human concern.

Socrates now sets forth what he takes to be the ruling questions about unity. First, whether it is to be accepted that such a thing truly is. Next, how these things which are forever one and the same, neither coming to be nor being destroyed, can be so firmly the same one. And then how this One is to be in one and also in the infinite multiplicity of the generated things—whether it is broken up among them or maintains itself in some sort of isolated distinctness: very much the question thrust upon the youthful Socrates when he must defend the Ideas against old Parmenides. But Socrates does not refer to Ideas here (15), rather to one and Many—not “what is?” but “how many,” in anticipation of the emphasis on measure that will soon be striking. And the emphasis on measure or limit will itself be a response to the encroachment of the limitless or infinite on the One.

The order in which Socrates presents the serious questions about unity is notable for the fact that it places the issue of accepting the being of the One before the questions about the difficulties inherent in the character of the One. The existence of Unity may be prior to the character of Unity, but the question whether we should accept that being before knowing anything about what in its being would testify to its being deserves attention. It appears to receive that attention immediately (15d) when Socrates remarks that we say that the same One and Many, generated by speech, circulate and have circulated, always, of old, and now in every single thing that is uttered, and that it neither ages nor dies in us, neither commencing nor ceasing but apparently inhering in speech itself. In light of this remark, the reason that we may or must regard the question of our accepting the being of One before considering or knowing anything concrete about it is easily understood: we accept it because, as speaking beings, we have no choice but to do so. As one might say, without the ever-present and ever-active One and Many, there could be no language and thus no speech. It is to be noted that this reason for human acceptance of the One is not tantamount to a proof of the One’s cosmic or universal existence, for it is an argument from human convenience rather than from the nature of things. More exactly, if a requirement for the human good could be understood without any doubt as having an existence dictated absolutely by the nature of the whole itself, then we could know positively that the Whole and Man are in a state of absolute unity and perfect articulation, beyond any mere “neutrality” of the Whole in regard to us. The case would be significantly different if the One existed in and for the human world rather than or even differently than it does in the world of the Whole. Socrates’ answer to the first serious question about

One falls short of indicating the perfection of the relation between man and the whole.

Saying nothing that bears visibly on the last two serious questions, Socrates moves on, presumably on a continuous path, to introduce a major element of the dialogue, a path of inquiry that is of the greatest efficacy and divine or human origin, and is indispensable to all the arts. It is that all the spoken-about things arise out of one and many and have within them innately the finite and infinite; and that, things being so ordered, it is up to us always to posit one idea in each case and to search for it and to find it, for it is there. Then if we grasp this, we must go on after one to two, if there are two, or to three or to whatever number until we can understand the original unity in its oneness, not only that it is one and many and infinite but also how many. We must not be satisfied with simply "many" but, he insists, we must arrive at a particular number between one and infinity before we settle for the infinity that accompanies the unity in things. Socrates ends this seminal discourse by criticizing the wise men of his time who pass heedlessly between unity and infinity, disregarding number, and in so doing fall into eristic and miss dialectic. The full import of this definition of dialectic will not become clear until Socrates, for the benefit of the understandably confused Protarchus, explains himself with the use of examples. The examples will show that dialectic is the art of answering "What is . . . ?" with "how many?"

The definitive example is sound, which is of course some one thing. It is also infinite, or as we would say a continuum of infinitesimals. One could break in on the infinity by designating a duality, namely, high and low; or a trinity of high, medium, and low, but with these alone there would be no art of music. Necessary to be known are the intervals and harmonies, and the movements of the body that follow—all of these determined in finite quantities by measure and number, including the rhythms of motion of the body, namely, dance. While our knowledge of anything is on the level of a sense of its infinity or infinite gradation, we do not understand it. Socrates does not make explicit the equally consequent conclusion from his illustration that we do not understand it when we know it as a One.

Starting with unity, e.g., the unity of "sound," one may not proceed to the infinity of sounds but must find the finite number of them that is the key to understanding. Likewise, starting with the infinity of sound, one must find the number of sounds before pronouncing a unity. Socrates' explicit reason for going through the argument in the reverse direction is that doing so will draw the discussion closer to the large purpose of the conversation, which has to do with pleasure, wisdom and good. How it does so is a matter of great concern. The reverse illustration is that of the infinity of sound and the transition thence to its unity through the finite number of the letters of the alphabet. This transition too is of divine or human origin. As Prometheus was the only one named in the musical illustration, so the Egyptian Theuth is the only one mentioned by name

as the inventor of letters and the science of letters. He observed the infinity of sound, the multiplicity of the vowel sounds and the consonant sounds, and in a way not made clear, distinguished also the silent letters. He reduced all these to a finite number of letters and generated the science of letters, or grammar. There would have been no science or intelligibility in the One and the Many without the intermediation of Number.

We cannot take up the difficult question whether what an Egyptian inventor of writing generated was a true alphabet or was rather a system of hieroglyphs that captured the sounds of spoken words and then became meaningless symbols of those sounds, as letters are. But we cannot avoid the implications of the fact that the Egyptian alphabet, whatever it may be, is extracted from Egyptian speech, as the Greek alphabet would be extracted from Greek, and so on through Russian, Hebrew and Sanskrit. Alphabets are human inventions drawn from the multiplicity of languages, the conventional manifestations and exemplars of natural speech. As one might say, the natural One of "speech" would be unintelligible and of no effect if it were not reduced by human agency to a number, some finitude or measure, of actual languages; and there would be no understanding the sounds of each language as such, and of course no writing it down, if its sounds were not identified and reduced to a number. I wish to stress the arbitrariness of that reduction, a point that comes to mind as one notices the regional dialects into which the pronunciation of any language might be and every language probably is divided. The number between One and Infinity that is crucial to understanding is, in the definitive illustrations, a product of human determination affected with arbitrariness as well as with definiteness. As we learned earlier, out of the capacity for speech comes the primal drive toward or need for the One; and as we see now, out of that same speech, not as rational discourse but as sound produced through the mouth in the mode of utterance, comes the drive toward or need for the Number that fructifies the One as it reduces the One to the concrete intelligible. It would be going too far too fast to say that Number replaces Unity as the ground of intelligibility, but it would not be unreasonable to suggest that Number presses hard against Unity for the distinction.

At this point, Philebus repeats the question he had raised previously as to the bearing of the present discussion on the matter before them. Socrates replies that the issue is just how each of them, presumably pleasure and wisdom, is one and many, and how each is not immediately infinite but is of some number. Protarchus reasonably takes this to mean that Socrates might wish to go on to determine the number of kinds of pleasure and wisdom; but in his speech to Socrates, Protarchus opens the possibility of pursuing the inquiry in some other unnamed way, should Socrates choose to do so. Surprisingly, Socrates abruptly gives the discussion what appears to be a new direction. He vaguely recalls hearing that neither pleasure nor wisdom is the good, but that some third thing is. If that is so, then pleasure cannot triumph, and there is no need to distin-



guish its kinds (*eide*), or as we would now say, its number. Socrates promises that what follows will help to explain this, to us astonishing casting aside of the laborious preparation for a taxonomy of pleasures and wisdoms or the discovery of the number of each. As Unity was challenged by Number, that is, cardinal number (two, three, four), so cardinal number is now about to be challenged by ordinal number: which is second and which is third as pleasure and wisdom are ranked behind the other thing that is the good, which is identified provisionally as the combination of pleasure and wisdom.

