BEAUTY, TO ΚΑΛΟΝ, AND ITS RELATION TO THE GOOD IN THE WORKS OF PLATO

by

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ABSTRACT

Despite the evident importance of beauty (τὸ καλὸν) in Plato, the precise relation between beauty and goodness (τὸ ἀγαθόν) has yet to be specified. Part of the reason for this seems to be the belief that καλός should not be translated ‘beautiful,’ because it has a broader sense and application than our word ‘beautiful.’ A better translation, on this view, would be something like ‘fine.’ But it is difficult to see the difference between fineness and goodness, and it is perhaps for this reason that determining the relation between the two has not been felt an urgent task. In the first chapter we shall investigate the use of the Greek word καλός in some of the major authors prior to and contemporary with Plato in order to determine the strength of the evidence for translations of καλός other than ‘beautiful.’ It will be argued that the evidence for translations of καλός other than ‘beautiful’ is weak, and thus that the word should
generally be translated ‘beautiful.’ When we turn to Plato’s understanding of τὸ καλὸν, we find that he often seems to associate the concept closely with goodness, and yet there are also passages which suggest a difference between the two. Thus the first question to ask is whether beauty and goodness are at least coextensive for Plato? In the second chapter it will be argued that despite some apparent evidence to the contrary, he does seem to think they are coextensive. In the third chapter we argue that Plato identifies goodness and unity, and that the coextension of goodness and beauty is explained on the model of the necessary connection between certain forms, or immanent characters, in the Phaedo. But it does not follow from this that goodness and beauty are identical. In the fourth chapter we will argue that, though beauty and goodness are connected in concrete particulars, qua forms they are distinct, i.e., there are two separate forms, the form of the good (which is identical to the one) and the form of beauty.

Finally, a theme which runs more or less throughout this work is that, contrary to what one might expect, Plato seems to discover what is good by asking what is beautiful. This may seem counterintuitive, because there are passages, like Republic 452d-e and 509b, where it seems that goodness determines or in a way causes beauty, but it seems that when trying to discover what is truly good, Plato always settles on what is beautiful. It may be agreed, even by those who disagree about what goodness is, that things like justice and courage are beautiful, and it is these that Plato always thinks constitute the human good.
χαλεπὰ τὰ καλὰ

- Republic 435c, Hippias Major 304e, Cratylus 384b

We should never underestimate what a word can tell us, for language represents the previous accomplishment of thought.

- Hans Georg Gadamer


- Julius Walter
I would like to thank my supervisor, Lloyd Gerson, for showing me that there is always more truth and wisdom to be found in Plato, and my two advisors, Rachel Barney and Jennifer Whiting, for challenging me to become more precise and rigorous in my thought and writing. Their dedication to the highest standards of scholarship has enormously improved the quality of my thesis. I would also like to thank Brad Inwood for his encouragement and sound advice throughout the years. The remaining inadequacies are, of course, my own. Finally, for all their patience and support, I would like to thank my parents, John and Nicole Riegel, to whom I dedicate this thesis.
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INTRODUCTION

Beauty, in Greek τὸ καλὸν, was one of the most important concepts in Ancient Greek society. It was, quite literally, a reason for living and dying. In Sophocles’ Antigone, when the heroine wants to explain why she must bury her brother even though it will mean her death, she gives as her explanation that it is beautiful for her to do so. And from the War Poems of Tyrtaeus we learn that a primary concern of the Greek warrior was having a beautiful death. The power and importance of beauty for the Greeks was such that Aristotle could write, without any explanation, that beauty is the only proper end and goal of virtue and the virtuous man. Of the significance of beauty in Ancient Greece, Werner Jaeger writes,

The training of the young... must be distinguished from cultural education, which aims at fulfilling an ideal of man as he ought to be. In such an ideal pattern, utility is neglected, or at least relegated to the background. The vital factor is τὸ καλὸν, the Beautiful as a determinant ideal.¹

It is worth dwelling for a moment on the full strangeness of this idea. For if we do not appreciate its strangeness, we may miss a vital aspect of Greek thought and culture. It is probably difficult for us today to understand how one could literally live one’s life for beauty, or see that as the proper goal of life. And this, indeed, may be part of the reason some scholars have resisted the idea that καλὸς should be translated ‘beautiful.’ But it should be admitted that it is at least possible that the Greeks saw and thought about the

world differently from the way we do. And the only possibility we have of seeing in Greek literature anything other than a reflection of our own thought is to let their words stand as they are, if at all possible. If we do this then we may at least begin to understand how the Greeks could see beauty as the obvious and natural goal of life.

What is true for Ancient Greek culture in this regard is also true of Plato. One cannot read Plato in his own language without being struck by his concern for beauty. He devotes an entire dialogue to it, the *Hippias Major,* and the ascent of philosophy in both the *Symposium* and the *Phaedrus* culminates in the vision of the beautiful. Though these are perhaps the most prominent examples of Plato’s interest in beauty, it would be a mistake to limit one’s investigation of this topic to these dialogues. Beauty pervades all of his writing and some of the most illuminating things he says about it are found in the *Republic, Philebus,* and *Timaeus.*

Given its evident importance, τὸ καλὸν is one of the most under-appreciated topics in Platonic scholarship. One recent scholar, Edvard Pettersson, despair of beginning his dissertation on beauty in Plato with a review of the secondary literature, because substantial literature on the topic simply does not exist. He writes,

> Given the frequency with which Plato appeals to the relationship between the kalon and the agathon, it is surprising to find that there has not been any significant attempt to sort out this relationship. The only substantial work on the kalon, in Greek literature and philosophy in general, dates from the nineteenth century and approaches the subject from a primarily aesthetic point of view. As

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2 One of the major obstacles to the study of beauty in Plato is the confusion translators have wrought in the translation of the word καλὸν. It will be one of the major goals of this study to remove this obstacle.

3 The authenticity of this dialogue has been challenged, but the majority of scholars today seem to accept it. See Paul Woodruff, *Plato: Hippias Major* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1982), pp. 93-105.

such, it has little bearing on the pertinent questions in Plato’s ethics that we are interested in here. Other discussions of the role of the kalon in Plato’s ethics tend to [be] quite brief and, as a rule, not very informative.\(^5\)

While Pettersson is right that there is little substantial literature on the topic, this is not the whole story. For the question of beauty in Plato appears in the secondary literature in two ways. First, it can be found in Histories of Aesthetics. Most such works will begin with a chapter on Plato.\(^6\) Many of the treatments of beauty in these works are quite admirable. In general they cover the right topics and present a reasonably accurate account of Plato’s understanding of beauty. But as surveys they cannot develop in sufficient detail the problems beauty posed for Plato and for the Greeks, and thus they fail to capture the significance of Plato’s response to them. Additionally, they generally start from the viewpoint of Aesthetics, as it is thought of today, with its own particular interests. And this viewpoint is inimical to Plato.\(^7\) To the extent that contemporary Aesthetics is concerned with the beauty found in art, its outlook differs from Plato’s; for, as the better studies readily acknowledge, Plato does not think beauty resides primarily

\(^5\) Edvard Pettersson, “The Kalon and the Agathon in Plato’s Socratic Dialogues” (University of California, 1996). The work referred to is Julius Walter, Die Geschichte der Ästhetik im Altertum, ihrer begrifflichen Entwicklung nach dargestellt (Leipzig: Reisland, 1893). Though Pettersson limits his investigation of the relation between καλόν and ἀγαθόν in Plato to the “Socratic dialogues,” I owe a debt of gratitude to his stimulating and excellent work.


in the realm of art and poetry. On the contrary, as we shall see, he thinks it is to be found primarily in nature, knowledge, the forms, and mathematics. Thus to approach Plato with the dual goal of discovering what he thinks about art, on the one hand, and beauty, on the other, is to approach him with combined interests in topics which he did not in general combine. Additionally, Plato’s thought on beauty must be understood in relation to what he says about goodness. And goodness in Plato is too large a topic and too tangential to the interests of a History of Aesthetics, as, again, the better studies acknowledge. Most will for instance explain that Plato “in some way” identified beauty with goodness, but the topic of goodness is central to Plato’s metaphysics as well as his ethics, and therefore it is too complex to be treated adequately in a survey of the history of Aesthetics.

This brings us to the second way in which beauty arises in Platonic scholarship. In the Platonic scholarship which does not explicitly identify itself as concerned with Aesthetics, some mention or discussion of τὸ καλὸν is found almost everywhere. Sooner or later, almost every major Plato scholar has to say something about it. It must be addressed in any complete discussion of the Hippias Major, the Symposium and the Phaedrus, but it would be difficult to ignore it in a complete investigation of the Gorgias, Philebus, Timaeus, and the Republic as well. But while it is almost ubiquitous, and many

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8 “…we should certainly realize that in the theory of beauty a consideration of the arts is quite absent in Plato…” Kristeller, “The Modern System of the Arts,” p. 112.
9 That Plato finds beauty in mathematics will be amply demonstrated below. Among the major passages, see Philb. 25d-6b, 51c, 64d-6b, Ti. 53e-4a, 87c-e et passim.
10 Mothersill is forthright about the problem: “[Beauty] was certainly a major preoccupation for Plato, who, though he acknowledged a separate Form was unclear about the relation of the Form, ‘Beauty’, to the Form, ‘Good’.” Mary Mothersill, Beauty Restored (Oxford: Clarendon, 1984), p. 252.
works touch on it to varying degrees,\textsuperscript{11} for some reason it is seldom thought worthy of separate investigation. It is rare to find even a whole essay or chapter devoted exclusively to τὸ καλὸν per se.\textsuperscript{12} Two reasons present themselves as to why this should be the case. In the first place τὸ καλὸν is largely treated as a translation problem. On the authority of Liddell and Scott’s \textit{Greek-English Lexicon} (henceforth \textit{LSJ})\textsuperscript{13} and previous scholarship, we are told that τὸ καλὸν does not have precisely the same sense as our word ‘beauty.’ It can also be translated ‘good,’ ‘useful,’ ‘noble,’ ‘admirable,’ etc. and it is applied to a broader range of objects than our word ‘beauty’ normally is.\textsuperscript{14} Thus the current trend is to say that a better translation of τὸ καλὸν would be ‘fine’ or ‘the fine,’ and then to move on.


\textsuperscript{12} Notable exceptions are: Rachel Barney, "The Fine and the Good," (Forthcoming); G. M. A. Grube, "Plato’s Theory of Beauty," \textit{Monist} 37 (1927).


\textsuperscript{14} An example of the more extreme tendency in this direction is Collingwood, who writes, “… καλὰς does not mean beauty,” and that “As the Greeks have no word for art, so they have no word for beauty.” R. G. Collingwood, "Plato’s Philosophy of Art," \textit{Mind} 34 (1925): pp. 161-2, cf. pp. 65-6. Unfortunately, Collingwood provides no evidence for his claims about beauty.
A second reason may be that τὸ καλόν finds itself especially resistant to scientific investigation. Good scholarship seems rightly to aim at giving sober and unemotional accounts of its subject matter. Enthusiasm especially has no place in scientific explanation. But τὸ καλόν is paradigmatically that which generates enthusiasm. How then, is it possible to treat unemotionally and unenthusiastically that to which emotion and enthusiasm are essential? This may account for the feeling of dread we experience when anyone begins to try to explain what beauty is. We feel instinctively and perhaps correctly that prosaic words, logic, and reason are the wrong type of tools with which to approach it, and that it is perverse to prefer talking about beauty to experiencing it. Thus one might say the investigation of τὸ καλόν in Plato has fallen between two stools. While Histories of Aesthetics do not pay sufficient attention to the good in their handling of τὸ καλόν, the scholarship which does not identify itself as concerned with Aesthetics assimilates τὸ καλόν to the good by translating it ‘the fine.’

A third group worth mentioning is the Straussians. Those influenced by Leo Strauss seem particularly interested in τὸ καλόν, but they also seem to associate it with the idea of nobility and often suggest ‘the noble’ as a suitable translation. We may

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15 Seth Benardete, The Being of the Beautiful: Plato’s Theaetetus, Sophist, and Statesman, Translated with Commentary (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1984); Hyland, Plato and the Question of Beauty. Despite their intriguing titles, however, it is difficult to advance one’s understanding of the question of beauty in Plato from these works.

16 “The kalon is a crucial and ambiguous term in classical moral thought altogether, and we have no precise equivalent for it. It means, in the first place, fair or beautiful, and expresses nobility when qualifying speech or deed.” Allan Bloom, The Republic of Plato (New York: Basic Books, 1968), note 19, p. 443. “The political significance of this ‘physiological’ principle is shown by the fact that the words for ‘beautiful’ and ‘ugly’ also mean ‘noble’ and ‘shameful.’” Stanley Rosen, Plato’s Symposium, 2 ed. (New Haven: Yale University, 1987), p. 261. See also Leo Strauss, On Plato’s Symposium (Chicago: University of Chicago, 2001), pp. 64-5.
speculate whether this is due to their interest in Political Philosophy, but, in the first place, we are not told what exactly they mean by ‘noble.’ And, in the second place, as we shall see, the Greeks already had a word which is standardly translated ‘noble,’ γενναῖος. Thus we shall have to see to what extent nobility captures the essence or is a suitable translation of τὸ καλὸν.

The central problem concerning beauty in both Plato and Greek society in general is its relation to the good. This thesis is an attempt to give an exact account of Plato’s understanding of that relation, an account which goes beyond saying that “in some way” Plato identifies beauty and goodness. I will argue that beauty and goodness are extensionally equivalent in Plato, and yet qua forms they still differ. The form of the good is identical with the one, and yet there is evidence it is distinct from the form of beauty. As an explanation for how beauty and goodness could be coextensive we may find a model in the Phaedo. Just as threeness brings oddness along with it, so goodness may bring along beauty with it in anything which is good. But I think it is important to resist the interpretation that goodness is the leading concept, and that beauty just follows upon what goodness is, because there is also reason to believe Plato thinks it is actually the other way around, and that we must look to beauty if we are to discover the good. Such at any rate certainly seems to be his view in the Symposium and Phaedrus, but it can also be seen in the fact that in the end it is always what is beautiful which turns out to be good for Plato. The reason we discover what is truly good by looking toward the beautiful may have to do with the connection between beauty and appearance. Appearance is usually a pejorative term in Plato; like other Ancient philosophers, he
continually contrasts appearance and reality. But it may be that a positive aspect of appearance lies in the fact that it is “unhidden,” to use Heidegger’s word. When we or the Ancient Greeks think about what things are good for us or what things we want, candidates present themselves which we might not like others to know about, e.g., pleasure, wealth, honour, etc. We may secretly desire these things as long as our desire remains hidden. No one would be ashamed, on the other hand, if it were discovered that she wanted things like courage, wisdom, and moderation – the very things Plato considers beautiful. It may be a test of candidates for goodness to see if they survive public evaluation.

Another way in which beauty can be thought to be “unhidden” is in its universal appeal. As Barney points out, goodness in Greek often takes the dative of interest: things are commonly said to be good for this or that person or object; whereas beauty rarely does so: what is beautiful is simply beautiful. In this way beauty is similar to truth: beauty shines forth in every direction, just as what is true is so equally for everyone. For Plato it is impossible for something to be true for one person and false for another. Truth, like the truths of mathematics, is the same for all. When we say that something is good for, e.g., the sick man, only the sick man is the recipient of that goodness. On the other hand, when we say something is beautiful, everyone is intended to be the recipient

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17 “Unverborgen,” Der Ursprung des Kunstwerkes. Though I cite Heidegger as the source for this idea, I do not intend to import anything of his thought into this dissertation, i.e., one need not understand anything about Heidegger in order to understand what I am saying.

18 “But there is one striking contrast between the two. This is that while it is common to speak of what is agathon for someone, using the dative of interest, the same construction is awkward and rare if not impossible with kalon. Moving from grammar to ideas, what is good is often presumed to be so by being good for somebody or other; but what is fine, generally speaking, is just plain fine.” Barney, “The Fine and the Good.”
of that beauty. Beauty like truth is universal, but at the same time it is attractive like the good. Beauty indicates what is good because what is beautiful is the unh
dden, true good. In the end, however, the two ideas may be compatible: goodness may be ontologically prior, while beauty is epistemically prior, that is, goodness may be more closely connected with an object’s existence, while it is still true that we discover what is truly good by looking toward the beautiful.

The dissertation will proceed in the following manner. In the first chapter I will argue that the evidence for translations of καλός other than ‘beautiful’ is not as strong as has been supposed. I will take LSJ as the paradigm of this interpretation, and endeavor to show that many of the passages cited in support of the view that καλός should be translated ‘good’ or some equivalent, in fact provide no such support. LSJ and much secondary literature could be taken to imply that there are three senses of καλός. I will argue that this is incorrect, that the word is univocal, and that evidence is not sufficiently strong to claim that it is equivocal in any sense. I will then look at the use of καλός in a sampling of Preplatonic authors, in order to give the reader a sense of issues surrounding the thought about τὸ καλὸν in Ancient Greece, how different authors use the word, and what developments took place regarding it.

In the second chapter, I will argue for the coextension of goodness and beauty in Plato.19 Perhaps the greatest counter-example to this is the analysis of beauty in the Gorgias. I will argue that in that dialogue Plato is taking advantage of the extended use

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19 The term ‘coextension’ is often used of words or concepts. I will use it about the properties goodness and beauty. Thus what I mean by ‘beauty and goodness are coextensive’ is that everything beautiful is good and everything good is beautiful.
of καλόν for dialectical purposes, and that there is evidence he is not seriously committed to the analysis of beauty at that point in the Gorgias. His more considered view is reflected in the Hippias Major, where he claims that what is beautiful is also intrinsically good and vice versa. In the next chapter I will argue that goodness is identical with unity, and that the reason beauty and goodness are coextensive is that they are necessarily connected in a way similar to the connection between threeness and oddness in the Phaedo. In the last chapter I will argue that, though they are coextensive, there is still a difference for Plato between goodness and beauty. We will consider the doctrine of love, what it means for beauty to be instantiated in the physical world and in mathematics, and how these considerations affect the relation between beauty and goodness.

Before turning to the dissertation proper, however, it may be useful to say a few words in order to prepare the reader for the type of work this is going to be. In the first place, as has been mentioned, a sufficiently strong body of secondary literature on the question of beauty and its relation to the good in Plato has not yet developed. Thus the dissertation cannot take the form of a debate between established views on the topic, or an argument against some strong line of interpretation. The closest it will come to this is in arguing against the view that καλός should be translated ‘fine’ or with some word other than ‘beautiful.’ Engagement with the secondary literature will take place mainly in the interpretation of difficult parts of the Platonic corpus. Second, readers will find extensive use of quotations. This too is an unavoidable consequence of the type of work this is. In large part this thesis is devoted to the meaning of a word, and this word has
been hidden or obscured by various translations. Thus it is necessary to go back and uncover the word and look at it in its context. Third, when citing the works of ancient authors I will use the abbreviations in LSJ. Thus a passage from Plato’s Republic may be cited, Pl. R. 509b, or where the context is clear, R. 509b or even just 509b. With respect to citing the translator of a passage, I will usually give the translator’s last name, and, at least in the first instance, the work in which the translation appears. Often it has been necessary to revise some part of the translation. These occurrences will be marked ‘rev.’ after the translator’s name. Thus a revision of a translation of Sappho may appear as follows: (tr. Campbell, rev.). The only exception to this is the translations of Plato. Unless noted otherwise, I will use the translations in the John Cooper, ed., Plato: Complete Works (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1997), abbreviated ‘Cooper, ed.’ Additionally, the following abbreviations should be noted:


LSJ = Liddell, Henry George, Robert Scott, Henry Stuart Jones, and Roderick McKenzie. A Greek-English Lexicon. 9 ed. Oxford: Clarendon, 1940. LSJ is universally accepted as the best general Lexicon of the Ancient Greek language in English. There are, however, more specialized lexica for particular authors, like Homer, Hesiod, Pindar, etc. I will use the abbreviation to refer alternatively either to the Lexicon or to its editors.

OCD = Hammond, N. G. L., and H. H. Scullard, eds. The Oxford Classical Dictionary. 2nd ed. Oxford: Clarendon, 1972. This will usually be the primary source for dates and biographical information about less commonly known authors and works.

Finally, some mention should be made of the different forms of the Greek words for ‘beauty’ and ‘beautiful.’ The basic word for ‘beautiful’ in Greek in the masculine nominative is καλός. From this adjective is derived the neuter noun κάλλος (beauty) and the substantive τὸ καλόν (the beautiful). The neuter noun κάλλος will not occupy us greatly for there is no debate that it simply means beauty. When speaking of the adjective in connection with its entry and definition in the Lexicon, I will use the form καλός. This will generally be confined to the first chapter; however, in later chapters, when speaking more of the concept of the beautiful, I will use the neuter form of the adjective, καλόν. There are also other forms related to καλός and κάλλος: καλλοσύνη is the poetic form of κάλλος; καλλονή is a less common form of κάλλος; and κάλλιμος is a poetic form of καλός. The comparative and superlative of καλός are καλλίων and κάλλιστος, respectively. And there are other words which may be translated ‘beautiful,’ e.g., εὐειδής, εὔμορφος, εὐώψ. However, our investigation will be concerned with τὸ καλόν, the beautiful.
CHAPTER 1

ON THE MEANING OF ΚΑΛΟΣ

1.0. On the Standard Understanding of Καλός and Its Sources:

Aside from the literature on Aesthetics, Platonic scholarship generally treats καλός in two ways. In the erotic dialogues, e.g., the Symposium and the Phaedrus, it is translated simply ‘beautiful.’ Any other translation would be too awkward. In the other dialogues it is common for a discussion involving καλός to begin with a preamble about the word and its proper translation. It is asserted that its range is broader than our word ‘beautiful.’ The current trend has been to prefer the translation ‘fine.’ In his work on the Hippias Major, Paul Woodruff, for example, writes,

Like beauty, to kalon is something splendid and exciting; and in women or boys it is the loveliness that excites carnal desire. But the use of kalos for that quality is embraced by its use as a quite general term of commendation in Greek. “Noble,” “admirable,” and “fine” are better translations, and of these “fine” is best of all in virtue of its great range. Different sorts of things are commended as kala for different sorts of qualities: boys for their sex appeal, horses for their speed, fighting cocks for their spunk, families for their lineage, acts of war for their courage, speeches for their truth, and so on. Our “beautiful” translates kalos in only a few of its many uses, and is wholly inappropriate for the word as Socrates uses it.20

20 Woodruff, Plato: Hippias Major, p. 110. Christopher Janaway writes “Many salient examples of things that are kalos are indeed beautiful things, and the word in ordinary Greek when applied to people and physical things has a central meaning to do with visual attractiveness. Nevertheless kalos is a term with a much wider use as well, and is more like ‘noble,’ ‘admirable,’ or ‘fine.’ It will pay to remember this, otherwise we run the risk of over-aestheticizing Plato. Inadvertency
Woodruff’s statement is striking in view of the fact that he consistently translates καλός ‘beautiful’ in his translations of the Symposium and the Phaedrus.\(^2\) One might think this is consistent with his statement, insofar as καλός in the Symposium and Phaedrus is applied to boys, but in the Symposium Diotima says that τὸ καλὸν may be found in customs, laws, and sciences as well.\(^2\) Thus something strange is going on here. On the one hand we are told that ‘beautiful’ is not the best translation of καλός; but, on the other, ‘beautiful’ is used even in context where we might not normally think of beauty. Further, it is usually agreed that ‘beautiful’ is the primary translation of the word. Edgar R. Smothers, for example writes, “Καλός in Homer, as an epithet of persons, signifies

must not lead us to construe Plato’s ultimate aspiration as purely aesthetic; the highest value is located for him in something more all-embracing, which for now we may call ‘fineness itself.’” Janaway, Images of Excellence: Plato’s Critique of the Arts, p. 59. In support of his claim he cites Terry Irwin, who writes, “There is no reason to believe that the use of ‘kalon’ for what we call moral properties indicates that the Greeks have a particularly ‘aesthetic’ attitude to morality, as the translation ‘beautiful’ might suggest.” Terence Irwin, Plato: Gorgias (Oxford: Oxford University, 1979), p. 154. However, Irwin provides no evidence that the Greeks did not have a particularly “aesthetic” attitude to morality, and, on the contrary, the pervasive use of kalon in what we might call moral contexts could very well be taken as at least some indication that the Greeks were more inclined than we are to evaluate moral actions in terms of beauty. Cf. also W. K. C. Guthrie, A History of Greek Philosophy, VI vols., vol. III (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1969), p. 170. (However, see also his discussion of τὸ καλὸν in volume IV, pp. 177-78.) E. R. Dodds, Plato: Gorgias. A Revised Text with Introduction and Commentary (Oxford: Clarendon, 1959), p. 249. J. C. B. Gosling, Plato: Philebus. Translated with Notes and Commentary (Oxford: Clarendon, 1975), p. 93. Dorothea Frede, Plato: Philebus (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1993), p. lxiv.

\(^2\) See his translations, with Alexander Nehamas, of these dialogues in John M. Cooper, ed., Plato: Complete Works (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1997).

\(^2\) ... ἵνα ἀναγκασθῇ ἀνθρώπους ὑπὲρ τὸ ἐν τοῖς ἐπιστημονικοῖς καὶ τοῖς νόμοις καλὸν καὶ τούτῳ ἰδεῖν δὴ πᾶν αὐτῶς συγγενὲς ἐστιν, ἵνα τὸ περὶ τὸ σῶμα καλὸν συμμορφώσας τὴν ἤμνησθαι εἶναι μετὰ τὰ ἐπιστημονικὰ ἐπὶ τὰς ἐπιστήμες ἀγαγεῖν, ἵνα ἦγῃ αὐτῶν ἐπιστημῶν κάλλος... (Smp. 210c). [The result is that our lover will be forced to gaze at the beauty of activities and laws and to see that all this is akin to itself, with the result that he will think that the beauty of bodies is a thing of no importance. After customs he must move on to various kinds of knowledge. The result is that he will see the beauty of knowledge... (tr. Woodruff and Nehamas).]
beauty of outward form... This meaning is primary in Attic, and remains in vigor throughout antiquity."23 ‘Beautiful’ is also the first translation suggested for καλός in LSJ. Thus it is worth considering how this belief in the other senses of καλός came about and what the evidence for it is.

Perhaps the best place to begin is with the lexicon itself. According to LSJ, καλός has three main senses or uses.24 The first is what I will call the “aesthetic sense.” The term ‘aesthetic’ must be used with care, if at all, when applied to the Ancients, having been coined by Alexander Baumgarten in the 18th century. However, following Irwin,25 I will use it merely as a convenient way of referring to the first sense of καλός in LSJ, i.e., the sense in which it should be translated ‘beautiful.’ In this sense, according to LSJ, καλός is frequently used of persons, but also of parts of the body, in which case it has the sense of ‘fair,’ and ‘shapely.’ It is used of clothes, arms, armor, buildings, and other artifacts. So far the entry is unobjectionable. But LSJ lists two other senses as well. It indicates that καλός may also be translated ‘good’ in “functional” and “moral senses.” By ‘functional’ all that is meant is the second sense listed in LSJ under κάλος. It is the sense in which LSJ suggests κάλος may be translated ‘good’ or some equivalent in a functional or utilitarian, as opposed to a moral, sense. In this sense a knife may be good if it cuts well. And by the ‘moral sense’ all that is meant is the third sense listed in LSJ

23 Smothers, "Καλός in Acclamation," p. 1. Later on he writes, “Making all allowances for the versatility of word-meanings in varied contexts, I think it is obvious that the proper and primary sense of καλός in Plato’s tongue is beautiful. As an epithet of persons, I find in him no examples where it would be adequately translated good.” Smothers, "Καλός in Acclamation," p. 6.

24 The view that καλός has three main senses is accepted by Richard John Cunliffe, A Lexicon of the Homeric Dialect (Norman: University of Oklahoma, 1963). However, Cunliffe does not explicitly mention a moral sense.

25 See footnotes 20 and 27.
under καλός. LSJ itself calls the third sense a “moral sense.” This is the sense in which, according to LSJ, καλός may be translated ‘beautiful,’ ‘noble,’ or ‘honorable,’ and it is the sense in which τὸ καλὸν may indicate ‘moral beauty,’ ‘virtue,’ ‘honor.’ Insofar as LSJ claims καλός can be translated ‘beauty’ in the realm of morality, its entry is unobjectionable. Its description of the moral sense of καλός is in fact considerably more conservative, and I would say accurate, than that of scholars like Woodruff and Janaway. LSJ does not suggest ‘fine’ as a suitable translation in the moral sense, and it emphasizes (by placing it first) that it can be translated ‘beautiful’ even moral contexts. But it is its extension to words like ‘noble,’ ‘honorable,’ ‘virtue,’ and ‘honor,’ coupled with its indication of functional goodness as a possible sense, which may form the basis of the modern thesis that ‘beautiful’ is not the best translation for καλός in Plato and his predecessors.27 Thus, it is necessary to look at the evidence they provide for these other senses to determine the extent to which it supports their interpretation.

Let us begin with the evidence presented for the translation ‘good’ in the functional sense. The first reference is to a speech by Nausikaa addressed to Odysseus at

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26 Again, I follow Irwin in labeling these three senses listed in LSJ, the aesthetic, functional, and moral senses, respectively. See footnote 27.

27 Irwin, for example, writes, “I normally render ‘kalon’ by ‘admirable’ (though sometimes ‘beautiful’ is needed; cf. VI. 12.2.); this term (or perhaps ‘fine’) perhaps comes nearest to ‘kalon’ in its generality, while ‘admirable’ may suggest the distinction between the sense of ‘kalon’ and of agathon, though something will often be kalon by being agathon, and vice versa. We may distinguish (with LSJ, s.v.) three relevant uses of ‘kalon’: (a) Aesthetic, for various kinds of beauty; (b) Functional, where something is kalon for a task or purpose; Hom. Od. 6.623 [sic. should be 6.263], Thuc. 5.60, Xen. Anab. 4.8.26. (c) Moral, referring to people and actions. These are three general areas in which the term is used; it would be a great mistake to find three ‘senses’ of the term here, or to suppose that a Greek speaker would be aware of any ambiguity.” Terence Irwin, Plato’s Moral Theory: The Early and Middle Dialogues (Oxford: Clarendon, 1977), note 29, p. 290. I agree with Irwin’s last phrase here, but then it is difficult to know what to make of what precedes it.
Odyssey 6.263, in which she mentions a καλός λιμήν (harbor). What evidence is there that she intends to communicate that the harbor is “good” or “of fine quality” in the functional sense? Let us look at the passage in its entirety to ensure that we miss nothing of the context:

ὅροςεν νῦν, ὧν ἑξείνε, πολύνδ' ἴμεν, ὑφαῖνα σε πέμψω (255) | πατρὸς ἐμοῦ πρὸς δωμα δαῖφρονος, ἐνθα σε ὑμὶ | πάντων Φαϊήκων εἰδησεμέν, ὑσσοὶ ἀριστοὶ. | ἀλλὰ μᾶλ' ὧδ' ἐρδεῖν· δοκεῖς δὲ μοι οὐκ ἀπινύσσειν· | ὑφρ' ἂν μὲν κ' ἄγροις ἴμεν καὶ ἐγρ' ἄνθρωπων, | τὸφρα σὺν ἀμφιτάλουσι μεθ' ἡμίνους καὶ ἀμαξαν (260) | καρπαλίμως ἔρχεσθαι· ἐγὼ δ' ὄδον ἤγεμονεύσω. | αὕταρ ἐπὶν πόλιος ἐπιβῆμεν, ἣν πέρι πύργος | ὑψηλός, καλὸς δὲ λιμήν ἑκάτερθεν πόλης, | λεπτὴ δ' εἰσίθμη· νῆς δ' ὄδον ἀμφιέλισσαι | εἰκώτατε· πάσιν γὰρ ἐπιστῶν ἐστιν ἐκάστῳ. (265) | ἐνθα δὲ τε σφ' ἀγορῇ καλὸν Ποσιδήϊον ἀμφίς, | ὑφραίσθοι χαρώνχος καὶ ἐρετμὰ νεῶν | ἐπὶν ἀμφὶ ἐχαρων ραβδίων, | ὑπερφίαλοι κατὰ ὑπερφίαλοι κατὰ | ὑπερφίαλοι κατὰ ὑπερφίαλοι κατὰ δήμον (Od. 6.255-74).

Rise up now, stranger, to go to the city, so I can see you to the house of my own prudent father, where I am confident you will be made known to all the highest Phaiakians. Or rather, do it this way; you seem to me not to be thoughtless. While we are still among the fields and the lands that the people work, for that time follow the mules and the wagon, walking lightly along with the maids, and I will point the way to you. But when we come to the city, and around this is a towering wall, and a handsome harbor either side of the city, and a narrow causeway, and along the road there are oarswept ships drawn up, for they all have slips, one for each vessel; and there is a place of assembly, put together with quarried stone, and built around a fine precinct of Poseidon, and there they tend to all that gear that goes with the black ships, the hawsers and the sails, and there they fine down their oarblades, for the Phaiakians have no concern with the bow or the quiver, but it is all masts and the oars of ships and the balanced vessels themselves, in crossing over the gray sea; and it is their

28 Occasionally, I will leave the translation of καλός as the translator translates it, even in cases where I would prefer a different translation. I do this when it is harmless and in order to give the reader a sense of how other translators translate the word. It is by no means an endorsement of the translation. The underlining is of course mine; it is to help the reader see what I am focusing on, namely usually the use of καλός. Thus in the quotation above, since I have not revised the translation, the reader may see that Lattimore translates καλός here ‘handsome.’
graceless speech I shrink from, for fear one may mock us hereafter, since there are insolent men in our community… (tr. Lattimore).

The editors of LSJ might have had some cause to believe that καλός is used here in the sense of functionally good, if Nausikaa said that the reason the harbors are καλός is, for example, that they are deep and well protected, i.e., good places to moor boats. But nothing of the sort is said. The mere attribution of καλός to an object or action gives no reason to deviate from the basic sense of the word without some preconceived notions about what sorts of things can be beautiful. But even if we agreed that harbors are not the sorts of thing which can be beautiful, there is still no evidence that Nausikaa or the Greeks in general could not have thought so. LSJ would, apparently, have us believe that Nausikaa could not have felt a harbor beautiful. This is absurd. Lattimore’s translation, though awkward, is adequate. There is no evidence here that καλός should be translated otherwise than by ‘beautiful.’

What of LSJ’s other examples? I would argue that many of their other citations are also at best dubious. The next reference is to Odyssey 14.253 and 299, where Odysseus refers to the North Wind, Boreas, as καλός. LSJ suggests the translation ‘fair’ here, which in itself seems unobjectionable since ‘fair’ in this context can only have the sense of ‘beautiful.’ But they cite this passage as evidence for the functionally good sense of καλός. Again, it may be difficult for us to conceive how wind could be thought of as beautiful, but a sailor knows that the right wind at the right point of sail can easily be thought of as more than just functionally good. Again, there is no evidence in either of these passages that καλός has different senses or that it should be translated otherwise
than by ‘beautiful.’ Lacking such evidence it seems the desire to translate καλός otherwise is motivated by preconceptions as to what sorts of things can be thought beautiful.

Much the same can be said of the evidence for the moral sense of καλός. As already noted, LSJ does an admirable job of indicating that it has the sense of ‘morally beautiful,’ that is, they do not say it has the sense of ‘morally good.’ But their very indication that καλός has a different, moral sense, coupled with the fact that in this sense they suggest that the word may be translated with such words as ‘noble,’ and ‘honorable,’ can be taken to imply that in moral contexts καλός means something like ‘morally good.’29 But the references LSJ cites in support of the moral sense do not support this conclusion. Their first reference is to *Odyssey* 8.166, where Odysseus says to Euryalus,

\[\text{ξεῖν', οὐ καλὸν ἐεῖπες· ἀτασθάλῳ ἀνδρὶ ἔοικας (Od. 8.166).}\]

Stranger, thou hast not spoken καλὸν; thou art as one blind with folly (tr. Murray, rev.).

Murray translates καλὸν ‘well’ here. But if we translate καλὸν here ‘beautiful’ then we may see that the thought Euryalus has expressed is ugly to Odysseus. Euryalus has just said that Odysseus looks not like a noble athlete, but more like a lowly ship’s captain, “mindful of his freight.” There is no evidence that we need take καλὸν in anything other than its aesthetic sense, that is, the sense in which it should be translated ‘beautiful.’ I could go on likewise for many of the other examples which LSJ cites, especially the

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29 I use ‘means’ as equivalent to ‘can be translated as.’
citations in Homer. None of the citations from Homer provide evidence for a new and different sense of καλός.

Also, there is the matter of the noun κάλλος derived from the adjective, καλός. LSJ gives only one translation of the word, and that is ‘beauty.’ But it is odd that a word in its nominal form should have only one sense, while in its adjectival form, according to LSJ, it has three senses. It is a problematic when those who prefer the translation ‘fine’ discover κάλλος being used interchangeably with τὸ καλὸν. Paul Woodruff, for example, writes disparagingly about translating καλός ‘beautiful’:

When the fashion was to translate kalon “beautiful,” the Hippias Major was diminished to a disappointing treatise in aesthetics. Understood more broadly, with “fine” for kalon (as I translate it), the dialogue is an interesting inquiry into the foundation of all sorts of value judgments.

However, in the following passage of the Hippias Major, Plato uses τὸ καλὸν and κάλλος interchangeably:

一幕颗一 ἐνεμνήσθαι ὅτι τὸ καλὸν αὐτὸ ἠρώτων, ὅ παντὶ ὁ ἀν
προσυγένηται, ὑπάρχει ἐκείνῳ καλῶ εἶναι, καὶ λίθῳ καὶ ἔλαῳ καὶ ἀνθρώπῳ
καὶ θεῷ καὶ πάσῃ πράξει καὶ παντὶ μαθήματι; αὐτὸ γὰρ ἐγὼ ἔγωγε, ὄνθρωπε,
κάλλος ἐρωτῶ ὅτι ἐστίν (Hp. Ma. 292c-d).

Aren’t you capable of remembering that I asked for the fine itself? For what when added to anything – whether to a stone or a plank or a man or a god or any action or any lesson – anything gets to be fine? I’m asking you to tell me what fineness is itself, my man, and I am no more able to make you hear me than if you were sitting here in stone – and a millstone at that, with no ears and no brain (tr. Woodruff)!

30 Instances of the noun in Homer’s epics can be found at Il. 3.392, 6.156, 9.130, 9.272, 9.389, 13.432, 20.235, 23.742; Od. 6.18, 6.237, 8.457, 11.282, 15.251, 18.192, 18.219, 23.156. In all these instances it is clear that κάλλος should be translated ‘beauty.’
31 Woodruff, Plato: Hippias Major, p. xiii. In my opinion the dialogue is more interesting when καλὸν is translated ‘beautiful.’
Woodruff translates κάλλος ‘fineness.’ But if, according to LSJ, it is certain that κάλλος should be translated ‘beauty,’ this should indicate that, contrary to Woodruff, τὸ καλὸν should be translated ‘beauty’ here as well. The singular sense of the nominal form of the word provides additional evidence that we should be skeptical of the suggestion that καλός has different senses, or that in some contexts it should be translated otherwise than by ‘beautiful.’ At least the burden of proof lies on those who believe it should be translated otherwise. And so far that proof is lacking. Therefore, it will be one of the main purposes of this chapter to show that in the vast majority of cases there is no warrant for the view that καλός has different senses or that its best translation is not ‘beautiful.’32

1.1. A Re-examination of Καλός:

The foregoing was merely an attempt to undermine what I call the standard interpretation of καλός, especially as presented by LSJ. But even if the entry under καλός in LSJ were unquestionable, it would still be necessary to review the use of καλός in a sampling of the major authors prior to and contemporary with Plato. LSJ considers a larger portion of Greek literature than is possible in this study. But in order to get a fuller picture of the word’s significance for the Greeks and of the constellation of ideas and problems associated with it, it is necessary to look at fewer passages and authors

32 Thus I agree with Mothersill when she writes, “if Plato characterizes as kalos such disparate items as youths and maidens, goddesses, horses, lyres, codes of law, this suggests that kalos is a good match for the English ‘beautiful’ which has an analogously wide range.” Mothersill, Beauty Restored, p. 251.
but in more detail. When we do this we will see, in the first place, how the relationship between beauty and goodness is fraught from the beginning. In Homer and Hesiod there is the conflict between, on the one hand, the expectation that beauty somehow goes along with goodness, and, on the other, the recognition that it is not always good and that it can coincide with evil. This is and always has been one of the greatest problems concerning beauty.

In the early poets we will see how beauty is often connected with the ideas of death and immortality. Tyrtaeus will reveal that beauty in death was a particularly powerful image for the Greeks. And Pindar will connect beauty with immortality and the creative impulse of poetry. The tragedians, Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides, will provide the most powerful images of the absolute character of beauty in action. And the Presocratic theorists will for the first time try to define beauty and enumerate its causes. Finally, we shall return to the question of the correct translation of καλός in prose writers near Plato’s time, Herodotus, Thucydides, and Xenophon. It will be seen that there are some specific instances where a translation other than ‘beautiful’ is possibly warranted. But these instances occur only in very definite circumstances, e.g. when καλός is used adverbially and when it is used in specific phrases such as ἐν καλῷ.

The reader may feel that this survey of καλός is, on the one hand, unnecessarily wide-ranging and, on the other, not sufficiently comprehensive. It is unnecessarily wide-ranging because not everything that is discussed will be made use of when we turn to the question of beauty in Plato; and it is not sufficiently comprehensive because it does not cover the use of καλός in all the major authors prior to and contemporaneous with
Plato. This concern is understandable. However, with respect to the second issue, it was felt that a full investigation of καλός in every pre-Platonic author would require a study of its own. Thus only a sampling of pre-Platonic authors is presented. With respect to the first criticism, this work has been written with future scholars of τὸ καλόν very much in mind. One of the most useful works I read in preparation for this study was Edvard Pettersson’s dissertation on τὸ καλόν in Plato. And my aim has been to make this study similarly useful to the next scholar who wishes to investigate τὸ καλόν. To that end, salient aspects of τὸ καλόν are included even if not all of them are made use of later in turning to Plato. The hope is that the reader may be able to make connections and insights that I have not. As will be seen, the subject of τὸ καλόν in Plato is far more difficult and worthy of investigation than might be inferred from its slight treatment in contemporary literature. And this study will by no means answer all questions concerning τὸ καλόν in Plato. It will be taken as an accomplishment to have highlighted the central problems concerning τὸ καλόν and its relation to the good in Plato, and to have come to some conclusions about what Plato thought that relation was.

1.2.0. Beauty in Poetry:

While the ultimate cause of the Trojan War may have been Zeus’ desire to depopulate Earth, its proximate cause seems connected with man’s desire for beauty.

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33 See footnote 5.
Angered at not being allowed into the marriage feast of Thetis and Peleus, Eris throws a golden apple in amongst the guests, on which is written τῇ καλλίστῃ (for the most beautiful).³⁵ Athena, Hera, and Aphrodite vie for the prize in front of Zeus;³⁶ however, Zeus wisely leaves the decision to Paris.³⁷ The story expresses the tension between beauty and goodness. It does not seem that we can conclude that Paris’ choice was wrong, because presumably any choice would have incurred the anger of two of the goddesses. The interpretation of the mythical trope seems peculiarly Greek in that Paris could not have acted such as to avoid suffering, and this suffering is the will of the gods.

Each of the goddesses is beautiful, but the story seems to suggest that it is the fate of man not to be able to have beauty without evil. Homer explicitly suggests the same separation between goodness and beauty in the character of Helen. Upon her approach the elders of Troy seated by the Skaian gates acknowledge at once that Helen’s beauty justifies the war: nevertheless they wish her away as a cause of grief.