Socrates begins the new argument by laying down that the good is the perfect in the sense that anyone possessing it would need nothing more in order to be happy. From this it is easily made to follow that neither pleasure without mind nor wisdom without pleasure is the good. If either were sufficient, it would be fit to be chosen by every plant and animal as its way of life, so far as possible, throughout its life (22b). From this remarkable pronouncement we seem invited to consider that there is some absolutely strict sense of "good" that removes it from the realm of the peculiarly human and that satisfies a demand that it apply, if not to every single object in the universe, then to every kind of thing that grows. On these terms, either mankind will have to settle for and participate in a good that is modest enough for the gnats and mosses of the world or it will have to find and dwell with a good that it prescribes to itself or is prescribed to it by some power that can or wishes to define a human good.

The explicit aim of the next part of the argument is to determine whether pleasure or wisdom is closer to the combination of the two of them, as, according to Socrates' illustration, wisdom would be if mind proved to be the cause of the combination. Mind would not then be itself the good but, as cause of the good, it would be its closest kin, as, *mutatis mutandis*, would pleasure. For his present purpose, Socrates declares that he needs a new instrument. That new instrument is a principle for investigating all things by quadripartition, according to the doctrine that everything in the Whole is either infinite, finite, a combination of both, or the cause of such a combination. This quadripartition replaces a tripartition, which in turn replaced the bipartition One and Many, which in turn could be regarded as the first analysis of the Whole Infinite. Socrates showed that neither Many, which he calls infinite, nor One is sufficient without the intermediation of Number, thus introducing the tripartition that guides all investigation on the way to the good. In the present quadripartition, the argument evolves away from Unity in two distinct ways. First, One is no longer an element of the taxonomy; and second, the number of elements in the taxonomy is now larger than ever. It might be appropriate to mention that the growth in the number of elements will continue until the good itself is reached.

Lest it be thought that the primal disjunction of One and Many has been simply superseded, Socrates proposes to move on by seeking the One and Many, i.e., the nature or definition, of the infinite and the finite. First, in what

way or in what sense is the infinite many? The defining examples are the hotter and the colder, by which Socrates means to illustrate an endless more and less, the opposite and contradictory of a definite number or quantity or measure. The more and less are always advancing and not at rest, while definite quantity stays still. Thus the “many” or essential plurality of the unnumbered is not its being composed of an unimaginably large quantity but rather its being characterized always, unceasingly, by more and less. Otherwise stated, something that belonged to the infinite could, as such, be known exclusively as more or less, in the way in which hotter and colder may suggest but can give no clue to Hot or Cold. One may wonder whether Hot and Cold proper do not collapse and vanish into their unlimited comparative correlates. If at this point a witness to the dialogue were to be dissatisfied because the principle of explanation seems to apply only to adjectives and not to substantives, he might be reassured by being reminded that “good” itself is both an adjective and a substantive.

Socrates summarizes the discussion of the Unity of the Infinite by saying (25a) that whatever appears to us to become more or less, as more or less hot or cold, should be placed in the class of the infinite as in a Unity, according to the earlier argument in which we said that we must bring together all things that are scattered and split up, as far as is possible for us to impress on them some one nature. In the earlier speech referred to at 16d, Socrates is preparing the mediation of One and Infinite by Number, and to do so announces that the division of everything between finite and infinite makes it necessary for us always to posit and search for the one idea of things that lies within. This relatively mild formulation for man’s contribution to the positing of the One is strengthened by the transition from the use of the verb *tithemi*, posit, at 16d to *episemaino*, to set the mark, seal, stamp, or sign of the One on the confused Infinite (25a). The same strong locution is used also in the *Statesman* 258c, as part of what emerges gradually as Plato’s critique of the One.

Socrates claims to have arrived at the Many and the One of the infinite, that from which all limit or definiteness is intrinsically absent. It may be thought paradoxical that what is in itself without definiteness is subject to definition, as the Infinite has just been shown to be by having a unity assigned to it in the form of some one nature that we strive to impress upon it. Apparently, the Infinite in being can be transformed into the Finite in reason or thought or speech, in that or so far as a One can be imposed upon it. It is one of those things spoken about to which we are compelled as speaking beings to apply the dichotomy of One and Many. If there is some tension between what is in being and what is in thought, that tension can be managed, resolved, or overcome only by thought or from the side of thought, human thought brought to bear to the best of our power, as far as possible, *kata dynamin*.

What we now seem to know is that the Many of the Infinite is the more and less in the infinitesimal and innumerable manifold thereof, as well as the things that can exist only as more and less; while the One of the Infinite is the thought

or the speech that utters the thought in words which report the membership in the class of the more and less.

Socrates finds it easy now to speak about the Finite. The things opposite to the Infinite—not subject to more and less, but rather to their opposites, namely, equality and the equal, the double, and all relation of a number to a number or a measure to a measure. By these illustrations and the locutions in which they are expressed, Plato makes clear to us that by the Finite he means what exists as a finite or rational number, a ratio between two commensurable quantities that are numbers, between which a relation exists that can be expressed as a definite number. By its opposite, the infinite, Plato then evidently means that existence of which the paradigm would be such a quantity as  $\pi$ , the symbol of the relation between two such incommensurables as the circumference and the diameter of a circle, or the square root of two,  $\sqrt{2}$ , the symbol of the relation between two such incommensurables as the diagonal of the unit square and any of its sides.

As will appear, Socrates considers himself now to have discussed the way in which the Finite is many, which is to say that he has shown by example the many kinds of things that belong among the Finite. Instead of completing the explanation by taking up the Unity of the Finite, he passes on to ask what sort of *idea* the third class has, the one that is a mixture of the Infinite and the Finite, which latter he now says has not been collected into its Unity, although what is to follow might produce that effect. The mixed or third class of things contains those in which the definiteness of number has been added to and evidently predominates over the indefinitely large multiplication of possibilities between more and less courageous, more and less purple, and so on, in the sense of Socrates' examples from health, which is restored when "number" intervenes to banish the "infinite" or disorder that presents itself as illness; and from music, wherein the Finite is added to high and low (i.e. higher and lower), fast and slow, for the perfection of music; and from the moderation of cold and hot in the climate. To use the addition of Number to the Limitless Opposites as a trope for expressing the superiority of moderation to extremes would be to waste a great effort on a very modest outcome. But Socrates ascribes by name health, beauty, strength, and many great beauties of the soul to this limitation of the unlimited by number—a limitation that could come to be only if two mutually contradictory things, the Finite and Infinite, or measure and the incommensurable, could be combined under the influence of the harmonizing or moderating power of cause, which would impose measure on its opposite and thus apparently transform the third class into the Finite just as surely as the mixture of the colored and the colorless would inevitably be colored. We perceive now why Socrates hinted that the missing "Unity of the Finite" might emerge in the definition of the third class of things, the combinations of Finite and Infinite. Apparently, it is of the nature of the idea of the Finite or of Number itself to exist as the dominant counterpoise to an opposite

principle in the Whole, a Whole that is constituted by the Infinite incommensurable-irrational as well as by the principle of measure and control that brings things to their proper sizes, amounts, and conditions. Inevitably, if we are to understand our world, we will wonder about the power that brings together the contradictory reconcilables to form a combination dominated by, if not indeed converted into the more potent but still limited ingredient, yet under such conditions that the union must always appear precarious.