{oï δ’ ὡς οὖν εἴδονθ’ Ἑλένην ἐπὶ πύργον ιοῦσαν, | ἡκα πρὸς ἀλλήλους ἔπεα πτερόεντ’ ἀγόρευον. (155) | οὐ νέμεσις Τρῶας καὶ ἐυκνήμιδας Ἀχαιοὺς | τοιῇδ’ ἀμφὶ γυναικὶ πολὺν χρόνον ἄλγεα πᾶσχειν. | αἰνῶς ἀθανάτῃσι θεῆς εἰς ὥπα ήοικεν. | ἄλλα καὶ ὡς τοῖς περ ἐοῦσ’ ἐν νησί νεόθω, | μηδ’ ἡμῖν τεκέεσσι τ’ ὀπίσω πῆμα λίποιτο (Il. 3.154-60).}

And these, as they saw Helen along the tower approaching, murmuring softly to each other uttered their winged words: ‘Surely there is no blame on Trojans and strong-greaved Achaians if for long time they suffer hardship for a woman like

³⁵ See Libanius, Progymnasmata, 2.27.1.
³⁶ Oddly enough, Artemis does not enter the competition, especially since as Kerenyi writes, “Now ‘Fairest,’ Kalliste, was in human mouths a divine name, which Artemis bore above all other goddesses.” Kerenyi, The Heroes of the Greeks, p. 314.
³⁷ The three goddesses may be interpreted as representing the attractive aspect of the desiderata of what Plato will later analyze as the three parts of the soul. Athena offers Paris intellectual gifts, Hera political power or gifts answering to the spirited part of the soul, and Aphrodite gifts answering to the epithumetic desires.
this one. Terrible is the likeness of her face to immortal goddesses. Still, though she be such, let her go away in the ships, lest she be left behind, a grief to us and our children' (tr. Lattimore).38

Here we have early written evidence of the tension between the good and the beautiful in the Greek tradition. But it is worth considering exactly how Helen’s beauty and evil are related in order to avoid confusion, for in the first place there is no suggestion that she is a bad or defective specimen of her kind. Nor do the elders suggest that she is evil in a moral sense or that she is personally harming the Trojans.39 Rather, she is a passive cause of evil. The true source of the fighting may be complex: it could be the desire of men to possess her, or it could be that the Achaeans are fighting to restore an outrage to their honor, the will of the gods, or some combination of these or other factors. But in any case the simple fact of her beauty is not by itself evil. Thus it may be precipitous to say at this point that there is a direct connection between beauty and evil, or beauty and goodness. On the other hand, it is possible to detect a note of paradox in the elders’ claim that though she is beautiful she is also a cause of much trouble.

38 The sentiment that Helen was the cause of the Trojan war is more explicit in Euripides. At Hel. 260-66, Helen says to the Chorus: τέσσας γὰρ ὃ βίος καὶ τα πράγματ’ ἔστι μου, (260) ἂ τα μὲν δὲ Ἡραν, τὰ δὲ τὸ κάλλος αἰτιον. ἐιθ' ἐξαλειψθείσος' ὡς ἀγαλμ' αὖθις πάλιν ἂντι τοῦ καλοῦ, καὶ τὰς τύχας μὲν τὰς κακὰς ἃς νῦν ἔχω ἢ Ἐλληνες ἐπελάθοντο, τὰς δὲ μὴ κακῶς (265) ἐσωίζον ἄσπερ τὰς κακὰς σωίζουσι μου. [My life and fortunes are a monstrosity, partly because of Hera, partly because of my beauty. I wish I had been wiped clean like a painting and made plain instead of beautiful, and that the Greeks had forgotten the evil fate I now have and remembered what is good, just as they now remember what is ill!] (Notice how here τὸ κάλλος is used interchangeably with τὸ καλὸν.) Again, at Orestes 1639-42, Apollo says to Menelaus: ἐπέι θεοὶ τῷ τήρησε καλλιπεματί | Ἐλλήνας εἰς ἐν καὶ Φρύγας συνήγαγον (1640) | ἰθανάτους τ’ ἔθηκαν, ὡς ἀπαντλοῖεν χθονός | ὑφίσιμα θνητῶν ἀφθόνου πληρώματος. [For it was by her beauty that the gods brought Greeks and Phrygians to one place and caused deaths, in order to relieve the earth of the rank growth of mortals’ boundless population.] The translations are those of David Kovacs, Euripides, 3 vols. (Cambridge: Harvard University, 1994).

39 The tone of Gorgias’ Encomium of Helen suggests that the common charge against her was her infidelity to Menelaus. Gorgias argues that it is entirely possible that Helen was overcome by the power of rhetoric, and if she did so she is unfortunate, not evil.
The paradoxical relation between beauty and goodness is more explicit in Hesiod’s *Theogony* and *Works and Days*, where womankind, in the figure of Pandora, is described as having been explicitly created by the gods as a καλὸν κακόν (a beautiful evil) in order to hinder the human race. Zeus had taken fire away from men in response to a treachery on the part of Prometheus. When Prometheus steals fire back for mankind, Zeus punishes him and orders the creation of womankind as a penalty to balance the advantage mortals gain from fire. When Zeus has finished the female mortal with Hephaestus and Athena, he presents her to gods and men:

αὐτὰρ ἐπεὶ δὴ τεῦξε καλὸν κακόν ἀντ’ ἀγαθοῖο, (585) | ἐξάγαγ’ ἐνθά περ ἄλλοι ἔσαν θεοὶ ἢδ’ ἀνθρώποι, | κόσμῳ ἀγαλλομένην γλαυκώπιδος Ὀβριμοπάτρης∙ | θαῦμα δ’ ἔχ’ ἀθανάτους τε θεοὺς θνητοὺς τ’ ἀνθρώπους, | ὡς εἶδον δόλον αἰπύν ἀμήχανον ἀνθρώποισι. | ἐκ τῆς γὰρ γένους θηλυτεράων, τῆς γένος κακολόμης Πενίης οὐ σύμφοροι, ἀλλὰ Κόροιο (Th. 585-93).

But when he had made the beautiful evil to be the price for the blessing, he brought her out, delighting in the finery which the bright-eyed daughter of a mighty father had given her, to the place where the other gods and men were. And wonder took hold of the deathless gods and mortal men when they saw that which was sheer guile, not to be withstood by men. For from her is the race of women and female kind: of her is the deadly race and tribe of women who live amongst mortal men to their great trouble, no helpmeets in hateful poverty, but only in wealth (tr. Evelyn-White).40

But we may well ask why Zeus chose to punish men in this manner, and in what the punishment consists, for presumably he could have punished men in any number of ways which did not involve beauty. The notion that Pandora represents some kind of trick or deception (δόλον) is fitting retribution for Prometheus’ treachery. But the

40 The story is repeated at *Works and Days* 42-105, where it is made clear that Pandora is both beautiful (63) and evil (57, 58, etc.).
deception depends on the assumption that what is beautiful will be good. On this assumption beauty is the veridical appearance of goodness, that is, the deception works only if people assume that beauty indicates goodness. The fact that Pandora (literally “every gift”) loses all her gifts except one, hope (ἐλπίς: Op. 96), can be interpreted differently: hope is either part of beauty’s treachery or its one redeeming attribute.

The expectation that beauty should accompany goodness is not confined to female beauty. In the following passage Hector is able to say that though beautiful, Paris is not courageous, but on the other hand he acknowledges the assumption that his beauty should entail his virtue.

Δύσπαρι ἐίδος ἀριστε γυναιμανὲς ἥτεροπευτά | αἱθ’ ὀφελεῖς ἀγονὸς τ’ ἐμεναι ἀγαμός τ’ ἀπολέσθαι (40) | καὶ κε τὸ βουλοίμην, καὶ κεν πολὺ κέρδιον ἦν | ἡ οὕτω λὼβην τ’ ἐμεναι καὶ ὑπόψιον ἄλλων. | ἤ πον καγχαλώσι κάρη κομόστοτες Ἀχαιοί | φάντες ἀμιστή πρόμον ἐμεναι, οὔνεκα καλὸν | εἰδος ἔπ’, ἀλλ’ οὐκ ἐστι βή φρεσιν οὐδέ τις ἀλκή (Il. 3.39-57).

Evil Paris, beautiful, woman-crazy, cajoling, better had you never been born, or killed unwedded. Truly I could have wished it so; it would be far better than to have you with us to our shame, for others to sneer at. Surely now the flowing-haired Achaians laugh at us, thinking you are our bravest champion, only because your looks are handsome, but there is no strength in your heart, no courage (tr. Lattimore).

And the converse of this sentiment also holds: what is good is expected to be or act beautifully. At Odyssey 17.381, Eumaios says to Antinoos:

Ἀντίνο’, οὐ μὲν καλὰ καὶ ἔσθλος ἔων ἀγορεύεις...

Antinoos, though you are good, you do not speak beautifully... (tr. Lattimore, rev.).

While Paris was said to be beautiful but not courageous, here Antinoos is said to be good (ἔσθλος) but not to speak beautifully. Both in men and in women, then, beauty
and goodness were expected to coincide and appear together, but at the same time it was believed or recognized that often the two did not coexist, and that one could have one but not the other. And according to Hesiod and pre-Homeric myth as recorded in the Cypria, the Greeks may have seen the failure of beauty and goodness always to coincide as particularly revelatory of the human condition.

1.2.1. Beauty and Immortality:

Despite the recognition or belief that goodness and beauty do not always coincide, there is substantial evidence that what is beautiful was felt to be divine or god-like. Take, for instance, Achilles’ rejection of Lykaon’s plea for ransom:

Poor fool, no longer speak to me of ransom, nor argue it. In the time before Patroklos came to the day of his destiny then it was the way of my heart’s choice to be sparing of the Trojans, and many I took alive and disposed of them. Now there is not one who can escape death, if the gods send him against my hands in front of Ilion, not one of all the Trojans and beyond others the children of Priam. So, friend, you die also. Why all this clamour about it? Patroklos also is dead, who was better by far than you are. Do you not see what a man I am, how huge, how splendid and born of a great father, and the mother who bore me immortal? Yet even I have also my death and my strong destiny, and there shall be a dawn or an afternoon or a noontime when some man in the fighting will take the life
The phrase κάλλεος εἶνεκα (for the sake of, or because of beauty) indicates that beauty could be a cause of deification or apotheosis. There is no obvious parallel to this in the Judeo-Christian tradition. At some point between the decline of Athens during and after the connection in thought between beauty and immortality:

In this powerful scene Achilles almost seems to be comforting Lykaon with the explanation that all men die sooner or later. But Achilles’ reference to his size and beauty is peculiar. He is saying that even one as great and beautiful as he is will die.\footnote{It is worth mentioning at this point that beauty and size, or largeness, are often connected throughout Greek literature.}

The point would be lost if there were not some feeling that what is beautiful should be immune from misfortune and death. The following passages reveal even more clearly the connection in thought between beauty and immortality:

Erichthonios had a son, Tros, who was lord of the Trojans, and to Tros in turn there were born three sons unfaulted, Ilos and Assarakos and godlike Ganymedes who was the loveliest born of the race of mortals, and therefore the gods caught him away to themselves, to be Zeus’ wine-pourer, for the sake of his beauty, so he might be among the immortals (tr. Lattimore).

The children born to Mantios were Polypheides and Kleitos, but Dawn of the golden throne carried Kleitos away, because of his beauty, so that he might dwell among the immortals… (tr. Lattimore).

\[\text{Τρώα δ’ Εριχθόνιος τέκετο Τρώεσσιν ἀνακτα· (230) \mid Τρώος δ’ αὐ τρεῖς παῖδες ἀμύμονες ἐξεγένοντο \mid Ἡλίσ τ’ ἀσσάρακος τε καὶ ἀντίθεος Γανυμήδης, \mid ὃς δὴ κάλλιστος γένετο θνητῶν ἀνθρώπων. \mid τὸν καὶ ἀνηρείψαντο θεοὶ Δί \mid οἰνοχοεύειν \mid κάλλεος εἵνεκα οἵῳ ἰν’ ἀθανάτοις μετείη (Il. 20.230-35).}\]

\[\text{Μάντιος αὖ τέκετο Πολυφείδεα τε Κλεῖτόν \te. \mid ἀλλ’ ὑ τοι Κλεῖτον χρυσόθρονος ἠρπασεν Ὑὼς (250) \mid κάλλεος εἶνεκα οἵῳ, ἰν’ ἀθανάτοις μετείῃ... (Od. 15.249-51).}\]
the fourth century beauty ceases to be thought a sufficient ground for assumption to the realm of the divine.

1.2.2. Beauty and Death:

As beauty was seen as a cause of immortality, so it seems to have been especially revealed in death. Priam speaks about the difference between a young and an old man being slain:

... νέῳ δὲ τε πάντ' ἐπέοικεν ἡ Δήη κταμένῳ δεδαίγμενο ὀξέϊ χαλκῷ | κεῖσθαι∙ πάντα δὲ καλὰ θανόντι περ ὅτι φανήῃ∙ | ἀλλ' ὅτε δὴ πολιόν τε κάρη πολιόν τε γένειον | αἴδω τ' αἰσχύνωσι κύνες κταμένοι γέροντος, (75) | τοῦτο δὴ οἰκτιστον πέλεται δειλοῖσι βροτοῖσι (Il. 22.71-6).

For a young man all is decorous when he is cut down in battle and torn with the sharp bronze, and lies there dead, and though dead still all that show about him is beautiful; but when an old man is dead and down, and the dogs mutilate the grey head and the grey beard and the parts that are secret, this for all sad mortality is the sight most pitiful (tr. Lattimore).

In the first place it might seem surprising that Priam thinks “all is decorous” when a young man is killed in battle. One might be persuaded that, despite the grimness of it all, the sight of a slain young man is not as ugly as the sight of a slain old man – though even this is by no means certain – but certainly to say that everything is still beautiful for a young man when he is slain seems to strain our understanding of beauty.

If καλὰ is used here in what LSJ calls a moral sense, the same problem arises. How is it in any way morally acceptable, not to mention good, for a young man to be killed? Though again the same possible solution presents itself: it could be argued that it is less morally reprehensible for a young man to be slain than for an old. The same
sentiment is expressed by the Spartan poet Tyrtaeus, that death in battle is beautiful for

the young, but ugly for the old:

αἰσχρὸν γὰρ δὴ τούτω, μετὰ προμάχοισι πεσόντα ἱείσθαι πρόσθε νέων ἀνδρά παλαιότερον, ἀδή λευκὸν ἐχοντα κάρη πολέων τε γένεων, 〈θυμὸν ἀποπνείοντ’ ἄλκιμον ἐν κοινή, ἀιματόντ’ αἰδοία φίλαις ἐν χερσίν ἐχοντα— (25) αἰσχρὰ τὰ γ’ ὀφθαλμοίς καὶ νεμεστῶν ἴδειν, καὶ χρόνα γυμνωθέντα· νέοις δὲ πάντ’ ἐπέοικεν, ὅφ’ ἐρατῆς ἥβης ἀγαλόν ἀνθός ἐχῆ, ἀνδράς μὲν θητός ἴδειν, ἐρατός δὲ γυναιξὶ ζωὸς ἐών, καλὸς δ’ ἐν προμάχοισι πεσών (Fr. 10, ll. 21-30).

For this brings shame, when an older man lies fallen among the front ranks with the young behind him, his head already white and his beard grey, breathing out his valiant spirit in the dust, clutching in his hands his bloodied genitals – this is a shameful sight and brings indignation to behold – his body naked. But for the young everything is seemly, as long as he has the splendid prime of lovely youth; while alive, men marvel at the sight of him and women feel desire, and when he has fallen among the front ranks, he is fair (tr. Gerber).42

Gerber decides to translate αἰσχρὸν here ‘shameful,’ but given the condensed reference to the eyes (l. 26) and to seeing (ll. 26, 29), the whole passage seems predominantly concerned with how things look.43 It is of course possible to translate αἰσχρὸν ‘shameful’ but again there is no need to. The text does not provide evidence supporting the translation ‘shameful’ over ‘ugly’; in fact, given the references to the eyes and seeing, there is more cause to translate it ‘ugly.’ One might also argue that an explicit contrast is

42 The text and translation are found in Douglas E. Gerber, Greek Elegiac Poetry (Cambridge: Harvard University, 1999).
43 “In the ‘ugliness’ decried by the word aischron there is a hint of ‘moral’ disapproval: the horror of the scene serves to exhort the neoi not to yield their place in the forefront of men older than they. The whole context, however, with its contrast between beautiful and ugly and the ‘spectacular’ quality of the entire description, reveals the persistence of an ‘aesthetic’ vision – in the broadest sense of the term – of heroic death in its close attachment to hebe.” Jean Pierre Vernant, “A “Beautiful Death,”” in Mortals and Immortals: Collected Essays, ed. Froma I. Zeitlin (Princeton: Princeton University, 1991), p. 65. I agree that “the horror of the scene serves to exhort the neoi not to yield their place in the forefront of men older than they,” but where does the “hint of ‘moral’ disapproval” come from, except in so far as it is recognized that what is ugly should not be done, or allowed?
being made between what is αἰσχρόν for the old man and what is καλόν for the young man. Even Gerber translates καλόν in the last line ‘fair.’

In the previous two examples the beauty of young men was compared to the ugliness of the old when they die in battle. But the following provide evidence of the absolute beauty of death in battle.

τεθνάμεναι γὰρ καλὸν ἐνὶ προμάχωσι πεσόντα | ἄνδρ’ ἀγαθὸν περὶ ἢ πατρίδι μαρνάμενον… (Tyrt. Fr. 10, ll. 1-2).

It is a beautiful thing for a good man to die when he has fallen among the front ranks while fighting for his homeland… (tr. Gerber, rev.).

Later, Aeschylus will also speak of death in battle as beautiful:

Ετεοκλέα μὲν τόνδ’ ἐπ’ εὐνοῖα χθονὸς | θάπτειν ἐδοξέ γῆς φίλαις κατασκαφαῖς | στέγων γὰρ ἐχθροὺς θάνατον εἰλετ’ ἐν πόλει, | ἱερῶν πατρῶιων δ’ ὀσίος ἐκ μομφῆς ἀτερ (1010) | τεθνήκεν οὕτε τοῖς νέοις θυνήσκειν καλὸν (Th. 1007-11).

Eteocles, who lieth here, seeing that he hath shown loyalty to his country, it is decreed to bury with kindly interment in its soil; for that, hating the foe, he courted death in the city, and pure of offence towards the shrines of his fathers he hath fallen, free of reproach, where it is beautiful for the young to fall (tr. Smyth, rev.).

Tyrtaeus speaks of a good man and Aeschylus of the young, but in these cases the beauty seems more absolute than the previous, comparative beauty. The reason the death is beautiful in both cases seems to be that it is an instance of dying for one’s country. But it is still strange to think of any person’s death as beautiful. No doubt this is the impetus behind Gerber’s and Smyth’s desire to translate it ‘fine’ and ‘an honour,’ respectively. But the action may be beautiful in that it is a case of a person making the

44 Cf. also A.1610.
greatest sacrifice anyone can make. Notice that in neither case is any specific advantage mentioned either to the person who dies or to the country for which he dies. No doubt fighting for one’s city was praised because it was beneficial to the city, and praising those who died fighting is beneficial because it encourages young soldiers, but the lack of any explicit mention of benefit to any party suggests a reason why death in battle might have been said to be beautiful: perhaps things were thought to be beautiful when they were felt to be good despite not being of any particular benefit to anyone. It may be this absolute character of beauty, combined with the fact that it always implied approbation, which made it particularly useful for the expression of an absolute, non-beneficial good. The term ἀγαθός (good) seems always to have been too closely associated with the notions of benefit or advantage to be used to express the notion of an absolute, non-beneficial good. It may be, then, that the Greeks felt they had no word to correctly express the idea of such an absolute good, and that they therefore began to use καλόν instead, precisely because it did combine the notions of goodness and absoluteness. Such a hypothesis would be very difficult to prove with any certainty, but it may be a plausible interpretation of the word’s development.

1.2.3. Beauty, Immortality, and Poetry:

Beauty and immortality are also linked to poetry. Whereas in the foregoing we saw evidence that the Greeks directly deified beauty, in a further development they viewed poetry as a means to perpetuate beauty. Immortality is one of the special
characteristics of the divine. Poetry is a means of immortalizing humans and their actions. The theme runs throughout Greek literature from Homer to Plato, but it is perhaps most noticeable and explicit in Pindar.

In his *Lexicon to Pindar*, William Slater follows LSJ in breaking down the entry under καλός into three sections. He is correct to say that its primary use in Pindar is “of actions,” but again I would dispute the need to translate καλός in these circumstances ‘noble,’ or ‘honorable.’ Or, if one insists on so translating it, it should be clear that in most cases the nobility or honorability of the actions does not derive from considerations of an action’s goodness or justice. Pindar’s extant poems are mostly victory odes, in honor of victors at the various games. And games or contests are a realm where acts are especially prone to be praised, but not particularly because they are either beneficial or just. I have looked at every instance of all the forms of καλός in Pindar, and as with Homer I can find no instance where the word needs another translation than ‘beautiful.’ We may feel that another word may be more appropriate in certain contexts but Pindar did not. Like Homer, Pindar had perfectly good words for ‘honorable’ (τίμιος) and ‘noble’ (γενναῖος). Instead of assuming that we know, better than some of the world’s greatest poets, how to express their thought, we could at least take a moment to see what Pindar’s thought looks like when we translate καλός ‘beautiful.’ If one is aiming at accuracy in translation, it seems a word should only be translated otherwise when its primary meaning either cannot make sense or is intolerably awkward. But neither is the case here in Pindar. All the passages are tolerably coherent

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and intelligible when καλός-words are translated with ‘beautiful.’ In fact when we let καλός be translated ‘beautiful’ parts of Pindar make more sense than they would otherwise.

One of the most salient aspects of Pindar’s use of καλός is the connection he maintains between beauty or beautiful actions and poetry or the poet’s activity. Composing poems for champions is necessary in order to provide the immortality warranted by the beauty of the actions. Without the song of praise the καλὰ ἔργα will be forgotten, and that would be a shame if not wrong:

... καὶ ὅταν καλὰ ἔρξαις ἀοιδᾶς ἄτερ, Ἰ. Αἰδιαδαμ, εἰς Αἴδα σταθμὸν ἀνήρ ἴκηται, κενεὰ πνεύσαις ἐπορεύθυμο βραχὺ τι τερπνόν (O. 10.91-3).

... so when a man who has performed beautiful deeds, Hagesidamos, goes without song to Hades’ dwelling, in vain has he striven and gained for his toil but brief delight.

... εὖθυν’ ἐπὶ τοῦτον, ἄγε, Μοίσα, οὖρον ἐπέων ἐνυκλέα· παροιχομένων γὰρ ἀνέρων, ἴοι διὰ καὶ λόγοι τὰ καλὰ φιν ἔργ’ ἐκόμισαν... (30)(N. 6.28-30)

Come, Muse, direct to that house a glorious wind of verses, because when men are dead and gone, songs and words preserve for them their beautiful deeds...46

The above are revised translations of Pindar by William Race;47 wherever ‘beautiful’-words appear Race has ‘noble.’ Race’s translation is of course possible but the question is whether it is necessary. And if it is possible to translate καλός ‘beautiful,’ what is the difference between translating it ‘beautiful’ and translating it ‘noble’? It should be clear that it is possible to translate καλός ‘beautiful’ in all the above excerpts. The test is intelligibility and awkwardness. Translating καλός ‘beautiful’ in the above passages

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46 Cf. also O. 1.103-5; P. 9.93-96; I. 1.41-46, 4.37-42, 8.69; Fr. 52b.66.
does not result in unintelligibility, nor is it even awkward. What then is the difference between ‘beautiful’ and ‘noble’? Perhaps Race prefers the translation ‘noble’ because there is a connection between noble action and songs of praise. Noble actions are praise-worthy, and so it follows that the poet would be moved to song by noble actions. But the situation is slightly different if one says that it is necessary to immortalize beautiful actions. Beauty may be praise-worthy and nobility may be beautiful, but if an action is beautiful then the song, since it is itself beautiful, may be a continuation of the beauty of the beautiful action. Such, it seems, is the import of the following passages:

εἰ δὲ τύχῃ τις ἔρδων, μελίφρον’ αἰτίαν | ὡς Μοισάν ἐνέβαλε· ταὶ μεγάλαι
γὰρ ἀλκαὶ | σκότον πολὺν ὤμων ἔχοντι δεόμενα· | ἐργοῖς δὲ καλοῖς
ἐσοπτρον ἰδαμεν ἐνὶ σὺν τρόπῳ, | εἰ Μναμοσύνας ἐκατὶ λιπαράμπυκος (15) |
εὑρηται ἄποινα μόχθων κλυταῖς ἐπέων ἀοιδαῖς (N. 7.11-16).

If a man succeeds in an exploit, he casts a honey minded cause into the Muses’ streams, for great deeds of valor remain in deep darkness when they lack hymns. We know of a mirror for beautiful deeds in only one way, if by the grace of Mnemosyne with the shining crown, one finds a recompense for his labors in poetry’s famous songs.

... πρέπει δ’ ἐσλοίσιν ὑμνεῖσθαι... | καλλίσταις ἀοιδαῖς. | τοῦτο γὰρ ἀθανάτως τιμαὶς ποτιψαύει μόνον [阍θέν], | 
θνᾴσκει δὲ σιγαθὲν καλὸν ἔργον... (Fr. 121).

... it is proper for good men to be hymned... with the most beautiful songs, for that alone touches upon immortal honors but a beautiful deed dies when left in silence...

Here we see Pindar characterize poetry as a mirror (ἐσοπτρον) for beautiful actions. The beauty of songs and poetry is therefore seen as a continuation, a sort of incarnation of the beauty of the action. Pindar therefore continues the tradition of connecting beauty with immortality. Whereas Homer sees beauty as sufficient cause for direct ascension
into the immortal realm of the gods, Pindar finds the impetus to poetry in the need to immortalize the beauty of action in song.

But Pindar is not the only one to connect beauty with immortality through poetry. Though he does not mention beauty explicitly, Homer also sees the poets function as immortalizing the actions of men (see Il. 9.189; Od. 1.337-8, 8.73).48 The thought also appears in Aeschylus’ Septem contra Thebas:

\[ \text{ἦ τοῖον ἔργον καὶ θεοῖσι προσφιλές, (580) | καλόν τ’ ἀκούσαι καὶ λέγειν μεθυστέροις, | πόλιν πατρώιν καὶ θεοὺς τοὺς ἐγγενεῖς | πορθεῖν, στρατέυμ’ ἔπαικτὸν ἐμβεβληκότα (Th. 580-3);} \]

Of a truth is such a deed as this well pleasing unto Heaven, and to thy fame for men in days to come to hear and tell of – that thou dost ravage the city of thy sires and the gods of thine own race by hurling upon them an invading host?...

(tr. Smyth).

In translating καλόν at line 581 “to thy fame” Smyth is at the far end of interpretive translation. A more accurate translation of lines 580-1 would be: “Is such a deed dear to the gods | and beautiful for those living afterwards to hear and speak of…?” Smyth reveals that he understands the connection between the καλὸς and fame, but there is no need to mistranslate Aeschylus here in order to get the point across. The literal translation which adheres to the basic meaning of the words is intelligible.

1.2.4. Beauty and Action:

So far we have seen the paradoxical relations between beauty and evil, and beauty and death. But LSJ and others are correct that beauty, τὸ καλόν, is also used

48 Cf. Plato, Phdr. 245a.
extensively in what might seem to us like moral contexts. The question is whether in all these cases it is necessary or advisable to translate καλὸς ‘right,’ ‘good,’ ‘noble,’ or ‘honorable.’ While it is possible in some cases to translate it with these terms, in the sense that passages are still intelligible if one does so, it is also possible and in some cases even enlightening to abide by the primary translation, namely ‘beautiful.’ There are many instances of this in Homer, such as at Iliad 6.326-29, where Hector rebukes Paris for staying away from the fight (δαιμόνι οὐ μὲν καλὰ χόλον τόνδ’ ἐνθεο θυμῷ), or at Il. 8.399-400, where Zeus says it will not be καλὰ for him to fight against Hera and Athena,49 but perhaps one of the most revealing of these is at Il. 21.436-40, where Poseidon calls on Apollo to begin the fighting:

Φοῖβε τί ή δὴ νοϊ διέσταμεν; οὐδὲ ἐσκέκαν ἡ ἀρξάντων ἐτέρων· τὸ μὲν αἰσχὺν αἰ κ’ ἀμαχητὶ ἦν Οὐλίμπον δὲ Δίος ποτὶ χαλκοβατὲς δῶ. | ἄρχε· σὺ γὰρ γενέηψι νεώτερος· οὐ γὰρ ἐμοίγε | καλὸν, ἐπεὶ πρότερος γενόμην καὶ πλείονα οἶδα (Il. 21.436-40).

Phoibos, why do you and I stand yet apart. It does not suit when the others have begun, and it were too shameful if without fighting we go back to the brazen house of Zeus on Olympus. Begin you; you are younger born than I; it is not beautiful for me to, since I am elder born than you and know more (tr. Lattimore, rev.).

Lattimore translates καλὸν here ‘well,’ but this is unnecessary and moreover it may obscure the delicacy of the situation. It may seem, from a certain point of view, absurd to be concerned with beauty prior to a battle, but as we have seen, this was intelligible to the Greek. Poseidon is saying that he is the older and wiser of the two, and his feeling is still intelligible. There is still today something ugly – not just wrong or disadvantageous

49 See also Il. 19.78-80; Od. 15.10-12.
– about the idea of an older man beginning the fight against a younger. The desire not to translate καλόν ‘beautiful’ here may be a result of a difference in how Homer thinks of beauty in such a situation and how we might. It is possible to think of beauty in such a way that it would be ridiculous to think of a god as being concerned with it. If, for instance, we think of beauty as merely external and superfluous then, indeed, it would seem rather vain of Poseidon to be concerned with it, the more external and superfluous the more vain. However, it is also possible to think of beauty as something not entirely superfluous and vain. In this sense, beauty is not something merely external and superfluous, and yet it is not wholly without some considerations of how things will look or appear, at least to a certain kind of observer.

But what do I mean when I say that there could be a beauty which is not merely external and yet not wholly independent of how things will appear? Perhaps it would be useful at this point to consider the sort of property that beauty, or τὸ καλόν, is. A tempting candidate might be what has recently been described as a ‘response-dependent’ property. According to Mark Johnston, if C is a response-dependent concept then the following bicondition is true: “x is C iff in K, Ss are disposed to produce x-directed response R (or, x is such as to produce R in Ss under conditions K).”50 The idea can be explained in terms of color. To say that color is a response-dependent property is to say something like that the color red, for example, is the disposition to produce a certain response (R) in a certain subject or group of subjects (S) under certain conditions

The color red, we are told, is not actually a real property of anything ‘out there’ in the external world. Rather, it is something that occurs (mostly) in our minds. And yet statements about the colors of objects seem to be statements about the external, mind-independent world, in a way that statements about what tastes, or smells good do not. Statements about what tastes or smells good seem more about our own feelings than statements about the color of objects. The idea of response-dependent properties is an attempt to capture the status of colors as somehow neither purely dependent on our own feelings nor existing completely independently or our minds.51

So, might it be true that τὸ καλόν was a response-dependent property? Certainly one would want to be very careful about attributing such a complex theoretical understanding to Homer or the Ancient Greeks generally. It is not that they were incapable of understanding complex ideas, there is ample evidence to the contrary; rather, it is that nothing of the sort is explicitly articulated just in that way in the literature at least up to Plato’s time. But, one might still ask, couldn’t it still be true that the Greeks or at least some of the Greeks felt τὸ καλόν was something like a response-dependent property in a pre-theoretical, implicit way? Isn’t it possible, that is to say, that τὸ καλόν was viewed, at least implicitly, as whatever produced a certain reaction, pleasure say, in certain observers, perhaps ideal observers?

It is certainly possible that this was the case. And, as I will argue later when we turn to those who theorized more explicitly about beauty, some theorists seem to have turned to those who theorized more explicitly about beauty, some theorists seem to have

51 Johnston expresses this as follows: “The dispositional view, so spelt out, is not simple subjectivism or idealism about colour. The colours of things are not existentially dependent upon our responses. Rather, colour concepts are conceptually dependent upon the concepts of our responses under certain conditions.” Johnston, "Dispositional Theories of Value," p. 141.
focused more on the reaction of observers of beauty. But the trouble is finding any evidence or support for such a complex theory. One may indeed argue that some of the later theorists had something like a response-dependent theory of beauty, but any such thesis would be very difficult convincingly to defend. Rather, it would be safer to say that there is a difference in focus between those, on the one hand, who tried to locate that one property, say proportionality or harmony, which was the cause of beauty, and on the other hand, those who were impressed with the discovery that different things seemed beautiful to different persons and groups.52 In Homer and the poets we have been discussing there simply is not enough evidence to decide the matter. The mere attribution of beauty to certain objects and actions leaves the question of what theoretical understanding of beauty is in play underdetermined.

All this notwithstanding, I would venture to say that the concern for what is καλόν very often does seem to include some concern for how things will look to others. When Poseidon says that it is not καλόν for him to begin the fighting because he is older, we do get the sense that at least part of the concern is how things would look to others if he, being older, were to begin the fight with a younger god. Or at least we could

52 It should be noted that the concept of response-dependent properties seems deliberately formulated to avoid the necessity of being grounded in some one or limited number of definite external properties. If red is a response-dependent property then whatever is such as to produce a certain response in suitable observers is red. Redness is the disposition to produce a certain response in suitable observers. Nevertheless, response-dependent properties can still be viewed as objective properties: “This claim to a certain kind of objectivity is a feature of all response-dependence theories. Response-dependent properties do not depend for their instantiation on the existence of a single conscious entity in the whole universe; what they depend upon is the presence of a disposition.” Richard Joyce, "Moral Anti-Realism," The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, ed. Edward N. Zalta, <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2009/entries/moral-anti-realism/>, Summer 2009 Edition.
understand how this could be a concern for someone in such a situation. This concern for how things will look to others should become increasingly apparent, if it has not already, as we go through more instances of the use of καλόν. But, at the same time, we should be careful not to overemphasize the role of the observers, ideal, hypothetical, or otherwise, in elucidating the concept of τὸ καλόν. For we also get the strong impression that beauty was felt to be a real, mind-independent, property that objects or actions could have in the “external” world. Indeed, even an explicit awareness of such a distinction as mind-dependent/ mind-independent would be difficult to establish with any certainty in much Preplatonic literature. Though the concern with the καλόν often seems to include a concern with how things will look or appear to others, this is not to say that it was believed that what is καλόν was determined by how things looked to others. In particular it is not to take a position on the question whether any one property, such as proportionality or harmony or propriety, in all cases caused beauty, or a positive reaction in the right observers. It is consistent to believe that beauty does cause a positive response in the right observers in the right conditions, and at the same time to believe that only proportionality, for example, causes things to be beautiful.

What was said above about Homer can also be said about the tragedians, especially Sophocles and Euripides. Each one often uses καλός where there is no question that the correct translation is ‘beautiful.’ The examples are too numerous to cite. But the second most prominent use of καλός is in action, where, as before,
translators are continually tempted to translate it with words indicating moral approbation.\textsuperscript{53} Some examples may suffice:

\begin{verbatim}
\textit{άλλ’ } εἰ \ θέλοντά \ γ’, οὐδὲ σοι \ φεύγειν καλόν (OC. 590).
\end{verbatim}

Theseus (to Oedipus): But if they wish you to go willingly, it is not \textit{right} for you to remain in exile.

\begin{verbatim}
Μ. \ ἐγὼ \ γὰρ \ ἄν \ ψέξαιμι \ δαμάσων \ νόμους; (1130) \ | \ Τευ. \ εἰ \ τοὺς \ θανόντας \ οὐκ \ ἕας \ θάπτειν \ παρών. \ | \ Με. \ τοὺς \ γ’ \ αὐτός \ αὐτῷ \ πολέμιος· \ οὐ \ γὰρ \ καλόν (Aj. 1130-2).
\end{verbatim}

Menelaus: Why, would I find fault with the laws of the gods? Teucer: Yes, if you stand there and forbid the burial of the dead. Menelaus: Yes that of my own enemies; is it not \textit{honorable}?

\begin{verbatim}
...φήμ’ \ ἐγὼ \ προσβεύειν \ πολὺ (720) \ | \ φύναι \ τὸν \ ἄνδρα \ πάντ’ \ ἐπιστήμης \ πλέων· \ | \ εἰ \ δ’ \ οὖν, \ φυλεῖ \ γὰρ \ τούτο \ μή \ ταύτῃ \ ἂς, \ | \ καὶ \ τῶν \ λεγόντων \ εὖ \ καλόν τὸ \ μανθάνειν (Ant. 720-3).
\end{verbatim}

Haemon (to Creon): I say that it is best by far if a man is altogether full of knowledge; but that, since things are not accustomed to go that way, it is also \textit{good} to learn from those who give good counsel.

\begin{verbatim}
ὅταν \ δὲ \ τὰμ’ \ ἀθυμήσαντ’ \ ίδης, \ | \ σύ \ μου \ τὸ \ δεινὸν \ καὶ \ διαφθαρὲ \ φρενῶν \ | \ ἰσχναι \ παραμυθοῦν \ θ’, \ | \ ὅταν \ δὲ \ σὺ \ στένης, \ | \ ἡμᾶς \ παρόντας \ χρῇ \ σε \ νουθετεῖν \ φίλα· \ | \ ἐπικουρία \ γὰρ \ αἴδε \ τοῖς \ φίλοις \ καλαί (Or. 296-300).
\end{verbatim}

Orestes (to Electra): Whenever you see me despondent, you must cure the grim derangement of my mind and encourage me. And when you are groaning, I must stand by you and offer friendly admonition. Aid like this is \textit{proper} for kin to offer.

\textsuperscript{53} In his \textit{Lexicon Sophocleum} (Berlin: Borntraeger, 1872), Friedrich Ellendt writes that about manners, the soul, or things done, \textit{kalós} mostly signifies “\textit{decorum}, τὸ \ πρέπον, et honestum.” The Latin ‘\textit{decorum}’ is a suitable translation in that it is similar to our word ‘\textit{beauty},’ Though the exact relation between them is unclear, both Plato (\textit{Hi. Ma.} 290c, 293d ff.) and Aristotle (\textit{Topics} 135a10ff.) connect τὸ \ καλὸν with τὸ \ πρέπον (propriety or what is fitting). What is less certain is Ellendt’s claim that ‘\textit{honestum}’ is also a suitable translation. The primary translation of ‘\textit{honestum}’ is ‘\textit{honorable},’ and only in a secondary, extended sense can it be translated by a word like ‘\textit{beauty},’ For \textit{kalós} it seems the reverse: the primary translation would seem to be ‘\textit{beautiful},’ and only secondarily and by extension can it also connote honorability, etc. See Charlton Lewis and Charles Short, \textit{A Latin Dictionary} (Oxford: Clarendon, 1879), s. vv.
Iphigenia: But what was her reason for killing her husband? Orestes: Let be your mother’s deeds: not even for you is it right to hear about them.54

The translations of Sophocles are those of Hugh Lloyd-Jones, and those of Euripides are those of David Kovacs.55 I have left them unrevised to illustrate the propensity to translate καλός using words other than ‘beautiful.’ As before, we may certainly sympathize with the translators’ decisions, but the question is whether this is true to the text? Overly literal translations are, of course, to be discouraged. No one would argue persuasively that every word must always be translated according to its most basic meaning. But it does not follow from this that no error can be made in the opposite direction. Translators should be chary of imposing their own outlook or presuppositions on the text, even with the sanction of lexica. The fact that we are surprised, when we learn Greek, to see the word καλός underneath all these translations must lead us to question all these translations and the presuppositions on which they are based.

One of the most emblematic uses of the word καλός in Sophocles must be Antigone’s use of it to explain the motivation for her action to Ismene:

οὔτ’ ἂν κελεύσαμ’ οὔτ’ ἂν, εἰ θέλοις ἐτι | πράσσειν, ἐμοῦ γ’ ἂν ἥδεως δρώης μέτα. (70) | ἄλλ’ ἵσθ’ ὄποια σοι δοκεί, κείνον δ’ ἐγὼ | θάψω. καλόν μοι τούτο ποιούσῃ θανεῖν (Ant. 69-72).

I would not tell you to do it, and even if you were willing to act after all I would not be content for you to act with me! Do you be the kind of person you have

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54 Further examples may be found in Appendix I.
55 Hugh Lloyd-Jones, Sophocles, 3 vols. (Cambridge: Harvard University, 1994); Kovacs, Euripides.
decided to be, but I shall bury him! It is beautiful for me to do this and die (tr. Lloyd-Jones, rev.).

Lloyd-Jones translates καλόν ‘honorable’ here, but it seems to make just as much sense to translate it ‘beautiful.’ In burying Polyneices she disobeys Creon, who as the king of Thebes is the representative of Zeus on earth. As her uncle, Creon is also her familial elder, and since Oedipus is dead, Creon takes the place of her father. Thus she could be interpreted as disobeying both divine law and familial obligations, albeit in order to follow other divine and familial obligations. Thus whether or not the Greek audience would agree with her that her action is καλόν, or beautiful, is eminently debatable. But it is possible to see why she might find her action beautiful. In addition to following at least one line of divine and familial obligations, perhaps the beauty also comes from her self-sacrifice. Rightly or wrongly she is placing something above her own life, adhering to a rule regardless of the consequences, and this may be beautiful.

But why is she doing it? Is it out of a sense of duty to her dead brother or the divine law concerning the burial of the dead? Arthur Adkins has argued that duty, at least in the Kantian sense, simply did not exist in Greek ethical vocabulary:

That there should exist a society so different from our own as to render it impossible to translate ‘duty’ in the Kantian sense into its ethical terminology at all – impossible, that is to say, to translate ‘duty’ by a word not only of equivalent connotation but also of equivalent status and emotive power – is, despite the evidence, a very difficult idea to accept.56

It is tempting to say that τὸ καλὸν was precisely the concept Adkins was looking for. It certainly seems to have had the status and emotive power of our word ‘duty,’ and the Greeks seem often to use καλὸν where we would speak about duty. But where it seems to differ is that duty does not have the attractive aspect of τὸ καλὸν. Or perhaps it would be more accurate to say that to the extent that duty has an attractive aspect, it is because there is a certain beauty to it.

Roughly the same idea can be found in Homer. When Achilles drags Hector’s body around Patroklos’ grave, Apollo states:

αὐτὰρ ὁ γ’ Ἕκτορα δίον, ἔπει φίλον ἦτοι ἀπηφόρα, (50) | ἵππων ἐξάπτων περὶ σήμ’ ἔταρφοι φίλοι | ἔλκει· οὐ μὴν οἱ τὸ γε κάλλιον οὐδὲ τ’ ἄμεινον. | μὴ ἀγαθῶ περ ἕντε νεμεσηθέωμέν οἱ ἡμεῖς· | κωφὴν γὰρ δὴ γαῖαν ἀεικίζει μενεαίνων (Il. 24.50-4).

But this man, now he has torn the heart of life from great Hector, ties him to his horses and drags him around his beloved companion’s tomb; and it is not something more beautiful or better for him. Great as he is, let him take care not to make us angry; for see, he does dishonour to the dumb earth in his fury (tr. Lattimore, rev.).

Both this passage and Antigone 72 present rare cases of καλὸς with the dative. In both cases Lattimore and Lloyd-Jones translate καλὸς ‘honor’ or ‘honorable.’ Honor functions like duty and it has an attractive aspect to it, but as we have already noticed the Greeks already had a word for honor (τιμή), and neither of these poets decided to use it in these places. Additionally, there was a fairly strong distinction between honor and beauty, at least if Aristotle is any guide, for he decidedly rejects honor as a possible candidate for against his inclinations. Adkins denies that the Greeks found this idea intelligible: for Adkins, the Greeks always had to believe they would be benefited in some way in order to be motivated.
happiness at *EN* 1095b22ff., on the ground that it depends too much on the unstable opinions of others, and yet as we have seen he says several times that τὸ καλὸν is the proper end and goal of virtue. It is doubtful that Aristotle would commend τὸ καλὸν as the proper end of virtue if it were similarly dependent on the unstable opinion of others. The same sentiment can be found in Plato. Honor (τιμή), like money, is not something good people should seek:

Διὰ ταῦτα τοίνυν, ἣν δ’ ἐγὼ, οὔτε χρημάτων ἐνεκα ἐθέλουσιν ἄρχειν οἱ ἀγαθοὶ οὔτε τιμής· οὔτε γὰρ φανερῶς πραττόμενοι τῆς ἁρχῆς ἐνεκα μισθὸν μισθωτοὶ βούλονται κεκλήσθαι, οὔτε λάθρᾳ αὐτοὶ ἐκ τῆς ἁρχῆς λαμβάνοντες κλέπται. οὐδ’ αὐ τιμής ἐνεκα· οὐ γὰρ εἰσὶ φιλότιμοι (R. 347b-c).

Therefore good people won’t be willing to rule for the sake of either money or honor. They don’t want to be paid wages openly for ruling and get called hired hands, nor to take them in secret from their rule and be called thieves. And they won’t rule for the sake of honor, because they aren’t ambitious honor-lovers (tr. Cooper, ed.).

Beauty, however, or τὸ καλὸν is constantly mentioned together with goodness and justice as the three best things a person should aim for and be concerned about, cf. *Euthphr.* 7e, *Cri.* 47c, *Phd.* 75c, R. 476a, 506a, 593b, *Lg.* 731e, etc. If Plato and Aristotle can be taken as any guide to Greek thought in general then it is evident that honor was a goal of questionable legitimacy, while beauty, or τὸ καλὸν, was always a legitimate goal.

1.3.0. Beauty in Theory:

So far we have been investigating the use of καλὸς in poets and tragedians. It would certainly be unwise to say that these authors used the term unreflectively, but at
the same time there is little evidence of an explicit consideration of, e.g., the relation between beauty and goodness, or what if anything τὸ καλὸν is on its own. It is no criticism of these authors that they do not appear to have approached τὸ καλὸν in a philosophical manner – surely they had different goals and methods. But there is also evidence of a concern with beauty in a philosophical sense. Authors who are typed as sophists, philosophers, and even – in the case of Sappho – a poet, all begin to demarcate the problems of beauty and to suggest solutions to them. How influential they were on the rest of Greek society in general is even less certain than in the case of the poets. Of course the poets were influential, but it is far from clear whether or to what extent we may take what they say about τὸ καλὸν or how they use the word to reflect a consensus on the matter in Greek society in general. The thought of the theorists was probably less influential than that of the poets, on the assumption that they were not read or communicated as widely. Likewise it is probably even more dangerous to extrapolate anything about how τὸ καλὸν functioned in Greek life from what theorist say about it.57 However, it is still worth investigating what the Presocratic theorists say about τὸ καλὸν because it is almost certain Plato read them and was to a greater or lesser extent influenced by or reacting against them.

Τὸ καλὸν is treated by the theorists in two main ways. On the one hand are the mathematicians and Pythagoreans, who seem to believe that beauty rests primarily in mathematics or in some mathematical relation. These associate or try to define beauty in

57 This, of course, is a matter of degree. Aristotle probably reflects Greek thought on τὸ καλὸν better than, say, Heraclitus.
terms of qualities like order and proportion. On the other hand, there are those who concern themselves with beauty primarily in order to show that it does not seem to correspond with any one quality, property, or relation. They see that what is called beautiful differs from one person to another or one society to another. Thus we can distinguish these two groups as, on the one hand, those who seek beauty in some one quality or property, and on the other, those who focus on the difference between what is called beautiful by different people and societies.

1.3.1. Pythagoras and the Pythagoreans:

The study of Pythagoras (late 6th cent. BC) and the Pythagoreans is plagued by the problem of sources. Pythagoras himself left no written works we are aware of, and among Pythagoreans we have genuine fragments only of Philolaus (late 5th cent. BC) and Archytas (early 4th cent. BC). Most of our beliefs about Pythagoreanism depend upon indirect evidence, that is, reports about Pythagoras or Pythagoreans from non- or neo-Pythagorean doxographers. These reports are more or less valuable depending, among other things, on their author’s proximity to Pythagoreans or genuine Pythagorean

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59 McKirahan, Philosophy before Socrates, p. 81. See also, Carl A. Huffman, Philolaus of Croton: Pythagorean and Presocratic (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1993); Carl A. Huffman, Archytas of Tarentum: Pythagorean, Philosopher, and Mathematician King (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 2005).
sources. With respect to Pythagorean thoughts on beauty we find significant passages in the works of Diogenes Laertius (early 3rd cent. AD), Iamblichus (c. 250 – c. 325 AD), Stobaeus (5th cent. AD), and Aristotle (c. 384 – 322 BC). With the exception of Aristotle, all these authors are substantially later than the last of the Pythagoreans in the 4th century BC, and thus their testimony cannot be taken as unquestionably true. Despite Cherniss’ attack Aristotle is our best and most reliable source for Pythagoreanism, even if, as Philip admits, no secondary source about Pythagoreanism can be completely authoritative without primary sources. Thus, though Aristotle is still our most authoritative source, none of the following reports can be taken as unquestionably true Pythagorean views on beauty, especially when, as with Diogenes, Iamblichus, and Stobaeus, they are temporally further removed from genuine Pythagoreans. But, though all these reports must be treated with a degree of skepticism, it is still true that they may give us some idea of the way beauty was thought of in Pythagorean circles. Nothing in this study depends crucially on the authority of any of these reports, but it would seem

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60 McKirahan, Philosophy before Socrates, p. 80.
61 Harold F. Cherniss, Aristotle’s Criticism of Presocratic Philosophy (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1935).
62 “The primary importance of Aristotle’s evidence is generally conceded... It may be argued that Aristotle is not always a reliable witness, and that Cherniss has shown him to be in some respects a biased one. Cherniss’ conclusions, however, and in particular the conclusions that other scholars drew on the basis of his strictures, have been modified as a result of subsequent discussion. We appreciate that it is part of Aristotle’s method to use other philosophers as foils in the dialectical elaboration of his own thesis and that this method entails some falsification of perspective for which we must allow. But he does not willingly distort or fabricate fact. He is attempting to lead us rather than to mislead us... His testimony – as that of even the most reliable of witnesses – must remain subject to question. But the testimony of a witness of Aristotle’s intelligence, discussing doctrines he has been at pains to ascertain, is of infinitely more value that the protreptical writings of Porphyry and Iamblichus.” James A. Philip, Pythagoras and Early Pythagoreanism (Toronto: University of Toronto, 1966), pp. 6-7.
amiss to omit what little evidence we have of Pythagorean thought on beauty only because we cannot be sure in all cases that it is genuinely Pythagorean.

There are relatively few Pythagorean passages specifically about beauty. Beside Aristotle, we have one excerpt from Diogenes, one from Stobaeus and two from Iamblichus. But through these we see that the absolute character of beauty was, for the Pythagoreans, best captured by the order and proportion in mathematics and geometry. Though we must be skeptical about his reports, according to Stobaeus the Pythagoreans held that order and proportion are beautiful and advantageous (ἡ μὲν τάξις και συμμετρία καλὰ και σύμφορα: Anth. 4.1.49). As so often with statements concerning beauty, the exact relation between order and proportion and beauty in Stobaeus is left open: the line seems to indicate that order and proportion are sufficient for beauty, but we are not told whether they are necessary. The strong association, however, between order and proportion and beauty is found both in Plato (“measure and proportion turn out to be everywhere beauty and excellence,” μετριότης γὰρ και συμμετρία κάλλος δήποι και ἀρετή πανταχοῦ συμβαίνει γίγνεσθαι: Phlb. 64e, cf. ib. 65a) and Aristotle (“the greatest forms of beauty are order, proportion, and definiteness,” τοῦ δὲ καλοῦ μέγιστα εἴδη τάξις και συμμετρία και τὸ ὠρισμένον: Metaph. 1078a36-b1). Beauty here

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63 The whole sentence runs: δεῖν δὲ ἔφασκον εὐθὺς ἐκ παιδίων καὶ τὴν τροφήν τεταγμένως προσφέρεσθαι, διδάσκουσαν ὡς ή μὲν τάξις και συμμετρία καλὰ και σύμφορα, ή δὲ ἀταξία και ἀσυμμετρία αἰσχρὰ τε καὶ ἀσύμφορα (Stob. Anth. 4.1.49). [They said it was necessary, straight from childhood also to take food in an orderly manner, teaching that order and proportion are beautiful and advantageous, and disorder and disproportion are ugly and disadvantageous (my trans.).] Cf. Iamb. VP 203. We must be very careful how much weight to give this evidence. Stobaeus is not considered entirely trustworthy, especially when it comes to Pythagorean material. See Rosa Maria Piccione and David Runia, “Stobaeus,” in Brill’s New Pauly, ed. H. Cancik and H. Schneider (Leiden: Brill, 2010).
is absolute in the sense that order and proportion do not depend on the particular interest of anyone or anything. What is ordered or proportional is so absolutely, regardless of any other consideration. A similar idea is expressed by Iamblichus in his *De Vita Pythagorica*. Among the Pythagorean “sayings” (ἀκούσματα: literally, “things heard”), it is said that the most beautiful thing is harmony (τί κάλλιστον; ἀρμονία).

Iamb. VP 18.82). According to the tradition – by which I mean what is surely true of Pythagoreanism if we know anything about it – harmony (ἀρμονία: literally, “a fitting together”) is central to Pythagoreanism. We find the following in a fragment of Philolaus:

> περὶ δὲ φύσις καὶ ἀρμονίας ὡδὲ ἔχει· ἀ μὲν ἐστὼ τῶν πραγμάτων, ἀδίδος ἔσσα καὶ αὐτὰ μάν ἀ φύσις, θείαν τε καὶ οὐκ ἀνθρωπότερην ἐνδέχεται γνώσιν, πλάνα γα ἢ ὁτι οὐχ οἷόν τ’ ἦν οὐκεθεν τῶν ἐστών καὶ γηγνωσκομένων υφ’ ἀμόν γεγενήθαι μὴ ὑπαρχοῦσας τὰς ἐστώς τῶν πραγμάτων, ἐξ ἢ ἤν συνέστα ὁ κόσμος, καὶ τῶν περαινόντων καὶ τῶν ἀπείρων. ἐπεὶ δὲ ταὶ ἀρχαὶ ὑπάρχον οὐχ ὁμοίαι οὐδ’ ὁ μόρφυλος ἔσσα, ἢδη ἀδύνατον ἢς κα ἀυταίς κοσμηθῆναι, εἰ μὴ ἀρμονία ἐπεγένετο, ὥς τινιῶν ἄν τρόπω ἐγένετο. τὰ μὲν ὅμων ὁμοία καὶ ὁμόφυλα ἀρμονίας οὐ δέον ἐπεδέοντο, τὰ δὲ ἀνόμοια μηδὲ ὁμόφυλα μηδὲ ἰσοταχῆ, ἀνάγκα τὰ τοιαῦτα ἀρμονίᾳ συγκεκλεῖσθαι, εἰ μέλλοντι ἐν κόσμῳ κατέχεσθαι (Stob. Anth. 1.21.7d, DK 44B6, text Huffman).

Concerning nature and harmony the situation is this: the being of things, which is eternal, and nature in itself admit of divine and not human knowledge, except

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64 τὰ δὲ τὶ μάλιστα, οἶον τὶ τό δικαιότατον; θύειν. τὶ τὸ σοφώτατον; ἀριθμός: δεύτερον δὲ τὸ τοῖς πράγμασι τὰ ὀνόματα τιθέμενον. τὶ σοφώτατον τῶν παρ’ ἡμῖν; ἱερομονή ἤ τὸ κάλλιστον; ἀρμονία. τὶ κρατίουσον; γνώμη. τὶ ἁρμονίαν; εὐδαιμονία (Iamb. VP 18.82). [Those [sayings] on what is best, are, for example: what is the most just thing? To sacrifice. What is the wisest? Number; and in the second place is that which gives names to things. What is the wisest thing among us? Medicine. What is the loveliest? Harmony. What is the most powerful? Intelligence. What is best? Well-being.] All translations of Iamblichus are from John M. Dillon and Jackson P. Hershbell, *Iamblichus: On the Pythagorean Way of Life* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1991).

65 “Harmony and number were probably among Pythagoras’ own key ideas.” Kirk, Raven, and Schofield, *The Presocratic Philosophers*, p. 328.

66 For the authenticity of the fragment see Huffman, *Philolaus of Croton: Pythagorean and Presocratic*, p. 124.
that it was impossible for any of the things that are and are known by us to have come to be, if the being of the things from which the world-order came together, both the limiting things and the unlimited things, did not preexist. But since these beginnings preexisted and were neither alike nor even related, it would have been impossible for them to be ordered, if a harmony had not come upon them, in whatever way it came to be. Like things and related things did not in addition require any harmony, but things that are unlike and not even related nor of [?] the same speed, it is necessary that such things be bonded together by harmony, if they are going to be held in an order (tr. Huffman).

We need not adduce more instances to know that harmony was of paramount importance for the Pythagoreans. And yet what is harmony? Philolaus has very specific ideas about it. Just before quoting Philolaus, Nicomachus states that the Pythagoreans call the octave a harmony: ἁρμονίαν μὲν καλοῦντες τὴν διὰ πασῶν (Harm. 9). Then he quotes Philolaus:

ἁρμονίας δὲ μέγεθος συλλαβὰ καὶ δι’ ὀξειᾶν... οὖτως ἁρμονία πέντε ἐπόγδοαν καὶ δυοῖν δίεσεοιν. δι’ ὀξείαν τρι’ ἐπόγδοα καὶ δίεσις, συλλαβὰ δὲ δι’ ἐπόγδοα καὶ δίεσις (Harm. 9, DK 44B6).

The magnitude of harmonia (fitting together) is the fourth (sylloba) and the fifth (di’ oxeian)… Thus the harmonia is five 9:8 ratios [tones] and two dieses [smaller semitones]. The fifth is three 9:8 ratios [tones] and a diesis, and the fourth two 9:8 ratios [tones] and a diesis (tr. Huffman).

Here we have the word harmonia used where the usual term for the octave is τὸ διὰ πασῶν (sc. χορδῶν: literally, “the through [or across] all chords”). It would probably be going too far to try to combine Philolaus’ thought here with the Pythagorean saying recorded by Iamblichus that harmony is the most beautiful thing (VP 18.82). If we did so, however, the result would be that the octave is the most beautiful thing. The octave, as

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67 Huffman expects the reader to understand what he means when he says, “harmonia refers not to the concordant interval, but to the octave conceived of as an attunement, while dia pasôn refers to the concord.” Huffman, Philolaus of Croton: Pythagorean and Presocratic, p. 161.
“the through all” (τὸ διὰ πασῶν) is a microcosmic representation of the universe for the Pythagoreans. For in it Limit and the Unlimited, the principles of the cosmos according to Philolaus (Fr. 6: Stob. Anth. 1.21.7d), are reconciled (κοσμηθῆναι) by harmony (ibid.). If all of this seems too speculative, however, we can interpret harmonia at Lamb. VP 18.82 merely along the lines of its basic meaning as a “fitting together.” A fitting together is also absolute in the sense that it does not depend on anyone’s interest.

Connected with the view that the Pythagoreans thought of beauty in an absolute sense, is the impression we get at least from Iamblichus that though highly interested in beauty, the Pythagoreans were not supposed to pursue pleasure. According to Iamblichus, Pythagoras taught that,

τοὺς μὲν γὰρ χρημάτων καὶ τρυφῆς αἱρεῖ πόθος, τοὺς δὲ ἀριθμὸς καὶ ἡγεμονίας ἴμερος φιλονεικία τε δοξομανεῖς κατέχουσιν. εἰλικρινέστατον δὲ εἶναι τούτων ἀνθρώπων τρόπον, τὸν ἀποδεξάμενον τὴν τῶν καλλίστων θεωρίαν, ὃν καὶ προσονομάζειν φιλόσοφον (Iamb. VP 12.58-9).

Some are influenced by the desire of riches and luxury; others, by the love of power and dominion, or by insane ambition for glory. But the purest and most genuine character is that of the man who devotes himself to the contemplation of the most beautiful things, and he may properly be called a philosopher (tr. Dillon and Hershbell).

Though the purest character of man pursues the contemplation of the most beautiful things, the Pythagoreans taught that not pleasure, but the beautiful (τὸ καλὸν) and the

68 ἐπεὶ δὴ τὰ μὲν ἄλλα τοῖς ἀριθμοῖς ἐφαίνοντο τὴν φύσιν ἀφομοιώσθαι πάσαν, οἱ δ’ ἀριθμοί πάσης τῆς φύσεως πρῶτοι, τὰ τῶν ἀριθμῶν στοιχεῖα τῶν ὀντῶν στοιχεία πάντων ύπέλαβον εἶναι, καὶ τὸν ὅλον οὐρανόν ἀριθμικόν εἶναι καὶ ἀριθμόν (Arist. Metaph. 985b33-6a3). [Since, then, all other things appeared in their nature to be likenesses of numbers, and numbers to be first in the whole of nature, they came to the belief that the elements of numbers are the elements of all things and that the whole heaven is a harmony and a number (tr. Apostle).]

69 Limit is represented by the one and the unlimited by two (the gnomons surrounding these would form similar and dissimilar figures, respectively). They are reconciled or harmonized by the arithmetic 3/2 (the fifth) and harmonic 4/3 (the fourth) means.
well-formed (τὸ εὔσχημον) should be the goal, while what is advantageous should be
the second:

καθόλου δὲ, ὡς ἔοικε, διετείνοντο μηδέποτε μηδὲν πράττειν ἥδονής
οτοχαζομένους (καὶ γὰρ ἁσχήμονα καὶ βλαβερόν ὡς ἐπὶ τὸ πολὺ τούτον εἶναι
τὸν σκοπόν), ἀλλὰ μάλιστα μὲν πρὸς τὸ καλὸν τε καὶ εὔσχημον βλέποντας
πράττειν ὃ ἂν ᾖ πρακτέον,
δεύτερον δὲ πρὸς τὸ συμφέρον τε καὶ ὡφέλιμον,
δεῖσθαί τε ταῦτα κρίσεως οὐ τῆς τυχούσης (Iamb. ΨΠ 31.204).

In general, so it seems, they made every effort never to do anything aiming at
pleasure (for this aim is, for the most part, indecorous and harmful), but looking,
most of all, to the beautiful and decorous, to do whatever must be done; and in
second place, (they advised looking) to the useful and beneficial. And such
choices require no ordinary judgment (tr. Dillon and Hershbell, rev.).

On this account the Pythagoreans felt beauty or the contemplation of beauty the correct
goal for men, not pleasure. It can be concluded then that, at least according to the
admittedly late Iamblichus (c. 250 – c. 325 AD), the Pythagoreans may have been the first
to separate beauty from pleasure. The question of its relation to pleasure is always
bound up with beauty. It is difficult to believe the perception of beauty can be entirely
separated from pleasure, and yet we find thinkers who are traditionally held to be non-
hedonists, like the Pythagoreans, Plato, and Aristotle, advocating the contemplation of
beauty as one of the highest ends of man. We are tempted to conclude that these non-
hedonists do not actually separate beauty from pleasure, but that the pleasure associated
with beauty for them is of such a different kind from that normally associated with
hedonism that they incline not to call the perception of beauty pleasant at all. Whatever
the explanation, its relation to pleasure is central to the question of beauty, and it should
be borne in mind as we examine τὸ καλὸν in early Greek thought.
So far, with the exception of Philolaus, we have been dealing with sources far removed from the original Pythagoreans. Much more reliable and authoritative is Aristotle but, unfortunately, he does not say a great deal about how the Pythagoreans viewed beauty. At the end of *Metaphysics N* he states that the Pythagoreans place certain mathematical relations and properties \(^{70}\) “in the column of the beautiful” (τῆς συστοιχίας τῆς τοῦ καλοῦ: *Metaph.* 1093b12-13),\(^{71}\) and at *Metaph.* 1072b30ff., he takes issue with the fact that they do not see beauty in the beginning, but only in an entity’s mature perfection.\(^{72}\) Both of these points merit investigation, but perhaps the most significant

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\(^{70}\) Oddness, straightness, the equal-by-equal, and the powers of certain numbers.

\(^{71}\) ἀλλ’ αἱ ἐν τοῖς αριθμοῖς φύσεις αἱ ἑπανυόμεναι καὶ τὰ τούτων ἔναντι καὶ ὅλως τὰ ἐν τοῖς μαθήμασιν, ὡς μὲν λέγουσι τινες καὶ αἴτια ποιοῦσι τῆς φύσεως, ἐνικεν σύνωσι γε σκοπουμένως διαφεύγειν (κατ’ οὐδένα γὰρ τὸν τῶν διωρισμένων περι τάς ἀρχὰς οὐδὲν αὖτων αἴτιον)· ἐστιν ὡς μὲντοι ποιοῦσι φανερὸν ὅτι τὸ εὖ ὑπάρχει καὶ τῆς συστοιχίας ἐστὶ τῆς τοῦ καλοῦ τὸ περιττόν, τὸ εὐθὺ, τὸ ἱσάκις ἰσον, αἱ δυνάμεις ἐν ἑνίων αριθμῶν· ἀμα γὰρ ὧραι καὶ αριθμὸς τοιοῦτοι· καὶ τὰ ἀλλὰ δὴ ὅσα συνάγουσιν ἐκ τῶν μαθηματικῶν θεωρημάτων πάντα ταύτην ἔχει τὴν δύναμιν. διὸ καὶ ἐνικεν συμπτώμασιν· ἔστι γὰρ συμβεβηκότα· ἔστι γὰρ συμβεβηκότα· ἔστι γὰρ συμβεβηκότα
diὸ καὶ ἔοικε συμπτώμασι· ἔστι γὰρ συμβεβηκότα· ἔστι γὰρ συμβεβηκότα.

\(^{72}\) ὡσιοὶ δὲ ὑπολαμβάνουσιν, ὅσπερ οἱ Πυθαγόρειοι καὶ Σπεύσιππος τὸ κάλλιστον καὶ ἀριστοτέρον μὴ ἐν ἀρχῇ εἶναι, διά τὸ καὶ τῶν φυτῶν καὶ τῶν ὤνων τὰς ἀρχὰς αἴτια μὲν εἶναι τὸ δὲ καλὸν καὶ τέλειον ἐν τοῖς ἐκ τούτων, οὓς ὀρθῶς οἴονται. τὸ γὰρ σπέρμα ἐξ ἐτέρων ἐστὶν προτέρων τελειῶν, καὶ τὸ πρῶτον ὑπ’ ἰσόμετα καὶ τὰ πρῶτα εἰσέχεσθαι καὶ τὰ πρῶτα ἐν τῷ πρῶτῳ ἐστίν ἀλλὰ τὸ τέλειον· ὅσον πρῶτον ἀνθρώπων ἀν φαίνεται τού ἐπερμάτος, ό τὸν ἐκ τούτων γενόμενον ἀλλ’ ἐτέρων ἐξ νῦν τὸ σπέρμα (Metaph. 1072b30-73a3). [Those who believe, as the Pythagoreans and Speusippus do, that the most beautiful and best are not in the principle, because the principles of plants and of animals are also causes but beauty and completeness are in what comes from them, do not think rightly. For the
point he makes for our purposes is that, except for disagreement on a few points, Plato was himself a Pythagorean. It still seems too seldom recognized just how Pythagorean Aristotle considers Plato.73 Immediately after discussing the Pythagoreans and Eleatics in *Metaphysics* A 5, Aristotle writes,

Μετὰ δὲ τὰς εἰρημένας φιλοσοφίας ἢ Πλάτωνος ἐπεγένετο πραγματεία, τὰ μὲν πολλὰ τούτοις ἀκολουθοῦσα, τὰ δὲ καὶ ἱδια παρὰ τὴν τῶν Ἰταλικῶν ἔχουσα φιλοσοφίαν (Metaph. 987a29-30).

After the philosophies named came the system of Plato, which followed these philosophies in many respects but also had its own peculiarities distinguishing it from the philosophy of the Italians (tr. Apostle).

Now strictly speaking the Eleatics might be included in “the Italians,” but Ross and others are probably correct that by “Italians” Aristotle usually means the Pythagoreans.74 Aristotle then goes on to say that Plato differs from the Pythagoreans in only four ways. First, Plato said that things exist by “participation” in the forms while the Pythagoreans said they exist by “imitating” numbers (987b10ff.). Second, he made the unlimited a dyad of great and small, instead of one principle (987b25ff.). Third he separated the numbers from sensible things, whereas the Pythagoreans said sensible things were seed comes from other things which are prior and complete, and that which is first is not the seed but the complete thing. One might say, for example, that prior to the seed is the man, not the man who comes from this seed but the man from whom this seed comes (tr. Apostle, rev.).]

73 “... the extent of the affinity which [Aristotle] recognizes, here and in a30, between Pythagoreanism and the ideal theory, has not been sufficiently emphasized by historians of philosophy. Socrates has commonly been regarded as the chief influence on Plato’s philosophy; Aristotle evidently regards Plato as having owed more to the Pythagoreans... it is more surprising that the ideal theory itself should be described as differing only verbally from the Pythagorean doctrine.” W. D. Ross, *Aristotle’s Metaphysics: A Revised Text with Introduction and Commentary*, II vols. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1924), vol. I, p. 163.

numbers (987b27ff.). And fourth, Plato placed mathematical objects between the numbers and sensible particulars (987b28ff.).

Now some of these differences may be greater than others: Aristotle certainly treats Plato’s use of “participation,” instead of the Pythagorean “imitation,” as merely a verbal distinction (τὴν δὲ μέθεξιν τούνομα μόνον μετέβαλεν: 987b10); and splitting the principle of the unlimited up into the great and the small does not seem like a major break with Pythagorean doctrine, especially when one considers that the Pythagoreans identified unlimitedness with the number two and even numbers generally.75 It is in the last two points – namely the separation of form-numbers and the intermediacy of mathematical – that Plato seems seriously to differ from the Pythagoreans. And the intermediacy of the mathematical seems a corollary to the separation of the form-numbers.76 The central difference and distinguishing feature of Platonism, then, for Aristotle is the separation of the forms, or form-numbers.77 But this means that Plato’s pupil of twenty years for the most part considers his master a Pythagorean except for the issue of separation and what follows from separation, namely, participation and the

75 Arist. Metaph. 986a15ff.; Ph. 203a10ff. etc.
76 The intermediacy of the mathematical follows from the separation of form-numbers from sensible particulars. As Aristotle explains, mathematical must be separate from sensible particulars because they are eternal and immovable, but they cannot be forms because there are many alike (Metaph. 987b15ff.).
77 Exactly what the relation was between numbers and physical objects for the Pythagoreans is difficult to ascertain, for at one point Aristotle says that the Pythagoreans believed that things exist by imitating numbers (987b10ff.) and later he says that in contrast to Plato they thought things are numbers (987b27). However, it must be the case that, at least according to Aristotle, the Pythagoreans did not separate numbers from physical objects, for this is the prime way in which he differentiates Plato from them. “[Aristotle] does not mean that the Pythagoreans thought that things ‘imitated’ numbers which existed separately from the things (this, he thinks, is one of the differences between them and Plato, l. 27), but that they thought the external, sensible nature of things to be modeled on their inner, numerical nature.” Ross, Aristotle’s Metaphysics: A Revised Text with Introduction and Commentary, vol. I, p. 163.
intermediacy of mathematicals. At *Metaphysics* 987b22, Aristotle states that Plato, at least in his later years,\textsuperscript{78} identified the forms with numbers:

\begin{quote}
\begin{verse}
\textgreek{επει δ’ αίτια τὰ εἴδη τοῖς ἄλλοις, τάκεινων στοιχεία πάντων ὑήθη τῶν ὄντων εἶναι στοιχεία. ὡς μὲν οὖν ὅλην τὸ μέγα καὶ τὸ μικρὸν εἶναι ἀρχάς, ὡς δ’ οὐσίαν τὸ ἐν· ἐξ ἐκείνων γὰρ κατὰ μέθεξιν τοῦ ἐνός [τὰ εἴδη] εἶναι τοὺς ἀριθμούς (*Metaph. 987b18-22*).
\end{verse}
\end{quote}

Since the Forms are the causes of all other things, he thought the elements of the Forms are the elements of all things. As matter, the Great and the Small are principles; as substance, it is the One. For from the Great and the Small and by participation in the One come the Forms, and these are Numbers (tr. Apostle).

There is no need to question τὰ εἴδη (Zeller, Ross) or τοὺς ἀριθμούς (Christ, Jaeger) in the last line. It may be correct to do so from a philological standpoint,\textsuperscript{79} but the whole remainder of A 6 makes it clear that, according to Aristotle, Plato identified the forms with numbers.\textsuperscript{80} What this means, of course, with respect to beauty is that, at least if we accept Aristotle as any authority on Plato’s thought, it is quite possible that Plato held views about beauty similar to the Pythagoreans. In fact, I will argue that this is so: mathematics is one of the main contexts in which Plato thinks about beauty.

1.3.2. Polyclitus:

The Pythagoreans were not the only ones who connected beauty with mathematics. The art and architecture of 5th century Greece reveals that the artists,

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\textsuperscript{78} At *Metaphysics* M 4, Aristotle indicates that those who first held the doctrine of Ideas, i.e., Plato et al., did so without initially identifying them with numbers (*Metaph. 1078b10ff.*).


sculptors and architects of the period must have seen a connection between mathematical proportion and beauty. Though there can be no doubt that many Greek artists concerned themselves with mathematical and geometrical proportion in their work, the famous sculptor Polyclitus (late 5th cent. B.C.) is said to have written down mathematical precepts for sculpture in a work called “the Canon.” His sculpture, the Doryphoros, of which copies have survived, may represent the embodiment of the rules of his Canon, the rules of proportion for the most beautiful representation of the human body. As with the Pythagoreans, however, there is a problem of sources. We do not have the original written work, and so we must rely for our information about it from later sources. The most intriguing testimonia come from Galen (2nd cent. A.D.), roughly six centuries after Polyclitus. Thus here again we cannot be sure that what Galen reports in fact goes back to the time of Plato or before.

The following two testimonia from Galen reveal the significance of proportion (συμμετρία) for Polyclitus.81

οὕτω γοῦν καὶ πλάσται καὶ γραφεῖς ἀνδριαντοποιί τε καὶ ὅλως ἀγαλματοποιοί τὰ κάλλιστα γράφουσι καὶ πλάττουσι καθ᾽ ἕκαστον εἶδος, οἷον ἄνθρωπον εὐμορφότατον ἢ ἱππον ἢ βοῦν ἢ λέοντα, τὸ μέσον ἐν ἐκείνῳ τῷ γένει σκοπούντες. καὶ ποῦ τις ἄνδριὰς ἐπαίνειται Πολυκλείτου κανῶν ὀνομαζόμενος, ἐκ τοῦ πάντων τῶν μορίων ἀκριβῆ τὴν πρὸς ἄλληλα συμμετρίαν ἔχειν ὀνόματος τοιούτου τυχόν (Gal. De temperamentis 1.566, DK 40A3).

So then moulders, painters, sculptors, and image-makers generally paint and form the most beautiful things according to each kind, for example, the best shaped man, horse, bull or lion, by looking to the mean in that kind. And surely

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81 The correct translation of συμμετρία is a difficulty and will be discussed in detail below. For now, let it be said that it should not be translated ‘symmetry,’ for the current meaning of ‘symmetry’ definitely differs from the ancient Greek concept of συμμετρία. In all probability, the best translation is ‘proportion.’
one of Polyclitus’ statues, the one called the canon, was praised, taking such a name from the fact that it had an accurate proportion of all the parts in relation to one another.

That the most beautiful things (τὰ κάλλιστα) should be crafted by looking to the mean (τὸ μέσον) in each kind is intelligible enough. It seems to have been a central tenet of ancient Greek thought that the ideal in every species was neither too tall nor too short, neither too wide nor too narrow, neither too heavy nor too light, etc. The notion of the mean is implicit in the Delphic apothegm, μηδὲν ἄγαν (nothing too much). But Galen’s association of the mean with proportion in Polyclitus calls for comment, for it is unclear what the connection is between the mean and proportion. Certainly a mean can be expressed as a proportion, if by ‘proportion’ we mean fraction. But Galen here seems to be speaking about two different things. If by ‘the mean (τὸ μέσον) in every species’ he means what we have said he does then this is something different from the internal parts or elements of a member of a species all being in proportion to one another. A member of a species may be too small or too big, that is, not the mean relative to the species, and yet have all of its parts and elements in proportion to one another.

The following passage makes it even clearer that that proportion has to do with the parts or elements of an object being right in relation to each other.

ἐδήλωσε γὰρ σαφῶς τούτο διὰ τῆς προγεγραμμένης ὀλίγον ἐμπροσθεν ὄσισις ἐν ἡ τὴν μὲν υγίειαν τοῦ σώματος ἐν θερμοῖς καὶ ψυχροῖς καὶ ξηροῖς καὶ υγροῖς συμμετρίαν εἶναι φησιν, ἀπερ δὲ στοιχεία δηλονότι τῶν σωμάτων ἐστί, τὸ δὲ κάλλος οὐκ ἐν τῇ τῶν στοιχείων ἄλλο ἐν τῇ τῶν μορίων συμμετοίχα συνίστασθαι νομίζει, δακτυλὸν πρὸς δακτυλὸν δηλονότι καὶ συμπάντων αὐτῶν πρὸς τε μετακάρπιον καὶ καρπόν καὶ τούτων πρὸς πῆχυν καὶ πήχεως πρὸς βραχίονα καὶ πάντων πρὸς πάντα, καθάπερ ἐν τῷ Πολυκλείτου κανόνι γέγραπται. πάσας γὰρ ἐκδιδάζεις ἡμᾶς ἐν ἐκείνῳ τῷ συγγράμματι τὰς συμμετοίχας τοῦ σώματος ὁ Πολύκλειτος ἔργῳ τόν λόγον ἐβεβαιώσε
δημιουργήσας ἀνδριάντα κατά τὰ τοῦ λόγου προστάγματα καὶ καλέσας δὴ καὶ αὐτὸν τὸν ἀνδριάντα, καθάπερ καὶ τὸ σύγγραμμα, κανόνα. τὸ μὲν δὴ κάλλος τοῦ σώματος ἐν τῇ τῶν μορίων συμμετρίᾳ κατὰ πάντα ἱατροὺς καὶ φιλοσόφους ἐστίν, ἡ δ’ ὑγίεια τῶν στοιχείων αὖ πάλιν, ἀττα ποτ’ ἂν ἢ, πρὸς ἀλληλά ἐστι συμμετρίᾳ (Gal. De placitis Hippocratis et Platonis 5.3.15-18, DK 40A3).

[Chrysippos] made this clear in the aforementioned work in which he states that health of the body is proportion in heat and cold and dryness and wetness, which are clearly elements of the body, but he thinks beauty consists not in the proportion of elements but of the parts, that is to say, of finger to finger and of all the fingers to the palm and wrist, and of these to the forearm, and of the forearm to the upper arm, and of all the parts to each other, as it is written in the Canon of Polyclitus. For when he had taught us all the proportions of the body in that work, Polyclitus confirmed his theory in deed, making a statue according to the dictates of the theory, and calling the statue, like the treatise, his Canon. According to all doctors and philosophers, beauty of the body lies in the proportion of the parts. But health again is the proportion of the elements to one another, whatever they may be.82

Beauty is repeatedly said to lie in proportion, and proportion is the correct disposition of the parts or elements to one another. But this still does not tell us what the relation is between proportion and the mean in the previous quotation. This question will have to be borne in mind in the investigation of beauty in Plato, in particular when it is discussed in a mathematical context.

One of the main ways, however, in which beauty was connected with the absolute was through mathematics. Among those who connected beauty with mathematics or who found that at least a certain kind of beauty was best expressed by and through mathematical objects and relations were the Pythagoreans and probably also some of the craftsmen or artisans. Our conclusions about both these groups must

82 Both these quotations from Galen regarding Polyclitus were brought to my attention by Tatarkiewicz, History of Aesthetics, vol. I, p. 77.
remain to a certain extent speculative, based as they are to a large extent on later sources. Also, it is impossible to say what connection or influence these two groups had on each other. And it is possible that these were not the only groups who connected beauty with mathematics. There may have been non-Pythagorean mathematicians who found their subject beautiful. These are all questions for the most part lost to history. But the very remains of the buildings and temples of ancient Greece testify to the fact that by Plato’s time a very strong association had developed between beauty and mathematical relations.\textsuperscript{83}

1.3.3. Sappho

So far, we have been speaking of those theorists who tried to connect beauty with some mathematical relation. They seemed to look for what is the same in different instances of what they found beautiful. But others came to different conclusions about beauty. They seem to have been struck by the fact that different individuals and societies found different things beautiful. Sappho seems to have been the first to theorize about beauty. She is especially noteworthy for the investigation of beauty in the Presocratics for three reasons. First, it appears that in her work we have the first recorded instance of the substantive use of καλός, namely τὸ καλὸν. Second, she is first to present an explicit connection between the good and the beautiful. And third, she characterizes beauty as

\textsuperscript{83} There are many descriptions of this. A succinct one is Tatarkiewicz, History of Aesthetics, vol. I, pp. 48-75.
όττω τις ἔραται (whatsoever a person loves). What appears to be the first recorded instance of τὸ καλὸν is found in Fragment 58, line 26:

...μοι (25) | τὸ λάμπον ἠρος τῶν ἔρωτα καὶ τὸ καλὸν λέγομεν.

Love has obtained for me the brightness and beauty of the sun.84

Most of the substantive in question is the editors’ conjecture; however, the existence of the substantive at this point is well enough established to be listed in LSJ, s.v. καλός.85 The significance of the substantive here is that for the first time of which we are aware the adjective καλός could be thought of on its own, in abstraction from the noun it would modify. Later, the substantive τὸ καλὸν comes to be used more frequently than the noun, κάλλος. However, the use of the substantive does not by itself establish a different sense from the noun. The fact that the substantive comes to be used more frequently may only reflect the tendency of the Ancient Greek language to prefer substantives to nouns in general.

The second point to be made about Sappho is that she is the first to make an explicit theoretical connection between being beautiful (καλός) and being good (ἀγαθός). This appears in Fragment 50, lines one and two.

ό μὲν γὰρ κάλος ὁς ὑπὸν ἴδην πέλεται <κάλος>,86 | ὁ δὲ κάγαθος αὐτικα καὶ κάλος ἔσσεται.

84 The fragment and line numbers are those found in Edgar Lobel and D. L. Page, Poetarum Lesbiorum fragmenta (Oxford: Clarendon, 1963). All translations of Sappho are those of David A. Campbell, Greek Lyric, 5 vols. (Cambridge: Harvard University, 1982). Campbell follows the numeration of Lobel and Page.
86 Editors seem to agree on the necessity of κάλος here. See Voigt, Sappho et Alcaeus: Fragmenta, p. 73.
For he that is beautiful is <beautiful> as far as appearances go, while he that is good will consequently also be beautiful.

One interpretation of this fragment is that while beauty does not imply or lead to real goodness, real goodness implies or leads to beauty. It seems we must translate καλός as ‘beauty,’ at least in the first line, because we are using καλός with reference to appearance (ἴδην). If καλός is to be translated ‘beautiful’ in the first line, it is reasonable to assume – lacking anything to suggest otherwise – that so it should be translated in the second. But the context may help us understand at least how Galen understood the lines.

The fragment is from his Exhortation on Learning (8.16). He introduces the fragment saying: “Therefore, since we know that the prime of youth is like the spring flowers and brings short-lived enjoyment, it is better to commend the woman of Lesbos when she says…” He seems to be speaking about the transitory nature of human physical flourishing. Therefore he might take καλός in the first line to have a slightly different sense from that in second line. In the first line καλός should certainly be translated ‘beautiful,’ referring as it does to the individual’s appearance (ὀσσον ἰδην). But there is no reason to think that καλός in the second line has a different sense; it is just that in the second case the beauty is that which one sees, not at first, like the immediate beauty of the first line, but after one has come to know the individual, and recognize his or her goodness. The physical attractiveness of appearance fades with time, but one can also be attracted to the more stable quality of a person’s goodness.
Sappho’s third contribution is to focus on the fact that different people find different things beautiful. She concludes that beauty is ὅτω τις ἔραται (whatsoever a person loves).

οἱ μὲν ἱππῆων στρότον οἱ δὲ πέρας φαίο’ ἐπ[ι] γὰν μέλαι[ν]αν
| ἐ]μεναι κάλλιστον, ἔγω δὲ κήν’ ὅτ- | τω τις ἔραται (Fr. 16, II. 1-4).

Some say a host of cavalry, others of infantry, and others of ships, is the most beautiful thing on the black earth, but I say it is whatsoever a person loves.

She appears to try to support her claim in the following lines of the same fragment:

πάγχω δ’ εὔμαρες σύνετον πόησαι (5) | πλάντεῳ τὸ[ι]ς, ’ ἀ γάρ πόλυ

It is perfectly easy to make this understood by everyone: for she who far surpassed mankind in beauty, Helen, left her most noble husband and went sailing off to Troy with not a thought at all for her child or dear parents, but (love) lead her astray…

It is difficult to see how this supports her thesis that what is most beautiful is what one loves, but it seems from the phrase, “It is perfectly easy to make this understood by everyone…” that she felt it was some sort of explanation or support for her thesis. The thought may be something like the following: what was most beautiful for Helen was not a host of cavalry, infantry, or ships, nor even her husband, as perhaps it should have been; what was most beautiful for her was the one she fell in love with, namely Paris. In conclusion, Sappho may be credited with three innovations: the introduction of the substantive, τὸ καλόν, a theoretical connection between the ἀγαθός and the καλός, and the belief that whatever one loves is beautiful.
1.3.4. Heraclitus:

It may initially seem questionable whether it is worth making reference to Heraclitus at all in the investigation of τὸ καλὸν, because he does not address the question of beauty directly; but there is an unusually high frequency of καλός-words, given the number of fragments which remain, evincing perhaps a preoccupation with beauty even if it only surfaces in conjunction with the exposition of some of his doctrines. If we only focus on those fragments in which beauty is mentioned – a thing admittedly dangerous to do – Heraclitus seems to believe both that beauty is a comparative property and that different things appear beautiful to different perceivers. But in addition to this he seems to have substantive views about what causes beauty. That beauty is a comparative property can be seen from such passages as the following from Plato’s *Hippias Major*:


The most beautiful ape turns out to be ugly compared to the race of men (tr. Cooper, ed., rev.).

Roughly the same thought is expressed at *Hippias Major* 289b:

Ἀνθρώπων ὁ σοφώτατος πρὸς θεὸν πίθηκος φανεῖται καὶ σοφία καὶ κάλλει καὶ τοῖς ἄλλοις πάσιν (DK 22B83);

In relation to god, the wisest man will appear an ape in wisdom, beauty, and everything else (tr. Cooper, ed., rev.).

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87 Though DK accept both these fragments, Robinson notes that they have been doubted. See T. M. Robinson, *Heraclitus Fragments: A Text and Translation with a Commentary* (Toronto: University of Toronto, 1987), p. 133.
Such passages seem to emphasize that the evaluation of beauty can change as the same object is compared to different objects. Humans are beautiful when compared to apes but ugly when compared to gods. The moral of all this would seem to be that nothing is really beautiful in itself, but that, like heat or largeness, beauty is a comparative quality. What is considered beautiful is only so considered because it is more beautiful than something else. And anything considered beautiful is also considered ugly in comparison to what is more beautiful. The gods may represent an upper bound of beauty, but Heraclitus does not explicitly say that they do.

That Heraclitus also thought beauty varied according to different perceivers can be seen from the following:

τῶς μὲν θεῷ καλὰ πάντα καὶ δίκαια, ἄνθρωποι δὲ ἀ μὲν ἄδικα ύπειλήφασιν αὖ δὲ δίκαια (Porph. ad ll. 4.4, DK 22B102).

For god all things are beautiful and just, but men have supposed that some things are unjust and others are just (tr. Robinson, rev.).

If all things are beautiful to god while some things are not to men, then it would seem beauty varies according to the perceiver. It would not be surprising if the point of this were that – a god being an authority – though some things seem not beautiful to men, in fact all things are beautiful. It is a question how this would relate to Heraclitus’ thesis about the comparative character of beauty. However, we do not have enough information to determine whether this is what Heraclitus means.