At this point (26b), Socrates gives the discussion a historical or political bearing by remarking that a goddess intervened at some time to put an end to universal insolence and wickedness and unlimited pleasure-seeking by imposing law and order, *nomos* and *taxis*, which belong to Finite. The universe is so strangely constructed that its powerful impulse, ubiquitous in all animals, namely, the innately unlimited thrust toward pleasure, requires to be restrained so that the happiness almost universally believed to accompany the infinite is in fact possible only when the seductive infinite is subdued to the finite, over heavy resistance. Law is the finite for us; it is also the alternative or even the antithesis to nature according to the distinction rendered venerable in classical political philosophy between *physis* and *nomos*. The very order of our world is deep in mystery, but mystery that would be greatly attenuated if the cause of the mixture of Infinite and Finite were manifest to us. Socrates will turn to the Cause next, but only after speaking of the Many, i.e. the concrete members of the third or mixed class: everything born of the limitation of the unlimited—perhaps all things. He does not stop to make explicit the One of the mixed class. There is little need to do so for once he has characterized the concrete many, the definition of the One would simply repeat that characterization: the One is what is seen in the Many and made into speech while the Many are the instances of that same observation and speech in concrete manifestation. The Idea as a separate being in which the concrete existences “participate” plays no part in the quadripartition Infinite-Finite-Mixture-Cause. The One as alternative to Many, in the formula One-Number-Infinite, is replaced by Mixture and the Cause of Mixture, by a duality and the cause of the duality, in the formula Infinite-Finite (or Number)-Mixture-Cause, as Plato’s critique of the One continues.

Cause is what produces the members of the class of mixture, and the best life is a mixture of pleasure and wisdom. The interlocutors’ task is not to determine the best life, which proved to be easy, but to decide which of its two ingredients stood in second place, that is, in second place behind the mixture itself. The mixture is a composite of infinite and finite. Pleasure belongs wholly in the class of the infinite. Socrates moves to make the argument turn on whether mind and wisdom are in the class of the finite or the infinite, and he proceeds by gaining assent to the proposition that the whole itself is ruled and ordered not by unreason or chance but by wisdom. Protarchus, appalled at the thought of denying this, agrees to it so hastily on the evidence of the heavenly

bodies that Socrates cautions him against adopting thoughtlessly the acceptable received opinions. This noted, Socrates begins the investigation of Cause by himself referring to the nature of the bodies of all living things, that is, the nature of fire, water, air, and earth. His point is that fire as it is in us is the paltry counterpart of the great fire of the Whole by which our fire is nourished, out of which it is generated and by which it is ruled; and similarly with water, air, and earth. We are, in other words, naturally, spontaneously, automatically in perfect and absolute concord with the Whole on the plane of body. As somatic beings, we are one with the Whole and are ruled by it unqualifiedly. Now it is Socrates' task to establish our relation to the Whole on the plane that is relevant to soul or Cause. His proof of the presence of soul in our body is achieved with no difficulty by the simple means of asking Protarchus whether they should not say that our body has a soul. That admitted, Socrates moves next to a surprising position: instead of arguing that, as the quadripartition of body in us must be understood under the identical quadripartition of body in the Whole, so the presence of soul in our body must be understood by reference to a universal soul, he reverts instead to the quadripartition of Finite, Infinite, their Mixture, and Cause, the fourth which is in all things and which provides us with soul and with those things that are good for the body. As Cause replaced One at the earlier stage, it now replaces soul in the forward movement of the argument. His argument for Cause goes beyond soul to what provides both soul and the good of the body, to what he calls the totality of wisdom. How, he asks, could there be missing from the other components that exist throughout the heavens, that single one which he calls the most beautiful and glorious nature? Would it not be better if we said that in the Whole there is much infinite and enough finitude, and a not contemptible cause which orders the times and seasons and is most justly called wisdom and mind. But wisdom and mind could not come into being without soul. And in the nature of Zeus you would say that a royal soul and a royal mind were brought into being through the power of Cause, and other noble things in the others according to how each likes best to be spoken of. Thus we know that mind always rules the Whole, as the ancients said.

The totality of wisdom that rules so widely is not soul but is prior to soul, and it is not the wisdom of the god but is responsible for the soul and mind of a god, is prior also to god. But Cause, or Wisdom and Mind, could not come to be without soul, although soul does not produce Cause, rather the reverse. Soul must therefore be a condition of the existence of Cause if Cause, qua wisdom and mind, were to come into being. Cause, in any ordinary signification of the word, and according to the meaning given it by Socrates, is prior to its product; but that product is here presented as necessary to its own productive cause, if the productive Cause qua wisdom and mind is such a thing as comes into being. Cause qua productive is primordial; but if productive of a cosmos it must have and depend on mind. Absolute Cause should be both different from mind

as being its producer, and it should be guided by mind, perhaps while being co-extensive with mind, to the end that its product be a cosmos, and order. If there is no mind without soul, and the cosmos is a product of intelligent Cause, then soul must be coeval with Cause. Then it would be misleading to represent Cause as unconditionally primordial.

Our perplexity will not subside if we do not clarify to ourselves what we mean or should mean by Cause. We might mean a mere efficiency or power or capacity for producing an effect or a product or a change in the state of things. If we meant this, and in doing so meant to adhere strictly to the notion of an efficient cause, which is an entity distinct from any other to which the form and the end of its products are intellectually present, then we should have to admit either the separate existence of such an intelligent companion or the activity of mere chance, were our axiom the orderliness of the cosmic product of Cause. But if by Cause we were to mean not mere efficiency but the totality of whatever is primordial to an orderly cosmos, not admitting the need for a collaboration between efficiency and any other indispensable separate adjunct entity, then we would have adhered to the strictest because absolute sense of Cause, and in so doing would have made unnecessary, indeed repugnant, the hypothesis of soul which bears intelligence and is opposite to body. If an escape from the difficulty were sought by ensouling the cosmos itself, making it an animal possessed of its own self-directing intelligence, then Cause would be rendered superfluous immediately by what would amount to a denial that the cosmos was in need of a power that both transcends and precedes it for its coming into being. Socrates does not here choose to take that direction but, on the contrary, as was said above, he unexpectedly fails to argue the existence of soul in the All by analogy with our somatic integration in the Whole, moving instead to Cause as the amalgamation of the Infinite and the Finite. As he previously moved cautiously toward presenting the One as if replaceable by the mere characterization of the Many, so he now appears to de-emphasize a discrete soul of the All, a separate intelligence external to and decisive for the good of the cosmos but not of the body of the cosmos, installing in its place that which makes possible or accomplishes the harmonious conjunction of irrational and rational that are the inmost irreducibles of the universe. Whatever it is that is the ground of, reason for, producer of that reconciliation of opposites, solely by itself whether in the capacity of agent or in the capacity of an essence shared by the reconcilable opposites that drives them into mixture because they are what they are, that "whatever" is primordial self-subsistent Cause. If, however, Cause is not to be understood, cannot be understood except as working in the presence of mind as distinct from the intelligible essence of objects, and mind for all purposes means soul, then Cause can never be conceived as unconditional. In presenting Cause as both unconditional and dependent upon soul, Socrates is not so much contradicting himself as compelling us to look directly at a question that stands before all serious theology.