Finally, though beauty seems to be both a comparative quality and to vary according to the perceiver, Heraclitus also has substantive views about where a most
beautiful harmony comes from. According to Aristotle, Heraclitus believes that a most beautiful harmony comes from “differing things”:

καὶ Ἡράκλειτος τὸ ἀντίξουν συμφέρον καὶ ἐκ τῶν διαφερόντων καλλίστην ἀρμονίαν καὶ πάντα κατ' ἔριν γίνεσθαι (Arist. EN 1155b4, DK 22B8).88

Heraclitus said that what opposes unites, and that from differing things comes the most beautiful harmony, and that all things come to be according to strife (tr. Robinson, rev.).89

Whether things differing is a necessary or sufficient condition, or neither or both, is not discernable from this fragment. It may be that only in some cases does a most beautiful harmony result from things differing; however, it is tempting to think that Heraclitus thought that the differing tendencies of things always resulted in the most beautiful harmony. Perhaps this is what the god sees even when men do not. How this would connect with the comparative view of beauty and the view that beauty can vary according to the perceiver is again a question. But it may also be that Heraclitus did not have any consistent view about beauty. Nevertheless his view about the comparative nature of beauty and his claim that beauty may have something to do with the differing tendencies of things and the resulting harmony seem positive contributions to the development of theories about beauty.

88 For a discussion of this summary of Heraclitean doctrines, see Robinson, Heraclitus Fragments: A Text and Translation with a Commentary, pp. 80-81.
89 With this fragment one should compare the following: σάρμα εἰκῇ κεχυμένων ὁ κάλλιστος, φησὶν Ἡράκλειτος, [ὁ] κόσμος (Thphr. Metaph. 7a, DK 22B124). [The most beautiful order is a pile [σάρμα: lit. sweepings, refuse] of things poured any which way.]
1.3.5. The *Dissoi Logoi*:

‘*Dissoi Logoi,*’ literally ‘two speeches [or arguments],’ is the title given to an anonymous work,\(^90\) written around 400 B.C., either in Cyprus or at Cyrene.\(^91\) The work is divided into sections, the first on the good, the second on the beautiful, the third on justice, and so on. In each section the author usually first presents arguments in favor of view that the same thing can be good and bad, beautiful ugly, just and unjust, and then arguments in favor of the view that it is not the case that goodness is the same as badness, or that beauty is the same as ugliness. Though the author seems to favor the view according to which the same thing can be said to be good and bad, there is a marked difference in the way the good and the beautiful are dealt with. The good is spoken about exclusively in terms of advantage or benefit, and never in what we would call a moral context. The following may be taken as representative of the whole section on goodness and badness:

\[\ldots\ \varepsilon\rho\omega\iota\sigma\iota\varsigma\ \tau\epsilon\ \kappa\alpha\iota\varsigma\ \sigma\iota\varsigma\varsigma\iota\varsigma\iota\varsigma\iota\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\varsigma\ vars\ \tau\alpha\upsilon\tau\alpha\varsigma\ \gamma\alpha\varsigm\ldots\]

... food, drink, and sexual pleasures: these things are bad for a man if he is sick but good if he is healthy and needs them. (3) And further, incontinence in these matters is bad for the incontinent but good for those who sell these things and

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\(^90\) ‘*Dissoi Logoi,*’ is an English transliteration of the first two words of the work. It is not uncommon when dealing with ancient texts for the title to come from the first few words of the text. The work may also, however, be found under the title ‘*Dialexeis*’ (discourses, arguments), taken from Stephanus’ 1570 edition of Diogenes Laertius. See T. M. Robinson, *Contrasting Arguments: An Edition of the Dissoi logoi* (Salem: Ayer, 1984), p. 1.

\(^91\) OCD s.v. *Dissoi Logoi*, p. 356.
make a profit. And again, illness is bad for the sick but good for the doctors (tr. Kent Sprague).

Additionally, the way in which something is said to be good is usually in relation to individuals in certain situations or circumstances. An object or action is usually said to be beautiful, on the other hand, in relation to different societies. It is often spoken of in the context of the manners, customs, and beliefs of different cities and peoples:

αὐτικα Λακεδαιμονίως τὰς κόρας γυμνάζεσθαι <καί> ἀχειριδώτας καὶ ἀχίτωνας παρέστην καλὸν· Ἰωσι δὲ αἰσχρόν. (10) καὶ <τοῖς μὲν> τῶς παίδας μὴ μανθάνειν μωσικὰ καὶ γράμματα καλὸν. Ἰωσι δ′ αἰσχρόν μὴ ἐπίστασθαι ταύτα πάντα. (11) Θεσσαλοῖσι δὲ καλὸν τὼς ἵππως ἐκ τᾶς ἀγέλας λαβόντι καὶ τὼς ὀρέας· βῶν τε λαβόντι αὐτῶι σφάξαι καὶ ἐκ δεῖραι καὶ ταῦτα πάντα.

To the Spartans it is beautiful that young girls should do athletics and go about with bare arms and no tunics, but to the Ionians this is ugly. (10) And to <the former> it is beautiful for their children not to learn music and letters, but to the Ionians it is ugly not to know all these things. (11) To the Thessalians it is beautiful for a man to select horses and mules from a herd himself and train them, and also to take one of the cattle and slaughter, skin, and cut it up himself, but in Sicily these tasks are ugly and the work of slaves (tr. Kent Sprague, rev.).

In this excerpt καλὸς (beautiful) and αἰσχρός (ugly) concern the realm of customs, manners, and habits, which for the most part is distinct from the realm of morality, in the modern sense of the term. Surely it is not a moral question whether a man trains

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92 All translations of the Dissoi Logoi are from Rosamond Kent Sprague, ed., The Older Sophists: A Complete Translation by Several Hands of the Fragments in Die Fragmente Der Vorsokratiker (Columbia: University of South Carolina, 1972). In the section “About Beauty and Ugliness,” both Kent Sprague and Robinson consistently use the words ‘seemly’ and ‘disgraceful’ or ‘shameful’ to translate καλὸς and αἰσχρός. But at 2.22, where καλὸς is applied to a man, they both switch to the translations ‘handsome’ and ‘ugly.’ In a footnote to this section Kent Sprague writes, “The Greek words are still καλὸν and αἰσχρόν, but the seemly-disgraceful antithesis seems unsuitable here.” Kent Sprague, ed., The Older Sophists: A Complete Translation by Several Hands of the Fragments in Die Fragmente Der Vorsokratiker, p. 284, n. 4.
horses himself. But in other passages καλός and αἰσχρός are used in what we would call moral contexts.

(7) καὶ τῶς μὲν φίλως εὖ ποιὲν καλόν, τῶς δὲ ἐχθρῶς αἰσχρόν. καὶ τῶς μὲν πολεμίως φεύγεν αἰσχρόν, τῶς δὲ ἐν σταδίωι ἀνταγωνιστὰς καλόν. (8) καὶ τῶς μὲν φίλως καὶ τῶς πολίτας φονεύεν αἰσχρόν, τῶς δὲ πολεμίως καλόν (Dialex. 2.7-8).

(7) And it is beautiful to do good to one’s friends but ugly to do so to one’s enemies. And it is ugly to run away from the enemy but beautiful to run away from one’s rivals in the stadium. (8) To murder one’s friends and fellow citizens is ugly but to slaughter the enemy is beautiful (tr. Kent Sprague, rev.).

This is not to say that only the καλόν is used in moral contexts; τὸ δίκαιον (justice) is also so used, cf. Dialex. 3. Note, however, that at least this author uses καλός in some moral contexts, yet does not use ἀγαθός (good) in a moral context. The καλόν seems to have a more absolute or universal character than the ἀγαθόν. What is ἀγαθόν is said to be so toward a particular individual in some circumstance. What is καλόν is not καλόν for one individual or another; it is said to be καλόν in the relevant society. It is simply καλόν, at least for the Spartans, that young girls should do athletics and go about with bare arms and no tunics. There is no question of this being καλόν to some Spartans and not to others; all Spartans think this is καλόν, at least according to the author of the Dissoi Logoi. Nor is it καλόν for some Spartan girls to do so and not others. It is true that some things are beautiful for men to do and other things are beautiful for women to do. In this sense beauty could take datives, just as goodness does. But when it is said that something is beautiful for a woman to do, the sense is that it is beautiful to all, or at least all the members of the relevant society, for women to do this. The recipients of the beauty are everyone, whereas the recipient of the goodness, when it is said that it is
good for a sick man to do such and such, is only the sick man himself. It may be that it is
good for a sick man to do such and such, just as it is beautiful for a woman to act in a
certain manner, but the goodness is only directed at him.\footnote{One could argue that everyone benefits when a sick man gets better, but this is a philosophical claim which, though plausible, requires a defense. It is still true that the sick man alone is the immediate beneficiary of the prescribed action, whereas the immediate recipients of the beauty of a beautiful action are all those who see it.} Thus at least according to this
author the καλόν seems to have a more universal character than the ἀγαθόν, and it is
also used in moral contexts, whereas the ἀγαθόν is not.\footnote{See Appendix II for further examples of the use of καλός in Presocratic theorists.}

1.4.0. Beauty in Prose:

It was argued earlier that LSJ’s “evidence” for special functional and moral
senses of καλός in early Greek authors is unpersuasive. But they might seem to present
rather more persuasive evidence, especially for a functional or utilitarian sense, in prose
authors closer to Plato (c. 429 to 347 B.C.), in particular Herodotus (c. 484 to 425 B.C.),
Thucydides (c. 460–455 to c. 400 B.C.), and Xenophon (c. 428/7 to c. 354 B.C.). However,
the strongest evidence for a functional sense appears in adverbial uses of καλόν, and
uses of the word in certain idiomatic phrases such as ἐν καλῷ, which is often translated
‘in a good time/place,’ or ‘in the right time/place.’ The incidence of such phrases
becomes increasingly common, and it is indeed often difficult to see how καλόν could
be translated ‘beautiful’ in such cases. This development may be one of the sources of
the belief that καλόν itself has changed or broadened its meaning, or that it never had
only the one sense of ‘beautiful.’ But we should not be so quick to draw this conclusion. The word may have been in transition. It is true that in modern Greek the word καλός means, or should be translated, simply ‘good,’ and that other words are used to express ‘beautiful.’ But it could still be true that in its adjectival form, and outside of idiomatic expressions, the word still meant, or should be translated, ‘beautiful.’ And I think this is the case. In the vast majority of cases there is still no reason to translate καλός with any other word than ‘beautiful’. So at least I will argue in the cases of Herodotus, Thucydides and Xenophon.

1.4.1. Herodotus:

There are seven instances of the noun κάλλος and eighty-one instances of the adjective καλός in Herodotus’ Historiae. In the case of the noun, there is no instance where the context warrants translating κάλλος otherwise than by ‘beauty’. A. D. Godley often chooses to translate it ‘goodliness,’ for instance at 7.187.2, 9.25.1 and 9.69.2. But there is no warrant for this, and in fact good reason to translate it ‘beauty’ where Godley translates it ‘goodliness’. Let us take 9.25.1:

Οἱ μὲν νυν βάρβαροι τρόπῳ τῷ σφετέρῳ ἐτίμων ἀποθανόντα Μασίστιον· οἱ δὲ Ἑλληνες, ὡς τὴν ἱππὸν ἐδέξαντο προσβάλλουσαν καὶ δεξάμενοι ὤσαντο, ἐθάρσησαν πολλῷ μᾶλλον. Καὶ πρῶτα μὲν ἐπὶ ἄμαζαν ἐσθέντες τὸν νεκρὸν παρὰ τὰς τάξις ἔκομιζον· ὁ δὲ νεκρὸς ἦν θέης ἀξίου μεγάθεος εἶνεκα καὶ κάλλεος· τῶν δὲ εἶνεκα καὶ [ταύτα ἐποιεύν·] ἐκλείποντες τὰς τάξις ἐφοίτων θεησόμενοι Μασίστιον.

So the foreigners honoured Masistius’ death after their manner; but the Greeks were much heartened by their withstanding and repelling of the horsemen. And first they laid the dead man on a cart and carried him about their ranks; and the body was worth the viewing, for stature and κάλλεος; wherefore they would even leave their ranks and come to view Masistius (tr. Godley, rev.).

Godley translates κάλλεος here ‘goodliness,’ but what in the context indicates that this is the best translation? On the contrary, the context is that of viewing (θέης, θεησόμενοι). Masistius’ body is said to be ‘worthy of viewing’ (θέης ἄξιος) for certain reasons. Would it not make more sense to say that something is worthy of viewing for its beauty than for its “goodliness”? At least it certainly does not make any less sense to translate it ‘beauty,’ and in fact ‘beauty’ seems to fit the context better.96

The arbitrariness of the use of ‘goodliness’ as a translation can also be seen from the following excerpt:

ἐὼν τε Ὀλυμπιονίκης καὶ κάλλιστος Ἑλλήνων τῶν κατ’ ἑωτόν. Διὰ δὲ τὸ ἑωτοῦ κάλλος ἴνεικάτο παρὰ Εγεσταίων τὰ οὐδεὶς ἄλλος (5.47.1-2).

This Philippus was a victor at Olympia and the goodliest Greek of his day. For the beauty of his person he received honours from the Egestans accorded to none else (tr. Godley).

Why does Godley translate κάλλιστος in the first sentence ‘goodliest,’ and then κάλλος in the next ‘beauty’? It is true, as we shall see, that the superlative of the adjective seems to be used more flexibly and, especially when used as an adverb, seems to have the sense of ‘best.’ But there is no need to alter the translation in this case. Clearly the subject is the same and so is the attribute in question, namely beauty.

96 In addition, here we see the common conjunction of κάλλος with size or stature (μέγεθος), cf. 7.187.2, 9.78.2, 9.96.2.
Of the eighty-one instances of the adjective καλός, there are only nine which pose any difficulty for the view that it should be translated ‘beautiful.’ Of these, seven are cases where the adjective is used adverbially in the form κάλλιστα, 2.69.2, 4.61.2, 4.161.1, 5.92.2, 7.8.81, 7.26.2, 8.80.2. The remaining two instances have the sense of ‘in a favorable place’ (1.142.1) or ‘in favorable circumstances’ (3.73.1). To go through all the instances for which J. E. Powell suggests the translations ‘good’ or ‘excellent’ would overtax the reader’s patience and is unnecessary.97 Let it simply be said that, except for the cases just mentioned, there is no reason to translate καλός-words otherwise than ‘beautiful.’

Some mention should, however, probably be made of the idiom τὰ ἱερά (ἱερὰ) καλά, for it appears frequently in Herodotus, Thucydides, and Xenophon. Τὰ ἱερά are sacraments or, probably in most cases, sacrifices. Powell indicates that the idiom is meant to convey that the sacrifices are favorable, and certainly that is what the idiom implies. But there is no reason why the sacrifices could not be favorable precisely because they are beautiful. I think it would be more accurate to say that the sacrifices were beautiful and to infer from this that they were favorable. Instances of the idiom in Herodotus are 6.112.1, 9.36.1, 9.37.1.

Of special interest, may be the connection in Herodotus between beauty and customs. The customs of different societies are often said to be beautiful, at least to the members of the society in question, rather than good or beneficial. One example of this is from the following famous passage:

Εἰ γὰρ τις προθείη πάσι ἀνθρώπους ἐκλέξασθαι κελεύων νόμους τοὺς καλλίστους ἐκ τῶν πάντων νόμων, διασκεψάμενοι ἃν ἐλείατο ἐκαστοὶ τοὺς ἐωυτῶν· οὕτω νομίζουσι πολλὸν τὶ καλλίστους τοὺς ἐωυτῶν νόμους ἐκαστοὶ εἶναι (3.38.1).

For if it were proposed to all nations to choose which seemed best of all customs, each, after examination made, would place its own first; so well is each persuaded that its own are by far the best (tr. Godley).

But nothing is said here about any custom, or law (νόμος), being the “best”; the customs/laws are said to be most beautiful. And indeed, we could see why it might be more appropriate to speak of the beauty of customs, because customs do not usually concern the realm of utility. We do not generally speak about e.g. trying to stay healthy or looking out for one’s best interest as customs. Rather, customs and habits usually have nothing to do with utility. Therefore it might be more appropriate to speak about the beauty of customs rather than their goodness. We might here recall the connection between beauty and customs highlighted in the Dissoi Logoi. Other passages which connect beauty and customs are 1.37.2, 1.172.1, 1.196.5, 5.6.2, cf. 4.162.4.

1.4.2. Thucydides:

There are fifty-one instances of the adjective καλός in Thucydides’ Historiae. Of these only ten might pose any difficulty for the thesis that καλός should be translated ‘beautiful.’ In the great majority of cases, however, there is no evidence that it should be translated otherwise. Nonetheless, in his Lexicon Thucydideum, Bétant suggests ‘bonus’

(good) as the sense of καλός at 6.16.5 and 4.118.9. But neither passage supports his suggestion. In the first passage, Alcibiades states,

οἶδα δὲ τοὺς τοιούτους, καὶ ὅσοι ἐν τινος λαμπρότητι προέσχον, ἐν μὲν τῷ καθ' αὐτοὺς βιω λυπηροὺς ὄντας, τοῖς ὁμοίοις μὲν μάλιστα, ἐπείτα δὲ καὶ τοῖς ἄλλοις ξυνόντας, τῶν δὲ ἐπείτα ἀνθρώπων προσπαίησιν τε ξυγγενείας τισὶ καὶ μὴ οὖσαν καταλιπόντας, καὶ ἢς ἂν ὄντας καταλιπώντας, καὶ οὐ περὶ ἄλλοτρόν οὐδ' άμαρτόντων, ἂλλ' ὡς περὶ σφετέρων τε καὶ καλὰ πραξάντων.

I know, however, that men of this stamp, and all others who have in any way stood out as illustrious, are indeed in their own lifetime an offence, most of all to their equals, then also to others, while still among them, but that they leave behind to those who come after the claiming of kinship even where there is none; and, whatever their fatherland, to it they leave exultant pride in them, as men who are not aliens or offenders, but who are their own and have done well. Smith translates καλὰ in the last line adverbially with the word ‘well,’ but there is no reason Alcibiades could not be referring to men who have done beautiful things (καλὰ).

When we know from Pindar and others what it meant to have accomplished καλὰ – the fame and good report that would come from such deeds. Beautiful things, deeds, accomplishments gained one renown, and were the sort of thing poets would sing about and the sort of thing ambitious men like Alcibiades himself would try to realize. The sentence would still make sense if καλὰ were translated ‘beautiful.’ In short, there is no reason to agree with Bétant here that the sense is that of ‘bonus.’ Likewise for the second passage cited:

τοῖς μὲν Λακεδαιμονίοις καὶ τοῖς ξυμμάχοις ταῦτα δοκεῖ· εἰ δὲ τί ύμιν εἴτε κάλλιον εἴτε δικαίωτερον τούτων δοκεῖ εἶναι, ἰόντες ἐς Λακεδαιμόνα διδάσκετε… (4.118.9).

99 Élie Ami Bétant, Lexicon Thucydideum (Hildesheim: Georg Olms, 1961), s.v.
100 The translation is that of Charles Forster Smith, Thucydides, 4 vols. (Cambridge: Harvard University, 1965).
To the Lacedaemonians and their allies these things seem good; but if anything seems to you fairer or juster than these things, come to Lacedaemon and set forth your view… (tr. Smith).

Here Smith’s translation is acceptable, and there is no reason to agree with Bétant that the sense of κάλλιον is ‘better.’

In a large number of cases, however, Smith translates καλόν ‘glorious,’ or some equivalent. But neither is there warrant for translating καλόν other than by ‘beautiful’ in these cases. Some examples are as follows:

οὐ γὰρ περὶ τοῦ αὐτοὶ σωθῆναι μόνον ἐτι τὴν ἐπιμέλειαν ἐποιοῦντο, ἀλλὰ καὶ ὅπως ἐκείνους καλύσουσι, νομίζοντες ὅπερ ἦν, ἀπὸ τε τῶν παρόντων πολὺ σφῶν καθυπέρτερα τὰ πράγματα εἶναι καὶ, εἰ δύναντο κρατῆσαι Ἀθηναίων τε καὶ τῶν ξυμμάχων καὶ κατὰ γῆν καὶ κατὰ θάλασσαν, καλὸν σφίσιν ἐς τοὺς Ἑλλήνας τὸ ἀγώνισμα φανεῖσθαι (7.56.2).

For the Syracusans were no longer concerned with merely saving themselves, but also with preventing the Athenians from being saved, thinking, as indeed was the case, that in the present circumstances their own position was much superior, and that if they could defeat the Athenians and their allies both by land and by sea the achievement would appear a glorious one for them in the eyes of the Hellenes (tr. Smith).

Οἱ δ’ οὖν Συρακόσιοι καὶ οἱ ξύμμαχοι εἰκότας ἐνόμισαν καλὸν ἀγώνισμα σφίσιν εἶναι ἐπὶ τῇ γεγενημένῃ νίκῃ τῆς ναυμαχίας ἑλεῖν τε τὸ στρατόπεδον ἅπαν τῶν Ἀθηναίων τοσοῦτον ὄν, καὶ μηδὲ καθ’ ἑτερα αὐτοὺς, μήτε διὰ θαλάσσης μήτε τῷ πεζῷ, διαφυγεῖν (7.59.2).

The Syracusans and their allies, then, naturally conceived the thought that it would be a glorious achievement for them to crown the victory which they had won in the sea-fight by taking the whole vast armament of the Athenians and preventing their escape in either way, either by sea or by land (tr. Smith).

‘Οτι μὲν καλὰ τὰ προειρηγασμένα καὶ ύπέρ καλῶν τῶν μελλόντων ὁ ἀγῶν ἐσται, ὦ Συρακόσιοι καὶ ξύμμαχοι, οἳ τε πολλοὶ δοκεῖτε ἡμῖν εἰδέναι (οὐδὲ γὰρ ἂν οὕτως αὐτῶν προθύμως ἀντελάβεσθε), καὶ εἰ τις μὴ ἐπὶ ὅσον δεῖ ἥσθηται, σημανοῦμεν (7.66.1).
That the deeds which have already been achieved are glorious and that the contest will be for glories still to come, you, Syracusans and allies, seem to us most of you to be aware – otherwise you would not have laid your hands to the task so zealously; but if anyone has not perceived this as clearly as he should, we will make it plain (tr. Smith).

In none of these cases is it necessary to deviate from the standard translation of καλόν, namely ‘beautiful.’ Wherever Smith translates καλόν ‘glorious,’ the sentence would be just as clear if he had used the word ‘beautiful.’ Of course it may be true that the beautiful actions were thought to be glorious, and thus Smith’s translation probably does not do much violence to the author’s intention. But in an apparent attempt to aid the reader’s comprehension, Smith has actually increased the distance between the reader and the text. One could argue that Smith has performed a function which readers should be allowed to perform themselves. And one could wonder whether the value of increasing the readability of a text outweighs the value of allowing readers to make their own decisions about what Thucydides meant. At least the latter is given as a reason for learning the original language. In short, in these examples I see no need to deviate from the basic translation of καλός-words. Further examples of the same sort can be found at 1.38.5, 1.81.5, 1.129.3, 2.35.1, 2.42.4, 2.64.6, 3.55.3, 4.126.5, 5.46.1, 5.69.1, 5.107.1, 6.33.4, 6.80.2, 7.68.3, 7.70.7, 7.71.1, 7.86.2, 8.2.1, 8.12.2.

But what then of those passages where it would indeed be awkward to translate καλός ‘beautiful’? These can be divided into three types. The first is when καλός is used adverbially. Instances of the adverbial use can be found at 5.9.4 and 6.33.3. The second is where καλός seems to be used almost as a superlative of ἀγαθός. It seems to be used in these cases because the word ἀγαθός is not sufficient. We may see instances of this at
5.60.3 and 1.93.3. And finally καλός is used in idiomatic phrases like ἐν καλῷ, indicating “favorable circumstances.” Examples are: 1.33.1, 2.84.2, 3.94.3, 5.59.4, 5.60.2, 5.60.5. In these cases I would concede that it would probably be too awkward to insist on translating καλός ‘beautiful.’ But at the same time I would be wary of the insistence on translating Greek into idiomatic English. The requirement that Ancient Greek be translated into modern idiomatic English may not be wholly innocent, for it seems to assume that the Greeks must have thought just as modern English speakers do. We may question whether ‘winged words’ (ἐπεα πτερόεντα) in Homer constitutes modern idiomatic English. And if we are content to translate ἐπεα πτερόεντα, ‘winged words,’ why do we balk at translating ἐν καλῷ ‘in a beautiful time [or place]’?

In closing I would merely like to point out what seem to me three of the most interesting passages with respect to τὸ καλὸν in Thucydides. The first of these is at 5.69.1, where Thucydides is recounting exhortations given by the generals to their respective armies. The Mantineans are reminded that the battle is for their fatherland; the Argives are to fight for, among other things, their ancient hegemony; but perhaps most interestingly, the Athenians are to fight because it is καλὸν:

Ἐπεὶ δὲ ξυνιέναι ἐμελλον ἡδη, ἐνταῦθα καὶ παραινέσεις καθ’ ἐκάστους ὑπὸ τῶν οἰκείων στρατηγῶν τοιαίδε ἐγίγνοντο, Μαντινεὺσι μὲν ὅτι ὑπὲρ τε πατρίδος ἡ μάχη ἐσται καὶ ὑπὲρ ἄρχης ἀμα καὶ δουλείας, τῆς μὲν μὴ πειρασαμένοις ἀφαιρεθῆναι, τῆς δὲ μὴ αὖθις πειράσθαι, Ἀργείοις δὲ ὑπὲρ τῆς τε παλαιᾶς ἡγεμονίας καὶ τῆς ἐν Πελοποννήσῳ ποτὲ ἰσομοιρίας μὴ διὰ παντὸς στερισκομένους ἀνέχεσθαι, καὶ ἄνδρας ἅμα ἐχθροὺς καὶ ἀστυγείτονας ὑπὲρ πολλῶν ἀδικημάτων ἀμύνασθαι, τοῖς δὲ Ἀθηναίοις καλὸν εἶναι μετὰ πολλῶν καὶ ἀγαθῶν ἐνταῦθα ἐξουσίων ἀγωνιζομένους μηδενὸς λείπεσθαι, καὶ ὅτι ἐν Πελοποννήσῳ Λακεδαίμονίους νικήσαντες τὴν τε ἄρχην βεβαιοτέραν καὶ μείζω ἔξουσι καὶ οὐ μὴ ποτὲ τις αὐτοῖς ἄλλος ἐς τὴν γῆν ἐλθῇ (5.69.1).
When they were on the point of engaging, exhortations were made to the several contingents by their own generals to the following effect: The Mantineans were reminded that the battle would be for fatherland, and moreover, for dominion or servitude – that they should not be deprived of the one after having made trial of it, and should not again experience the other; the Argives, that the contest would be both for their ancient hegemony and for their old equality of influence in the Peloponnese, that they must not brook being deprived of it forever, and at the same time must avenge themselves for many wrongs on men who were enemies and near neighbors at that; the Athenians, that it was glorious, contending along with many and brave allies, to be inferior to none, and that if they should conquer the Lacedaemonians in the Peloponnese they would have a greater empire and hold it more securely, and no one would ever invade their country again (tr. Smith).

Smith translates καλόν here ‘glorious,’ but we now know what to think about that. This text should also be compared to the passage in Pericles’ funeral oration where, again, it seems a love of beauty is somehow especially connected with the Athenian outlook:

Φιλοκαλοῦμέν τε γάρ μετ’ εὐτελείας καὶ φιλοσοφοῦμεν ἀνευ μαλακίας (2.40.1).

For we are lovers of beauty yet with no extravagance and lovers of wisdom yet without weakness (tr. Smith).

Here Smith translates καλόν correctly. Other noteworthy passages are 5.105.4, where the Athenian envoys say that while the Lacedaemonians are virtuous among themselves, with respect to others they consider “what is pleasant beautiful (καλά) and what is beneficial just.” And at 2.53.3, while describing Athens under the plague, Thucydides writes that people no longer cared about the seeming beautiful (καὶ τὸ μὲν προσταλαιπωρεῖν τῷ δόξαντι καλῶ οὐδεὶς πρόθυμος ἦν), but only about immediate pleasure, and whatever lead to it was both beautiful and useful. Such passages seem to
show that pleasure was not the correct criterion for doing what is beautiful, and that only in corrupt natures did pleasure become the correct criterion for τὸ καλὸν.

1.4.3. Xenophon:

The use of καλὸς in Xenophon is similar to its use in Herodotus and Thucydides. Only in certain definite uses does the word warrant a translation other than 'beautiful.' As with Herodotus and Thucydides these uses are 1. when the adjective is used adverbially, especially in the superlative, and 2. in idiomatic phrases, like ἐν καλῷ. For instance in his Historia Graeca, or Hellenica, Xenophon writes:

ἐτι δὲ κεῖσθαι τὴν Κέρκυραν ἐν καλῷ μὲν τοῦ Κορινθιακοῦ κόλπου καὶ τῶν πόλεων αἰ ἐτὶ τοῦτον καθήκουσιν, ἐν καλῷ δὲ τοῦ τὴν Δακωνικήν χώραν βλάπτειν, ἐν καλλίστῳ δὲ τῆς τε ἀντιπέρας Ἡπείρου καὶ τοῦ εἰς Πελοπόννησον ἀπὸ Σικελίας παράπλου (X. HG 6.2.9).

Further, Corcyra was situated in a favourable position with respect to the Corinthian Gulf and the states which reach down to its shores, in a favourable position for doing damage to the territory of Laconia, and in an extremely favourable position with respect to Epirus across the way and the coastwise route from Sicily to Peloponesus (tr. Brownson).101

LSJ cites other examples of this dative at S. El. 384; E. IA 1106, Or. 579; Ar. Th. 292; Th. 5.59-60; X. HG 2.1.25. In this sense the use of καλὸς is like the adverb καλῶς (beautifully) which comes to be used so frequently that it is easier to associate it with our more common notion of ‘good’ or ‘well.’102 But we may still wonder whether we are

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101 The translation is that of Carleton L. Brownson, Xenophon: Hellenica, 2 vols. (Cambridge: Harvard University, 1921).

102 A TLG search for the words καλῶς and εὖ in the entire Platonic Corpus (including the dubia, spuria, epigrammata, etc.) reveals 530 instances of καλῶς and 574 instances of εὖ. Thus the
entirely justified in translating καλός other than with ‘beautiful’ even in these cases. It seems that καλός-words always have a slightly different sense from words like ἀγαθός or εὖ. Even in the quotation above it is not obvious that it is necessary to translate ἐν καλῷ ‘in a favorable position.’ Why couldn’t Xenophon mean that Corcyra is in a beautiful place from which to damage the territory of Laconia? Surely, he would not mean that it was beautiful in the sense of picturesque, but for a military strategist some geographical formations may be so advantageous that they are beautiful to contemplate. An object’s advantageousness may be the cause of its beauty, and yet even in this case there is a difference between the beauty and the advantageousness. We could say the same of the following example, cited by LSJ in support of the functional sense:

ὁ δὲ δείξας οὔτερ ἐστικότες ἐτύγχανον Οὔτος ὁ λόφος, ἔφη, κάλλιστος τρέχειν ὅπου ἂν τις βούληται (X. An. 4.8.26).

He pointed out the precise spot where they chanced to be standing, and said, “This hill is superb for running wherever you please (tr. Brownson).”

Though the καλός word is in the nominative case, it seems to be used to the same effect as ἐν καλῷ, and so Brownson translates it. But it is also in the superlative, κάλλιστος, and, as we have seen, it seems as though the superlative is more flexible in its meaning than the positive adjective. In particular, there often seem compelling reasons to translate the superlative ‘good’ or ‘best’ or some equivalent. It may be that the superlative of κάλος came to be favored over superlatives like ἄριστος and βέλτιστος,

frequency in which each is used is similar, at least in Plato. (This outcome, however, depends on what we take to be the Platonic Corpus. A different interpretation would surely yield other results.)

both superlatives of ἀγαθός. And it is perhaps possible to see this in our own language. It sometimes happens that some object, action, or state of affairs is so good, we feel so positively disposed toward it, that superlatives of ‘good,’ like ‘excellent,’ or ‘best,’ do not suffice to express our approval. And in these cases we sometimes revert to other words, like ‘beautiful.’

In addition to apparently using καλός in the functional sense in these instances, Xenophon is one of the first authors beside Plato for which we have substantial theoretical discussions of τὸ καλὸν. In the Memorabilia he portrays Socrates as a functionalist about both beauty and goodness. In a discussion with Aristippus\(^\text{104}\) he states:

\[
\text{Σὺ δ' οἴει, ἔφη, ἄλλο μὲν ἀγαθόν, ἄλλο δὲ καλὸν εἶναι; οὐκ οἶσθ' ὅτι πρὸς ταῦτα πάντα καλὰ τε κἀγαθὰ ἐστί; πρὸτὸν μὲν γὰρ ἢ ἀρετή οὐ πρὸς ἄλλα μὲν ἀγαθόν, πρὸς ἄλλα δὲ καλὸν ἐστὶν, ἐπεὶ τὰ οί αὐθέρωποι τὸ αὐτὸ τε καὶ πρὸς τὰ αὐτὰ καλοὶ τε κἀγαθοὶ λέγονται, πρὸς τὰ αὐτὰ δὲ καὶ τὰ σωματα τῶν ἀνθρώπων καλὰ τε κἀγαθὰ φαινότας, πρὸς ταῦτα δὲ καὶ τὰλλα πάντα οίς ἀνθρώπωι χρώνται καλὰ τε κἀγαθὰ νομίζεται, πρὸς ἀπερ ἄν εὐχρήστα ἢ (X. Mem. 3.8.5).}
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You think, do you, that good is one thing and beautiful another? Don’t you know that all things are both beautiful and good in relation to the same things? In the

\(^{104}\) Little is known with certainty about Aristippus, besides the fact that he was an associate of Socrates from Cyrene. He seems to have espoused some form of hedonism (X. Mem. 2.1), and may have been the founder of the Cyrenaic school of philosophy, though his grandson, also named Aristippus, was more probably the founder (OCD). Perhaps most intriguingly, Aristotle mentions him as in a way a source of the first aporia at Metaphysics B 2. He writes that Aristippus criticized mathematics apparently for failing to use teleological explanations. ὡστε διὰ ταῦτα τῶν σοφιστῶν τινὲς οίον Αρίστιππος προσεπιδίκησεν αὐτάς: ἐν μὲν γὰρ ταῖς ἄλλαις τέχναις, καὶ ταῖς βαναύσοις, οίον ἐν τεκτονικῇ καὶ σκυτικῇ, διότι βέλτιον ἢ χεῖρον λέγεσθαι πάντα, τὰς δὲ μαθηματικὰς οὐθένα ποιεῖσθαι λόγον περὶ ἀγαθῶν καὶ κακῶν (996a29-b1). [And so because of this, some sophists, Aristippus for example, used to speak of mathematics with contempt; for in the other arts, even the ones requiring manual skill, such as carpentry and cobbling, people always say “because it is better, or worse,” but in mathematics no one speaks about the good or bad (tr. Apostle).]
first place, Virtue is not a good thing in relation to some things and a beautiful thing in relation to others. Men, again, are called ‘beautiful and good’ in the same respect and in relation to the same things: it is in relation to the same things that men’s bodies look beautiful and good and that all other things men use are thought beautiful and good, namely, in relation to those things for which they are useful.\textsuperscript{105} 

Note, first, that both beauty and goodness are reduced to usefulness or what is useful (εὐχρηστα);\textsuperscript{106} and, second, that goodness and beauty are said to be the same thing. When Socrates asks, rhetorically, “You think, do you, that good is one thing and beautiful another?” we expect him to go on to argue that it is wrong to think that beauty is one thing and goodness another, i.e., we expect him to go on to argue that in fact beauty and goodness are the same. But this is not what he does; instead, he goes on to argue that the same thing is the cause of both, namely usefulness for an object’s intended purpose. But the fact that two things have the same cause does not mean they are the same. It could be true both that beauty and goodness are caused by the presence of usefulness, and that beauty differs from goodness. Thus here we have an instance of Socrates or Xenophon implying that two things are the same, when what he means is that they have the same cause. This manner of speaking contributes to the difficulties surrounding τὸ καλόν and should be borne in mind as we turn to Plato, because the same problem is found there. But Xenophon also poses difficulties for both the theses espoused in the passage above. Socrates separates beauty from goodness when he states, 

\[ \dot{\text{oipws de di h kai touc ekontas to semnon onoma touto to kalos te kagnathos episkupaimhen, ti poti ergazomenoi tout' `aexointo kaleisthai, pany mou h} \]

\textsuperscript{105} The translation is that of E. C. Marchant and O. J. Todd, \textit{Xenophon: Memorabilia, Oeconomicus, Symposium, Apology} (Cambridge: Harvard University, 1923).

\textsuperscript{106} The same thought is expressed at X. \textit{Mem.} 4.6.8-9.
ψυχή ἐπεθύμει αὐτῶν τινι συγγενέσθαι. καὶ πρῶτον μὲν ὦτι προσέκειτο τὸ καλὸς τῷ ἀγαθῷ, ὡντινα ἵδοιμι καλὸν, τοῦτῳ προσήειν καὶ ἐπειρώμην καταμανθάνειν εἰ που ἰδομὶ προσηρτημένον τῷ καλῷ τὸ ἀγαθόν. ἀλλ' οὐκ ἂρα εἴχεν οὕτως, ἀλλ' ἐνίους ἐδόκουν καταμανθάνειν τῶν καλῶν τὰς μορφὰς πάντων μοχθηροὺς ὄντας τὰς ψυχὰς. ἐδοξέμν μοι τῆς καλῆς ὀψεως ἐπὶ αὐτῶν τινα ἐλθεῖν τῶν καλουμένων καλῶν τε κἀγαθῶν.

But I felt a desire to meet one of those who are called by that grand name ‘gentleman,’ which implies ‘beautiful’ as well as ‘good,’ in order to consider what they did to deserve it. And, first, because the epithet ‘beautiful’ is added to ‘good,’ I went up to every person I noticed, and tried to discover whether I could anywhere see goodness in combination with beauty. But after all, it was not so: I thought I discovered that some who were beautiful to look at were thoroughly depraved in their minds. So I decided to let good looks alone, and to seek out someone known as a ‘gentleman.’ Accordingly, since I heard the name applied to Ischomachus by men, women, citizens and strangers alike, I decided to meet him, if I could (tr. Marchant).

Here we see Socrates disillusioned at the discovery that what is beautiful is not always good. Thus he rejects the unification of goodness and beauty.

The second thesis, namely the functional analysis of beauty, is rejected by reductio in Xenophon’s Symposium 5.4-7. At 5.4, Critobulus puts forth something like a functional definition of beauty:

’ᾆν νὴ Δί’, ἐφη, πρὸς τὰ ἔργα ὅν ἐνεκα ἡκαστὰ κτώμεθα εὖ εἰργασμένα ἢ ἢ εὖ περικάτα πρὸς ἂν δεώμεθα, καὶ ταύτ’, ἐφη ὁ Κριτόβουλος, καλά (X. Smp. 5.4).

Why, they are beautiful, answered Critobulus, if they are well made for the respective functions for which we obtain them, or if they are naturally well constituted to serve our needs (tr. Marchant, rev.).

Socrates argues against this apparent definition on the grounds that if it were true then his eyes would be more beautiful than Critobulus’, for since they protrude out more he
has better peripheral vision. And his nose is also more beautiful since his nostrils are wide open, the better to take in odors from everywhere. But since Socrates is famously ugly and this is meant to be a refutation of Critobulus’ definition, he must be showing the absurdity of the view that usefulness or advantageousness constitutes or causes beauty.

1.5. Conclusion:

At the beginning of this chapter we found that LSJ lists three main senses of καλός: the first is the sense in which the best translation would be ‘beautiful’; the second is roughly what might be called the utilitarian or functional sense, in which καλός could be translated ‘good’ or ‘beneficial’; and finally there is the moral sense, according to which ‘noble,’ ‘honorable,’ or ‘right’ might be acceptable. To their credit, LSJ do not actually advocate the translations ‘beneficial’ or ‘right’ but their division of καλός into these three main uses could be taken to imply the acceptability of something like these translations. It was argued that at least in Homer the passages cited in support of the latter two uses constitute no such evidence. There is no warrant whatever for assuming Nausikaa means anything other than ‘beautiful harbor’ at Odyssey 6.263, and likewise for the evidence of a special moral sense. What is true of Homer in this respect is also true of many later authors prior to Plato. We searched in vain for a functional or moral sense in Hesiod, Pindar, and the later Tragedians. But the purpose of this exercise was not simply to challenge the entry under καλός in LSJ; rather, LSJ was used as an example of
the whole modern understanding of καλός, which it may have influenced or may reflect. A lexicon should be used as a propaedeutic instrument, like Wittgenstein’s ladder (Tract. 6.54), which once one has climbed to the top can be thrown away; it is merely an imperfect instrument to help one learn a language. It is imperfect because it is an interpretation, as any translation from one language to another is an interpretation. Once one has sufficiently grasped the language, however, the authority on the language is no longer the lexicon, but the language itself and the authors who wrote in it. Once we overcome the influence of the lexicon and reexamine the evidence, we open ourselves to the possibility that the Greeks saw beauty in places we no longer do, and that they thought about the world in a way we no longer do.

In our reexamination of καλός we focused on the constellation of ideas in which it is situated. The first and greatest of these is the good. From the beginning, in Homer, the Greeks are keenly aware of the association and disassociation of the good and the beautiful. According to one tradition, the Trojan War itself was the result of a dispute among the gods over the question of beauty. Then Helen is admitted by the Trojan elders to be very beautiful, but she is a great source of evil and suffering to the city. In Hesiod, the human condition seems to be essentially bound up with the separation of goodness from beauty. Pandora, the first woman, is a beautiful evil, sent as punishment by Zeus. The second great idea with which beauty is associated is immortality. Ganymede and Kleitos are immortalized because of their beauty, and Achilles wonders that his beauty does not protect him from death. Connected with this is the peculiar notion of a beautiful death found in Homer, but most prevalent in Tyrtaeus. And Pindar
believes it is the poet’s responsibility to immortalize the beautiful acts of mortals. Both immortality and death involve a sort of absoluteness which I argued seemed to be especially characteristic of beautiful actions in Greek Tragedy.

Turning to those who theorized explicitly about beauty, there seemed to be broadly speaking two outlooks toward beauty. There were those, like Sappho, Heraclitus and the author of the Dissoi Logoi, who seemed to emphasize the fact that different persons find different things beautiful. And then there were those, like the Pythagoreans and Polyclitus, who seemed to try to connect beauty with some one quality, like measure or proportion.

Returning to the question of the sense of κάλος in authors near Plato’s time we saw that, indeed it did seem possible to translate κάλος-words otherwise than by ‘beauty.’ But these were almost universally confined to cases where the adjective was used adverbially, especially in the superlative, and cases where the adjective was used in what appear to be certain idiomatic phrases, like ἐν καλῷ. Finally, in Xenophon we see the major problems of τὸ καλὸν being fully articulated: beauty is either the same as goodness or caused by the same thing, namely, what is useful or advantageous; beauty is not the same as goodness; and finally what is useful or advantageous cannot be what makes things beautiful.
2.0. Introduction:

We have seen some of the problems surrounding the concept of beauty in Greek thought prior to Plato, but what is Plato’s understanding of beauty, in particular what is his understanding of its relation to the good? Before investigating this question we must determine what we mean when we ask whether two objects\(^{107}\) are the same or not, for as we saw in Xenophon, objects may be the same in different ways, and the question of sameness and difference was as important in Greek philosophy as it is today.\(^{108}\) Xenophon starts by having Socrates suggest that goodness and beauty are the same, but then we find out that what he means is that they are caused by the same thing, namely usefulness. Since there are different ways in which objects may be considered similar, or

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\(^{107}\) In order not to prejudice the question, I use the term ‘object’ in the broadest possible sense, as merely ‘thing’ or res. Thus ‘object’ could include properties, qualities, terms, as well as substances.

the same, and since we do not know Plato’s position on this question, it is prudent to
start by asking whether beauty and goodness are at least coextensive,\textsuperscript{109} for if they are
not then we do not need to ask whether they are essentially identical. If two objects are
essentially the same then they must have the same extension, but it is not the case that if
two objects are coextensive, they are essentially or “intensionally” identical – intensional
identity being taken as the linguistic correlate of essential identity. To borrow an
example from Quine, whatever has a heart has a kidney, but it is not the case that having
a heart is essentially the same as having a kidney.

Coextension can be expressed as a biconditional: if something has a heart then it
has a kidney, and if something has a kidney then it has a heart. Thus the investigation
will test the following conditionals: 1. If an object is good then it is beautiful
(abbreviated ‘if good then beautiful’), and 2. if an object is beautiful then it is good (‘if
beautiful then good’). It will be seen that there is strong evidence Plato believes ‘if good
then beautiful.’ The evidence for the converse is perhaps more controversial; however, it
will be argued that the balance of the evidence supports the view that Plato also believes
‘if beautiful then good.’\textsuperscript{110} Does it follow from the fact that beauty and goodness are
coeextensive that they are essentially the same? I think not. In the first place, one of the
most important contributions Plato makes to the discussion of beauty is to say that
beauty is something, “itself by itself” (\textalpha\textupsilon\textomicron\tau\omicron\ \kappa\alpha\theta’ \textalpha\upsilon\tau\omicron\). There is a form of beauty. Even

\textsuperscript{109} See footnote 19.

\textsuperscript{110} A question may arise at this point about real versus only apparent beauty, for certainly we
would want to leave room for the view that persons can be wrong about beauty (cf. Smp. 218e, R.
505d). My view is that this is not as problematic as it may seem: apparent beauty and goodness
are connected in Plato, just as real beauty and goodness are, that is, what is only apparently
beautiful is only apparently good, while what is really beautiful is really good as well.
if beauty is caused by something else, whether it be usefulness, proportion, unity etc., it cannot be eliminatively reduced to its cause. The significance of this thesis cannot be overstated. But even in those passages where the theory of forms is not emphasized or explicitly present, there does not seem to be enough evidence to conclude that Plato believes goodness and beauty are essentially identical. In fact, as we will see in the third and fourth chapters, there are good reasons for thinking that he did not think they are essentially identical.

2.1. If Good then Beautiful:

Several texts indicate Plato thinks everything good is also beautiful. For instance, at *Symposium* 200a-201b Socrates tries to prove to Agathon that Love is neither beautiful nor good. The argument is:

P1: Love does not have what it desires (200a)
P2: Love desires beauty (201a)
C1: Love does not have beauty (201b)
C2: Love is not beautiful (201b).

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111 “Mit der Anerkennung eines „an sich Schönen“, welches seinen Wert nicht erst der Beziehung zu anderen Dingen verdankt, scheidet sich der Standpunkt Platos auf das Bestimmteste von der Lehre des Sokrates ab. Ist das Schöne aber als ein für sich bestehendes Phänomen erkannt, so ist damit auch die Forderung einer Wissenschaft erhoben, welche seinem Wesen gerecht zu werden hat, mag sie nun alsfort ihre Ausführung finden, oder durch leitende Ideen der Folgezeit die Richtung der Untersuchungen vorschreiben.” [With the recognition of a “beauty in itself,” which does not derive its value in relation to other things, Plato’s point of view separates itself in the most definite way from the doctrine of Socrates. If the beautiful, however, is revealed as a phenomenon existing for itself, so is thereby also the demand raised for a science which does justice to its being, whether it now also finds its realization, or whether it prescribes to the future the direction of research through leading ideas.] Walter, *Die Geschichte der Ästhetik im Altertum, ihrer begrifflichen Entwicklung nach dargestellt*, p. 168.
Whether or not the argument is valid, the point is that then, in order to prove Love is not good, Socrates asks, “Don’t good things also seem beautiful to you (τἀγαθὰ οὐ καὶ καλὰ δοκεῖ σοι εἶναι; 201c)?” Agathon agrees, and Socrates goes on to argue that if Love needs and desires beautiful things and good things are beautiful, then Love will need and desire good things, and therefore Love cannot be good either (201c). But the question for our purpose is whether Socrates’ statement, “Don’t good things also seem beautiful to you?” can be taken in support of the view that Plato believes ‘if good then beautiful.’ In the first place, it is a question, not a statement, and even if we ignore for a moment the problem whether Socrates’ statements in the Platonic dialogues reflect Plato’s beliefs, how can we be sure Plato’s Socrates holds this view from what he says here? After all, Socrates is here engaged in an elenchus, a dialectical refutation, and an elenchus is supposed to proceed entirely from the respondent’s beliefs. Socrates is not supposed to present any views of his own; rather, he should generate conflict or contradiction merely by asking questions.112 In answer to this question we can derive some help from Greek grammar. Negative questions expect affirmative answers when the negative particle is οὐ, as opposed to μή.113 The English equivalent, as in the quotation above, is “Don’t you think...?” Thus the grammar of the question implies that Socrates here expects Agathon to agree with the view that good things are beautiful. But it is perilous to place too much weight on Greek grammar. And even if Robinson is right

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113 Herbert Smyth and Gordon Messing, Greek Grammar, Revised ed. (Cambridge: Harvard University, 1956), §2651.
that during an *elenchus* Plato’s Socrates generally asks questions no one can well deny,114 it cannot be taken for granted that Socrates himself always agrees with the statements in his questions. Perhaps the most famous example is at *Protagoras* 351c ff., where Socrates works hard to get Protagoras to accept hedonism. Thus it is necessary to seek confirmation from other texts in order to establish that Plato’s Socrates believes ‘if good then beautiful.’

The *Timaeus* provides stronger evidence that Plato believes everything good is beautiful, because it occurs during Timaeus’ speech, and Timaeus seems to be expressing his own views. With Timaeus there is not the problem of whether the views he is expressing are his own. He is not engaged in dialectical debate and he does not proceed by asking questions. There is still the question whether Timaeus’ views can be taken to represent Plato’s, but this is a problem in all of his dialogues.

When Timaeus turns to the care of body and mind, he states: πᾶν δὴ τὸ ἀγαθὸν καλὸν, τὸ δὲ καλὸν οὐκ ἀμετρον (87c). The correct translation is difficult. At issue is whether Timaeus means “all good things are beautiful,” or something like “the whole good is beautiful.”115 LSJ indicates that πᾶς is best translated ‘all’ when used of a number, and when used of only one, ‘the whole.’ According to this rule, it would seem

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114 “[Socrates] is always putting to somebody some general question, usually in the field of ethics. Having received an answer (let us call it the primary answer), he asks many more questions. These secondary questions differ from the primary one in that, whereas that was a matter of real doubt and difficulty, the answers to all these seem obvious and inescapable. Socrates usually phrases them so that the natural answer is yes; and if you say anything else you are likely to seem irrational or at least queer. In other words, they are not so much requests for information as demands for an assent that cannot very well be withheld.” Robinson, *Plato’s Earlier Dialectic*, p. 7.

115 This ignores the problem whether an article is missing in the predicate, such that the sentence should be translated, “The whole good is the beautiful.”
we should translate the passage, “The whole good is beautiful…” But according to Smyth,

In the attributive position πᾶς denotes the whole regarded as the sum of all its parts… In the predicate (and usual) position πᾶς means all… οἱ πολίται πάντες all the citizens (individually)... In the singular, πᾶς often means every...116

From what we are told, insofar as τὸ ἀγαθὸν is singular, we should translate the πᾶς “the whole,” but insofar as πᾶς is in the predicate position it should be translated “every.” Most translators choose to translate the passage to the effect that all good things are beautiful, in line with the Symposium on this issue.

Now all that is good is beautiful, and what is beautiful is not ill-proportioned (tr. Donald Zeyl).117

All that is good is fair, and the fair is not void of due measure (tr. R. G. Bury).118

F. M. Cornford avoids the issue by translating πᾶν adverbially: “Now the good is always beautiful, and the beautiful never disproportionate…”119 Given the context, what Timaeus must mean is that good things are beautiful. His argument is that since good things are beautiful, and beautiful things are proportionate (σύμμετρον, 87c), if persons want to be good or healthy, they must be proportionate, in particular their bodies have to be in proportion to their souls (87c ff.). Since Timaeus is speaking about bodies and souls, he is speaking about things, plural, which are to be good. It would seem Zeyl and

116 Smyth and Messing, Greek Grammar, §1174.
Bury’s translations are correct. Thus if we can take Timaeus’ statements to represent Plato’s beliefs, it would seem Timaeus 87c can be taken to confirm the view that Plato thinks if something is good then it is also καλὸν or beautiful.

In the Lysis too we have confirmation of the conditional relationship between goodness and beauty. Socrates states: λέγω γὰρ τὰ γὰρ καλὸν εἶναι σὺ δ’ οὐκ οίξ; (Ly. 216d). Again, Greek grammar does not allow us to discern whether καλὸν is a predicate adjective or a predicate substantive, nor does the context allow us to disambiguate. This sentence may mean that the good is the beautiful, or that the good is beautiful. Stanley Lombardo, W. R. M. Lamb, and Penner and Rowe all have “the good is beautiful.” If they are correct, this would support the thesis that Plato thinks if good then beautiful.

Finally, we may also refer to Republic 457b, where Socrates states: κάλλιστα γὰρ δὴ τὸ τοῦτο καὶ λέγειται καὶ λελέξεται, ὅτι τὸ μὲν ὡφέλιμον καλὸν, τὸ δὲ βλαβερὸν αἰσχρὸν. G. M. A. Grube (rev. C. D. C. Reeve) and Paul Shorey agree that the translation is roughly “the beneficial is beautiful, and the harmful is ugly.” Like the other passages, these translations would support the ‘if good then beautiful’ thesis, except that here the beneficial (τὸ ὡφέλιμον) is said to be beautiful. Plato’s usual conception of the good is very closely linked to the beneficial (See Men. 77c-d, Grg. 477a). Thus, ignoring

———. 120 Cornford’s translation could be compatible with our interpretation of the context. To say that “the good is always beautiful,” seems to imply that all good things are beautiful.

121 Cooper, ed., Plato: Complete Works; W. R. M. Lamb, Plato: Lysis, Symposium, Gorgias (London: Heinemann, 1925); Terry Penner and Christopher Rowe, Plato’s Lysis (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 2005), ad loc. and see pp. 102-3.

the *Hippias Major* for the moment, if Plato thinks of goodness as beneficence then R. 457b supports the thesis, ‘if good then beautiful.’

In conclusion, even if we do not accept R. 457b, Plato’s belief that if something is good then it is also beautiful is well-supported. The proof texts are those already cited, namely, *Smp.* 201c, *Ti.* 87c, and *Ly.* 216d.\textsuperscript{123} In these places Plato seems to believe that this thesis needs no argument. He seems less certain, however, about the converse, the thesis that ‘if beautiful then good.’ Or, perhaps it would be more accurate to say he seems less certain that the ‘if beautiful then good’ thesis would be immediately accepted. For, as we have seen, anyone who knew the *Iliad* or *Theogony* could easily think there are beautiful things which are not good.

2.2.0. If Beautiful then Good:

While the ‘if good then beautiful’ thesis is fairly certain, the converse may seem more questionable. There is evidence in the *Protagoras* and the *Alcibiades*, but the proof text in the *Protagoras* occurs in an apparently dialectical passage, and the authenticity of the *Alcibiades* has been doubted.\textsuperscript{124} Additionally, as we shall see, there seems to be positive counterevidence to ‘if beautiful then good’ in the *Gorgias*. Thus one could argue that the ‘if beautiful then good’ thesis is debatable. But there is additional evidence of ‘if beautiful then good’ in the *Charmides*, *Laches*, and *Meno*. There is also evidence Plato believes in a biconditional relationship between beauty and goodness in the *Hippias*

\textsuperscript{123} See also *Grg.* 463d: τὰ γὰρ κακὰ αἰσχρὰ καλῶ.
\textsuperscript{124} See note 137. As will be discussed below, I accept the dialogue’s authenticity.
Major and the Symposium. What are we to make of all this? We will first present and discuss the evidence in Alcibiades, Protagoras, Charmides, Laches and Meno, then the counterevidence to ‘if beautiful then good’ in the Gorgias, and then argue that despite apparent evidence to the contrary Plato does in fact believe ‘if beautiful then good.’

2.2.1. If Beautiful then Good: Alcibiades 113d-116d:

Let us turn directly to the argument in the Alcibiades where Socrates states that what is beautiful is also good. The argument begins when Socrates, dropping the question whether Alcibiades knows what is advantageous for the Athenians, asks him to prove that the just and the advantageous are the same or different. After some further debate, Alcibiades says,

οὐ γὰρ ταὐτὰ οἴμαι ἐστὶν τὰ τε δίκαια καὶ τὰ συμφέροντα, ἀλλὰ πολλοὶς δὴ ἐλυσιτέλησεν ἀδικήσασι μεγάλα ἀδικήματα, καὶ ἐτέροις γε οἴμαι δίκαια ἐργασαμένοις οὐ συνήνεγκεν (113d).

In fact, though, what’s just is not the same, I think, as what’s advantageous; many people have profited by committing great injustices, and others, I think, got no advantage from doing the right thing (tr. Cooper, ed.).

Socrates’ first step in his refutation of this point, i.e., in his proof that justice is always advantageous, is to get Alcibiades to agree that all just things are καλὰ. From this one may guess the form of the argument:

P1: All just things are καλὰ
P2: All καλὰ things are good
P3: All good things are beneficial
C: All just things are beneficial.
Socrates has almost no difficulty establishing premises 1 and 3. The only premise which needs argument is the one with which we are concerned, P2: All καλά things are good, or ‘if beautiful then good.’

When Socrates asks whether all καλά things are good, Alcibiades responds: “I at least, Socrates, think some beautiful things are bad (Οἴομαι ἐγὼγε, ὁ Σώκρατες, ένια τῶν καλῶν κακὰ εἶναι, 115a).” A typical example of something which is καλὸν but bad, i.e., harmful or disadvantageous, is helping friends in battle (115b). But Socrates argues that this action is καλὸν and bad for different reasons. It is καλὸν because it displays courage; it is bad because it leads to wounds and death (115b). Having established that things are not bad insofar as they are καλὰ, Socrates next needs to argue that what is καλὸν is good. In what follows in the Alcibiades, namely after about 115c,

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125 ΣΩ. Μαντικὸς γὰρ εἰ. καὶ μοι λέγει· τῶν δυκαίων φῆς ἕνια μὲν συμφέρειν, ἔνια δ’ οὐ; ΑΛ. Ναί. ΣΩ. Τί δὲ; τὰ μὲν καλὰ αὐτῶν εἶναι, τὰ δ’ οὐ; ΑΛ. Πῶς τούτο ἐρωτάς; ΣΩ. Εἰ τις ἡδή σοι ἐδοξεῖ αἰσχρὰ μὲν, δίκαια δὲ πράττειν; ΑΛ. Οὐκ ἔμοιγε. ΣΩ. ΑΛΛὰ πάντα τὰ δίκαια καὶ καλὰ; ΑΛ. Ναί (115a). [Soc: You’re quite a prophet. Now tell me – are you saying that some just things are advantageous while others are not? Alc: Yes. Soc: Really? Are some of them beautiful and others not beautiful? Alc: What do you mean by that question? Soc: Have you ever thought that someone was doing something that was both just and ugly? Alc: No, I haven’t. Soc: So all just things are beautiful. Alc: Yes (tr. Cooper, ed., rev.).]

126 ΣΩ. Τί δὲ; τὰ ἄγαθὰ συμφέρει ἢ οὐ; ΑΛ. Συμφέρει (116c). [Soc: Well then, are good things advantageous, or not? Alc: Advantageous (tr. Cooper, ed.).]

127 ΣΩ. Ἀρα λέγεις τὰ τοιαῦτα, οἶνον πολλοὶ ἐν πολέμῳ (2) βοηθήσαντες ἐταῖρῳ ἢ οἰκείῳ τραυματά ἐλαβον καὶ ἀπέθανον, (3) οί δ’ οὐ βοηθήσαντες, δέον, ὑγείας ἀπῆλθον; (4) ΑΛ. Πάντω μὲν οὖν. (5) ΣΩ. Οὐκ ὅτι τὴν τοιαύτην βοηθήσαν καλὴν μὲν λέγεις (6) κατὰ τὴν ἐπιχείρησιν του σώσαι οὐς ἐδεῖ, τουτοὶ δ’ ἐστίν (7) ἄνδρεια· ἢ οὐ; (8) ΑΛ. Ναί. (9) ΣΩ. Κακὴν δὲ γε κατὰ τοὺς θανάτους τε καὶ ἔλεα· ἢ γὰρ (115b1); [Soc: Are you thinking of this sort of case? Many people get wounded and killed trying to rescue their friends and relatives in battle, while those who don’t go to rescue them, as they should, escape safe and sound. Is this what you’re referring to? Alc: Exactly. Soc: Now you call a rescue of this sort beautiful, in that it’s an attempt to help the people whom you should help, and this is what courage is; isn’t that what you’re saying? Alc: Yes. Soc: But you call it bad, in that it involves wounds and death, don’t you (tr. Cooper, ed., rev.)?] Lines 5-7 indicate that helping friends in battle is καλὸν insofar as (κατὰ) it is an attempt to save those whom one ought, or those whom it is necessary to save (οὐς ἐδεί, cf. δέον, line 3).
Socrates seems to use two arguments to prove ‘if beautiful then good’; however, it is difficult to see how either one individually successfully argues for a conditional relation between goodness and beauty. The most that can be said is that both arguments show that some object – courage in the first argument and doing well (τὸ ἐὖ πράττειν/ ἢ εὖπραγία) in the second – is both good and beautiful. Thus perhaps the best way to interpret these arguments is as together forming the basis of an induction: two things have been found to be both beautiful and good, therefore everything that we find beautiful will also be good. This, of course, is hardly convincing, but it seems the only way to interpret the arguments as at all supporting the required thesis that everything beautiful is good.

In the first argument for the second premise, Socrates gets Alcibiades to agree that courage is good (115c7-e9). Once this is established, it seems as though he wants to argue that courage is beautiful insofar as it is good, which is odd because what he needs to prove is that courage is good insofar as it is beautiful.

Τὸ ἄρα βοηθεῖν ἐν πολέμῳ τοῖς φίλοις, ᾧ μὲν καλὸν, κατ’ ἀγαθοῦ πράξειν τὴν τῆς ἀνδρείας, καλὸν αὐτὸ προσεῖπα (115e);

So helping friends in war, insofar as it is beautiful, did you say it was beautiful insofar as it is the practice of courage, that is, of a good thing?

Ἄρ’ οὖν καὶ ᾧ ἀγαθὸν, καλὸν· ᾧ δὲ κακὸν, αἰσχρόν (116a);

Isn’t it also beautiful insofar as it’s good, and ugly insofar as it’s bad (tr. Cooper, ed., rev.)?
But this conclusion is invalid. Alcibiades had agreed that helping friends in battle is καλόν because it is courageous,\textsuperscript{128} and he agreed that courage is good (115e). But it doesn’t follow from this that helping friends in battle is καλόν because it is good. As Nick Denyer has noticed,\textsuperscript{129} one could equally argue that a car moves because or to the extent that it has gasoline in it. Gasoline is a liquid. Therefore a car moves because or to the extent that it has a liquid in it.

But this is not all, from this illegitimate inference Socrates gets Alcibiades to agree to another illegitimate inference. After getting Alcibiades to agree that courage is beautiful insofar as it is good, he then secures Alcibiades’ agreement that ‘good’ and ‘beautiful’ mean the same thing!

Then when you say that rescuing one’s friends in battle is beautiful but bad, you mean exactly the same as if you’d called it good but bad (tr. Cooper, ed., rev.).

But it does not follow from the fact that something is beautiful insofar as it is good that ‘beauty’ and ‘goodness’ mean the same thing, or that goodness is the same thing as beauty. Taken as an argument, 115c-116a is a hopeless series of illegitimate inferences. However, it may be incorrect to take this text as an argument; or, we may be assuming there is an argument where the author did not intend one. Alternatively, the argument could be interpreted merely as showing Alcibiades that once a brave action is seen to be

\textsuperscript{128} Οὐκοῦν τὴν τοιαύτην βοήθειαν καλὴν μὲν λέγεις κατὰ τὴν ἑπιχείρησιν τοῦ σώσαι σοίς ἔδει, τοῦτο δ’ ἐστὶν ἀνδρεία· ἢ οὐ (115b); [Now you call a rescue of this sort beautiful, in that it’s an attempt to help the people whom you should help, and this is what courage is; isn’t that what you’re saying (tr. Cooper, ed., rev.)?]

beautiful and bad for different reasons then there is no obstacle to saying also that it is
good and bad for different reasons. Instead of seeing the statement at 116a as following
from something said previously in the argument, in which case it would be an
illegitimate inference, we could see it as a question.130 When Socrates states, “Then when
you say that rescuing one’s friends in battle is beautiful but bad, you mean exactly the
same as if you’d called it good but bad (tr. Cooper, ed., rev.),” he may be asking
Alcibiades whether this is what he believes. In other words, Socrates may be saying
something like the following: “Look, Alcibiades, when you said that such a courageous
action was beautiful but bad, perhaps that is because you felt it would be problematic to
say that it was good, but bad. But if it is shown, as it has, that such a courageous action
is good and bad for different reasons then there is no obstacle to saying that it is at once
good and bad. And perhaps that is what you meant when you said that it is beautiful but
bad.” This is perhaps the best interpretation of the spirit of the argument, if indeed it can
still be considered an argument rather than a clarification.

It was said earlier that Socrates presents two quasi-arguments in support of the
second premise of the major argument proving that all just things are advantageous. The
second and crucial premise was that all καλά things are good. The second argument in
support of this premise runs from 116b-c:

ΣΩ. Ἐτι τοῖνυν καὶ ὧδε σκέψαι. ὅστις καλῶς πράττει, (b3) οὐχὶ καὶ εὖ πράττει;
(b4) ΑΛ. Ναϊ. (b5) ΣΩ. Οἱ δ’ εὖ πράττοντες οὐκ εὐδαίμονες; (b6) ΑΛ. Πῶς γὰρ
οὗ; (b7) ΣΩ. Οὐκοῦν εὐδαίμονες δὲ ἀγαθῶν κτήσιν; (b8) ΑΛ. Μάλιστα. (b9)
ΣΩ. Κτῶνται δὲ ταύτα τῷ εὖ καὶ καλῶς πράττειν; (b10) ΑΛ. Ναϊ. (b11) ΣΩ. Τὸ

130 The fact that there is no question mark at the end of the sentence is just the editor’s (Burnet)
decision; the original Greek has no punctuation marks.
Soc: Now then, examine this also. Whoever acts beautifully, (b3) does he not also act well? (b4) Alc: Yes. (b5) Soc: And aren’t those who act well happy? (b6) Alc: Of course. (b7) Soc: Are they happy then on account of the possession of good things? (b8) Alc: Certainly. (b9) Soc: And they have these things by acting well and beautifully. (b10) Alc: Yes. (b11) Soc: So acting well is good? (b12) Alc: Of course. (b13) Soc: Then is well-doing beautiful? (b14) Alc: Yes. (c1) Soc: So the same thing appears for us again both beautiful and (c2) good. (c3) Alc: Apparently. (c4) Soc: So if we find that something is beautiful, we’ll also find that it’s good (c5) – according to this argument, at least (tr. Cooper, ed., rev.).

It is once again difficult to see what the argument here is, or if indeed there is one at all.

In such cases it is usually best to attempt reconstruction from the conclusion. The conclusion is that “if we find that something is beautiful, we’ll also find that it’s good.”

But this does not follow from the fact that something, namely acting well, has been found to be both good and beautiful. It doesn’t follow from the fact that one particular thing is beautiful and good that whatever we discover to be beautiful, we will also discover to be good. It is for this reason that I think the conclusion in lines c4 and 5 must be an induction from the conclusion of this (116b-d) and the previous argument (115c-116a), as the πάλιν αὕτη suggests in line c1. Two things, courage and doing well, have

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131 If this argument is to have any validity, we must allow that “acting well” (τὸ εὖ πράττειν, 116b11) is the same as “well-doing” (ἡ εὐπραγία, 116b13).

132 As Denyer correctly points out, the lack of articles before καλὸν and ἀγαθὸν at lines 116c1-2 requires that ταύτων be taken as the subject. In other words, the sentence is not to be read as saying that beauty and goodness are the same thing. Denyer, Plato: Alcibiades, p. 150.

133 True, 116c5 only refers to a single λόγος, but both arguments 115c-116a and 116b-d could easily form a single argument, especially if the conclusion is an induction.
both been found to be both good and beautiful, therefore whatever is beautiful must be
good – or at least this seems to be the argument.\textsuperscript{134}

Neither of these “arguments,” 115c-116a and 116b-d, is very convincing either
individually or together. Socrates needs to prove the ‘if beautiful then good’ thesis in
order to show Alcibiades that justice is always beneficial. He attempts to do this by first
establishing the coextension or biconditionality of goodness and beauty. If a
biconditional relationship exists between goodness and beauty then Socrates can deduce
‘if beautiful then good.’ Though the argument for biconditionality is unconvincing if not
nonexistent, there can be no doubt that Socrates wants or needs to prove that ‘if
beautiful then good.’ Thus the question becomes whether this text can be taken as
evidence that Plato believes ‘if beautiful then good.’

In the first place Socrates is here engaged in an \textit{elenchus} of Alcibiades’ view that
just things are not the same as advantageous things, and we have already spoken about
the danger of taking anything Socrates says during an \textit{elenchus} as representing his own
view. Secondly, one might argue that we should be especially doubtful of any beliefs
presented during an argument which seems clearly fallacious. But, most importantly,
there is the question of the authenticity of the \textit{Alcibiades}. Though this is not the place to
resolve the question of the dialogue’s authenticity, I will simply say that I agree with
Nicholas Denyer’s vigorous defense of its authenticity.\textsuperscript{135} Denyer points out that the
\textit{Alcibiades} was unchallenged until the 19\textsuperscript{th} century, and that before that time it was

\textsuperscript{134} How \textit{εὐπραγία} is found to be both good and beautiful is of less importance. There seems to be
no real argument for it, but it is not a thesis contemporaries were likely to challenge.

treated as the standard introduction to Plato’s works.136 But it seems to me the burden of proof should rest on those who would atheitize a particular work of Plato, if it has long been held to be genuine, and so far the arguments mounted against it do not seem sufficiently strong to conclude that it is definitely inauthentic.137 Lacking sufficient evidence of its inauthenticity, it seems we must agree with long standing tradition that it is genuine and thus that Socrates seems to claim that ‘if beautiful then good.’

2.2.2. If Beautiful then Good: *Protagoras* 349a-362a:

After the discussion of Simonides’ poem, Socrates argues against Protagoras’ revised thesis that, while the rest of the virtues are similar and can be described as kinds of knowledge or wisdom, courage is different.138 In the course of arguing that, like the other virtues, courage is some sort of knowledge and wisdom, Socrates takes advantage

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136 “The Alcibiades maintained its place among Plato’s dialogues unchallenged, until the early nineteenth century. Then Friedrich Schleiermacher (1836) 329 declared it to be ‘very insignificant and poor, and that to such a degree, that we cannot ascribe it to Plato’. Schleiermacher’s condemnation was immensely influential. The Alcibiades fell out of favour. From being the one dialogue read by anyone who had read any Plato at all, it passed out of the canon, and almost completely out of sight.” Denyer, *Plato: Alcibiades*, pp. 14-15.


138 Ἀλλ’ ἐγὼ σοι, ἔφη, λέγω, ὦ Σωκράτες, ὅτι ταῦτα πάντα μόρια μὲν ἐστιν ἀρετῆς, καὶ τὰ μὲν τέτταρα αὐτῶν ἐπιεικῶς παραπλήσια ἀλλήλως ἐστίν, ἢ δὲ ἀνδρεία πάνυ πολὺ διαφέρον πάντων τούτων. ὥδε δὲ γνώσῃ ὅτι ἐγὼ ἀληθὴ λέγω· εὐφήμες γὰρ πολλοῖς τῶν ἀνθρώπων ἀδικωτάτους μὲν ὄντας καὶ ἀνοσιωτάτους καὶ ἀκολαστάτους καὶ ἀμαθεστάτους, ἀνδρειοτάτους δὲ διαφερόντως (349d). [What I am saying to you, Socrates, is that all these are parts of virtue, and that while four of them are reasonably close to each other, courage is completely different from all the rest. The proof that what I am saying is true is that you will find many people who are extremely unjust, impious, intemperate, and ignorant, and yet exceptionally courageous (tr. Cooper, ed.).]
of his interlocutors’ assent to the ‘if beautiful then good’ thesis. The argument runs as follows:

P1: Pleasure is the good (358a-b).
P2: No one knowingly chooses what is worse or less pleasant over what is better or more pleasant (358c-e).
P3: Going to war is beautiful (καλόν, 359e).
P4: What is beautiful (καλόν) is good (359e).
P5: What is good is pleasant (360a).
P6: Courageous persons must know that war is pleasant, because they go toward it; and cowards must be ignorant of the pleasure of war, because they avoid it (360a-d).
C: Therefore courage is a kind of knowledge (360d).

P3139 may sound strange to our ears, and to that extent one might think it serves against the translation ‘beautiful’ for καλόν, but to the Greek, going to war, especially as an expression of courage, may very well have been thought beautiful. But our central concern with this passage is with the ‘if beautiful then good’ thesis expressed in the fourth premise. The wording of P4 is:

Οὐκοὖν εἶπε Καλόν, καὶ ἀγαθὸν ἡμιλογήσαμεν ἐν τοῖς ἐμπρόσθεν· τὰς γὰρ καλὰς πράξεις ἀπάσας ἀγαθὰς ἢμιλογήσαμεν. Ἀληθῆ λέγεις, καὶ ἀεὶ ἔμοι γε δοκεῖ οὕτως (359e).

Then, if it is beautiful, we agreed earlier that it is also good, for we agreed that all beautiful actions are good. You speak truly, and it always seems so to me (tr. Cooper, ed., rev.).

The thesis is repeated a few lines later:

Οὐκοὖν ὅλως οἱ ἄνδρεῖοι οὐκ αἰσχροὺς φόβους φοβοῦνται, ὅταν φοβῶνται, οὐδὲ αἰσχρὰ θάρρη θαρροῦσιν; Ἀληθῆ, ἐφη. Εἰ δὲ μὴ αἰσχρὰ, ἄρ’ οὐ καλὰ; Ὡμολόγει. Εἰ δὲ καλὰ, καὶ ἀγαθὰ; Ναί (360a-b).

139 Πότερον, ἐφην ἐγὼ, καλὸν ὅν ἰέναι ἢ αἰσχρὸν; Καλὸν, ἐφη (359e). [Is going (to war) beautiful or ugly? I said. Beautiful, he said.]
So, generally, when the courageous fear, their fear is not ugly; nor when they are confident is their confidence ugly. True. If not ugly, is it beautiful? He agreed. If beautiful, then also good? Yes (tr. Cooper, ed., rev.).

This premise is apparently based on the previous agreement made at 358b:

 kepē ἔγῳ, τὸ τοιόνδε; αἱ ἐπὶ τούτου πράξεις ἅπασαι, ἐπὶ τοῦ ἀλύπως ζῆν καὶ ἡδέως, ἄρ’ οὐ καλαὶ [καὶ ὠφέλιμοι]; καὶ τὸ καλὸν ἔργον ἄγαθὸν τε καὶ ὠφέλιμον; Συνεδόκει (358b).

Well then, men, I said, what about this? All actions leading to this, namely to living painlessly and pleasantly, are they not beautiful [and beneficial]? And isn’t beautiful activity both good and beneficial? They agreed (tr. Cooper, ed., rev.).

No argument is ever presented for ‘if beautiful then good,’ it is simply accepted whenever the question is raised. Nevertheless, at this point in the Protagoras it is definitely affirmed three times.

What credence may we give these avowals of the ‘if beautiful then good’ thesis? The Protagoras is genuinely Platonic, i.e., no one argues Plato is not its true author. But we still have the problem that these avowals occur during an elenchus. Socrates is trying to refute Protagoras’ thesis that courage differs from the rest of the virtues: it cannot be identified with the rest of the virtues, unlike them it cannot be reduced to knowledge (Prt. 349d). But now this objection is wearing thin. The Protagoras is not merely an aporetic dialogue, like the Euthyphro, Charmides, Laches, and Lysis; in refuting Protagoras Socrates is trying to establish his own positive belief in the unity of virtue, in particular in the reduction of all virtues to knowledge.141 Exactly what form the unity of the virtues

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140 Burnet’s critical notice indicates that Schleiermacher would seclude καὶ ὠφέλιμοι (and beneficial), probably because it would make the following sentence pointless.

141 “My conclusion is that Plato in the Protagoras is making a serious attempt to understand for himself, and explain to his readers, what the Socratic equation [goodness = knowledge] really
is supposed to take and exactly how they are related to knowledge is debatable; but it is no longer plausible maintain that Socrates is merely refuting Protagoras at this point, without endeavoring to promote a view of his own.

Thus, we are taking it that the *Protagoras* is genuine, and that in it Socrates is not merely bent on reducing his opponent to *aporia*, but rather advancing and defending positive doctrines of his own, viz. the unity of virtue, and the equation of virtue and knowledge. The question is: can we take the last major argument of the dialogue, in which the avowals of ‘if beautiful then good’ occur, as representing Socrates’ and Plato’s own view? Answering affirmatively is problematic because in the last argument Socrates appears to espouse Hedonism, which, as Vlastos states, “is not in keeping with the general temper or method of Socratic ethics.”142 In particular, hedonism seems definitely rejected in the *Phaedo* (69a),143 *Gorgias*, *Republic*, and *Philebus*. At the very least it is paradoxical to say that pleasure is the good during the course of an argument intended to prove all virtue is knowledge. If pleasure is the (final) good then it seems the only

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143 Ὅ μακάμε Σιμία, μή γὰρ σοί αὕτη ἢ ἡ ὀρθὴ πρὸς ἀρετὴν ἀλλαγὴ, ἠδονᾶς πρὸς ἠδονᾶς καὶ λύπας πρὸς λύπας καὶ φόβον πρὸς φόβον καταλλάττεσθαι, [καὶ] μείζω πρὸς ἐλάττω ὥστε τὸ νόμισμα διαφόρον, ἀλλ’ ἐκείνο μόνον τὸ νόμισμα ὀρθὸν, ἀντὶ οὐ δεὶ πάντα ταύτα καταλλάττεσθαι, φρόνησις (Phd. 69a). [My good Simmias, I fear this is not the right exchange to attain virtue, to exchange pleasures for pleasures, pains for pains and fears for fears, the greater for the less like coins, but that the only valid currency for which all these things should be exchanged is wisdom (tr. Cooper, ed.).]
sense in which virtue or goodness can be knowledge is as a means to maximum
pleasure. Thus if the argument is based on a premise which Plato probably does not
believe, one could argue that we should be doubtful of any other claims made in the
argument. On the other hand, though Plato probably does not accept the premise, he
seems to believe in the conclusion, namely that in some way virtue is knowledge.

There have been various attempts to deal with the apparent hedonism in this
argument. One is to admit that Socrates sincerely espouses hedonism here, and to say
that Plato simply changed his mind later in the Gorgias, Republic, etc. This is the view of
Hackforth and Dodds.¹⁴⁴ On the other hand, there is the interpretation of A. E. Taylor,
according to which Socrates is only accepting Hedonism “dialectically,” as it were, in
order to show that even on the assumption of hedonism, goodness turns out to be
knowledge.¹⁴⁵ But even if we accept the dialectical interpretation, according to which
Socrates is not in fact espousing hedonism in this argument, why should this impugn
the evidence that he believes ‘if beautiful then good’? It does not follow from the fact
that Socrates does not believe one premise of this argument, e.g., that pleasure is the
good, that he does not believe another, e.g., that ‘if beautiful then good’ – even if it does,
perhaps, make us more skeptical. But Socrates never says he believes ‘if beautiful then
good’; he merely asks whether Protagoras thinks so. And he does not here in the

¹⁴⁴ Hackforth, "Hedonism in Plato’s Protagoras," p. 42. Dodds, Plato: Gorgias. A Revised Text with
Introduction and Commentary, p. 21.
J. B. Bury, S. A. Cook, and F. E. Adcock (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1927), p. 313. For a
guide to the literature on this question see C. C. W. Taylor, Plato: Protagoras (Oxford: Clarendon,
Protagoras, as he did in the Alcibiades, formulate his questions regarding this thesis in the negative, such that we could tell from the negation whether Socrates expects assent. But even if we judge that Socrates expects assent to all three of his questions whether ‘if beautiful then good,’ we could still not infer that he believed it. He may be demanding or expecting assent on the grounds that ordinary opinion holds that ‘if beautiful then good.’ Here we are reminded of Robinson’s statement that,

Socrates usually phrases [his questions] so that the natural answer is yes; and if you say anything else you are likely to seem irrational or at least queer. In other words, they are not so much requests for information as demands for an assent that cannot very well be withheld.146

So it is possible that Socrates is in fact forcing Protagoras to agree that ‘if beautiful then good,’ on pain of embarrassment. But when combined with the Alcibiades it seems Socrates would have to be relying pretty heavily on the ‘if beautiful then good’ thesis for one who does not believe it himself.

2.2.3. If Beautiful then Good: Charmides 160e-61a:

At Charmides 160e Socrates argues from the fact that temperance, or moderation, (σωφροσύνη) is beautiful to the fact that it is good:

Καὶ ὁ ἐπισχὼν καὶ πάνυ ἀνδρικῶς πρὸς ἑαυτὸν διασκεψάμενος, Δοκεὺς τοῖνυν μοι, ἐφ᾽ ἐστιν ἀσχύνεσθαι ποιεῖν ἢ σωφροσύνη καὶ αἰσχυντηλόν τὸν ἄνθρωπον, καὶ εἶναι ὀπλοῖ γιὰδὶ ἢ σωφροσύνη. Εἶεν, ἤν δ᾽ ἔγω, οὐ καλὸν ἀστι ὄμολογεῖς τὴν σωφροσύνην εἶναι; Πάνυ γ᾽, ἐφ᾽ ἢν τοὺς καλὸν ἀγαθοῖς ἀνδρεῖς οἱ σωφρονεῖς; Νάι. Ἀς ἡμῖν ἂν εἴη ἀγαθὸν ὁ μὴ ἀγαθοὺς ἀπεργάζεται; Οὐ δῆτα. Οὐ μόνον οὖν ἄρα καλὸν, ἀλλὰ καὶ ἀγαθὸν ἔστιν. Έμοιγε δοκεῖ (Chrm. 160e-61a).

146 Robinson, Plato’s Earlier Dialectic, p. 7.
He paused and, looking into himself very manfully, said, well, temperance seems to me to make people ashamed and bashful, and so I think modesty must be what temperance really is. But, I said, didn’t we agree just now that temperance was a beautiful thing? Yes, we did, he said. And it would follow that temperate men are good? Yes. And could a thing be good that does not produce good men? Of course not. Then not only is temperance beautiful, but it is good. I agree (tr. Cooper, ed., rev.).

The argument here, if there is one, is not straightforward. On the one hand, we could take the Οὐκοῦν in a strong inferential sense, as Kent Sprague does, and say that the argument is the following:

P1a: Moderation is beautiful.
P2a: Whatever is beautiful is good.
Ca: Therefore, moderate men are good.

P2 would therefore be the hidden premise of the inference from the fact that moderation is beautiful to the conclusion that moderate men are good. However, this does not seem to be the way Socrates formulates his argument. Rather, his argument seems unnecessarily convoluted. The wording of the arguments can be formulated as follows:

P1b: Moderation is beautiful.
C1b: Therefore, moderate men are good.
P2b: If something is not good then it does not produce good men.
P3b: If something produces good men then it is good (equivalent of P2b).
P4b: Moderation produces good men (from P1b and C1b).
C2b: Moderation is good.

The problem with this argument is that it is still necessary to have some premise like P2a (Whatever is beautiful is good) in order to get from P1b to C1b. Therefore if Socrates’ argument is to have any validity it must rely on the assumption that whatever is beautiful is good, or ‘if beautiful then good.’ Thus this text also supports the thesis that Plato believes ‘if beautiful then good.’
2.2.4. If Beautiful then Good: *Laches* 192c-d:

An argument similar to that above, namely the argument at *Charmides* 160e-61a, occurs at *Laches* 192c-d. The argument is similar both in apparently relying on the premise that everything beautiful is good, and in being apparently convoluted.

Now this is what appears to me: I think that you don’t regard every kind of endurance as courage. The reason I think so is this: I am fairly sure, Laches, that you regard courage as a very beautiful thing. One of the most beautiful, you may be sure. And you would say that endurance accompanied by wisdom is a beautiful and good thing? Very much so. Suppose it is accompanied by folly? Isn’t it just the opposite, harmful and injurious? Yes. And you are going to call a thing beautiful which is of the injurious and harmful sort? No, that wouldn’t be right, Socrates. Then you won’t allow this kind of endurance to be courage, since it is not beautiful, whereas courage is beautiful. You are right (tr. Cooper, ed., rev.).

Once again, we must try to distill the argument:

P1: Courage is always beautiful.
P2: Endurance accompanied by folly is harmful.
P3: Whatever is beautiful can never be harmful.
C: Courage is not identical with endurance.

This time the important premise, P3, is pretty explicitly in the text: “And you are going to call a thing beautiful which is of the injurious and harmful sort? (Kalôn oûn ti φήσεις σὺ εἶναι τὸ τοιοῦτον, ὅν κακοῦργὸν τε καὶ βλαβερὸν;)”. What is hidden in this
is the assumption that what is beautiful is good. It can only be absurd for what is beautiful to be harmful on the assumption that what is beautiful is good. This is because Socrates assumes, not unnaturally, that whatever is good is beneficial and therefore whatever is harmful cannot be good. Thus, again, though it is not explicit in the text, we seem to have evidence that Plato believes what is beautiful is good, or ‘if beautiful then good.’

2.2.5. If Beautiful then Good: Meno 77b:

Finally, we might also add a word about Meno 77b. Pressed to come up with something more like a proper definition of virtue, Meno responds:

καὶ ἐγώ τοῦτο λέγω ἀρετήν, ἐπιθυμοῦντα τῶν καλῶν δυνατόν εἶναι τορίζεσθαι (Men. 77b).

So I say that virtue is to desire beautiful things and have the power to acquire them (tr. Cooper, ed.).

To which Socrates replies:

Ἄρα λέγεις τὸν τῶν καλῶν ἐπιθυμοῦντα ἀγαθῶν ἐπιθυμητὴν εἶναι; Μάλιστά γε (Men. 77b).

Do you mean that the man who desires beautiful things desires good things? Most certainly (tr. Cooper, ed.).

It is a question whether to group this text with Symposium 204e (discussed below) as an instance of the substitution of ‘good’ for ‘beautiful.’ Although it does seem Socrates is
implying here that ‘good’ and ‘beautiful’ are interchangeable,\(^\text{147}\) a more conservative interpretation would be that he is saying ‘if persons desire beautiful things then they desire good things,’ and this is to assert the ‘if beautiful then good’ thesis.