Everything said is intended to conduce to the conclusion that mind rules and that mind belongs or belongs more or less or virtually to that one class of the quadripartition that is called Cause. Hence it follows that mind or wisdom lies closer than pleasure to the highest of the four classes, and thus stands in second place ahead of the life of pleasure the infinite, which is what was to be shown. Socrates has determined the order of goodness between pleasure and mind not by establishing first what is meant by good but by erecting Finite or definite number as the criterion of superiority and arguing as if the decisive quality of mind is its power of limiting the unlimited or imposing number and thus reason on the unnumbered and irrational, represented by *pi*. It is not at all clear how *pi* can ever be mastered, for it belongs in the nature of things; but that it can be somehow subdued is demonstrated by the simultaneous existence, in a condition of evident reconciliation and mutual dependence, of the circumference and the diameter of a circle. Perhaps the numbering power of mind is demonstrated in the fact that the irrational "number" is made by mind to appear as if it were a number, namely "*pi*," through an act of mind that cannot be better denominated than by use of the figure used earlier by Socrates: stamping upon some plurality the idea of a rationalizing unity. At any rate, number or Finite is at the present stage of the argument the surrogate for Good.

For reasons not stated, Socrates moves next to investigate the coming into being of pleasure and mind—in what, and through what passion or affect (*pathos*) each of them comes to be. The satisfactory discussion of pleasure is said to require the inclusion of pain, and the inquiry will begin in fact with the genesis of pain. Socrates opens the investigation with the assertion that both pleasure and pain have their origin according to nature in the third class, the class of the mixture of Infinite and Finite. Since he argued earlier that pleasure belonged to the class of the Infinite, his assertion here has the clear implication that its being in one class is compatible or consistent with its becoming through another. Whatever that might portend in general, Socrates' immediate point is that the third class is the locus of harmony and of health, which are subject to disruption and restoration according to whether dissolution or a repletion is taking place, or a displacement or restoration—a movement against the natural condition or a movement towards it. Since a movement of return is unintelligible in the absence of a movement of displacement, it is clear that the discussion of pleasure is impossible without considering pain if, as will soon appear, pleasure originates in bodily motions of a natural direction. Every ensouled being comes to be according to nature out of the infinite and finite, so that its natural state is also its harmonious or measured state in the sense that each is present in some right amount. In light of what has gone before, that must mean that some number has been applied to something capable of being present as more or less. The illustrations of this highly abstract doctrine indicate an intention on Plato's part to explain pleasure and pain as counterparts of somatic states: hunger is a dissolution and a pain, eating a repletion and a pleasure; excessive cold

brings on a painful congelation of the moistures, the return of the parts to their natural places and separation is pleasure. Plato has provided an account of pleasure and pain in terms of how they come about or come to be—"what it is" as what is its coming into being, as before he explained the One as the Many and as he continues to speak of the living and other things as compounded of Infinite and Finite rather than of body and soul.

But there are pleasures and pains of other sorts and origins. There are the pleasures and pains that arise within the soul itself, those that come to be when the soul looks forward to pleasures and pains that lie ahead. In the briefest of remarks, Socrates lets it be understood that the pleasures and pains of the soul itself are mere shadows of anticipation derivative from those aesthetic accompaniments of small bodily motions already described as pleasure and pain. Before leaving the subject of their genesis, Socrates characterizes both kinds of pleasure as "pure," that is, unmixed with pain, by which he cannot yet mean arising independently of pain since pleasure has been defined in terms of the hedonic movement that follows the perturbation of pain.

Still inquiring whether pleasure as such is simply choiceworthy, Socrates asks Protarchus to consider whether a living being in whom neither the disrupting nor the restoring motions were occurring would not be free from pleasure and pain at the moment. On this basis Socrates affirms that there is a condition devoid of pleasure and pain alike, and takes the next step of asserting that there is nothing to prevent one from living a life of the mind in that manner. For this astonishing assertion nothing resembling evidence is offered, only a reminder of the point made much earlier that anyone living such a life would be entirely without feelings of pleasure or pain. In the earlier passage (21de), Socrates made the joylessness of such an apathetic life a reason for rejecting it in favor of the mixed life of pleasure and mind. The reasoning that argued against its desirability is now adduced in support of its possibility—a non sequitur made conspicuous by the recent definition of pleasure and pain in terms of bodily motions, harmonious and inharmonious with nature, that could cease only in death. In fact, the impossibility of such a cessation of the flux in a living body will be granted freely by Socrates at a much later point in the dialogue (43a). At any rate, that gods probably feel neither joy nor its opposite is the weakest of arguments for the possibility of a human life without either.

Socrates reverts now to the pleasures of the soul itself, connects their origin with memory and declares it necessary to clarify perception (*aisthesis*) before grappling with memory. According to Socrates, the body is affected in two ways: in one, what the body suffers never reaches the soul for its awareness, while in the other, the vibrations (*seismon*) of the body reach the soul's consciousness to produce sensation, which Socrates defines as the shared experience and shared motion of body and soul united. The soul does not "forget" those things of which it was never aware, it is simply oblivious of them, while



it is only the perceptions that it has once entertained that it can either remember or forget. Memory is the preservation of perception, which involves the body's motions. Memory seems to constitute a pool or fund of such stored perceptions, from which the soul can on its own initiative draw when it wishes to do so, and when it does so, it "recalls" rather than "remembers." Socrates stresses the importance of the distinction between remembering and recalling for the bearing it has on the pleasure of the soul apart from the body, and also the soul's desiring. Socrates guides the discussion next to the subject of desire, what it is and how it originates.