What weight are we to give this evidence? The *Meno* is unquestionably genuine. But once again, Socrates is engaged in an *elenchus*. Unlike the situation in the *Protagoras*, however, Socrates does not here base any part of this *elenchus* on a premise which seems contrary to the general tenor of his ethics. The main premises of the argument here are 1. that everyone desires the good (78b), and 2. that whatever is done with a kind of virtue is done virtuously (79a-b). Premise 1. is explicitly adopted at *Symposium* 205e-6a, *Gorgias* 468c, *Republic* 505d, and the second premise does not seem to conflict with anything Socrates or Plato is usually thought to believe. Thus we cannot dismiss the evidence here as unreliable because situated in a dialectical argument, i.e., an argument based on premises Socrates does not himself believe. It is true that Socrates does not say he believes if persons desire beautiful things they desire good things; he merely asks Meno

\(^{147}\) Dominic Scott takes it as a straightforward substitution: “Socrates’ first move is to substitute the word ‘good’ (*agathos*) for ‘fine’ (*kalon*). Although he does this very swiftly, the move is not as straightforward as it is made to sound. The word *kalon* can mean ‘beautiful,’ and is commonly applied to physical objects. But it can also apply to actions or characters in the sense of ‘noble.’ (I have used the translation ‘fine’ in an attempt to cover both senses.) In Plato’s works, the concept of the *agathon* is very closely connected to whatever is beneficial or useful – *prima facie* a different sense from that of *kalon*. Nevertheless, *agathon* and *kalon* draw very close together in other dialogues, and it is interesting that here Meno accepts the substitution without any complaint.” Dominic Scott, *Plato’s Meno* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 2006), p. 46. Bluck agrees: “Socrates begins his criticism of Meno’s latest definition by obtaining consent to the substitution of ἀγαθὰ for τὰ καλὰ… The substitution of ἀγαθὰ for τὰ καλὰ… is in itself quite legitimate. Meno has no reason to deny that καλὰ, in so far as they are καλὰ, will be ἀγαθὰ (cf. *Alc.* I 115a-116a). The making of the substitution here helps Plato to prepare the way for the later argument (87e sq.) that ἀφετή is ὥφελίμον and that knowledge is the source of all real usefulness.” R. S. Bluck, *Plato’s Meno: Edited with Introduction and Commentary* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1961), pp. 257-8.
whether this is what he (Meno) means. So we might still question whether we can attribute the ‘if beautiful then good’ thesis to Socrates. Nevertheless, when combined with the Alcibiades, Protagoras, Charmides and Laches, it does seem as though the evidence is starting to mount.

2.3. Evidence against ‘If Beautiful then Good’: Gorgias 474c-477a:

But one could also argue that there is evidence Socrates or Plato deny ‘if beautiful then good.’ One of the most serious of these might be Gorgias 474c-477a. During the course of trying to discover what rhetoric is good for, Socrates engages Polus in a discussion concerning the goodness of justice. Socrates holds two views, both of which Polus denies. The first is that performing injustice is worse than suffering it (469b), and the second is that getting away with injustice is worse than not getting away with it (472e). The first step in refuting Polus’ opposition to these theses occurs at 474c-d, where Socrates discovers that Polus thinks that while suffering injustice is worse than performing it, suffering injustice is less ugly than performing it. It follows from this that Polus thinks it is not the case that what is worse is always uglier, or that what is better is always more beautiful.

ΣΩ. Λέγε δὴ μοι, ἵν’ εἰδῆς, ὡσπερ ἂν εἰ ἐξ ἀρχῆς σε ἡρώτων· πότερον δοκεῖ σοι, ὧν Πῶλε, κάκιον εἶναι, τὸ ἀδικεῖν ἢ τὸ ἀδικεῖσθαι; ΠΩΛ. Τὸ ἀδικεῖσθαι ἐμοίγε. ΣΩ. Τί δὲ δή; αἰσχίον πότερον τὸ ἀδικεῖν ἢ τὸ ἀδικεῖσθαι; ἀποκρίνου. ΠΩΛ. Τὸ ἀδικεῖν. ΣΩ. Οὐκοῦν καὶ κάκιον, εἰπέρ αἰσχίον. ΠΩΛ. Ἡκιστά γε. ΣΩ. Μανθάνω· οὐ ταὐτὸν ἣγή σῦ, ὡς ἔοικας, καλὸν τε καὶ ἀγαθὸν καὶ κακὸν καὶ αἰσχρόν. ΠΩΛ. Οὐ δήτα (Grg. 474c-d).
Soc: So that you’ll know, answer me as though this were my first question to you. Which do you think is worse, Polus, doing what’s unjust or suffering it? Pol: I think suffering it is. Soc: You do? Which do you think is uglier,148 doing what’s unjust or suffering it? Tell me. Pol: Doing it. Soc: Now if doing it is in fact uglier, isn’t it also worse? Pol: No, not in the least. Soc: I see. Evidently you don’t believe that the same thing is both beautiful and good, or that the same thing is both bad and ugly. Pol: No, I certainly don’t (tr. Cooper, ed., rev.).

It has been claimed that Socrates identifies the beautiful and the good in this passage.149 But, while one might interpret “I see” (μανθάνω, literally: “I learn/ perceive/ understand”) and “evidently,” (ὡς ἔοικας, literally: “you are like/ you seem”) at lines 474c9-d1 as evincing some surprise, it does not follow from the fact that Polus does not think the same thing is good and beautiful that Socrates does. And, indeed, it would be odd, if Socrates identifies the beautiful and the good here, for him to go on to describe the beautiful as what is either pleasant or beneficial in what follows, as Scott seems to recognize.150

Once Socrates finds that Polus denies the coextension of beauty and goodness, one could argue that his first step is to describe the beautiful as what is either pleasant or beneficial (474d-5a). But this may be problematic for the view that Plato believes ‘if beautiful then good.’ For if Plato thinks ‘useful’ is the same as, or interchangeable with, ‘beneficial’ and ‘good,’ but different from ‘pleasant,’ then it may be that some things

148 Should one be tempted to reject the translation of αἰσχὺν here, one would have to come to terms with the fact that καλὸς and κἀλλος are used interchangeably in the text immediately following at 474d-5a. Forms of κἀλλος are to be found at 474d9-10 and 475a2. And, once again, if we are satisfied that the proper translation of κἀλλος is ‘beauty’ then it would be difficult to argue that καλὸς should be translated differently, and likewise mutatis mutandis for its opposite. 149 “Another place where Socrates identifies the kalon and the agathon is Gorgias 474d1…” Scott, Plato’s Meno, p. 46. n. 2. 150 “(Also, Socrates himself immediately goes on to shift position and give a disjunctive definition of the fine as either good or pleasant.)” Ibid.
which are beautiful because pleasant are not good. And this would invalidate ‘if beautiful then good.’ And in fact Socrates and Polus agree that ‘beneficial’ and ‘good’ are interchangeable with ‘useful.’ At 474e Socrates substitutes what is beneficial (ἡ ὠφέλεια/ τὸ ὠφέλιμον, 474e) for what is useful (τὸ χρήσμον, 474d). And at 475a Plato has Polus substitute good (ἀγαθόν) for beneficial. Thus if Socrates is serious here in his analysis of the beautiful in terms of pleasure and benefit then this would seem a counter-example to ‘if beautiful then good.’

Should we take the analysis of the beautiful here in the Gorgias as what is either pleasant or beneficial as a view Plato believes? One might begin answering this question by considering the place of the Hippias Major. The Hippias Major is crucial to the question what weight we should give the analysis of beauty in the Gorgias because in it, as we shall see in the next section, Socrates denies that either benefit or pleasure can serve as a proper answer to the question what is beauty? If the Hippias Major is genuine then the analysis of beauty in the Gorgias should be set aside whether it is earlier or later than the

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151 The interchangeability of ‘useful,’ ‘beneficial,’ and ‘good,’ is denied in the Hippias Major, where some consideration is given to the senses of these terms. This is one of the reasons I cannot agree with Dodds that the Gorgias presupposes the Hippias Major. In fact, one of the reasons Dodds gives for his view supports the opposite of his view. He says, “The analysis of the notion of τὸ καλόν is the main subject of the Hippias Major; and I am inclined to think... that the brief treatment of the topic here presupposes that discussion and its result – namely, that neither ὠφέλεια nor ἡδονή nor the combination of both is by itself sufficient to explain what we mean by καλόν.” Dodds, Plato: Gorgias. A Revised Text with Introduction and Commentary, p. 250. However, if the result of the Hippias Major is that “neither ὠφέλεια nor ἡδονή nor the combination of both is by itself sufficient to explain what we mean by καλόν,” then it is difficult to see why Dodds thinks the Gorgias presupposes it, for the Gorgias seems to assert precisely what the Hippias Major denies.

152 I do not mean to assert here that Socrates definitely does analyze the beautiful into what is either pleasant or beneficial, even though that seems a plausible and natural reading of the text. I am only saying that one could argue that Socrates analyzes the beautiful into what is pleasant or beneficial at this point, and then go on to say that since he does so, beauty and goodness cannot be coextensive.
Gorgias. If the Hippias Major comes later than the Gorgias, which I think is the case, then it can be taken as a reevaluation and correction of the Gorgias. If it is earlier than the Gorgias then it seems we should not take the analysis of beauty there seriously either, for the Hippias Major considers benefit and pleasure in considerable detail, while the Gorgias gives almost no consideration to similarities and differences between usefulness, benefit and goodness or to pleasure itself, at least in the arguments in question from 474c-477a. Instead, it is simply accepted without any question that the beautiful is what is either pleasant or beneficial. It would seem too strange, if the Hippias Major were genuine and preceded the Gorgias, for Plato to expect his readers to take Socrates seriously in the Gorgias when he seems to analyze beauty into what is pleasant or beneficial with no consciousness of the difficulties raised in the Hippias Major.

But even without considering the Hippias Major, there are reasons to believe Socrates is not entirely serious at Gorgias 474c-477a. (By ‘serious’ all that is meant is that Socrates does not entirely believe the analysis himself, or we need not take Socrates’ analysis here as representing Plato’s own view. Socrates is being “dialectical” here, beating the orators, rhetoricians, and sophists at their own game.) The first reason not to take the analysis seriously is that the arguments themselves are dubious. The two arguments run as follows:

The First Argument (474b-5c):

P1: Doing what is unjust is uglier than suffering it (474c).
P2: What is beautiful is so either because it is pleasant or because it is useful/beneficial/good (474d-5a).
P3: Therefore, what is uglier is so either because it is more painful or because it is worse (475a).
P4: Doing what is unjust is not more painful than suffering it (475c).
C: Therefore, doing what is unjust must be worse than suffering it (475c).

The Second Argument (476a-7a):

P1: Paying what is due is being justly disciplined (476a).
P2: Just things are beautiful insofar as they are just (476b).
P3: The patient is affected in the way the agent acts (476d).
P4: The agent who disciplines correctly (ὀρθῶς) disciplines justly (476d).
P5: Therefore the patient who is disciplined correctly is acted upon justly (476e).
P6: Beautiful things are good since they are either pleasant or beneficial (477a).
C1: Therefore the patient who is disciplined correctly has good things done to him (477a).
C2: Therefore the patient who is disciplined correctly is benefited (477a).153

Intuitively, we may feel there is something amiss about these arguments, ingenious though they are, and Vlastos has, I think correctly, analyzed what is wrong with them.

Vlastos points out that Socrates takes advantage of the different ways something may be said to be pleasant when it is said to be beautiful.154 When Socrates first expands on the pleasant aspect of the beautiful for Polus, he speaks of beauty as what is pleasant to the observer:

Τί δὲ τόδε; τὰ καλὰ πάντα, οἷον καὶ σώματα καὶ χρώματα καὶ σχήματα καὶ
φωνές καὶ ἑπτιθεύματα, εἰς οὔδὲν ἀποβλέπων καλεῖς ἑκάστοτε καλὰ; οἷον
πρῶτον τὰ σώματα τὰ καλὰ οὐχὶ ἤτοι κατὰ τὴν χρείαν λέγεις καλὰ εἶναι,
πρὸς δὲ ἃν ἐκατοστὸν χρῆσιμον ἢ, πρὸς τοῦτο, ἢ κατὰ ἡδονήν τινα, ἢ ἐν τῷ
θεωρεῖσθαι χαίρειν ποιή τούς θεωροῦντας; ἔχεις τι ἐκτὸς τούτων λέγειν περὶ
σώματος κάλλους (474d-5a);

153 In schematizing this argument I have followed the wording of the text. The language of the text makes it sound as though Socrates is inferring that beautiful things are good (‘if beautiful then good’) since they are either pleasant and beneficial in P6 (477a), and then inferring again that beautiful things are beneficial since they are good in C2 (477a). However, these two inferences are problematic and questionable even by Socratic standards. Thus it may be better to interpret the argument more charitably, and say what he surely must mean is that since (P6a) beautiful things are either pleasant and beneficial, and (hidden premise, P7a) being punished is surely not pleasant then (Ca) being punished must be beneficial.
Well, what about this? When you call all beautiful things beautiful, bodies, for example, or colors, shapes and sounds, or practices is it with nothing in view that you do so each time? Take beautiful bodies first. Don’t you call them beautiful either in virtue of their usefulness, relative to whatever it is that each is useful for, or else in virtue of some pleasure, if it makes those looking at them rejoice from seeing them? In the case of the beauty of a body, can you mention anything other than these (tr. Cooper, ed., rev.)?

Vlastos highlights the phrase “if it makes those looking at them rejoice from seeing them (ἐὰν ἐν τῷ θεωρεῖσθαι χαίρειν ποιή τοὺς θεωροῦντας),” and notes that Socrates conveniently drops this qualification from his summation at 475a-b:

ΣΩ. Ὅταν ἀρα δυοῖν καλοῖν κάλλιον ἢ, ἢ τῷ ἐπέφω τούτων ᾗ ἀμφοτέροις ύπερβάλλον κάλλιον ἐστιν, ἢτοι ἡδονή ἢ ωφέλια ἢ ἀμφοτέρους. ΠΩΛ. Πάνυ γε. ΣΩ. Καὶ ὅταν δὲ δὴ δυοῖν αἴσχροῖν τὸ ἐπέφων αἴσχρον ἢ, ἢτοι λύπη ἢ κακῷ ὑπερβάλλον αἴσχρον ἐσται· ἢ οὐκ ἀνάγκη; ΠΩΛ. Ναι.

Soc: Therefore, whenever one of two beautiful things is more beautiful than the other, it is so because it surpasses the other either in one of these, pleasure or benefit, or in both. Pol: Yes, that’s right. Soc: And whenever one of two ugly things is uglier than the other, it will be so because it surpasses the other either in pain or in badness. Isn’t that necessarily so? Pol: Yes (tr. Cooper, ed., rev.).

But the whole question is: Pain or pleasure for whom? In Socrates’ first formulation of the way in which beauty was pleasant he said that something was beautiful if it was pleasant to the observer. But in the first argument the subject of pleasure changes. Polus had said that doing injustice was better (for the agent) but uglier. In what sense is the agent’s action ugly? Surely it is ugly from the point of view of one seeing the action, that is, from the third person point of view, whereas it is more beneficial ex hypothis for the agent, that is, from the first person point of view. But during the first argument (474b-5c) Socrates changes the subject of the pleasure from the third to the first person. He asks, “Let’s look at this first: does doing what’s unjust surpass suffering it in pain, and do
people who do it hurt more than people who suffer it (Πρῶτον μὲν δὴ σκεψώμεθα, ἀρα λύπη ὑπερβάλλει τὸ ἀδικεῖν τοῦ ἀδικεῖσθαι, καὶ ἀλγοῦσι μᾶλλον οἱ ἀδικοῦντες ἢ οἱ ἀδικουόμενοι; 475b-c, tr. Cooper ed.)?” Of course Polus will not think doing injustice more painful than suffering it, but that was not the sense in which he thought it was uglier. It is uglier from the observer’s point of view, from the point of view of one watching someone be unjust to another. Polus’ problem is that when asked, “Is doing injustice more painful?” he should have answered “Yes, from the point of the observer,” instead of “No” from the point of one who performs the injustice. The second argument works in the same way. Socrates argues thus: Paying the penalty is more beautiful than not doing so. But it is surely not more pleasant (for the one paying the penalty) therefore it must be better (for the one paying the penalty). But the sense in which it is more beautiful has nothing to do with how the one paying the penalty feels; it is more beautiful because more satisfactory from the observers’ point of view.\(^\text{155}\) Vlastos is careful to note that from the point of the observer of an injustice, it may not be entirely clear which is uglier, seeing someone perform an injustice or seeing someone suffer an injustice.\(^\text{156}\) This is, no doubt, because these are two aspects of a single action: an act of injustice implies an agent and a patient. But at least in Polus’ eyes, and he is the

\(^{155}\) Dodds analyzes the problem differently. He writes, “But while Polus’ view is muddled and ultimately untenable, Socrates’ formal ‘refutation’ of it seems to turn merely on the ambiguity of the word ὧφελίμων. When Polus said that doing wrong was less admirable, he clearly meant that it was less ὧφελίμων for the community, and from this it does not immediately follow that it is less ὧφελίμων for the agent, i.e., κάκιον in Polus’ sense of that term.” Dodds, Plato: Gorgias. A Revised Text with Introduction and Commentary, p. 249. ‘Admirable’ is Dodds’ word for καλόν. But there is no evidence that καλόν means what is beneficial for the community.

\(^{156}\) Vlastos, "Was Polus Refuted," p. 63.
respondent in the argument, it is clear which is uglier, for he said at the outset that he thinks performing an act of injustice uglier (474c).

Though there are problems with the argument, it reveals a distinction between the good and the beautiful. Polus said he believed that to do injustice is better but uglier. But now we know that he thought the same action was better and uglier from different points of view. It is better, Polus thinks, from the agent’s point of view, but it is uglier, not from the agent’s point of view but from the point of view of the observer of the agent. If I am doing the injustice, according to Polus, the act is better for me, from my point of view, but it is uglier, not from my point of view, but from the point of view of someone who sees me, even if this other person is my consciousness reflecting on what I am doing. This is one of the reasons it is so important to insist on translating καλὸν ‘beautiful’: because the notion seems to have to do with how something looks to an observer other than the agent. The beauty is essentially connected with the third person point of view. This connection is indicated by the difference we feel between the two phrases “I like this” and “this is beautiful.” The former is a first person statement while the latter is a third person statement.157 We may now begin to see why Socrates seems to look to the beautiful when he wishes to discover what is truly good. Truth is discovered from the point of view of the impartial spectator. Plato seems to have thought that there is no such thing as ‘true for me.’ Truth and beauty are both approached in the same way,

157 “When I find something beautiful, I do not simply mean that it pleases me in the same sense that I find a meal pleasant to my taste. When I find something beautiful, I think that it ‘is’ beautiful. Or, to adapt a Kantian expression, I ‘demand everyone’s agreement.’” Hans Georg Gadamer, ”The Relevance of the Beautiful,” in The Relevance of the Beautiful and Other Essays, ed. Robert Bernasconi (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1986), p. 18.
namely from the point of view of the impartial spectator, so we should not be surprised to find Socrates interested in both. Considerations of goodness are usually so distorted by our emotions and interests that it is difficult for us to distinguish what is actually good for us from what we just happen to like. Like truth, goodness is easier for persons to recognize correctly from the point of view of an impartial observer.158

2.4. Evidence for a Biconditional Relationship between the Good and the Beautiful:

The *Hippias Major* is a central text for the examination of τὸ καλὸν, because it seems to cover many, if not all, the major theories about beauty in 5th and 4th century Greece. Roughly speaking, they can be divided into two groups: the unreflective ones, advanced by Hippias, and the reflective ones, advanced by Socrates.159 Hippias suggests 1. a girl (287e), 2. gold (289e), 3. the good life (291d-e), and 4. rhetoric (304a-b); while Socrates suggests 1. the appropriate (293e),160 2. the useful or able (295c), 3. the beneficial (296e), 4. pleasure through sight and hearing (299b), and 5. beneficial pleasures (303e).

Each of Polus’ suggestions, with the possible exception of rhetoric, can be recognized as something the Greek would consider paradigmatically beautiful. However, each fails

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158 This is not to deny that something can be truly good for me and bad for you; it is only that it is generally believed that the best way to discover the truth, and therefore also what is truly good, is to look at the matter from the point of view of the impartial spectator.

159 No distinction need be made between Socrates and the person he introduces at 286c. It is a common Socratic/Platonic device. When Socrates finds his interlocutor too hopelessly slow, he will invent a wiser questioner and pretend to be the respondent himself, so that the investigation may proceed in question and answer format, e.g., the voice of the laws in the *Crito*, the voice of the pleasures and sciences in the *Philebus*, Diotima in the *Symposium*.

160 One might argue that Hippias actually introduces the appropriate as a possible *definiens* at 290c-d, but this seems more like an addendum to his hypothesis of gold. In any event, it is not treated or tested as a separate hypothesis until it is taken up by Socrates.
because qua examples they are not coextensive with beauty. Likewise, in the Gorgias and in Xenophon we have already seen the attempt to equate beauty with what is useful, beneficial, or pleasant. The appropriate as such may sound new, but if we reflect on how beauty was used in the Tragedians with respect to action, we will recall how it often had what I called an absolute sense which could well be captured by the appropriate.  

In Socrates’ refutation of the beneficial as a possible answer to the question “What is beauty?” there is strong evidence of a biconditional relation between goodness and beauty. The argument against the beneficial takes the form of a reductio: if the beautiful is the beneficial then the beautiful is not good and the good is not beautiful. It is taken as obviously absurd to say that the good is not beautiful and the beautiful is not good, and therefore the beautiful cannot be the beneficial. But if it is obviously absurd to say that the good is not beautiful and the beautiful is not good then the correct belief must be that what is good is beautiful and what is beautiful is good. And this is strong evidence Plato believes in a biconditional relation between goodness and beauty. In order to understand the argument in detail, however, it is necessary first to understand the preceding argument against ‘useful’ or ‘able’ as a possible definiens of beauty.  

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161 See also Aristotle Topics, 135a: αὐτὸ γὰρ αὐτῷ πᾶν τὸ εἶναι δηλοῖ· τὸ δὲ τὸ εἶναι δηλοῦν οὐκ ἰδιὸν ἀλλ’ ὀρος ἐστιν. οἰον ἐπεὶ ὁ εἶπας καλὸν τὸ πρέπον ἰδιὸν εἶναι αὐτὸ ἐαυτοῦ ἰδιὸν ἀποδέδωκε (ταὐτὸν γὰρ ἐστὶ τὸ καλὸν καὶ τὸ πρέπον), οὐκ ἄν εἰη τὸ πρέπον τοῦ καλοῦ ἰδιον. [For a thing itself always shows its own essence, and what shows the essence is not a property but a definition. Thus (e.g.) he who has said that the appropriate is a property of beautiful has rendered the term as a property of itself (for the beautiful and the appropriate are the same); and so the appropriate will not be a property of the beautiful (ROT, rev.).]

162 In what sense one word can serve as the definiens of another is of course problematic. It is also unclear exactly what Socrates is looking for with his “What is X?” question. For these matters see: Robinson, Plato’s Earlier Dialectic, Chapter 5; Gregory Vlastos, "What Did Socrates Understand by His "What is F?” Question?,” in Platonic Studies (Princeton: Princeton University, 1981); Alexander
After rejecting the appropriate as a possible definition of the beautiful, Socrates next suggests the useful (τὸ χρήσιμον, 295c). But the useful fails because, Socrates argues, what is useful is not always useful for some good outcome, and one would hardly call what is useful for something bad beautiful (296c-d). We see already then that Socrates is connecting the beautiful and the good. The useful fails on the assumption that goodness is necessary to beauty, that beauty implies goodness, or ‘if beautiful then good.’ But Hippias suggests that the useful could still stand as a possible definition of beauty if it were qualified as having a good end (296d). This is the same as to say that the beautiful is what is beneficial (τὸ ὀφέλιμον, 296e). The argument against this is as follows: The beneficial is the maker (τὸ ποιοῦν) of the good (296e). As such, it is the cause (αἰτιον) of the good. But the effect of a cause insofar as it is an effect, is an effect, not a cause. Therefore, since the beneficial is the maker and cause of the good, it must differ from the good. And this conclusion is unacceptable to both interlocutors. The conclusion of the argument is:

ΣΩ. Εἰ ἄρα τὸ καλὸν ἐστιν αἰτιον ἀγαθοῦ, γίγνοτ' ἢν ὑπὸ τοῦ καλοῦ τὸ ἀγαθὸν... καὶ κινδυνεύει εξ ἓν ἐν οὖσκομεν ἐν πατρός τινος ἱδέα εἶναι τὸ

Nehamas, "Confusing Universals and Particulars in Plato’s Early Dialogues,” in Virtues of Authenticity: Essays on Plato and Socrates (Princeton: Princeton University, 1999). For our purposes, however, I will simply call the various proposed answers to the question “What is beauty?” in the Hippias Major hypothetical definitions, or definitions.

163 One could argue that the appropriate is not entirely refuted. Socrates presents arguments against both of the following theses: 1. the appropriate is what makes things appear but not be beautiful, and 2. the appropriate is what makes things both appear and be beautiful. They are rejected at 294a and 294d-e, respectively. Though Socrates tries to get Hippias to agree that the appropriate is what makes things be but not appear beautiful (294d-e), Hippias refuses to agree to this. So no argument is presented against the third possibility, that the appropriate is what makes things be but not appear beautiful. In this last sense, significantly, the appropriate is not refuted in the Hippias Major. It is a good question whether this means Plato thinks Hippias is right not to divorce beauty from appearance.
καλὸν τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ. Π. Πάνυ μὲν οὖν· καλῶς γὰρ λέγεις, ὦ Σώκρατες. ΣΩ. Οὐκοῦν καὶ τὸδε καλῶς λέγω, ὅτι οὔτε ὁ πατήρ ύός ἐστιν, οὔτε ὁ ύός πατήρ; Π. Καλῶς μὲντοι. ΣΩ. Οὐδὲ γε τὸ αἴτιον γιγνόμενον ἐστιν, οὔτε τὸ γιγνόμενον αὖ αἴτιον. Π. Αληθὴ λέγεις. ΣΩ. Μᾶ Δία, ὦ ἄριστε, οὐδὲ ἄρα τὸ καλὸν ἀγαθὸν ἐστιν, οὔτε τὸ ἀγαθὸν καλὸν· ἡ δοκεῖ σοι οἷόν τε εἶναι ἐκ τῶν προειρημένων; Π. Οὐ μὰ τὸν Δία, οὐ μοι φαίνεται (297b-c).

Soc: So if the beautiful is a cause of the good, the good should come to be from the beautiful... and it would follow that the beautiful is formally a kind of father of the good. Hip: Certainly. You’re speaking beautifully, Socrates. Soc: Then see if I say this beautifully as well: the father is not a son and the son is not a father. Hip: You say it beautifully, indeed. Soc: The cause is not a thing that comes to be, and the thing that comes to be is not a cause. Hip: That’s true. Soc: Good god! Then the beautiful is not good, nor the good beautiful. Or do you think they could be, from what we’ve said? Hip: Good god, no. It doesn’t appear so to me (tr. Cooper, ed., rev.).

The argument presents difficulties, not the least of which is: what does Socrates mean when he says that “the father is not a son and the son is not a father?” Some sons may not be fathers, but surely all fathers are sons. And how can he conclude that the beautiful is not good and the good is not beautiful when all the argument seems to warrant is that the good is not the same thing as the beautiful?

Woodruff, following Nehamas, is surely correct that it is necessary to take ‘son’ and ‘father,’ ‘cause’ and effect,’ ‘good’ and ‘beautiful,’ in the sense of ‘being a son,’ ‘being a father,’ ‘being a cause,’ etc.¹⁶⁴ For, while it is certainly not the case that a father is not a son, it is the case that being a father is not the same as being a son. Thus perhaps what Socrates is saying is that qua maker and cause of good, being beautiful must differ from being good, just as being a cause differs from being an effect. And because these two things differ, they may not be coextensive: not every effect need be a cause as well.

Since they differ, and lacking any other information, there is no reason they should necessarily be coextensive. And this, I think, is what Socrates and Hippias find intolerable when applied to the good and the beautiful: If being beautiful differs from being good then, lacking other information, there is no guarantee that what is beautiful will always be good and vice versa. Regardless of the correct interpretation of this argument, however, the conclusion is clear: the denial of coextensive relation between goodness and beauty, the denial of mutual implication, is taken to be absurd. But then this means that the only acceptable view is that if something is beautiful then it is good, and if something is good then it is beautiful. Goodness and beauty are coextensive and imply one another mutually.

What weight are we to give this evidence? The statement is made during an elenchus, but language in which Socrates expresses the absurdity of the conclusion certainly makes it sound as though he believes it himself. The end of the argument is:

ΣΩ. Μὰ Δία, ὦ ἀριστε, οὐδὲ ἄρα τὸ καλὸν ἀγαθὸν ἐστιν, οὐδὲ τὸ ἀγαθὸν καλὸν· ἣ δοκεὶ σοι οἱὸν τε εἶναι ἐκ τῶν προειρημένων; ΠΠ. Οὐ μὰ τὸν Δία, οὐ μοι φαίνεται. ΣΩ. Ἀρέσκει οὖν ἡμῖν καὶ ἐξέλομεν ἂν λέγειν ὡς τὸ καλὸν οὐκ ἀγαθὸν οὐδὲ τὸ ἀγαθὸν καλὸν; ΠΠ. Οὐ μὰ τὸν Δία, οὐ πάνυ μοι ἀρέσκει. ΣΩ. Ναὶ μὰ τὸν Δία, ὦ Ἰππία· ἐμοὶ δὲ γε πάντων ἡκίστα ἀρέσκει ὃν εἰρήκαμεν λόγων. ΠΠ. Ἐοικε γὰρ οὕτως. ΣΩ. Κινδυνεύει ἄρα ἡμῖν, οὐχ ὄσπερ ἀρτι ἐφαίνετο κάλλιστος εἶναι τῶν λόγων τὸ ἄφελιμον καὶ τὸ χρήσιμον τε καὶ τὸ δυνατὸν ἀγαθὸν τοι ποιεῖν καλὸν εἶναι, οὐχ οὕτως ἔχειν, ἀλλ', εἰ οἱὸν τε ἐστιν, ἐκείνων εἶναι γελοιότερος τῶν πρῶτων· ἐν οἷς τὴν τε παρθένον φόμεθα εἶναι τὸ καλὸν καὶ ἐν ἔκαστον τῶν ἐμπροσθεὶν λειχθέντων. ΠΠ. Ἐοικεν (297c-d).

Soc: Good god! Then the beautiful is not good, nor the good beautiful. Or do you think they could be, from what we’ve said? Hip: Good god, no. It doesn’t appear so to me. Soc: So are we happy with that? Would you like to say that the beautiful is not good, nor the good beautiful? Hip: Good god, no. I’m not at all happy with it. Soc: Good god, yes, Hippias. Of all the accounts we’ve given these things please me least. Hip: So it seems. Soc: Then it doesn’t turn out to be the
more beautiful account, as we thought a moment ago, that the beneficial – the useful and the able for making some good – is beautiful. It’s not that way at all, but if possible it’s more laughable than the first accounts, when we thought the girl or each one of those things mentioned earlier, was the beautiful. Hip: Apparently (tr. Cooper, ed., rev.).

Socrates says that of all the accounts they have given so far, this is the least satisfactory to him, and that it is more ridiculous than the other accounts. These are things Socrates says himself, they are not questions. So it seems as though he actually does think the view that the beautiful is not good and the good is not beautiful most ridiculous and least satisfactory. At least within the dialogue it seems we have to give this evidence considerable weight, but some have questioned the dialogue’s authenticity. However, as with the Alcibiades, the authenticity of the Hippias Major was unquestioned until the 19th century, and I agree with Woodruff that the arguments adduced against it are not sufficiently strong to conclude that it is inauthentic.

Is there any other evidence for the biconditional thesis? There is, and this time it is in an unquestionably genuine dialogue: the Symposium. We have already seen that the Symposium provides evidence for ‘if good then beautiful.’ But the dialogue also provides evidence for the biconditional thesis. This lies in Diotima’s substitution of goodness for beauty at 204d:

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166 “Plato’s authorship of the Hippias Major was not questioned in antiquity or in modern times until the work fell under the suspicion of nineteenth century scholars... It has as good a claim to Platonic authorship as do the Ion and Euthyphro. The historical tradition creates a presumption in its favor, and no consideration powerful enough to undermine that presumption has been brought forward.” Woodruff, Plato: Hippias Major, p. 94.
The lover of beautiful things has a desire; what does he desire? That they become his own, I said. But that answer calls for still another question, that is, what will this man have, when the beautiful things he wants have become his own? I said there was no way I could give a ready answer to that question. Then she said, suppose someone changes the question, putting ‘good’ in place of ‘beautiful,’ and asks you this: Tell me, Socrates, a lover of good things has a desire; what does he desire? That they become his own, I said. And what will he have, when the good things he wants have become his own? This time it’s easier to come up with the answer, I said. He’ll have happiness (tr. Cooper, ed.).

This passage should be compared with *Meno* 77b (discussed above), where Socrates also seems to substitute ‘good’ for ‘beautiful.’ Either these passages support the biconditional thesis or, more conservatively they support ‘if beautiful then good.’ I only placed *Meno* 77b as evidence for ‘if beautiful then good’ because it is not as clear there as it is here in the *Symposium* that ‘good’ is being substituted for ‘beautiful.’ At *Meno* 77b Socrates simply asks Meno whether when he says ‘beautiful things’ he means ‘good things.’

Here in the *Symposium* the substitution is explicit. But either way, there is now considerable evidence Plato believes in a biconditional relationship between goodness and beauty. It was established that Plato believes ‘if good then beautiful.’ Thus, even on the assumption that *Meno* 77b and *Symposium* 204d only support the weaker ‘if beautiful then good,’ there is evidence for both conditionals in the biconditional.

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167 Ἄρα λέγεις τὸν τῶν καλῶν ἐπιθυμοῦντα ἀγαθῶν ἐπιθυμητὴν εἶναι; Μάλιστα γε (Men. 77b). [Do you mean that the man who desires beautiful things desires good things? Most certainly (tr. Cooper, ed.).]
2.5. Conclusion:

It was argued that the evidence Plato believes ‘if good then beautiful’ is quite strong. The proof-texts are *Lysis* 216d, *Symposium* 201c, *Republic* 457b, and *Timaeus* 87c. There was, of course, always the problem whether we can attribute the beliefs of characters in the dialogues to Plato himself. This problem is intensified at least in the *Lysis* and *Symposium* by the fact that Socrates is engaged in *elenchi*, and is merely asking the respondent questions. The former difficulty affects every interpretation of Plato, and would probably make it impossible to come to any conclusions about Plato’s beliefs based on the dialogues. The second difficulty is more serious. However, if we see Socrates continually appealing to the same premises in his arguments, it becomes difficult to believe that he did not hold them himself. When this is combined with the strong statements of ‘if good then beautiful’ in the *Republic* and the *Timaeus*, we must take this to be as good as the evidence for any of Plato’s beliefs.

Evidence for the converse seemed, at least at first, less convincing. There were proof-texts in the *Alcibiades* and the *Protagoras*, but the authenticity of the former has been questioned and the proof-text in the *Protagoras* occurs during what seems a dialectical argument in which Socrates espouses hedonism. Additionally, it could be argued that *Gorgias* presents counter-evidence insofar as beauty is analyzed into the pleasant or beneficial. But it was argued that the argument in the *Gorgias* turns on an ambiguity in the subject of pleasure. Beauty was initially analyzed in terms of what is pleasant to the observer, but then Socrates asked if performing injustice were less
pleasant to the agent than it was to the patient. And this points to a revealing difference in how we determine whether our actions are good or beautiful. One of the ways we can determine whether our actions are good is by asking whether they are beneficial to us. But when we ask whether our actions are beautiful, we must ask ourselves how they appear to the observer. In this way, beauty is determined as truth is: by asking what is the case from the point of view of an impartial observer.\footnote{Any persons involved in an activity could also count as impartial observers, but they would do so from the third person point of view. What I mean by third person is that in an interaction between two people where one person is unjust to another, there is the agent’s point of view, the patient’s point of view, and then there is the point of view of the third person, namely the impartial observer not involved in the activity.}

But how could we accept the evidence of the Protagoras and reject that of the Gorgias? What made the argument in the Protagoras dialectical did not have anything to do with beauty, but the speciousness of the argument in the Gorgias was directly connected to the analysis of beauty. Then it was discovered that the analysis of the Gorgias is explicitly rejected in the Hippias Major. Not only this but the Hippias Major provides direct evidence for the biconditional relation between goodness and beauty. The beneficial is rejected as a possible definiens of beauty because it would lead to the conclusion that beauty is not good and the goodness is not beautiful. Socrates says this is the least satisfactory and most ridiculous result of all the elenchi.

But the authenticity of the Hippias Major has also been questioned. Thus it was necessary to look for evidence of the biconditional relation in other dialogues. Such evidence was found in Diotima’s substitution of ‘good’ for ‘beauty’ at Symposium 204d. A similar substitution occurs at Meno 77b. These substitutions are evidence either for the
biconditional relation or at least for ‘if beautiful then good.’ Either way, when coupled with the evidence for ‘if good then beautiful’ in the *Alcibiades, Protagoras, Charmides* and *Laches*, we now have strong reasons to think Plato believes in the biconditional relation between goodness and beauty.

This may seem a satisfactory result, but two major problems are left to be addressed. First, there is the question: Beyond extensional equivalence and mutual implication, what is the relation between goodness and beauty? Are they intensionally or essentially equivalent for Plato? Or is one somehow the cause of the other? What is the metaphysical relation between goodness and beauty? Various passages, especially in the “middle” and “later” dialogues, give intriguing clues and hints that Plato has views about these questions. Second, there is still the problem of apparent beauty. Plato’s Socrates seems to say that some boys are beautiful where it is probable that he does not think they are good. How can this be, given that we have seen so much evidence of extensional equivalence? These questions and the answers to them will be taken up in the following chapters.
CHAPTER 3

BEAUTY, GOODNESS AND UNITY

3.0. Introduction:

Any investigation of beauty in Plato must eventually concern itself with Plato’s metaphysics. Not only this, but it must address and to a certain extent come to conclusions about the heart of his metaphysics. This is because the most pressing question concerning τὸ καλόν is its relation to the good, and, as we learn from Republic and elsewhere, the good is the fundamental principle of Plato’s ontology. Thus we find ourselves in a predicament: on the one hand, the form of the good is an immensely complex and contentious issue, on the other, Plato’s notion of beauty requires some understanding of it. This problem may be mitigated, however, if it is possible to reach some conclusions about the good without pretending to understand it completely. On this view, an interpretation is satisfactory if it is explanatory and illuminating, and does not conflict with anything said about the good, even if it does not explain, for example, what Plato means at Republic 509b, where Socrates says that the form of the good is “beyond οὐσία, exceeding it in seniority and power.”

169 The translation of οὐσία is problematic because, more than usual, to translate it is to take a position on a contentious issue. The main translations, according to LSJ, are ‘being,’ ‘essence,’
In order to reach some understanding of the good in Plato, it is necessary to see that there are certain fundamental tenets which he seems to have always held, even if he may have changed his mind about less important details. Thus we can say, for instance, that for Plato the good is always an object of desire, regardless of whether or not it is true, as Aristotle claims, that he turned to mathematics later in his life and expressed views similar to the Pythagoreans. He may have seen in certain Pythagorean beliefs a powerful system which could be adapted to the framework of his own ontology. But whether or not the forms can be reduced to or expressed by mathematical entities, or whether he thought they could, does not change the fact that he always believed in the existence of forms, and that he always thought they were epistemically and ontologically prior to sensible particulars.

Although Plato does not express it this way, it seems one of the thoughts behind the Theory of Forms is that the unqualified is prior to the qualified. His thinking may have been based on the following apparently simple truth: for something to be, say, triangular, there must be something it is to be triangular. Triangularity must be something, if it is possible and true to say that some particular object is triangular.\textsuperscript{170} The

\textsuperscript{170} As McCabe points out, however, it seems Plato came to realize that even the forms had to be qualified in some sense. That is, the form of triangularity must also have properties other than being pure triangularity, since it must at least be the same as itself, different from other forms, and enter into relations with other forms and particulars. A form, that is, cannot be what she calls an “austere individual.” “Both views of individuation come to grief on the notion of the absolute priority of the individual. If that is complete, then individuals are austere. But then the world in which they occur cannot be structured, since they cannot be interrelated; it turns out not to be a world at all, and certainly not one we can talk about. If, on the other hand, the individual is just a collection of properties, then it has no priority, and everything collapses in to a muddle of
notion of priority is complex. At the very least it signifies ontological, as opposed to
temporal priority. Ontological priority may be understood in terms of dependence: to
use Aristotle’s terminology, attributes depend for their existence on substances, but
substances do not depend for their existence on any more fundamental type of being.

Now this precedence of the unqualified over the qualified can be developed and
connected with other insights. ‘The one and the many’ – a problem Adam calls “the *fons
et origo* of Greek philosophy,”¹⁷¹ – may be another way of expressing the distinction
between the unqualified and the qualified. As McCabe explains, there are at least two
ways in which an object may be one: it may be one in relation to others and it may be
one in relation to itself.¹⁷² But it seems that at least in some cases Plato did not think
these two kinds of unity were entirely unrelated. One may say, for instance, that there is
usually only one way for things to be unqualified, while there are many ways in which
they may be qualified. Triangularity is one; there is only one essence or definition of
being a triangle: three-sided plane figure. But there are many triangles and triangular
objects. Each particular triangle is qualified triangularity; it is an equilateral triangle of

¹⁷¹ “We should bear in mind that the antithesis of ἐν and πολλὰ was the *fons et origo* of Greek
philosophy, and runs throughout its entire history.” James Adam, *The Republic of Plato: Edited with
Critical Notes, Commentary and Appendices*, 2 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1902), vol.
1, p. 110.

¹⁷² “Nonetheless, being one can be understood in two rather different ways – either as ‘one among
others’ or as ‘one in itself.’ Something may be one from without, in the context of others; or from
within, in terms of its internal structure.” McCabe, *Plato’s Individuals*, p. 306.
this size, or a scalene of that size, etc. And particular triangular objects are further qualified by space and time. A particular triangular object is this scalene in this place, at this time. Unqualified triangularity is more unified because it is simpler, it lacks the complexity of the added qualifications of any type of qualified triangularity. Qualified reality is ontologically dependent on unqualified reality: we could not have this triangle here now unless triangularity simpliciter were something. In this way, the many always depend on the one. And if degrees of reality can be measured in terms of dependence, then the one is more real, because more independent, than the many.

The theme of one and many can also be seen in the realm of value. In both ethical and practical circumstances there is often one way to go right, or one optimal solution, and many ways to go wrong. This is perhaps most famously expressed in Aristotle’s doctrine of the mean (cf. EN 1106a14ff., EE 1220b22ff.). It seems Aristotle often makes explicit what is implicit in Plato. Courage is a mean between cowardice and foolhardiness. There is usually one way to be courageous, but an indefinite number of ways to go wrong. And, apparently, adopting the mean is to become unified. Plato will argue that the vicious soul, like the bad city, becomes many. The beliefs, emotions, and desires of a vicious soul will conflict with one another, just as the different parts or classes of a wicked city will be at war with one another. In a good soul or city all the parts agree about the common good, there is no discord between them, and so the good soul or city is unified or one. The sort of unity here, however, must obviously be consistent with complexity. When we say that the good man or the good city is unified, we do not mean to imply that he or it lacks parts or ceases to have parts; the unity comes
from the harmonious ordering of the parts. Combining this with the previous thought, the one or the unqualified is both more real and better. We may also see from this the epistemic priority of unity (I use ‘unity’ and ‘one’ interchangeably). Since the virtue, courage, is one, we have a chance of understanding it; but since the vice in relation to courage is indefinite, there is no chance of understanding it, save in relation to the mean/one. Understanding, in this way of thinking, requires definiteness, limitedness, unity.