Desire is exemplified by hunger and thirst, emptiness calling for replenishment. Desire means a yearning for opposite states, for example to be filled while being actually empty. Since it is the body that is empty, the locus of desire must be the soul, for the body cannot and the soul therefore must envision the state opposite to its actual one. This is possible for the soul because it has the power to recall the perceptions or sensations of past states, in the present example the sensation of the body's being full. It belongs only to the soul to be cognizant of a state other than its actual state, but that other state is one that must have been experienced as actual at some other time. There is no question of a free or speculative intelligence at work. From all this Socrates infers that all desire is of the soul, not of the body, although, as he fails to mention, so far as hunger and thirst are typical of desire, to that extent the body commands the soul's desiring. Socrates remarks, as if casually, that every living thing is always striving towards the opposite of its actual state (35a), a statement that, if true, would mean not only that Socrates had been converted to the doctrine of flux in a significant degree but also that the wise desire to be foolish. It would be better to understand this remark, which helps to present the soul as always seeking to make of the future a copy of the pleasant past recollected, as referring particularly to states of the soul and body in their intense symbiosis. Socrates now proclaims that the discourse has shown that the appetite, the desire, the rule in every living thing belongs to the soul by virtue of its having the power of recalling. For the second time, Protarchus does not point out that the soul's recalling and desiring are responsive and ministerial to the states and needs of the body. Had he done so, Socrates might have been induced to make explicit that soul, whose hegemony is now being argued, differs in a significant respect from Cause, the ruling element in the quadripartition that preoccupied him and that seems to have dropped out of sight. Soul is not *nous*, or mind, reason, wisdom, or intellect. It is only that capacity for participating in, retaining, and recalling the vibrations of the body that it experiences as sensations and that it can transfer from the past, as the discourse will soon show, to the future as an image of things to come. If, therefore, Socrates will leave unqualified his assertion that the argument has shown that soul rules every living thing because the memory that projects our delights and thus rules us belongs to the

soul, then he would have found an extraordinarily pregnant meaning in the argument: we are ruled by our propensity to pleasure and to avoid pain, more fundamentally, to seek our preservation and avoid our destruction.

For the stated purpose of drawing an inference regarding the way of life, Socrates turns to the sensations of pain and pleasure that relate to being full and empty and all the others connected with the preservation and destruction of living things. He considers the transition between being empty and being full, elicits the thought that one may be pained by his present state but cheered by the anticipation of his coming relief. Socrates describes one who is affected by a pain that is expected to be followed by a pleasure as “between” (*en meso*) pleasure and pain. It is noteworthy that he does not adduce such a being in the middle to illustrate the freedom from both pleasure and pain to which he referred earlier when speaking of the present subject, namely, the way of life, maintaining that the most divine way of life would be the one free from both pleasure and pain. Here, in the rather pointedly somaticized discussion of pleasure and pain, he describes the man or other living thing who is in the middle condition as partaking at once of both (36b). The distinctions of soul and body, man and beast, become blurred as the mechanical etiology of pleasure and pain progresses. Socrates affiliates the soul’s vision of relief with hope and thus with pleasure; the absence of such a hope with pain. With this, Socrates begins a long passage of the discourse aiming to establish that pleasures and pains can be true or false. As we are capable of true and false opinions, so we are capable of the anticipations of pleasures and pains—which anticipations are themselves pleasures and pains of the soul—that are connected with true and false opinions. The opinions that lodge in our souls like words and images have their source in memory and perception, and in the feelings (*pathemata*) (39a), thus sharing an origin with the pleasures and pains of the soul alone. Perhaps because they exhibit a shared being by virtue of their common becoming, pleasure of the soul is vulnerable to the falseness of opinion, and where the vulnerability appears most clearly is in the visions of the future that false opinion holds up to the contemplation of the soul, misleading it into the pleasure of anticipation of that which is either wicked or nothing at all.

Addressing the reason that some men are shown true images and are thus inspired with true hopes or pleasures, Socrates finds the explanation in the friendship of the gods for the just, pious, and good man. We may thus trust that the opinions and the hopes and the anticipations of pleasure of the just, pious, and good are all true, specifically the hopes that they have for the pleasures that await them in heaven. But Socrates has shown nothing by way of a demonstration of any of these teachings on the helpfulness of the gods. The opinion that our right opinions are gifts of the gods to the pious must eventually be understood in its relation with the doings of Socrates, who before our eyes is himself endowing Protarchus and perhaps others with a correction of their hedonistic opinions and thus helping to save them from false pleasures and pains.

Socrates now proposes that the only badness of pleasures lies in their falseness, a conclusion to which he has been pushed by the near reduction of pleasure to opinion, of course in the soul. As one might say, if the soul's mind were only wisdom, then the opinionative underside of wisdom would not exist to falsify pleasure. Protarchus is not prepared for the radical intertwining of pleasure and knowledge, and protests that wickedness must have something to do with the badness of pleasures. Socrates agrees that they might take the point up at a later time, but he dismisses it for the present in favor of an argument showing that the soul compares the magnitudes of expected pleasures and pains, projecting its recollections of past states of body under the influence of the deceptions introduced by remoteness in time, as the eye is deceived by distance in space. Thus truth and falseness can attach to pleasures and pains without infection from opinion but through another failing of the mind, namely, miscalculation. It has by now been made clear that a life of pleasure is necessarily in some large measure a kind of life of the mind, understanding by mind not wisdom alone but the other powers of truth and untruth that must be included in an animate intelligence. How might one understand the issue between "the life of pleasure" and "the life of mind" if the two are inseparable?

Still not content, Socrates sees a way into greater falseness of pleasure and pain than has yet come to light. He would like to know what follows from the admitted fact that pain and pleasure have their origins in the disruptions and restorations of our natural somatic state: he asks, what if neither corruption nor restoration were taking place, dismissing Protarchus's objection that that would be impossible and eliciting the conclusion that there would then be neither pleasure nor pain. Thus, a condition for absence of both pleasure and pain would be the cessation of motion in the body. Socrates makes reference to the wise men whose saying is that everything is always in flux upward or downward, a dictum that would seem to obviate any rest from pleasure or pain. But Socrates reminds Protarchus that there are changes within our bodies, of which growth is the prime example, that are below the level of our consciousness—an argument reminiscent of the earlier one that distinguished the bodily motions that find their way to the soul and those that die out within the body. The proponents of the physics of universal flux cannot convert their insight about the motion of body throughout the whole into a truth about pleasure and pain, thus into a truth about human life or its goodness.

Having noticed the wise men who give life only the two possibilities of pleasure and pain, refuge from both problematic, he pursues his purpose of demonstrating that life has three possibilities: pleasure, pain, and neither. In order to proceed, he must confront the theorists who reduce the true possibilities to only one, namely pain. Pleasure, they teach, is merely the absence of pain. These are men who are said to be cunning in matters of nature, and also particularly hostile to Philebus, that is, to hedonism. Their position is a curious one, for while they deny that pleasure is anything, they are repelled by it through

some natural disgust, and they hate its power. Socrates considers them to be mistaken in their theory but on the right track in their morality. The wise men of flux upheld a physics of motion that Socrates does not refute, but they drew an untenable, unedifying moral conclusion from it, while the present misohedonists begin with an edifying moral instinct that will prove, under Socrates' guidance, to be inconsistent with physiology. Socrates' project will, at best and to the extent possible, articulate the facts of nature and the facts of the human good.