Before turning to the central argument of this chapter, I wish to give the reader as accurate an account of the relation between goodness, unity, and beauty in Plato as I can. In the first place, I think we are dealing with two things here, namely the form or idea of the good and the form of beauty. The form or idea of the good is identical with the one, or unity. This claim is made forcefully in Aristotle’s works. As we shall see, Aristotle claims Plato identified his highest or first principle, namely the one, or unity, with the good. Thus, at least according to Aristotle, Plato thinks goodness is identical with unity. But, as will be demonstrated, there is also evidence in Plato’s own works for the identification of goodness and unity. It is one of the major goals of this chapter to demonstrate that there is strong evidence in Plato’s works for accepting Aristotle’s claim that he identified goodness and unity. Plato is not as explicit about these claims as Aristotle is, but the Seventh Letter (341c) and the Phaedrus (276c) seem to indicate that Plato was reticent about putting his highest principles in writing. And so, we should not expect him to be as explicit on these matters. While it will be argued that he identifies goodness and unity, and therefore that the form of the good and the one are the same

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173 See footnotes 202 and 211.
thing, it seems to be the case that there is a separate form of beauty. Though it would perhaps be nice to think that beauty, goodness, and unity were all the same thing, Plato’s text poses obstacles to that interpretation. Despite the fact that beauty and goodness seem to be coextensive, there are reasons for thinking that the form of beauty is not the same thing as the form of goodness. One of these reasons is what Plato says at the end of the Philebus. There, he seems to say that beauty is one of the three forms by which goodness must be caught, and immediately afterwards he gives beauty second place in the final ranking of the goods. Secondly, certain things are said about goodness that are not said about any other form, in particular as we have seen, at Republic 509b the good seems to be beyond being (οὐσία) at least in some respects. Likewise, some things are said about beauty which are not said about any other form, in particular, that it is the only one of the souls true desiderata whose instances can be seen with our eyes (Phdr. 250d-e). And, as we shall see in the fourth chapter, there are also other reasons for thinking Plato did not identify the forms of goodness and beauty.

But if the form of beauty is distinct from the form of goodness, it would seem that some explanation is needed of the fact that goodness and beauty are coextensive. It is important to note, however, that the explanation of the relation between beauty and goodness must take place on two levels: (1.) the level of concrete particulars and (2.) the level of forms. It is difficult to say much with certainty about the relation between goodness and beauty at the level of forms. Though this is an important topic, and I will say as much about it as I think the evidence supports, Plato says little on the topic, and what he does say is obscure. In some way, at least in the Republic, the form of the good is
the cause of all the other forms. There, we are told that not only is the form of the good responsible for the knowability of the objects of knowledge, but it also causes their very being and existence (R. 509b). The form of the good, that is, is the cause of the existence of the forms. But how this is so and why he thinks it must be so, he does not explicitly say. Aside from the Philebus, which will be discussed in detail below, little is said about what exactly the relation was between the form of the good and the rest of the forms, including the form of beauty; and what is said on the matter is, as we shall see, difficult to understand and open to different interpretations. Thus, for the most part, when discussing the relation between goodness and beauty, we will be doing so at the level of concrete particulars. Most of the evidence for the coextension of beauty and goodness comes from objects at the level of concrete particulars, and this is where Plato seems most clear about what the relation between goodness and beauty is.

So what was the relation between goodness and beauty at the level of concrete particulars? We have already argued that goodness and beauty are coextensive in Plato, that is, that everything beautiful is also good and vice versa. The closest Plato comes to anything that might help explain this relation or connection is the “more sophisticated answer” at Phaedo 105c ff. At Phaedo 100d Socrates presents the sort of cause or explanation he has come to accept. He says he rejects those explanations which seek to explain beauty in terms of color or shape etc., and that the only explanation he now
accepts is that what is beautiful is beautiful by participation in the form of beauty. But later, he admits the possibility of a more sophisticated explanation:

λέγω δὴ παρ’ ἡν τὸ πρῶτον ἔλεγον ἀπόκρισιν, τὴν ἀσφαλὴ ἐκείνην, ἐκ τῶν νῦν λεγομένων ἀλλήν ὁρῶν ἀσφάλειαν. εἰ γὰρ ἐρόιο με ὡ ἀν τι ἐν τῷ σώματι ἐγγένηται θεμικόν ἔσται, οὐ τὴν ἀσφαλὴ σου ἐρώ ἀπόκρισιν ἐκείνην τὴν ἀμαθὴ, ὀτι ὡ ἀν θερμότης, ἀλλὰ κομψοτέραν ἐκ τῶν νῦν, ὀτι ὡ ἀν πῦρ· οὐδὲ ἀν ἐρή ὡ ἀν σώματι τί ἐγγένηται νοσήσει, οὐκ ἔρω ὁτι ὡ ἀν νόσους, ἄλλ’ ὁς ἀν πυρετός (Phld. 100b-c).

I say that beyond that safe answer, which I spoke of first, I see another safe answer. If you should ask me what, coming into a body, makes it hot, my reply would not be that safe and ignorant one, that it is heat, but our present argument provides a more sophisticated answer, namely, fire, and if you ask me what, on coming into a body, makes it sick, I will not say sickness but fever (tr. Cooper, ed.).

While earlier he would have said that heat is caused in a body by heat, now he is allowing that a more sophisticated answer might be to say that a body is hot by the presence of fire. Likewise, instead of saying that a body is sick because of the presence of sickness, he can say that it is sick because of the presence of fever. Fire brings heat along with it and fever brings along sickness. It may be, then, that this could provide a model for the interaction or connection between beauty and goodness at the level of concrete.

174 Οὐ τοινυν, ἡ δ’ ὤς, ἐτι μανθάνω οὐδὲ δύναμαι τὰς ἄλλας αἰτίας τὰς σοφὰς ταύτας γιγνώσκειν ἀλλ’ ἐὰν τὶς μοι λέγῃ δ’ ὅτι καλὸν ἐστὶν ὁτιοῦν, ἡ χρώμα εὐανθέας ἔχον ἡ σχῆμα ἡ ἄλλο ὁτιοῦν τῶν τοιούτων, τὰ μὲν ἄλλα χαίρειν ἐώ,—ταράττωμαι γὰρ ἐν τοῖς ἄλλοις πάσιν—τοῦτο δὲ ἀπλώς καὶ ἀτέχνως καὶ ἰσως εὐήθως ἔχω παρ’ ἐμαυτῷ, ὅτι οὐκ ἄλλο τι ποιεὶ αὐτὸ καλὸν ἢ ἔκεινον τοῦ καλοῦ εἰτε παρουσία εἰτε κοινωνία εἰτε ὅτι δὴ καὶ ὅπως προσγενομένῃ ὁν γὰρ ἦτο τοῦτο διαχωρισόμαι, ἀλλ’ ὅτι τῷ καλῷ πάντα τὰ καλὰ [γίγνεται] καλὰ. τοῦτο γὰρ μοι δοκεῖ ἀσφαλέστατον εἶναι καὶ ἐμαυτῷ ἀποκρινασθαι καὶ ἄλλω. [I no longer understand or recognize those other sophisticated causes, and if someone tells me that a thing is beautiful because it has a bright color or shape or any such thing, I ignore these other reasons – for all these confuse me – but I simply, naively and perhaps foolishly cling to this, that nothing else makes it beautiful other than the presence of, or the sharing in, or however you may describe its relationship to the Beautiful we mentioned, for I will not insist on the precise nature of the relationship, but that all beautiful things are beautiful by the Beautiful. That, I think, is the safest answer I can give myself or anyone else (tr. Cooper, ed.)]
particulars. Perhaps goodness in concrete particulars always brings beauty along with it, and beauty is not found in concrete particulars without goodness.

This is not so say that there might not be a similar connection between the forms of goodness and beauty themselves: Plato does seem to think both that the form of beauty is good (Smp. 211d-212a, Philb. 65a) and that the form of the good is beautiful (R. 508e). But he does not say what it means to say that the form of the good is beautiful. Does it participate in the form of beauty? That would be odd, since the form of the good is supposed to be the cause and principle of all the forms, including the form of beauty. The interaction between beauty and goodness seems clearer at the level of concrete particulars. Insofar as a concrete particular is good, to that extent it is also beautiful and vice versa.

Two problems present themselves for using the “more sophisticated answer” of the Phaedo as a model for explaining the coextension of goodness and beauty. The first is whether Socrates is speaking about forms when he speaks about fire and sickness. Though we may doubt whether there are forms of fire or sickness, he seems to make no distinction between fire and sickness, on the one hand, and threeness and oddness on the other. But in the same part of the Phaedo he says there is a form of threeness. Just prior to mentioning fire and sickness he uses the example of three and oddness, referring explicitly to the form of three.

οἶσθα γὰρ δήποτε ὃτι ἄν ἡ τῶν τριῶν ἱδέα κατάσχῃ, ἀνάγκη αὐτοῖς οὐ μόνον τρισὶν εἶναι ἀλλὰ καὶ περιττοῖς (Phd. 104d).

175 Cf. Prm. 130c and Ti. 51b.
As we were saying just now, you surely know that what the form of three occupies must not only be three but also odd (tr. Cooper, ed.)

And immediately after this Socrates also refers to the form of odd (105a). So while we may doubt whether there are forms of sickness and fire, it seems the same sort of connection as exists between fire and heat, also exists between forms, namely the form of three and the form of odd. It may be the case that he is just using sickness and fire as illustrations of forms, just as he uses the example of a bed to make a point about forms in Republic 10, even though it is doubtful whether there were forms of artifacts.176

The second, perhaps more serious problem, is that a debate has grown over the question whether the forms in the Phaedo are separate or immanent. Without attempting to resolve this dispute, it seems the weight of the evidence supports Devereaux’s view, against Fine, that the forms are not immanent in the Phaedo or anywhere else.177 As Devereaux points out, Socrates in the Phaedo distinguishes between largeness itself, or in nature, and the largeness in us, or in Simmias.178 Likewise, Plato uses the canonical language ‘itself by itself’ (αὐτὸ καθ’ αὐτό) to describe the forms in the Phaedo (78d, 100b).179 Largeness itself or in nature refers to the separate form, and largeness in us or in

176 Fine sums up the point saying, “I agree that fire and fever are not, here, forms. But some of the entities that play the same role in the [clever answer] as fire and fever do are Forms... Plato says, for example, that whatever the Form of Three occupies is not only three but also odd.” Gail Fine, "Immanence," Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy 4 (1986): p. 75.
177 Daniel Devereux, "Separation and Immanence in Plato’s Theory of Forms," in Plato 1: Metaphysics and Epistemology, ed. Gail Fine (Oxford: Oxford University, 1999). Fine, "Immanence." The only place where one might argue that forms are immanent is Euthphr. 5c-d; however, even here I would argue that the matter is not definite.
Simmias refers to our participation in it (or the ‘immanent character’). The oddness or threeness in us can perish, while oddness and threeness qua forms do not perish.\textsuperscript{180}

The conclusion for our purposes is that this section of the \textit{Phaedo} provides a model which could explain the coextension of beauty and goodness in concrete particulars. Just as fire always brings heat with it, we may say that goodness always brings beauty with it. All that is needed is the other half of the biconditional. While three always brings oddness with it, other numbers bring oddness with it as well. So this section of the \textit{Phaedo} does not provide an example of a biconditional relation between immanent characters. But I would say that it is not a great step to make the further claim that a biconditional relation could exist between immanent characters within concrete particulars. The significance of this part of the \textit{Phaedo} seems to be that a concrete particular’s participation in one form can sometimes entail or require its participation in another form. And, though in Plato’s examples at this point in the \textit{Phaedo} the requirement only goes in one direction, I see no reason why it could not also go in both directions. That is, goodness always brings beauty with it, and beauty always brings goodness with it; or, goodness always and alone brings beauty with it.

But, though this may explain or provide a model for the connection between goodness and beauty at the level of concrete particulars, it would be dangerous to try to

\textsuperscript{180} “Ἀλλὰ τί κωλύει,” φαίη ἂν τις, “ἀρτιόν μὲν τὸ περιττὸν μὴ γέγνεσθαι ἐπιόντος τοῦ ἀρτίου, ὡσπερ ὤμολόγηται, ἀπολομένου δὲ αὐτοῦ ἀντ’ ἐκείνου ἀρτιόν γεγονέναι;” τῷ ταῦτα λέγοντι οὐκ ἄρα ἔχομεν διαμαχέσασθαι ὅτι οὐκ ἀπόλλυται· τῷ γὰρ ἀνάρτιον οὐκ ἀνώλεθρον ἐστιν (Phd. 106b-c). [But, someone might say, what prevents the odd, while not becoming even as has been agreed, from being destroyed, and the even to come to be instead? We could not maintain against the man who said this that it is not destroyed, for the uneven is not indestructible (tr. Cooper, ed.).]
infer anything about the relation between the forms of beauty and goodness themselves based on the interaction of their immanent characters. If the form of the good where just like any other form, we might feel more confident about coming to conclusions about the relation between the form of the good and the form of beauty, or any other form. So, for instance, if there are forms of lion and mammal, we could draw some conclusions about the relation between the form of lion and the form of mammal, based on the fact that all concrete particulars which are lions are also mammals, but not vice versa. But it would be dangerous to do this in the case of the form of the good, because we know from the Republic and elsewhere that the form of the good is not just a regular form like any other. Instead, it is unique among forms. It is the principle of all forms, and so its relation to all of the other forms is unique. This is why it is difficult to say anything with certainty about the relation between the form of the good and the form of beauty. One would first have to come to a better understanding of the relation of the form of the good to all the other forms. And this is difficult to do because Plato says so little about the matter, and what he does say is unclear and open to different and opposing interpretations.

3.1. On the Priority of the One:

In many places Aristotle refers to what Plato said in language not found in Plato’s dialogues. How to interpret these reports, and what weight or authority to give
them has been the subject of heated debate in Platonic scholarship.\textsuperscript{181} Just in the twentieth century, views on this issue range between the two extremes of, on the one hand, what could be called “the American School” (Paul Shorey, Harold Cherniss, Gregory Vlastos), which argues against the authority of the doxography concerning the unwritten doctrines;\textsuperscript{182} and, on the other, the “Tübingen-Milan School,” (Hans Krämer, Konrad Gaiser, Giovanni Reale), which raises the authority of the unwritten doctrines even above the dialogues themselves.\textsuperscript{183} To attempt to resolve this dispute is outside the scope of this essay, but something must be said about it, because some of Aristotle’s testimony is too explanatory to be ignored.

It seems impossible to determine the meaning of certain key passages in Plato’s dialogues on their own. To return again to Republic 509b, it makes no obvious sense to say that the idea of the good or anything else is “beyond οὐσία” in any respect. Even if, with Shorey, we translate οὐσία ‘essence’ and note that Socrates only says the good is beyond essence in seniority (πρεσβεία) and power (δύναμις), one would be hard-pressed to determine the meaning of this passage from the dialogues themselves, let alone from the Republic itself. Nor is it clear how the idea of goodness could be the cause

\textsuperscript{181} For a summary of the main authors and lines of debate see E. N. Tigerstedt, Interpreting Plato (Stockholm: Almquist & Wiksell, 1977).
\textsuperscript{182} The locus classicus for the attack on Aristotle’s reports of Plato’s beliefs is Harold F. Cherniss, Aristotle’s Criticism of Plato and the Academy (Baltimore: John Hopkins, 1944).
\textsuperscript{183} The locus classicus here is Hans Joachim Krämer, Arete bei Platon und Aristoteles. Zum Wesen und zur Geschichte der platonischen Ontologie (Heidelberg: 1959). A more accessible summary of Krämer’s views can be found in Hans Joachim Krämer, Plato and the Foundations of Metaphysics, trans. John R. Catan (Albany: State University of New York, 1990). A view between these two camps, with which in large part I agree, is that of Kenneth Sayre. He argues that there is substantial evidence for the theses of the “unwritten doctrines” in the dialogues themselves. Kenneth M. Sayre, Plato’s Late Ontology: A Riddle Resolved (Princeton: Princeton University, 1983).
of everything which is truly real. What does it even mean to refer to goodness by itself? One may grow accustomed to Plato’s Socrates speaking in this way, but accustomization is not understanding. It sounds plausible enough to say that politicians should know what goodness is before they rule others. But we cannot agree with Shorey when he says, “To ask what, then, is the idea of good, or to complain that Plato never tells us what it is, is to misconceive his meaning altogether.” On the contrary, the whole question is what constitutes goodness? A Callicles or Philebus might agree with Socrates that humans desire the good, but they disagree radically about what goodness is. And the same goes for beauty. It is not very informative to say, for instance, that we like beauty. Who would disagree with that? It is almost meaningless until the concept of beauty is filled in, until one states what, if anything, constitutes beauty.

Shorey proposes two possible reactions to Republic 509b, neither of which is satisfactory. Either it is nonsense, “a religious and mystic ejaculation,” or the explanation

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185 The reason Plato never says explicitly what goodness is brings us back to the dispute between the American and the Tübingen schools concerning the unwritten doctrines. My own opinion, in accordance with what is said about writing at *Phaedrus* 274b ff. and *Letter* VII 341b-e, is that Plato did not want to write things like “the good is the one” or “goodness is unity” because such statements are unclear as they stand and open to too many different interpretations. It is possible that he did not want to suffer the same reaction as he says Parmenides suffered at *Parmenides* 128c-d. If he were to say something like that, persons might think they understood him, when in fact they did not, and therefore feel no further need to search for truth in that direction. And, as we learn from the *Apology*, the *Lysis*, and the *Symposium*, amongst other dialogues, it is a worse kind of ignorance to think one knows when one does not, than to be aware of one’s ignorance; for the latter may cause one to search for truth, while the former makes one think one has it.

186 This is made explicit in the first book of Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics*. “Presumably, however, to say that happiness is the chief good seems a platitude.” (*EN* 1.7, 1097b22, tr. ROT) Everyone would agree that humans desire the good and that happiness is the human good. But the whole point is what constitutes happiness or the human good? See especially *EN* 1.5 and 1.7.
for it is simple.\textsuperscript{187} The simple explanation is that when he says that the good is beyond οὐσία what he means is that it is beyond physical reality. “The good is above existence because for Plato the category of intelligible design possesses a higher reality than the mere physical existence of the chaotic elements out of which it (whether in the order of time or of logic) constructed the world we know.”\textsuperscript{188} This is wrong because Plato does not say that the good is above “mere physical existence”; he says it is beyond οὐσία surpassing it in seniority and power. And whatever οὐσία means here, it certainly includes the realm of the forms, as is clear from the very sentence in which the phrase, ἐπέκεινα τῆς οὐσίας, appears:

Καὶ τοῖς γιγνωσκόμενοις τοίνυν μὴ μόνον τὸ γιγνώσκεσθαι φάναι ὑπὸ τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ παρεῖναι, ἀλλὰ καὶ τὸ εἶναι τε καὶ τὴν οὐσίαν ὑπ’ ἐκείνου αὐτοῖς προσεῖναι, οὐκ οὐσίας ὄντος τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ, ἀλλ’ ἔτι ἐπέκεινα τῆς οὐσίας πρεσβείᾳ καὶ δυνάμει ὑπερέχοντος (R. 509b).

Therefore, you should also say that not only do the objects of knowledge owe their being known to the good, but their being and οὐσία is also due to it, although the good is not οὐσία, but beyond οὐσία, surpassing it in seniority and power (tr. Cooper, ed., rev.).

In the Divided Line analogy, which immediately follows (R. 509d-10a), we learn that there is no knowledge of sensible particulars, or what Shorey calls “physical existence.” Thus the “objects of knowledge” (τοῖς γιγνωσκόμενοις) at 509b must include forms. Since the form of the good gives τὸ εἶναι τε καὶ τὴν οὐσίαν to the forms, Plato must be saying that the form of the good transcends even the realm of forms, or at least those forms which have οὐσία – not, as Shorey would have it, just the sensible physical realm.


I only mention Shorey because he deliberately refuses to look outside the Platonic dialogues for help in interpreting them. But we have seen where he was left by this refusal. By itself Republic 509b seems impossible to understand. It does not follow from this, however, that we have no choice but to turn to Aristotle and the doxography. In addition to looking at the Republic as a whole, we may and perhaps should seek help from Plato’s other dialogues. But even if we do so, there is no obvious, clear explanation of Republic 509b. On the other hand, once one reads the reports of Aristotle and others concerning what Plato said about the good and the principles of being, one may begin to see how to make sense of those most difficult and important passages.

Let me be clear, however, just how much and to what extent I accept the reports about the unwritten doctrines. In the first place there is a large controversy about Aristozenus and Plato’s so-called “lecture on the good.” I wish to set aside all of this, as too speculative and controversial. Also, I wish to exclude all that is said about the unwritten doctrines by Simplicius, Theophrastus, Alexander of Aphrodisias, and Sextus Empiricus. What Aristotle says is difficult and problematic enough without adducing these other commentators and trying to harmonize their accounts with each other and with Plato. Additionally, none of them can be assumed to have had the same intimate relationship with Plato that Aristotle did. The only point in which I wish to accept Aristotle’s testimony is on the point where he says that Plato connected goodness and unity. But the connection between goodness and unity can be found in Plato’s dialogues

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themselves. Thus Aristotle’s testimony only confirms the correct interpretation of the dialogues.

At this point, however, one might well ask: if Aristotle’s testimony only confirms what can be found in Plato’s dialogues themselves, why begin with Aristotle’s testimony? Why not simply start with Plato’s dialogues themselves? The reason is that Plato is never as explicit about the connection between the good and the one as Aristotle is. When one reads Aristotle’s brief summary of Plato’s views at *Metaphysics* A 6, the centrality to Plato’s thought of the connection between goodness and unity becomes evident in a way it never does in Plato’s own dialogues. Only after having read Aristotle’s account do we begin to see how the centrality of this thesis lies just below the surface or is implicit in so many of Plato’s dialogues. Thus, paradoxical as it may seem, it is necessary to begin by seeing what Aristotle has to say about Plato’s views, even though in the end his views only confirm what is already in the dialogues.

3.2. Aristotle’s Testimony on Plato’s Theory of the Good:

Aristotle never says, “Plato identified the good with the one,” just in so many words. But when all the texts where Aristotle speaks about Platonic doctrine are collected, that certainly seems to be what he means. In addition Aristotle writes that, with some exceptions, Plato agreed with Pythagorean doctrine, and there is evidence that the Pythagoreans in some way equated goodness and unity. Three texts support the
conclusion that Aristotle believed Plato identified goodness and unity. The first and strongest of these is at Metaphysics A 6, 988a8-16:

Πλάτων μὲν οὖν περὶ τῶν ζητουμένων οὕτω διώρισεν· φανερὸν δ’ ἐκ τῶν εἰρημένων ὅτι δυοὶ αἰτίαι μονὸν κέχρηται, τῇ τε τοῦ τί ἐστι καὶ τῇ κατὰ τὴν ὕλην (τὰ γὰρ εἰδή τοῦ τί ἐστιν αἰτία τοῖς ἄλλοις, τοῖς δ’ εἰδεῖ τὸ ἔν), καὶ τὶς ἡ ὑλὴ ἡ ὑποκειμένη καθ’ ἴδια τὰ εἰδή μὲν ἔπι τῶν αἰσθητῶν τὸ δ’ ἐν ἐν τοῖς εἰδεσι λέγεται, ὅτι αὕτη δυαῖς ἐστι, τὸ μέγα καὶ τὸ μικρὸν, ἢτὶ δὲ τὴν τοῦ ἐν καὶ τοῦ κακῶς αἰτίαν τοῖς στοιχείοις ἀπέδωκεν ἐκατέρως ἐκατέραν, ὡσπερ φαμέν καὶ τῶν προτέρων ἐπιζητήσαι τινας φιλοσόφους, οίον Ἐμπεδοκλέα καὶ Ἀναξαγόραν.

Plato, then, declared himself thus on the points in question; it is evident from what has been said that he has used only two causes, that of the essence and the material cause (for the Forms are the cause of the essence of all other things, and the One is the cause of the essence of the forms); and it is evident what the underlying matter is, of which the Forms are predicated in the case of sensible things, and the One in the case of Forms, viz. that this is a dyad, the great and the small. Further, he has assigned the cause of good and that of evil to the elements, one to each of the two, as we say some of his predecessors sought to do, e.g., Empedocles and Anaxagoras (ROT).

Now it must be seen exactly what is and is not claimed here. The most important point to note about this passage is that the thought is ascribed explicitly to Plato himself. In other places where Aristotle mentions roughly the same ideas he refers to the Academy with such phrases as ‘those who posit the forms’ or ‘those who believe in eternal substances.’ But, though the thought is definitely ascribed to Plato here, it is not explicitly said here that Plato identified the good with the one. All he says here is “[Plato] assigned the cause of good and that of evil to the elements, one to each of the two.” With respect to which cause or element is good and which is evil, perhaps Aristotle thought it was so obvious he did not need to specify. However, this translation depends on taking
Aristotle does not use the standard expression τὸ ἀγαθόν here to express the idea of goodness. It is not clear what if any significance this may have, given that at least according to LSJ τὸ εὖ is synonymous with τὸ ἀγαθόν. But it may be worth keeping in mind as we look at Aristotle’s other formulations of Plato’s thought concerning the relation between the good and the one.

The next passage is from Eudemian Ethics 1.8, 1218a16-21:

ἀνάπαλιν δὲ καὶ δεικτέον ἢ ως νῦν δεικνύουσι τὸ ἀγαθὸν αὐτό. νῦν μὲν γὰρ ἐκ τῶν ἀνομολογουμένων ἔχειν τὸ ἀγαθὸν, ἐξ ἕκειναν τὰ ὀμολογούμενα εἶναι ἀγαθὰ δεικνύουσιν, ἐξ ἁριθμὸν, ὅτι ἡ δικαιοσύνη καὶ ἡ ὑγίεια ἀγαθὸν· τάξεις γὰρ καὶ ἁριθμοὶ, ὡς τοῖς ἁριθμοῖς καὶ ταῖς μονάσι ἁριθμὸν ὑπάρχον διὰ τὸ εἶναι τὸ ἐν αὐτῷ ἁριθμὸν.

But we should show the nature of the good per se in the opposite way to that now used. For now from what is not agreed to possess the good they demonstrate the things admitted to be good, e.g., from numbers they demonstrate that justice and health are goods, for they are arrangements and numbers, and it is assumed that goodness is a property of numbers and units because unity is the good itself (ROT).

Here it is distinctly said that the one (or unity) is the good itself. Any question about the lack of article before ἁριθμόν at line 21 is removed a few lines later, where he states:

παράβολος δὲ καὶ ἡ ἀπόδειξις ὅτι τὸ ἐν αὐτῷ τὸ ἁριθμόν, ὅτι οἱ ἁριθμοὶ ἐφίενται· οὔτε γὰρ ὡς ἐφίενται λέγονται φαινόως (1218a24-26).

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190 Ross, Apostle, and Tredennick all agree in translating τὴν τοῦ εὖ “the cause of good.” Cf. Ross, Aristotle’s Metaphysics: A Revised Text with Introduction and Commentary, vol. 1, p. 158; Apostle, Aristotle’s Metaphysics: Translated with Commentaries and Glossary, ad loc; Hugh Tredennick, Aristotle: Metaphysics: Books I-IX (Cambridge: Harvard University, 1933), ad loc. With respect to the reference to Empedocles and Anaxagoras, at 984b15 Aristotle writes that according to Anaxagoras intellect or νοῦς is the cause of order and beauty, and at 985a5-7 Empedocles thought love the cause of goods and strife the cause of evils.

191 See LSJ s.v. εὖ (III).
And it is a bold way to demonstrate that unity is the good *per se* to say that numbers have desire; for no one says distinctly how they desire (ROT).

The problem here is the lack of clear attribution to Plato. With respect to *EE* 1.8, Michael Woods writes, “with the exception of 1218a15-32... the chapter does seem to be dealing with a theory that is recognizably the same as that to be found in such Platonic dialogues as the *Phaedo, Republic, Symposium,* and *Timaeus.*”\(^{192}\) He offers three possibilities as to the target of Aristotle’s attack at 1218a15-32: Plato, the Pythagoreans, or Xenocrates.\(^{193}\) But Aristotle gives no indication that the target of his criticism changes after 1218a15. He continues to use the third person plural in order to criticize what “they” think or believe, without giving any evidence that the referent of these pronouns differs from those at the beginning of *EE* 1.8. Thus if, as Woods believes, the earlier part of Chapter 8 is to be taken as referring to Plato, or those who agree with Plato, then so should 1218a15-32.\(^{194}\) This is especially so since we have already seen evidence that Aristotle thinks Plato connects the good with the one. Thus this passage appears to support the view that Plato identified goodness and unity.

The third text is *Metaph.* N 4, 1091b13-15:

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\text{τῶν δὲ τὰς ἀκινήτους οὐσίας εἶναι λεγόντων οἱ μὲν φασιν αὐτὸ τὸ ἐν τῷ ἄγαθόν αὐτὸ εἶναι· οὐσίαν μέντοι τὸ ἐν αὐτοῦ ὄντον εἶναι μάλιστα.}
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Of those who maintain the existence of the unchangeable substances some say the one itself is the good itself; but they thought the one was especially its substance (ROT, rev.).

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\(^{193}\) Ibid. p. 76.

\(^{194}\) The use of the word ‘now’ at line 1218a16 does not force us to conclude that there has been a change of subject. Cf. Ibid. p. 76.
Of this passage Ross writes that τῶν δὲ τὰς ἀκινήτους οὐσίας εἶναι λεγόντων refers to the Pythagoreans and Platonists, and “οἱ μὲν means primarily Plato (A. 988a14).” It may be that Plato was influenced in this connection between goodness and unity by Pythagoreans. Aristotle thinks Plato agreed with the Pythagoreans in all but three ways. And Aristotle presents considerable evidence that the Pythagoreans in some way connected the good with the one.

Thus if all these passages can be taken to refer to Plato’s views, at least as Aristotle understands them, it seems the weight of the evidence points to the thesis that Plato identified the good with the one. At EE 1.8, 1218a20-21, he states that those who agreed with Plato believed that “unity was the good itself (τὸ ἐν αὑτὸ ἀγαθὸν).” And at EE 1.8, 1218a25, he says that they believed that “unity is the good itself (τὸ ἐν αὑτὸ τὸ ἀγαθόν).” Then again at Metaph. N 4, 1091b14 the Platonists are said to believe that “the one itself is the good itself (αὐτὸ τὸ ἐν τὸ ἀγαθόν αὑτὸ εἶναι).” With respect to the passage at Metaph. A 6, 988a8-16, we can say that that the one there is said to be the

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196 At the beginning of Metaph. A 6, Aristotle writes, Μετὰ δὲ τὰς εἰρημένας φιλοσοφίας ἡ Πλάτωνος ἐπεγένετο πραγματεία, τὰ μὲν πολλὰ τούτοις ἀκολουθοῦσα, τὰ δὲ καὶ ἱδιὰ παρὰ τὴν τῶν Ἰταλικῶν ἔχουσα φιλοσοφίαν (987a29-31). [After the systems we have named came the philosophy of Plato, which in most respects followed these thinkers, but had peculiarities that distinguished it from the philosophy of the Italians (ROT).] “These thinkers” and “the Italians” refers to the Pythagoreans, who are the subject of the preceding chapter. The ways in which Aristotle states Plato differs from the Pythagoreans are: 1. Plato says that things exist by participating in forms/numbers rather than by imitating them (987b10-13); 2. he treats the material principle as a dyad, instead of treating the infinite as one (987b25-27); and 3. he separates the form/numbers from physical objects, while the Pythagoreans say that physical objects are numbers (987b27-988a1).
197 Cf. 986a22-26, 1096b5-6, 1106b29.
cause of good (τὸ ἔὖ) by being the good itself.\textsuperscript{198} Therefore 988a8-16 is not inconsistent with the other passages. And we can conclude that at least according to Aristotle, Plato believed that the good was identical to the one.

3.3.0. Goodness and Unity in Plato:

Though Plato nowhere explicitly says that unity and goodness are identical, various texts support the conclusion that that is what he thought. But, as will become clear, unity and goodness for Plato can take different forms. At the very lowest level, the sort of unity which is goodness is what one might call structural or organizational unity. This is the unity in complex objects which we often attribute to order. But on another level there is the sort of unity which is expressed as a mean between extremes. The mean unifies the parts of objects and thus makes the objects good. This sort of unity may well be connected with the unity of order. Like Aristotle, who made the theory more explicit, Plato believes virtue and goodness are means between extremes. Then there is also the sort of unity between objects which makes them members of the same class, and allows us to say that they are the same in some way. This is an integral part of Plato’s Theory of Forms. In these ways unity is found in each of Plato’s physics, metaphysics, epistemology, and axiology.

\textsuperscript{198} I thank Lloyd Gerson for this suggestion.
Perhaps the most convincing evidence that unity is goodness in Plato is found in those passages where he speaks of the unity which displays itself in order or structure.

The first of these is at Republic IV, 422e-23b, where Socrates is telling Adeimantus how the Kallipolis will fight against other cities if it does not have any money (cf. 422a). Cities organized other than as the Kallipolis are actually many cities grouped together; only the Kallipolis is truly one city. It must be quoted in extenso as nearly all of it is relevant:

Εὐδαίμων εἶ, ἦν δ’ ἐγώ, ὅτι οἴει άξιον εἶναι ἄλλην τινὰ προσειπεῖν πόλιν ἢ τὴν τοιαύτῃν οἶαν ἥμεις κατεσκευάζομεν. Αλλὰ τὶ μῆν; ἐφη. Μειζόνως, ἦν δ’ ἐγὼ, χρὴ προσαγορεύειν τὰς ἀλλὰς· ἐκάστῃ γὰρ αὐτῶν πόλεις εἰσὶ πάμπολλαί ἀλλ’ οὐ πόλεις, τὸ τῶν παιζόντων. δύο μὲν, κἂν οἴει, πολεμία ἀλλήλαις, ἢ μὲν πενήτων, ἢ δὲ πλουσίων· τούτων δ’ ἐν ἐκατέρα πάνυ πολλαί... καὶ ἐως ἀν ἡ πόλις σοι οἰκή σωφρόνως ὡς ἀρτι ἑτάχθη, μεγίστη ἐσται, οὐ τῷ εὐδοκιμεῖν λέγω, ἀλλ’ ὡς ἀληθῶς μεγίστη, καὶ ἐὰν μόνον ἢ χιλίων τῶν προπολεμοῦντων· οὕτω γὰρ μεγάλην πόλιν μίαν οὐ ὡδίας οὔτε ἐν Ἑλλησθιν οὔτε ἐν βαρβάροις εὑρήσεις, δοκοῦσας δὲ πολλὰς καὶ πολλαπλασίας τῆς τηλικαύτης. ἡ ἄλλως οἴει;

You’re happily innocent if you think that anything other than the kind of city we are founding deserves to be called a city. What do you mean? We’ll have to find a greater title for the others because each of them is a great many cities, not a city, as they say in the game. At any rate, each of them consists of two cities at war with one another, that of the poor and that of the rich, and each of these contains a great many... And as long as your own city is moderately governed in the way that we’ve just arranged, it will, even if it has only a thousand men to fight for it, be the greatest. Not in reputation; I don’t mean that, but the greatest in fact. Indeed, you won’t find a city as great as this one among either Greeks or barbarians, although many that are many times its size may seem to be as great (tr. Cooper, ed.).
The Grube/Reeve translation\textsuperscript{199} suppresses the true sense of ‘one’ in the last lines of this text. In general, to convey the sense of the indefinite article in Greek, as in ‘a city,’ the definite article is simply omitted, as at line 422e4, above. (Note that Grube/Reeve correctly stresses the article in his translation of this line, in recognition of the context.)

The Greek word for one, εὐς, is stronger than the indefinite article, and should be translated such as to convey the sense of unity wherever possible. Thus οὔτω γάρ μεγάλην πόλιν μίαν οὐ ραδίως... εὐφήσεις cannot be translated “Indeed, you won’t find a city as great as this one...” Grube/Reeve does include the word ‘one’ in the translation, but in the wrong way. It should rather be translated, “For so great a single city you will not find...” Shorey goes even further, translating it: “For a city of this size that is really one you will not easily discover either among Greeks or barbarians...”\textsuperscript{200}

But even from the Grube/Reeve translation it is evident that the Kallipolis is the paradigmatically good city, and its goodness and unity are inseparable. All other cities are less good, and their lack of goodness is likewise due to their lack of structural unity.

Socrates continues:

Οὐκοῦν, ἢν δ’ ἐγὼ, οὔτος ἃν εἰ ἢ καλλιστος ὁς τοις ἡμετέρως ἄρχουσιν, ὅσην δεί τὸ μεγέθος τὴν πόλιν ποιεῖσθαι καὶ ἐλεηὴν οὐσία ὅσην χώραν ἀφοισιαμένους τὴν ἄλλην χαίρειν ἐὰν. Τίς, ἐφη, ὅρος; Οἴμαι μέν, ἢν δ’ ἐγὼ, τόνδε: μέχρι οὐ ἀν ἐθέλη αὐξουμένη εἶναι μία, μέχρι τούτου αὔξειν, πέρα δὲ μή. Καί καλώς γ’, ἐφη. Οὐκοῦν καὶ τούτο αὐ ἀλλο πρόσταγμα τοῖς φύλαξι

\textsuperscript{199} The translation is that of Grube, revised by Reeve in the Cooper edition. As stated in the introduction, ‘Cooper, ed.’ is an abbreviation of Cooper, ed., Plato: Complete Works.

\textsuperscript{200} Shorey, Plato: The Republic: Books I-V, loc. cit. In a note at this place he writes, “Commentators, I think, miss the subtlety of this sentence; μίαν means truly one as below in D, and its antithesis is not so much πολλάς as δοκούσας which means primarily the appearance of unity, and only secondarily refers to μεγάλην. Καί then is rather “and” than “even.” “So large a city that is really one you will not easily find, but the semblance (of one big city) you will find in cities many and many times the size of this.” Ibid.
Then this would also be the best limit for our guardians to put on the size of the city. And they should mark off enough land for a city that size and let the rest go. What limit is that? I suppose the following one. As long as it is willing to remain one city, it may continue to grow, but it cannot grow beyond that point. That is a good limit. Then, we’ll give our guardians this further order, namely, to guard in every way against the city’s being either small or seeming great instead of being sufficient in size and one in number (tr. Cooper, ed., rev.).

Here even the size of the city is determined by the requirement of unity. The next passage is at Republic V, 462a-b:

Ἀρ’ οὖν οὐχ ἢ δὲ ἀρχή τῆς ὁμολογίας, ἐφεσθαί ἡμᾶς αὐτοὺς τί ποτε τὸ μέγιστον ἀγαθὸν ἔχομεν εἰπείν εἰς πόλεως κατασκευήν, οὐ δὲι στοχαζόμενον τὸν νομοθέτην τιθέναι τοὺς νόμους, καὶ τί μέγιστον κακόν, είτε ἐπισκέφασθαι ἄρα ἄνυνδη διηλθομεν εἰς μὲν τὸ τοῦ ἄγαθου ἡμῶν ἀρμόττει, τῷ δὲ τοῦ κακοῦ ἀναρμοστεῖ; Πάντων μάλιστα, ἡφι. Ἐχομεν οὖν τι μείζων κακὸν πόλει ἢ ἐκείνο ἃν αὐτὴν διασπᾷ καὶ ποιῇ πολλὰς ἀντὶ μιᾶς; ἢ μείζων ἄγαθον τοῦ ἃν συνδῆ τε καὶ ποιῇ μιᾶν; Οὔτι ἔχομεν.

Then isn’t the first step towards agreement to ask ourselves what we say is the greatest good in designing the city – the good at which the legislator aims in making the laws – and what is the greatest evil? And isn’t the next step to examine whether the system we’ve just described fits into the tracks of the good and not into those of the bad? Absolutely. Is there any greater evil we can mention for a city than that which tears it apart and makes it many instead of one? Or any greater good than that which binds it together and makes it one? There isn’t (tr. Cooper, ed.).

These texts speak for themselves. Plato says that there is no greater good for a city than that which makes it one. He identifies goodness and unity. It is worth noting also in this respect that he seems to use καλὸν and ἀγαθὸν words interchangeably. At 423b he says that whatever size keeps the city unified is the most beautiful limit (κάλλιστος ὄρος),

while at 462b the greatest good (μεῖζον ἀγαθόν) for a city is “whatever binds it together and makes it one.”

As the city becomes good when it becomes one, so the individual becomes good by becoming unified:

Τὸ δὲ γε ἀληθὲς, τοιούτον τι ἦν, ὡς ἑοικεν, ἢ δικαιοσύνην ἀλλ’ οὐ περὶ τὴν ἔξω πράξειν τῶν αὐτοῦ, ἀλλὰ περὶ τὴν ἐντός, ὡς ἀληθῶς περὶ ἑαυτὸν καὶ τά ἑαυτοῦ, μὴ ἐάσαντα τὰλλότρια πράττειν ἐκαστὸν ἐν αὐτῷ μηδὲ πολυπραγμονεῖν πρὸς ἀλληλα τὰ ἐν τῇ ψυχῇ γένη, ἀλλὰ τῶ ὅντι τὰ οἰκεία εὐθέμενον καὶ ἄρξαντα αὐτὸν καὶ κοσμήσαντα καὶ φίλων γενόμενον ἑαυτῷ καὶ συναιμόσαντα τρία ὅντα, ὡσπερ ὅρους τρεῖς ἁρμονίας ἀτεχνῶς, νεάτης τε καὶ ὑπάτης καὶ μέσης, καὶ ἐὰν ἄλλα ἄττα μεταξὺ τυγχάνει ὅντα, πάντα ταῦτα συνδήσαντα καὶ πάντα ἕνα γενόμενον ἐκ πολλῶν, σώφρονα καὶ ἡρμοσμένον (R. 443c–e).

And in truth justice is, it seems, something of this sort. However, it isn’t concerned with someone’s doing his own externally, but with what is inside him, with what is truly himself and his own. One who is just does not allow any part of himself to do the work of another part or allow the various classes within him to meddle with each other. He regulates well what is really his own and rules himself. He puts himself in order, is his own friend, and harmonizes the three parts of himself like three limiting notes in a musical scale – high, low, middle. He binds together those parts and any others there may be in between, and from having been many things he becomes entirely one, moderate and harmonious (tr. Cooper, ed.).

The identity of goodness and unity also pervades the first part of the Timaeus. In addition to arguing that there must be only one created universe (Ti. 31a–b), Timaeus argues that the created universe is structurally unified. That is, it is not only one in the sense that there is no other, it is also one in the sense that it is a truly unified whole. This is evident from the sort of bonds (δεσμοί) the Demiurge uses to combine the elements into a unified whole:

Σωματοειδὲς δὲ δὴ καὶ ὑπατῶν ἄπτων τε δὲ τὸ γενόμενον εἶναι, χωρισθέν δὲ πυρὸς οὐδὲν ἄν ποτε ὑπατῶν γένοιτο, οὐδὲ ἄπτων ἄνευ τινὸς στερεοῦ,
στερεὸν δὲ οὐκ ἀνευ γῆς· ὅθεν ἐκ πυρὸς καὶ γῆς τὸ τοῦ παντὸς ἀρχόμενος συνιστάναι σῶμα ὁ θεὸς ἐποίει. δύο δὲ μόνω καλῶς συνίστασθαι τρίτον χωρὶς οὐ δυνατόν· δεσμὸν γὰρ ἐν μέσῳ δεῖ τινα ἀμφοῖν συναγωγὸν γίγνεσθαι. δεσμῶν δὲ κάλλιστος ὃς ἂν αὑτὸν καὶ τὰ συνδούμενα ὁτι μάλιστα ἐν ποιῇ, τούτο δὲ πέφυκεν ἀναλογία κάλλιστα ἀποτελεῖν (31b‐c).

Now that which comes to be must have bodily form, and be both visible and tangible, but nothing could ever become visible apart from fire, nor tangible without something solid, nor solid without earth. That is why, as he began to put the body of the universe together, the god came to make it out of fire and earth. But it isn’t possible to combine two things well all by themselves, without a third; there has to be some bond between the two that unites them. Now the most beautiful bond is one that really and truly makes a unity of itself together with the things bonded by it, and this in the nature of things is most beautifully accomplished by proportion (tr. Cooper, ed., rev.).

The point here is not so much that good bonds unify – one might believe that without necessarily believing in the connection between goodness and unity; rather, it is that the Demiurge desired to use the most unifying bonds in the creation of the cosmos. The Demiurge is supremely good and so he wished to make everything as good as possible. And this leads him to unify the cosmos with the most unifying bonds.