Describing the misohedonists as comrades-in-arms, Socrates proposes to Protarchus that they track the allies' disgust with pleasure all the way to its origins in the definition of the nature of a class of things, in particular, pleasure. This proves to mean locating anything, and thus pleasure, in the thing's most concentrated form, which in the case of pleasure is in the body in reaction against or relief of the most concentrated pain. A man's worst moments are his times of most intense bodily disorder, say in feverish illness. If the most intense pleasure is pleasure itself, and pleasure itself arises out of pain itself, then the misohedonists' point seems to have been demonstrated: pleasure is nothing but the relief from or the absence of bodily pain in disease.

Socrates does not criticize the apparent nonsense in speaking of the "greatest" and "most intense," or the origin, of something whose nonexistence is to be proved. He will explain much later (15a) that he has wished only to make use of the misohedonists while making his argument that some pleasures are illusory and unreal, and others exist not purely but in mixture with pains. Since Socrates had already proved in his own name and without affecting to discover the reasonings of his "allies" that pleasure resulted from the correction of a decay from the natural norm, it is hard to see what he thinks his argument gains from the witness of these extremists whose merit is a moral predilection. From this point (45d) forward to 51a, Socrates' argument will consist of a correction of the misohedonist view that pleasure is simply nonpain of the body.

Socrates begins the striking anatomy of pleasure that follows with a showing that some pleasures are mixed in that they are in both body and soul and some in that they are also mixed with pain, while some lodge in and are of only body or soul. Because of the peculiar mixing together of pleasure and pain at the same time, as in the pain of an itch which lies deep in the body and the pleasure of the scratching which relieves only the surface, it is possible for the same mixture to appear to its host as pleasure or pain. Socrates carries this theme forward through the investigation of the pleasures and pains of the body and also of the body and the soul together, as in the case discussed earlier in which the body is in one state and the soul anticipates the opposite state, providing a pleasant antithesis to the actual distress. Socrates explains that he will now say what he did not say when the latter case was first discussed, namely, that in the utter enormity of the frequency of occasions when body and soul diverge in these directions, there is only one mixture of pain and pleasure.

More pointedly than ever, Socrates argues an ontology that seems to defy logic: mutual contradictories can exist simultaneously, at least in an animate being, and their coexistence is called a One. Is Unity a name for plurality of opposites, as if Being were a coin with One on the one side and Strife on the other, everything always being in motion upward or downward, advancing toward order or decaying from it?

Socrates proceeds to the pains and pleasures of the soul by itself, showing in a tour de force of psychology how the pains of anger and other passions combine with the pleasures of the same, arguing in an extended passage that men take pleasure in the ridiculous lapses from self-knowledge of their friends while at the same time enduring the pains of envy. He brings this exposition to its climax in a summary of the argument: in threnodies of mourning as in tragedies, not only on the stage but in all the tragedy and comedy of life, pain and pleasure are mixed together at once, as also in myriad other things (50b).

Having anatomized the mixtures of pleasure and pain in body, soul, and body and soul together, Socrates finds it natural and somehow necessary to consider the unmixed pleasures. He begins by repeating his disagreement with those who deny that pleasure is anything more real than cessation of pain, true as it might be that many pleasures—as he has shown—do have that character. Asked what are true pleasures, Socrates replies that they are those connected with the beautiful colors, shapes, odors, and sounds, delightful when perceived but not missed or yearned for painfully when they are absent. He explains that the shapes that he has in mind are not the shapes of animals or paintings, that is, not the shapes of the natural things or the artifacts that mimic them, but the geometric ones, in perceptible manifestation and not as objects of contemplation; indeed, manifested in products of the woodworker's art. He emphasizes the innate, everlasting beauty of such things, which is the source of the unmixed pleasure that they give. After the pleasures of the sense of smell and sound, Socrates adds the pleasures of knowledge if they do not originate in hunger for knowledge or in the pains of such a hunger. From this we understand that the philosophic life, driven by conscious wonder and earnest yearning for the knowledge that relieves the distress of confusion, is not a life of unmixed pleasure but rather resembles human existence altogether in its composition of tragedy and comedy. In a brief exchange (52ab), Socrates and Protarchus make it clear that the feelings of pleasure and pain that they have been discussing are the natural and spontaneous ones, not those that arise out of thought or reasoning about things. The pure pleasures of sensible beauty are free gifts to us from nature; the pleasures of philosophizing are neither pure nor natural; the loss of knowledge is not the accompaniment of a disarrangement that causes pain and that calls out for the restoration that brings pleasure. Nature does not sound an alarm to alert us to the loss of knowledge as a good; as merely natural beings, we would sink painlessly into the stupor of senility or diseased obliviousness. Socrates' proof that there are pleasures that are

unmixed with pain serves to refute the misohedonists' contention that pleasure is only a release from pain, but it has gone further in implicating the question of philosophic inquiry. We would be satisfied with our grasp of his meaning if he had not closed this part of his argument with the remark that the pure pleasures of knowledge belong not at all to the many but only to exceedingly few. What can he mean except that to a very few human beings it is given to know without desire or painful effort, as if truth were simply and directly to appear to them as a beautiful odor or sound might present itself, but having the character of an effortless insight into the noetic beauties of the world? It could not plausibly be said that the natural world is a great machine inclined to the realization of the multitude of mankind's purest pleasure; almost the reverse.

Now (52c) Socrates makes a remark that ostensibly summarizes and in fact breaks into the argument. He says, with much reservation, that, having moderately well discriminated the pure pleasures and those fairly correctly called the impure, they may go on to add that the turbulent pleasures (say those that come with scratching an intense itch) are unmeasured while the opposite kind are measured. The former, in body and soul, are of the class of the infinite, the latter of the measured. We have been brought back to the quadripartition of the first part of the dialogue, but the return is jarring because it contradicts flatly the repeated and uncompromising assertions (27e, 31a) that all pleasure is in the class of the unlimited. Protarchus accepts the new position without objection. It would appear that the introduction of the distinction between mixed and unmixed or pure and impure has had a decisive influence on the characterization of pleasure as either finite or infinite: not pleasure as such but the kind of pleasure determines whether it is finite or measured. According to the authoritative quadripartition, everything whatsoever is infinite or finite or a mixture of the two compounded by Cause: mixture means mixture of finite and infinite. As the investigation of pleasure was driven forward by the argument that pleasure is only surcease from pain, pleasure came to be portrayed as very often mixed with pain, and the leading distinction that emerged was between the mixed and the pure pleasures, the former being indeed a relief from pain even if by anticipation rather than surcease, the latter pure primarily in being unmixed with anything other than themselves, accompanying the unsought perception of purely beautiful things, enjoyed with a tranquil satisfaction. The pure pleasures in this last sense are pure in the sense of "good," as calm, serene, controlled—in brief, moderate or measured—and they recommend themselves self-evidently as good with respect to a human being's happiness. The application of finite to infinite in general is in the interest of the order of the cosmos and all its constituents, including in that order if not simply meaning by it the articulation of matter in ways that guard the world from being populated by monsters. As the argument draws closer to the final definition of good, the analysis of pleasure must be cast under headings that are appropriate to the definition of the conditions of human happiness or the good for man. The pure pleasures

must have a place in contributing to human good; their very purity or freedom from admixture with pain is the basis or condition for their moderateness or freedom from frenzy and ecstasy alike. Socrates had long since pronounced that it would not be necessary to investigate the kinds of pleasure for the task of determining whether pleasure or wisdom was second best after their combination. It now appears that the unity of pleasure is radically and decisively fractured, to be replaced by a duality or a double duality: mixed and pure, unmeasured and measured. The “unity” of pleasure is compelled to give way, or to be superseded, in the interest of the project for understanding the human good. Alternatively, man’s good would be unattainable by him if pleasure were effectually a unity. It is of the greatest importance to mankind that pleasure is not a one.

Now Socrates moves (52d) toward the definition of the human good by assimilating to each other the true and the pure, and then describing the pure form first of pleasure and then of wisdom. As the purest white is also the truest and most beautiful white, so the purest pleasure and the purest knowledge are the truest of their kind, and thus belong to good—and so we might imagine the analysis to run quickly to its conclusion. But Socrates injects into the argument the thought that pleasure participates in Becoming, not in Being, by which he presumably means that one is necessarily, by virtue of what pleasure is, approaching it, passing through it, or leaving it behind. Of such things he says they are always for the sake of something else, as a means is for the sake of an end: Becoming is directed toward Being, and what has the status of an end has also the character of good. Thus pleasure does not belong to the good.

It is hard to understand how this depreciation of pleasure, even or especially in pleasure’s purest form, does not carry knowledge or thinking down with it too, for the purest pleasure is precisely that which accompanies the presence of those unsolicited insights or knowledge gained without any admixture of painful desire for it. Moreover, such knowledge itself certainly comes into being and, as we saw, can pass away. It belongs fully as much to the realm of becoming as does the disparaged pleasure that it engenders, but its failure to qualify as an end is not only suppressed by the argument but is tacitly contradicted when Socrates presents the life of purest thought as most choiceworthy—the life of Being and Good. For the moment, we cannot do better than to notice that if the purest pleasure falls short of Good because pleasure belongs to Becoming rather than Being, then the purest knowledge or thought must be able to survive the same test if thought is to prove to be good. Before going on to subject mind and knowledge to the test, Socrates argues the folly of the hedonism that would make pleasure so unqualifiedly good as to make the man who feels pleasure the good man, ignoring such virtues as courage and moderation. We are left to wonder whether the wise man as such is courageous and moderate and in all ways virtuous, or even whether he would need to be in order to be thought good by this criterion.

Socrates discovers that there are sciences that are useful and others that are purely theoretical, as there is an arithmetic and a geometry for carpentry and then there is also the philosophical mathematics which recognizes only identical entities (presumably points, lines, and numbers rather than how many men or horses in two armies). It is given to Protarchus to conclude from this that the most precise arts are the ones that arise in connection with the eager efforts (*horme*) of the really philosophic, who presumably generate the most precise, hence presumably the purest knowledge. But it proceeds from their *horme* and hence is not an unsolicited insight but produces a pleasure in them preceded by a desire, a lack, a pain. Perhaps it is for this reason that Socrates now nominates the dialectic power as not to be judged behind any other. Dismissing Protarchus's argument that Gorgias would regard rhetoric as most powerful and best, Socrates insists on associating good with truth and purity rather than usefulness or advantage. If the present line of reasoning were to be pursued, the good for man would be disturbingly disjoint from man's practical advantage and thus perhaps even his survival. Having prepared for the mutual affiliation of dialectic, knowledge, and truth, Socrates is in a position to disparage those arts and their practitioners who exist in the realm of opinion, "and even if they think themselves to be investigating something of nature, know that all through their lives they investigate the things of this cosmos—how they come into being, how they are acted upon and what they do" (58e–59a). Thus we are exposed to a mighty distinction between nature and cosmos, the former being the realm of the objects of contemplation, the latter being the world of cause and effect, of what we now, in accord with Kant, call the world of the laws of nature. It is in this cosmos, this orderly world of experience, that all things are in a state of coming to be and passing away, of ubiquitous flux and thus of ungraspability. Therefore it can be said that the purest knowledge is of the eternal, changeless, and unmixed things—or of their nearest congeners—and this belongs with wisdom and mind. The search for the purest knowledge has ended: it is knowledge of the pure.

Immediately (59e), Socrates assigns to himself and Protarchus the character of *demiourgoi* or artisans whose task is to produce a mixture of wisdom (*phronesis*) and pleasure. He appears to be demonstrating in act that the dialectically achieved knowledge about the purest pleasure and the purest, most useless knowledge is itself useful for the humanly advantageous purpose of combining the pure into a mixture. Repeating the issue, which is whether pleasure or knowledge comes closer to the good, and repeating also that the good is that which leaves no need unsatisfied, Socrates repeats at last that neither the life of mind without pleasure nor of pleasure without mind would suffice for any man; thus neither wisdom nor pleasure is the good. Their purpose must now be to discover Good, which they know must be sought in or as a mixture. If Good is a mixture, it belongs to the class of the impure, the things that are



touched with Becoming and are passed by by Being—the things that cannot be grasped because they are forever changing. Of course what Socrates the *demiourgos* will confect here as good life will exist neither in the realm of nature, where the eternal and pure have their being, nor in the mere cosmos, where rhetoric and politics would be required to gain it an actuality among men, who might in any case be unequipped to live it.

Having gained again the admission that neither pleasure alone nor mind alone constitutes the good or the good life, Socrates begins the final ascent toward the true good for man (61). We know from the beginning that the good life—which is so indistinguishable from the good that we fall easily into the habit of thinking that good has meaning only in reference to human existence—depends for its coming to be on good mixing, whatever that might prove to mean. Although some kinds of knowledge are truer and higher than others because they pertain to the beings that most truly are, they are insufficient to life, and to them must be added the humbler knowledges that belong to the human sphere, even though they are tinged with falseness; and also music and every other kind of knowledge. Of the pleasures, the pure and true must be accompanied by the necessary ones, presumably because there would be no human kind if it did not perpetuate itself through seeking the pleasure that is preceded by longing. The admissible pleasures are the ones that comport with what we can divine to be the idea of the good by nature in man and the whole.

These things granted, with all their implication for the qualified good of the good for man and for all, Socrates calls next for the inclusion of truth (64b) in the melange that has already been required to admit something of the false. Hardly any formula of edification could be more routine and thus more empty of particular meaning than the bare imprecation of the truth. Socrates lifts his call for the truth above inanity by describing truth as indispensable to the becoming and the existence of what comes to be and exists. We might not know what truth is, but we know that it is necessary for becoming and existing. What is soon to follow will reveal what is necessary for becoming and existing, and in so revealing will shed light on truth, and on good and beauty. Before that, though, Socrates declares that their present discourse seems to him to have wrought, figuratively, an incorporeal cosmos that will rule nobly an animate body: the fabricated idea of this world of coming into being, existing, and dissolving—the rational principle *or truth* of this phenomenal world. This expression of Socrates', which rounds off a major portion of the dialogue, should be considered alongside the earlier passage (59a) in which cosmos was disparaged by comparison with nature, cosmos being this world of becoming and of being acted upon and of making, indeed the realm of the arts and knowledges that are of practical benefit to human beings, contrasted explicitly with the realm and faculty of truth, said to be appropriated to eternal things, unmixed

things. The argument is drifting toward the adaptation of truth to eternity in the cosmos as distinguished from eternity simply. What this means more concretely will appear in what follows.

Socrates opens the final section of the dialogue by suggesting that he and Protarchus are now before the gates of the good itself (64c). To facilitate their passage within, he proposes the decisive question: what that is in or of "the mixture" (presumably always the mixture of all wisdom and some pleasures, but now with the late addition of "truth") seems to be most venerable and most emphatically the cause of its being universally liked. The answer comes forth: measure and proportion are indispensable to the being of the ingredients and of their combination. But as we have recently learned, truth is necessary for the being and becoming of what is and exists. We may therefore say provisionally that truth is the measure and proportion of combinations: right amount, and right amount in relation to other amount, i.e., at best, commensurability. So far as the cosmos is the sum of all becomings and durations, a compound of compounds, its truth and cause is measure. But to measure is joined proportion, the other name for which is commensurability. Commensurability or proportion is the relation between two measured or finite amounts both of which are measurable by the same measure. But, as in the relation between the circumference and radius of a circle or the perimeter and diagonal of a square, there exist irrationalities or incommensurabilities that testify to a limit that binds the truth itself, a limit that indicated perhaps "why" the things in the cosmos do not endure forever: the truth of the cosmos is a mixture of reason and unreason.

From his declaration that measure and proportion are indispensable to things and their mixtures Socrates now (64e) draws a consequence: since measure and proportion are everywhere assimilated to beauty and virtue, the power of good may be said to have fled for refuge in the nature of the beautiful. It is as if the good is being hunted from one apparently safe place to another, each conception of it proving insecure in turn, the latest being the identification of good as beauty and thus as measure and proportion. Whatever else has been made clear, it has now been revealed that we are in pursuit of the good.

To this point, Socrates has drawn both truth and beauty into the sphere of measure and proportion. He says now (65a), "If we cannot catch the good with or in one idea, let us take it with three, beauty, proportion, and truth, saying that these considered as one might most correctly, of all the things in the mixture, be regarded as cause, and through these as good, it has become so too." Apparently, the Idea of Good is a triplex made one, and the common ground to which the three are reducible is measure or proportion. The Idea of Good, itself a mixture, must be subject to the rule that its central ingredient, i.e. measure or proportion, is dominant in its own constitution. Only measure and proportion, three considered one or made one by having a single Idea stamped on them by us (p. 174 above), lie within the Idea of Good as an ingredient of it and also lie

within it in the qualified sense in which cause is “in” or “of” the mixture to make it and its components endure as components and as composite.

Reverting now (65b) to the original dyad of pleasure and wisdom as “the mixture” superior to each of its components, and reverting also to the old question whether wisdom or pleasure stands closer to the good that neither of them by itself can claim to be, Socrates proceeds to compare each of them in turn with each element of the composite that is the test or standard, which is beauty, truth, and measure. In doing so, he will without explanation *again* restore (65c) the lately added and removed “truth” to mind (*nous*) and pleasure as the goods to be tested, thus producing the puzzling situation in which truth would have to be compared with itself since it is put in both the test and the thing to be tested. As will be seen, though, Socrates in act does finally drop “truth” from among the goods to be tested (mind or wisdom, and pleasure) with no more explanation than accompanied its recent insertions. Rapidly he “shows” that wisdom or mind, the two being used interchangeably, is much closer than pleasure to truth, measure, and beauty, each in turn. Now he has completed his demonstrations and is ready to pronounce the good.

As is to be expected, he passes from the thing to be tested to the thing by which it is to be tested in seeking the highest or first among the goods. The first choice of eternal nature is measure and what belongs to it, and the second is proportion and what belongs to it, which is beauty, perfection (*to teleon*), and sufficiency—all modes of proportion. Third, after the threefold criterion that has been reduced to a dyad by the subsumption of beauty under proportion, comes mind and wisdom (*nous* and *phronesis*). Acknowledging this, one will not deviate far from the truth, he says, thus introducing truth in its own name in a manner that could be called casual or incidental, as if, however exalted it may be, it did not have a distinct or self-subsistent being. Today we would say of it, to convey that meaning, that it is not a thing. It remains unmentioned in the fourth rank of good, which consists of sciences, arts, and right opinions—things of the soul that resemble good more than pleasure does; i.e., resemble measure and proportion more than pleasure does. By insisting, through the explicit application of the ordinal numbers in the ranking, on the duality of the chief criterion of good, namely, measure and proportion, Plato/Socrates calls attention to what I have referred to as a demotion of the One and, simultaneously, of the irreducibility to each other of measure and proportion or commensurability. As number or measure dominated the infinite in combining with it to form Cause, so now incommensurability asserts a silent influence in keeping measure and commensurability apart. Certainly, not all things that are “kept apart” are as such “incommensurable” with each other; but what are we to think of two such as *metron* and *summetron*, together forming good, troubling the unity of good with their intransigent duality?

Finally, in the fifth place, the pure pleasures unvexed with pain are ranked

in relation to good: finally but yet not quite finally, for Socrates refers to the sixth judgment of their discourse, with which it will cease. What is that judgment? If it exists, it is to be found in the short passage that precedes the end of the dialogue, a passage that Socrates introduces as a third presentation of the argument. He reminds of the view that pleasure is the good and of his own judgment that mind is better but that something else might be superior to both, and that mind would be closer than pleasure to that third. With particular emphasis he reminds of the ineligibility of both mind and pleasure to be deemed "the good" because each is not self-subsistent, sufficient, complete. These three attributes are the ones named in the immediately preceding (66b) elaboration of the second highest good or component of good: proportion, beauty, completeness or perfection, and sufficiency. This was from the very beginning the decisive criterion of good, *sine qua non*, known as such by Socrates and applied by him equally against *nous* and *hedone*. It appears that the sixth judgment is the one that determines the second criterion of good to be also first. As if to help us to see the direction of the argument, Socrates is made to refer to the sufficiency of the reasoning by which wisdom and pleasure were proved to be insufficient: not enough, falling short in amount, number, or measure. Proportion points to measure and measure points to proportion. They exist in relation to each other like the twin bodies of a binary star, a one in two and two in one. If geometry is the science that encompasses measure and proportion, one might agree with the judgment that the diligent study of geometry is an appropriate preparation for inquiring after Good.

Socrates closes with a remark that depends for its force on the dissimilarity or disproportion between man and all other animal life. Though every other living thing were to rank pleasure as the good itself, still it would be true that for man another good is better. Precisely while saying this, he speaks of the multitude of mankind whose judgment is the same as that of the beasts, opposite to what comes forth from the muse of philosophy. The true incommensurability of man and beast is revealed in or through philosophy, at exactly the same moment that mankind itself is revealed as composed of parts separated by a profound incommensurability or irrationality. The end of the dialogue returns to and perfects the beginning.