We should perhaps say more, however, about what we mean by structural unity. In the first place, it should be made clear that we are not speaking about numerical unity. Every object is numerically one, and thus numerical unity cannot be used to distinguish good states or objects from bad ones. What I am calling structural unity is the unity of a complex object caused by having the correct order and harmony within its parts. One could equally call this organizational unity. Thus in the passages just quoted from the Republic, both man and the city are complex objects: they both have three main parts or classes. Now when these parts do not cooperate, the man or the city cease to have structural or organizational unity, and instead of there being only one city there
comes to be two or three at war with one another. When the city or object is correctly organized or structured all the parts cooperate such that there is truly only one city or object there. This should be enough to explain what we mean by structural or organizational unity. Now Plato seems to say that, at least at the level of concrete particulars, this sort of unity constitutes the goodness of the object, i.e. for the concrete particular to become unified in this way is for it to become good – to be unified is to be good.

3.3.2. Goodness and Unity in Plato: Unity as the Mean:

Another form in which unity presents itself, and is identified with goodness, is in the doctrine of the mean. There is always only one mean, and this is good or the good, and the extremes in either direction from the mean are identified with badness. This doctrine is most explicit in Aristotle’s ethical works. For instance Aristotle writes,

�新的μὲν ἀμαρτάνειν πολλαχῶς ἔστιν (τὸ γὰρ κακὸν τοῦ ἀπείρου, ὡς οἱ Πυθαγόρειοι εἴκαζον, τὸ δ’ ἀγαθὸν τοῦ πεπερασμένου), τὸ δὲ κατορθοῦν μοναχῶς (διὸ καὶ τὸ μὲν ὀράδιον τὸ δὲ χαλεπόν, ὀράδιον μὲν τὸ ἀποτυχεῖν τοῦ σκοποῦ, χαλεπὸν δὲ τὸ ἐπιτυχεῖν); καὶ διὰ ταῦτα οὖν τῆς μὲν κακίας ἢ ύπερβολῆ καὶ ἢ ἐλλειψις, τῆς δ’ ἀρετῆς ἢ μεσότης· ἐσθλοὶ μὲν γὰρ ἀπλῶς, παντοδαπῶς δὲ κακοὶ (Arist. EN 1106b29-35).

Again, it is possible to fail in many ways (for evil belongs to the class of the unlimited, as the Pythagoreans conjectured, and good to that of the limited), while to succeed is possible only in one way (for which reason one is easy and the other difficult – to miss the mark easy, to hit it difficult); for these reasons also, then, excess and defect are characteristic of vice, and the mean of excellence; for men are good in but one way, but bad in many (ROT).
Now it is certainly true that this is a different sort of unity from the structural unity spoken of above. To say, for instance, that only one state, e.g., the mean, is good is not the same as to say that goodness consists in being truly one, or unified. But, in the first place, my point is to demonstrate a kind of thinking where unity repeatedly turns out to be identified with goodness. And, in the second place, I think that the view that goodness rests in a mean is not unconnected in Plato’s mind with an object’s being structurally unified in the sense above. Take, for instance, the following statements in the *Philebus*:

Τὴν τοῦ ἴσου καὶ διπλασίου, καὶ ὅπωση παύει πρὸς ἀλληλα τάναντια διαφόρως ἔχοντα, σύμμετρα δὲ καὶ σύμφωνα ἐνθείσα ἀφιθμὸν ἀπεργάζεται (*Phlb.* 25d-e).

The kind [of the unlimited] that contains the equal and double, and whatever else puts an end to the conflicts there are among opposites, making them commensurate and harmonious by imposing a definite number on them (tr. Cooper, ed.).

Ὅτι μέτρου καὶ τῆς συμμέτρου φύσεως μὴ τυχοῦσα ἡτισοῦν καὶ ὅπωσον σύγκρασις πάσα εξ ἀνάγκης ἀπόλλυσι τὰ τε κεραννύμενα καὶ πρώτην αὐτήν· οὐδὲ γὰρ κράσις ἀλλὰ τις ἀκρατος συμπερφορημένη ἀληθῶς ἢ τοιαύτη γίνεται ἐκάστοτε ὅντως τοῖς κεκτημένοις συμφορά (*Phlb.* 64d-e).

That any kind of mixture that does not in some way or other possess measure or the nature of proportion will necessarily corrupt its ingredients and most of all itself. For there would be no blending in such cases at all but really an unconnected medley, the ruin of whatever happens to be contained in it (tr. Cooper, ed.).

It will take some arguing to prove that the key concept in both of these passages is the concept of the mean, and I will undertake to show this below, but these passages are quoted here because they indicate that something to do with measure is taken to resolve the conflicts internal to objects. This thing to do with measure I will argue is the mean. It
is the imposition of the mean which “puts an end to the conflicts there are among opposites.” The good man and the good city in the Republic each became truly one and unified when an end was put to the conflicts between their parts. One could also mention here Timaeus 87c-e, where Timaeus says – paraphrasing a bit – that everything good is beautiful and what is beautiful is not without measure. But something without measure, for example a body with legs too long, is a cause to itself of myriad difficulties (μυρίων κακῶν αἱτιῶν ἐαυτῷ: Ti. 87e). Here the legs have difficulty cooperating with the whole body when they are too long and the same effect could be imagined if they were too short. They must be in a mean between too long and too short, determined by the size of the body as a whole. Thus I think the idea of the mean is not unconnected to the notion of structural unity presented above.202

Hints of a connection between the notions of a mean and goodness in Plato can be seen as early as the Laches, where Socrates opposes courage to cowardice on the one hand (191e) and rashness on the other (197b-c). More explicitly, however, at Republic 619a-b, during the “Myth of Er,” Socrates advises his audience concerning the choice of lives:

ἀλλὰ γνῶ τὸν μέσον ἀεὶ τῶν τοιούτων βίων αἰσθήσαι καὶ φεύγειν τὰ ύπερβάλλοντα ἐκατέρωσε καὶ ἐν τῷ δυνατόν καὶ ἐν παντὶ τῷ ἐπείτα· οὕτω γὰρ εὐδαιμονέστατος γίγνεται ἄνθρωπος.

202 Verity Harte in fact explicitly argues that for Plato the mean, or due measure, is identified with structure: “As such, structure is normative; a good thing that good things – and only good things – have. Thus, as we have seen, normative terms of value – such as harmony, proportion, and (due) measure – are bywords for structure, in Plato.” Verity Harte, Plato on Parts and Wholes: The Metaphysics of Structure (Oxford: Clarendon, 2002), p. 271.
And we must always know how to choose the mean in such lives and how to avoid either of the extremes, as far as possible, both in this life and in all those beyond it. This is the way that a human being becomes happiest (tr. Cooper, ed.).

There is also conclusive evidence in the extended passages at Statesman 284a-d:

Οὕκοιν τὰς τέχνας τε αὐτὰς καὶ τάργα αὐτῶν σύμπαντα διολούμεν τούτω τῷ λόγῳ, καὶ δὴ καὶ τὴν ἐπιτυμμένην νῦν πολιτικήν καὶ τὴν ὅθεν προσβεβήκεν ὑφαντικὴν ἀφανιοῦμεν; ἀπάσας γάρ αἱ τουαῦτα οὗτο τῷ τοῦ μετοίου πλέον καὶ ἐλαττον οὐχ ὡς οὐκ ἀλλαὶ ἕνας περί τὰς πράξεις παραφυλάττουσι, καὶ τούτω δὴ τῷ τρόπῳ τὸ μέτοιον σώζουσα πάντα ἀγαθὰ καὶ καλὰ ἀπεργάζονται... Πάτερον οὖν, καθάπερ ἐν τῷ σοφιστῇ προσηναγκάσαμεν εἶναι τῷ μή ὧν, ἐπειδὴ κατὰ τοῦτο διέφυγεν ἡμᾶς ὁ λόγος, οὕτω καὶ τοῦ τὸ πλέον καὶ καὶ ἐλαττον μὴ ἄλλον τινὰ τῶν περὶ τὰς πράξεις ἐπιστήμων ἔλαττον τῶν περὶ τὰς πράξεις ἐπιστήμων ἀναμφίσβητως γεγονέναι τούτου μὴ συνομολογηθέντος... ὡς ἄρα ἤγητεν ὅμως τὰς τέχνας πάσας εἶναι, μεῖζον τέ ἀμα καὶ ἐλαττον μετεριθείαν μὴ προς ἀλλήλα μόνον ἄλλα καὶ πρὸς τὴν τοῦ μετοίου γένεσιν; οὐ γὰρ δὴ δυνατὸν γε οὕτε πολιτικὸν οὐτί άλλον τινὰ ώς οὐκ ἄρα γε, ἀμα καὶ ἐλαττον μετεριθείαν μὴ προς ἀλλήλα μόνον ἄλλα καὶ πρὸς τὴν τοῦ μετοίου γένεσιν. τοῦτο τέ γὰρ ἐντὸς ἐκείνα ἔστι, κακεῖνων οὐσῶν ἔστι καὶ τοῦτο, μὴ δὲ ὧντος ποτέρου τούτων οὐδέτερον αὐτῶν ἔσται ποτέ.

Well, with this account of things we shall destroy – shan’t we? – both the various sorts of expertise themselves and their products, and in particular we shall make the one we’re looking for now, statesmanship, disappear, and the one we said was weaving. For I imagine all such sorts of expertise guard against what is more and less than what is in due measure, not as something which is not, but as something which is and is troublesome in relation to what they do. It is by preserving measure in this way that they produce all the good and beautiful things they do produce... Is it the case then that just as with the sophist we compelled what is not into being as well as what is, when our argument escaped us down that route, so now we must compel the more and less, in their turn, to become measurable not only in relation to each other but also in relation to the coming into being of what is in due measure? For if this has not been agreed, it is certainly not possible for either the statesman nor anyone else who possesses knowledge of practical subjects to acquire an undisputed existence... We should surely suppose that it is similarly the case that all the various sorts of expertise exist, and at the same time that greater and less are measured not only in relation to each other but also in relation to the coming into being of what is in due measure. For if the latter is the case, then so is the former, and also if it is the case that the sorts of expertise exist, the other is the case too. But if one or the other is not the case, then neither of them will ever be (tr. Cooper, ed., rev.).
And Laws 691c-d:

Ἐάν τις μείζονα διδῶ τοῖς ἐλάττοσι [δύναμιν] παρεῖς τὸ μέτριον, πλοίοις τε ἰστία καὶ σῶμασιν τροφὴν καὶ ψυχὰς ἀρχάς, ἀνατρέπεται που πάντα, καὶ ἐξυβρίζοντα τὰ μὲν εἰς νόσους θεί, τὰ δ’ εἰς ἐκγονον ὅβρεως ἀδικίαν. τί οὖν δὴ ποτε λέγομεν; ἀρα γε τὸ τοιόνδε, ως ὂν ἐστ’, ω φίλοι ἄνδρες, θυνητῆς ψυχῆς φύσις ἢτις ποτέ δυνὴ τὸ μέτριον ἐν ἀνθρώποις ἀρχήν φέρειν νέα καὶ ἀνυπεύθυνος, ὡςτε μη τις μεγίστης νόσου ἀνοίας πληρωθείσα αὐτῆς τὴν διάνοιαν, μίσου ἔχειν πρὸς τῶν ἐγγύτατα φίλων, ὃ γενόμενο ταχὺ διέφθειρεν αὐτὴν καὶ πάσαν τὴν δύναμιν ἡφάνισεν αὐτῆς; τούτ’ οὖν εὐλαβηθῆναι γνόντας τὸ μέτριον μεγάλων νομοθετῶν.

If you neglect the rule of proportion and fit excessively large sails to small ships, or give too much food to a small body, or too high authority to a soul that doesn’t measure up to it, the result is always disastrous. Body and soul become puffed up: disease breaks out in the one, and in the other arrogance quickly leads to injustice. Now, what are we getting at? Simply this: the mortal soul simply does not exist, my friends, which by dint of its natural qualities will ever make a success of supreme authority among men while it is still young and responsible to no one. Full of folly, the worst of diseases, it inevitably has its judgment corrupted, and incurs the enmity of its closest friends; and once that happens, its total ruin and loss of all its power soon follow. A first-class lawgiver’s job is to have a sense of proportion and to guard against this danger (tr. Cooper, ed.).

Though Plato uses different words and translators translate them differently, it seems Plato is expressing the same doctrine of the mean in all these texts. At Republic 619a-b he uses the word μέσος, which is literally translated ‘middle,’ but Grube/Reeve is not wrong to translate it ‘mean.’ In the Statesman and Laws, instead of μέσος, Plato uses the word μέτριος, which Rowe translates ‘due measure’ and Saunders translates ‘proportion.’203 However, both μέσος and μέτριος have the sense of a mean between extremes.204 Thus it is certain Plato believed in some kind of “doctrine of the mean,” that is, he seems to have believed that goodness was connected with the notion of a mean.

204 See LSJ s.vv.
And a mean is connected to unity both in the sense that only one state is good and, I think, in the sense that the mean truly unifies objects internally through structural unity.

3.3.4. Goodness and Unity in Plato: Unity as the Basis of Being and Knowledge:

There is sufficient textual evidence that Plato identified the good with the one, or unity. But there is also a great deal of indirect or implicit evidence for this. This is because, I think, one of Plato’s most fundamental insights is that the unqualified is prior to the qualified, e.g., that humanity simpliciter is prior to or more ontologically basic than humanity as expressed in this or that human. This thought pervades Plato’s work, and it is often how he characterizes the forms. Take the characterization of form in one of Plato’s aporetic dialogues:

νῦν οὖν πρὸς Διὸς λέγε μοι ὅ νυνδὴ σαφῶς εἰδέναι δισχυρίζου, ποίον τι τὸ εὖσεβὲς φής εἶναι καὶ τὸ ἀσεβὲς καὶ περὶ φόνου καὶ περὶ τῶν ἄλλων; ἢ σοῦ ταύτων ἐστιν ἐν πάσῃ πράξει πράξει τὸ ὁσιόν αὐτό αὐτῷ, καὶ τὸ ἀνόσιον αὐτοῦ τὸ μὲν ὀσίον παντὸς ἑναντίον, αὐτὸ δὲ αὐτῷ ὁμοίον καὶ ἔχον μίαν τινὰ ἴδεαν κατὰ τὴν ἀνοσιότητα πάν ὀσιόρ μελλὴ ἀνόσιον εἶναι (Euthphr. 5c-d).

So tell me now, by Zeus, what you just now maintained you clearly knew: what kind of thing do you say that godliness and ungodliness are, both as regards murder and other things; or is the pious not the same and alike in every action, and the impious the opposite of all that is pious and like itself, and everything that is to be impious presents us with one form or appearance in so far as it is impious (tr. Cooper, ed.).\textsuperscript{205}

\textsuperscript{205} It may be objected that the forms are not really introduced here because nothing Socrates says in the Euthyphro separates the form from its instances. But nothing Socrates says in the Euthyphro indicates the form is not separate. Thus the Euthyphro seems at least not inconsistent with the middle and late dialogues on this issue.
The form (here ἱδέα) is said to be one (μία) and the pious (τὸ ὅσιον) is identical (ταὐτόν) in every action (ἐν πάσῃ πράξει). One and the same thing in some sense “appears” in many instances.

Explaining how two different things could in some sense be the same may have been one of motivations for positing the existence of forms. Perhaps the best evidence for this is at Republic 597a-c, where Socrates argues that there must be a single, unique form or paradigm of an object if there are to be any others. An object such as a bed exists on three ontological levels; there is the form or paradigm, the concrete artifact, and the image of the artifact. Socrates is explaining the degenerate nature of the mimetic artist’s activity. The mimetic artist makes things twice removed from true being.

Τί δὲ ὁ κλινοποιός; οὐκ ἄρτι μέντοι ἔλεγες ὃτι οὐ τὸ εἶδος ποιεῖ, ὃ δὴ φαμεν εἶναι ὃ ἐστι κλίνη, ἀλλὰ κλίνην τινὰ;... Ο μὲν δὴ θεός, εἰτε οὐκ ἐβούλετο, εἰτε τις ἀνάγκη ἐπῆν μὴ πλέον ἢ μίαν ἐν τῇ φύσει ἀπεργάσασθαι αὐτὸν κλίνην, οὔτως ἐποίησεν μιᾶν μόνον αὐτήν ἐκείνην ὃ ἐστιν κλίνη; δύο δὲ τοιαύται ἢ πλείους οὔτε ἐφυτεύθησαν ὑπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ οὔτε μὴ φυῶσιν. Πῶς δή ἔφη. Ὡτι, ἦν δ’ ἐγώ, εἰ δύο μόνας ποιήσειν, πάλιν ἂν μία ἀναφανεὶ ἢς ἐκεῖναι ἂν αὐτοῖς ἀμφότεροι τὸ εἶδος ἔχοιεν, καὶ εἰ ἂν ὃ ἐστιν κλίνη ἐκείνη ἂλλ’ οὕτως αἰ δύο (R. 597a-c).

What about the carpenter? Didn’t you just say that he doesn’t make the form – which is our term for the being of a bed – but only a bed?... Now, the god, either because he didn’t want to or because it was necessary for him not to do so, didn’t make more than one bed in nature, but only one, the very one that is the being of the bed. Two or more of these have not been made by the god and never will be. Why is that? Because, if he made only two, then again one would come to light whose form they in turn would both possess, and that would be the one that is the being of a bed and not the other two (tr. Cooper, ed.).

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206 According to Aristotle there were not supposed to be forms of artifacts, but Socrates’ argument here can be taken as an illustration.
No explanation is given why a third bed would have to come to be if the god made two beds, but presumably the idea is that if two beds were made then they would be the same insofar as they are beds. Plato’s view here seems to be that any sort of identity between two objects requires the existence of a single nature, or essence, with multiple, different appearances or instantiations. The only differences there can be in the realm of forms or ideas are differences in kind or species. Thus there can only be one of each kind of thing. Two or more putative bed-paradigms would simply repeat the problem they were posited to explain, namely how two different things can be the same in some sense.

Roughly the same argument or analysis can be used to show that the one or unity is epistemically prior. An example has already been given of the epistemic priority of the one. In the *Euthyphro* Socrates wants to know what that one thing is which is piety. One can be acquainted with the many appearances, but true scientific knowledge, Plato seems to think, is always of a unity. Another example is from the *Meno*. When Socrates first asks what virtue is, Meno responds by giving the different virtues of men, women, and children (71e). But then Socrates takes great pains to explain that he is looking for virtue as one thing, not the many different types of virtue. As he explains, there may be many different types of bees, but there is only one thing it is to be a bee.

Whatever being a bee is, it is the same for all bees.²⁰⁷

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²⁰⁷ Οὕτω δὴ καὶ περὶ τῶν ἀρετῶν· κάν εἰ πολλαὶ καὶ παντοδαπαί εἰσιν, ἔν γέ τι εἶδος ταύτων ἀπασαι ἐχουσιν δὲ ὃ εἰσίν ἄρεται, εἰς ὃ καλῶς ποὺ ἔχει ἀποβλέψαντα τὸν ἀποκρινόμενον τῷ ἑρωτήματι ἐκεῖνο δηλώσαι, ὅ τυγχάνει οὔσα ἄρετή (*Men*. 72c). [The same is true in the case of the virtues. Even if they are many and various, all of them have one and the same form which makes them virtues, and it is right to look to this when one is asked to make clear what virtue is (tr. Cooper, ed.).] Here again the words ‘one’ (ἐν) and ‘the same’ (ταύτων) are used to describe the object sought.
The sort of unities being described here and their priority in Plato’s metaphysics and epistemology differ from the structural or organizational unity of the good man and the good city in the Republic. But, again, the goal here is to show the different ways unity appears in different areas of Plato’s thought. If unity is so significant in his metaphysics and epistemology perhaps we can see why he would have found connections between unity and goodness as well. Additionally, I think there may be a connection between ontological and epistemic unity, on the one hand, and structural or organizational unity, on the other. After all, it is doubtful that it is just by accident that these can all be described as kinds of unity. The primary quality of (ontic) unity may be simplicity.\(^{208}\) The form is supposed to be more unified than the concrete particular in part at least because it is less susceptible to the compresence of opposites.\(^{209}\) The very particularity of any sensible particular seems to involve it at once in opposite properties. Any concrete particular is both large and small, soft and hard, one and many (R. 523c-525a). The concrete particular cannot account for or explain its largeness because it is equally the explanation of its smallness. The forms are supposed to be free from much of this complexity.\(^{210}\) Thus any concrete particular was supposed to be more complex than a form. In the case of structural unity, the structurally unified object is more simple than the structurally un-unified object. When a city is not unified, we are told that there is no longer just one city there; it is really two or more cities warring against one another in

\(^{208}\) Recall that we are not primarily discussing numerical unity. Perhaps I should underline this by referring to “ontic” unity. However, I think a case could be made that ontic and numerical unity were also thought to be related.

\(^{209}\) See, e.g., McCabe, Plato’s Individuals, pp. 37-47.

\(^{210}\) Whether the form is in fact free from similar compresence of opposites seems to have been the subject of much of Plato’s later dialogues, especially the Sophist.
what appears to be a single city. Thus here again the idea is that a unified city is simpler, that is, less complex than one which is not unified. The unified city has the same amount of parts or classes as the un-unified one, but the order and harmony of the classes in the good city render the classes more the nature of parts of a whole, as opposed to independent objects warring against each other in what only appears to be a single city.  

3.4.0. The Philebus: The Good, the Limit, and the One:

The Philebus can be seen as providing support for some of the elements in Aristotle’s description of Plato’s metaphysics. Ken Sayre outlines five theses attributed by Aristotle to Plato at Metaphysics A 6: 1. numbers come from participation of the great and the small in unity, 2. sensible particulars are constituted by the forms and the great and the small, 3. forms are composed of the great and the small and unity, 4. forms are

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211 Though she does not pay particular attention to these examples of composition in the Republic, Harte argues persuasively that Plato resolved the problem of composition (how parts relate to wholes) through structure. She argues that Plato concluded that neither wholes nor parts can exist without structure, indeed that a whole is a structure. “What emerges from this general theorizing and from the illustrative examples of combining and of mixing, I have argued, is a conception of wholes as contentful structures. Structure, according to this conception, is essential to the constitution of a whole. Indeed, wholes, I have argued, are here best thought of as being (instances) of structures and not as things that ‘have’ structure in a way that makes structure seem more or less detachable from the whole and its parts. In Plato’s conception of wholes, structure is no less essential to the parts of such a whole than to the whole itself.” Harte, Plato on Parts and Wholes: The Metaphysics of Structure, pp. 268-9. McCabe argues in a similar fashion that much of Plato’s metaphysics concerns resolving the tension between austere and generous individuals. “The trouble with individuals can be characterized as a puzzle about one and many. Any something needs to be one something; but individuation seems to implicate it in plurality. At the extreme, a something must either be austerely one or hopelessly many.” McCabe, Plato’s Individuals, p. 243.
numbers, and 5. the good is the one. Sayre argues that all these theses can be found in the *Philebus*. Though Plato never clearly and explicitly identifies the good with the one in the *Philebus*, several passages suggest this, and the evidence we have already seen of the connection in other dialogues lends weight to these suggestions. The good in the *Philebus* is found in the constellation of limit, unity, and measure. As difficult as it may be to accept, and as vague as Plato is about the exact relation between these objects, the *Philebus* suggests that Plato in some way connected the good at least with limit and unity. This association becomes even more crowded when truth, proportion, and beauty are added at *Phlb*. 65a. It will be argued that unity and limit are identified as Plato’s first principles. Unity and limit are other terms for or specifications of the good in the *Republic*. Limit is in some way the immediate cause of measure and measure brings along with it proportion/commensurability, truth, and beauty. How exactly limit is the cause of measure is unclear. A full answer to that question would have to explain how the action of the limit on the unlimited produces measure. But regardless of the mechanism by which this is achieved, it does seem to be Plato’s view, at least in the *Philebus* that limit is the cause of measure and that measure brings along with it truth and beauty.

Let us begin by considering the evidence for the connection of unity with limit. The text comes early in the dialogue:

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212 Sayre, *Plato’s Late Ontology: A Riddle Resolved*, pp. 115-17.
213 In order to avoid speaking of the “concepts” of beauty, truth, etc., I use the word ‘object’ in the broadest sense of the term, such that beauty, truth, etc. are objects.
214 It would also probably have to come to some conclusions about Aristotle’s claim that the one produces the form-numbers by acting on the great and the small at *Metaphysics* A 6.
καὶ οἱ μὲν παλαιοί, κρείττονες ἡμῶν καὶ ἐγγυτέρω θεῶν οἰκούντες, ταύτην
φήμην παρέδοσαν, ώς ἐξ ἔνος μὲν καὶ πολλῶν ὀντῶν τῶν ἀεὶ λεγομένων
eίναι, πέρας δὲ καὶ ἀπειρίαν ἐν αὐτοῖς σύμφωνον ἐχόντων (16c-d).

And the people of old, superior to us and living in closer proximity to the gods,
have bequeathed us this tale, that whatever is said to be consists of one and
many, having in its nature limit and unlimitedness (tr. Cooper, ed.).

The relation between the pairs one/ many and limit/ unlimitedness is not optimally
specified. In particular they are not explicitly identified, but some sort of association
between the two pairs seems implied. Though his argument relies on Aristotle, Sayre
argues that Plato identifies the two pairs here.\(^{215}\) But it seems precisely the loose lack of
specification about the exact relation between the two pairs which suggests they are
simply interchangeable. At 14c Socrates introduces the first metaphysical section of the
Philebus when he says that consideration of the one and the many will be necessary to
resolve the dispute between intellectualism\(^{216}\) and hedonism. Then the two pairs seem to
be mixed at 16c-d ff., and then Socrates drops the one/ many pair in favor of the limit/

\(^{215}\) “The things always said to exist originate from (ἐξ) the one and many, and the sense in which
this is so is that they have within themselves connaturally (σύμφωνον) Limit and the Unlimited.
Another thing to note is that ‘being one and many’ and ‘having Limit and the Unlimited within
them’ are not named as two separate modes of composition. Having Limit and the Unlimited
within them is the manner in which these things are composed of one and many. Indeed, this is
very nearly what Aristotle said at Metaphysics 1004b32-34, presumably in Plato’s behalf, when he
remarked that the Limit and Unlimited named by some thinkers as principles are reducible to
unity and plurality. As already noted on various occasions, the account of Plato’s ontology in the
Metaphysics stresses the close similarity of Platonic and Pythagorean doctrine in this regard.
Association of Philebus 16c9-10 with the Pythagoreans is also suggested at Metaphysics 986a23-24,
where unity and plurality are listed in close sequence after limit and the unlimited in Aristotle’s
version of their table of opposites. Returning to the topic of basic principles at 987a13-19,
moreover, Aristotle substitutes unity for limit in opposition to the unlimited, and goes on to say
at 987b25-27 that Plato agreed with the Pythagoreans save in making his Unlimited two – the
Great and (the) Small – instead of a single principle.” Sayre, Plato’s Late Ontology: A Riddle
Resolved, p. 120.

\(^{216}\) “Intellectualism” here is Socrates’ thesis in the Philebus that the good for humans is knowledge,
thought, wisdom, etc.
unlimited pair as principles of being at 23c ff. The following seems to support the idea that the two pairs are interchangeable:

Since this is the structure of things, we have to assume that there is in each case always one form for every one of them, and we must search for it, as we will indeed find it there. And once we have grasped it, we must look for two, as the case would have it, or if not, for three or some other number. And we must treat every one of those further unities in the same way, until it is not only established of the original unit that it is one, many and unlimited, but also how many kinds it is (tr. Cooper, ed.).

The phrase “many and unlimited” (πολλά καὶ ἀπειρά) in the last line seems a hendiadys, since Socrates goes on to say that we must also discover “how many kinds it is.” If this is correct then the “many and unlimited” are opposed to the one; in other words, the unlimited is opposed to the one, implying that the two object pairs are interchangeable.

In addition we can see why Plato might have associated, if not identified, the two object pairs. Sayre argues that Aristotle associated Plato and the Philebus with Pythagoreanism,217 and the Pythagorean theory of gnomones links limitedness with unity: the gnomones formed around one point continue to create larger and larger squares to infinity. Since the squares all have the same proportion, the gnomones around one point produce figures with a limited proportion, namely one to one. The gnomones formed around two or more points produce rectangles, each with different proportions in

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217 Sayre, Plato’s Late Ontology: A Riddle Resolved, p. 120.
Thus one and limitedness somehow “go together,” as do plurality and unlimitedness.

Thus there is reason to believe Plato identified unity with limitedness. The text of the *Philebus* suggests this, and the Pythagorean theory of gnomones provides a rationale for it. It remains to be seen that he also identified unity and limitedness with goodness. We have already seen that in the rest of the Platonic corpus unity or the one is identified with goodness. Thus we could simply use this as evidence that he thinks unity and therefore also limitedness is identified with goodness in the *Philebus*. But there is also independent evidence in the *Philebus* for this. At 65a Plato writes,

Οὐκοῦν εἰ μὴ μιᾷ δυνάμεθα ἰδέα τὸ ἄγαθὸν θηρεῦσαι, σὺν τρισὶ λαβόντες, κάλλει καὶ συμμετρίᾳ καὶ ἀληθείᾳ, λέγωμεν ὡς τοῦτο οίνον ἐν ὁρθότατ' ἂν αἰτιασαίμεθ' ἂν τῶν ἐν τῇ συμμείξει, καὶ διὰ τοῦτο ἂς ἄγαθὸν ὁν τοιαύτην αὐτὴν γεγονέναι (*Phlb*. 65a).

So then, if we cannot capture the good in one form, taking it with three, beauty, proportion, and truth, let us affirm that we would most correctly take this, as one, as the cause of the things in the mixture, and it is on account of this, since it is good, that the mixture has become of this kind [i.e., good].

This intriguing sentence will occupy us again as we try to unpack the relations implied between goodness, truth, proportion, and beauty. But for now we need only notice the connection between unity and goodness. Beauty, proportion, and truth taken as one (οἷον ἐν) is the cause of the good in the mixture and is the good itself. Sayre interprets

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219 See Appendix III for a discussion of the correct translation of this important passage.
the text in the same way. Since 65a can be taken as evidence in the Philebus that Plato identifies the good with the one, or unity, we have independent evidence that Plato identifies goodness, unity, and limitedness in the Philebus.

3.4.1. The Philebus: The Good and the Beautiful:

Thus far the Philebus has proven supportive of Aristotle’s contention that Plato identified the good with the one. To this identification Plato seems to have added the principle of limit, or perhaps it would be better to say that in the Philebus he has chosen for the most part to describe his first principles as limit and unlimitedness instead of one and many. Likewise, up to this point, i.e., up to 64b, the Philebus has been consistent with the thesis that goodness and beauty are coextensive. But now a distinction appears to develop between beauty and goodness. Within the space of two Stephanus pages Plato seems to closely associate and to disassociate goodness and beauty. The close association appears in the following lines, some of which have already been quoted:

Νῦν δὴ καταπέφευγεν ἡμῖν ἡ τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ δύναμις εἰς τὴν τοῦ καλοῦ φύσιν-μετωπίς γὰρ καὶ συμμετοίχα κάλλος δήποι καὶ ἀρετή πανταχοῦ συμβαίνει γίγνεσθαι (Phlb. 64e).

But now we notice that the force of the good has fled for refuge to the nature of the beautiful. For measure and proportion turn out everywhere to be beauty and excellence (Cooper ed., rev.).

220 “But we know from 25a-b that measure is achieved by the imposition of Limit. And as argued earlier in this chapter, Limit and Unity are ontologically equivalent. So the following deduction is now available. Whereas measure is the primary ingredient of Limit, which in this role is equivalent to participation in Unity, for something to be good is for it to participate in Unity. For Plato in the Philebus, the Good is Unity. As Socrates puts it at 65a3-5, it is because of Unity that a mixture becomes good.” Sayre, Plato’s Late Ontology: A Riddle Resolved, p. 173.
And:

Οὐκοῦν εἰ μή μιᾷ δυνάμεθα ἑδα τὸ ἀγαθὸν θηρεῦσαι, σὺν τρισὶ λαβόντες, κἀλλει καὶ συμμετοῖα καὶ ἀληθεία, λέγωμεν ὡς τοῦτο ὦν ἐν ὀρθότατ’ ἀν αἰτιουσειμεθ’ ἀν τῶν ἐν τῇ συμμείξει, καὶ διὰ τοῦτο ὡς ἀγαθὸν ὦν τοιαύτην αὐτὴν γεγονέναι (Phlb. 65a).

So then, if we cannot capture the good in one form, taking it with three, beauty, proportion, and truth, let us affirm that we would most correctly take this, as one, as the cause of the things in the mixture, and it is on account of this, since it is good, that the mixture has become of this kind [i.e., good].

If this were all Plato said, it might be possible to believe that beauty was just as much unity as goodness is. But the problem is that later, during the final ranking of goods, Plato seems to make a strong distinction between goodness and beauty. At 66a and following, Socrates proceeds to rank the contributors to the goodness of the mixture of pleasure and knowledge, which it has been agreed since 22b constitutes the best human life. The first possession (κτήμα) is what is somehow connected with measure (περὶ μέτρου), the mean (μέτριον) and the timely (καίριον) and other similar things:

...ἡδονὴ κτῆμα οὐκ ἐστι πρῶτον οὐδ’ αὖ δεύτερον, ἀλλὰ πρῶτον μὲν πιὰ περὶ μέτρου καὶ τὸ μέτριον καὶ καίριον καὶ πάντα ὑπὸχα χρὴ τοιαύτα νομίζειν, τὴν ἡμέραν ἡμισθαῖ (Phlb. 66a).

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221 Though there would be a difficulty about what he means when he says that the good must be taken in the three forms, beauty, proportion and truth, and how these can be seen “as one” (οἷον ἐν).

222 One could well ask what sort of unity is in play here when it is said that the best human life is a mixture, since a mixture is complex rather than simple. But the point Plato wants to make, both here and in the Republic, seems to be that complexity can be organized into a single unified whole. Thus it is not simply that the good life is a mixture; rather, it is that the good life is a properly mixed/organized mixture. In the Republic, both the individual man and the city have many parts, and thus they are not one in the sense of lacking complexity, but the good man and the good city are each unified by having the correct organization. See Harte, Plato on Parts and Wholes: The Metaphysics of Structure.
...pleasure is not a property of the first rank, nor again of the second, but that first comes what is somehow connected with measure, the mean and the timely, and whatever else is to be considered similar (Cooper ed., rev.).

The second possession is what is about (περὶ) the commensurate (τὸ σύμμετρον), beauty, the perfect and the sufficient.

Δεύτερον μὴν περὶ τὸ σύμμετρον καὶ καλὸν καὶ τὸ τέλεον καὶ ίκανὸν καὶ πάνθ᾽ ὀπόσα τῆς γενεᾶς αὖ ταύτης ἐστίν (66b).

The second has to do with the commensurate and beautiful, the perfect, and the sufficient, and whatever else belongs in that family (Cooper ed., rev.).

Third, fourth, and fifth place go to mind, the arts and sciences, and the pure pleasures, respectively, and the impure but necessary pleasures may get sixth place. But the problem has already been stated: at Philebus 66a-b Plato seems to make an explicit and serious distinction between beauty and goodness. It is not stated in this way, he does not say for instance that goodness gets first prize and beauty second, but it does seem as though something other than beauty is cited as the highest good.

Not surprisingly, commentators disagree on how to interpret the end of the Philebus. Gosling devotes little more than two pages to the subject. He states that it is not clear how one would go about grading the elements that would contribute to a good life, and that the first two candidates seem “hardly distinct.”223

Indeed, they are distinguished not by description, but only by measuring pleasure against them at 65d and 65e. It then emerges that measure is contrasted with lack of moderation, and fineness with shamefulness... In that case the ordering seems not very significant, and the distinction made simply because Plato had two polemical points against Phileban pleasures to make (65d, 65e)

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223 Gosling, Philebus, p. 224.
which made a distinction convenient, and perhaps because they served to help put pleasure further down, and so thoroughly bear out the prophecy of 22e3.224

Explaining the distinction between the first two candidates along the lines of the difference between the criteria of measure (μετριότης) and beauty (καλός/κάλλος) at 65d and e is plausible, but hardly begins to address the problems surrounding the first and second candidates. Measure (μετριότης), the second criterion, is substituted for proportion (συμμετρία) at 65b and d. But both the proportionate (σύμμετρον) and the beautiful (καλόν) get second place in the ranking. Thus if measure (μετριότης) is interchangeable with proportion (συμμετρία), then both measure (μετριότης) and beauty (καλόν) get the second prize, and Gosling’s explanation does not work. His other suggestion, that the distinction between the first and second candidates only serves to push pleasure further down the scale, is unconvincing because Plato seems here to be making important points about the good.

Hackforth at least recognizes the problems:

[Formal] goodness has been declared to be apprehensible in the three aspects of κάλλος, συμμετρία and αλήθεια, the first two of which have been treated as so closely interdependent as to be hardly distinguishable, while the second has, to all appearance, been used interchangeably with μετριότης. Now however we get (a) a discrimination between μέτρον and σύμμετρον, (b) a collocation of καλόν with σύμμετρον, and (c) an absence of any mention of αλήθεια.225

His solution to (a), which is our main difficulty, is that measure (μέτρον) and the timely (καίριον) must refer to the parts of the mixture individually, while proportion (σύμμετρον) and beauty (καλόν) refer to the relation between the parts. The parts must

224 Ibid.
first be right in themselves and then in relation to each other. But the oddity here is the implied disassociation of the beautiful (καλόν), the perfect (τέλεον) and the sufficient (ἰκανόν) from measure (μέτριον) and the timely (καίριον). His explanation would seem to imply that Plato did not think measure (μέτριον) and the timely (καίριον) beautiful. It also gives no explanation of why measure (μέτριον) and the timely (καίριον) are not included at 65a amongst the forms of beauty, proportion and truth by which the good may be captured.

Frede believes all the difficulties of the final ranking “vanish” once one realizes that the ranking concerns not the metaphysical order of the universe, but only the good human life.

That the ingredients of the good human life are at stake here explains, for instance, the distinction between the prime good, measure, and the secondary good, the measured; and it explains why pure reason and intelligence obtain only third place. The proper balance between all ingredients must come first, and then the life that incorporates them, including all the harmonious mixtures such a life contains, such as virtue, health, a just society, etc. Since (human) reason is the cause of this mixture, it comes only third.

But in the first place there is no evidence that the distinction between the first and second possessions is that between measure and the measured. And in the second place, if human reason is the cause of this mixture then it seems it should come before the

\[226\] Hackforth, Philebus, p. 138. In this, Hackforth seems roughly to follow Bury. “The first group includes the elements of τἀγαθόν regarded singly and independently; and in the second these elements are regarded as united into a perfect whole to form the summum bonum.” Robert Gregg Bury, The Philebus of Plato: Edited with Introduction, Notes, and Appendices (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1897), p. 178.

\[227\] “If the list presents some difficulties, they vanish if one keeps it in mind that it lists the goods that make up a good human life. It is not a metaphysical ranking of everything there is in the universe, although one might, of course, try to extrapolate from it to such an all‐encompassing ranking.” Frede, Philebus, pp. lxv‐vi.

\[228\] Frede, Philebus, p. lxvi.
mixture, not after it. If human reason must be the cause of the proper mixture of a good human life then the text says the opposite of what it should. Finally, Plato explicitly connects the human good with the universal good when he states,

τὰς δ’ ἀεὶ μετ’ ἀφροσύνης καὶ τῆς ἄλλης κακίας ἐπομένας πολλὴ ποιν ἀλογία τῷ νῷ μειγνύαι τὸν βουλόμενον ὅτι καλλίστην ἱδόντα καὶ ἀστασιαστοτάτην μεῖξιν καὶ κρᾶσιν, ἐν ταύτῃ μαθεῖν πειρᾶσθαι τί ποτε ἐν τ’ ἀνθρώπω καὶ τῷ παντὶ πέφυκεν ἄγαθόν καὶ τίνα ἴδεαν αὐτήν εἶναι ποτε μαντευτέον (63e-4a).

But to forge an association between reason and those pleasures that are forever involved with foolishness and other kinds of vice would be totally unreasonable for anyone who aims at the best and most stable mixture or blend. This is true particularly if he wants to discover in this mixture what the good is in man and in the universe and to get some vision of the nature of the good itself (tr. Cooper, ed.).

Thus it is not true that Plato or his Socrates is merely speaking about the human good at the end of the Philebus; he states explicitly that the end of the Philebus concerns the universal good as well.

None of these explanations seems particularly convincing. Yet this passage should seem a serious problem for anyone who says that for Plato beauty and goodness are more or less the same thing, or interchangeable. The problem is: Why does beauty get second place in the final ranking of goods at the end of the Philebus? If beauty is interchangeable with the good for Plato, then beauty should get first place, as presumably goodness itself does. The only other possibility is that goodness itself gets also second place, but this would be difficult to reconcile with Republic 509b.

The following must be addressed by any putative solution to our problem. In the first place the solution should as far as possible be consistent with what is said about the forms of beauty and goodness in the Symposium and Phaedrus and the Republic. What this
means in particular is that our solution should take into account *Republic* 6 about the form or idea of the good, namely:

1. That it is the cause of knowledge and truth (508d-e).
2. That it is neither knowledge nor truth but somehow above them (508e-9a).
3. That it is also the cause of the being (*οὐσία*) of the objects of knowledge (509b).
4. That it is not being (*οὐσία*) but somehow above it as well (509b).

It would be good if the solution to the problem also fit with Aristotle’s testimony concerning Plato’s views about the good.

The solution to the difficulty at *Philebus* 66a ff., I suggest, lies in the connection between being (*οὐσία*) and those elements given first place in the final ranking of goods, namely measure (*μέτρον*) the mean (*μέτριον*) and the timely (*καίριον*). In the first place, we must come to some understanding of what these words mean. The primary sense of *μέτρον* is measure; however, LSJ notes that it can also have the more normative sense of “due measure,” “limit [!]” or “proportion.” The term *μέτριον* primarily has the sense of what is within measure or moderate; basically it can be summed up in the idea of the mean, in the sense that what is moderate is between extremes. *Καίριον* has the sense of “in the right place or time.” In Plato’s time it usually has the temporal sense of being in season or at an opportune time. But, as LSJ notes, it is derived from the more basic word *καιρός*, which again has the primary sense of “due measure, proportion, fitness.” Thus if we had to characterize all the objects given first place in the final ranking, their

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229 LSJ s.v. I. 4.
I take the notion of a mean to be roughly synonymous with that of a proportion, for one of the senses of ‘proportion’ is normative. When we say something is “in proportion,” we mean that there is the right amount of it, i.e., neither too much nor too little. And a mean is the right amount in a continuum of too much and too little. Thus it is a mathematical idea and can be expressed as a ratio. But the mean need not always be the exact middle between two extremes. As Aristotle explains, the mean needs to be appropriate to the subject in question. To fit Philebus 66a with Republic 509b perhaps we should say, with Aristotle, that by the time of the Philebus Plato had identified at

231 Δήλον ὦτι διαφορίμεν ἃν τὴν μετρητικήν, καθάπερ ἐφηθῇ, ταύτῃ δίχα τέμνοντες, ἐν μὲν τιθέντες αὐτῆς μόριον συμπάσσας τέχνας ὅπόσαι τὸν ἀριθμὸν καὶ μήκη καὶ βάθη καὶ πλάτη καὶ ταχυτήτας πρὸς τουναντίου μετροῦν, τὸ δὲ ἔτερον, ὅποσαι πρὸς τὸ μέτρον καὶ τὸ πρότερον καὶ τὸν καρνὸ καὶ τὸ δέον καὶ πάνυ’ ὅποσα εἰς τὸ μέσον ἀπωκίσθη τῶν ἐσχάτων (Plt. 284ε). [It’s clear that we would divide the art of measurement, cutting it in two in just the way we said, positing as one part of it all those sorts of expertise that measure the number, lengths, depths, breadths and speeds of things in relation to what is opposed to them, and as the other, all those that measure in relation to what is in due measure, what is fitting, the right moment, what is as it ought to be – everything that removes itself from the extremes to the middle (tr. Cooper, ed.).]

232 λέγω δὲ τοῦ μὲν πράγματος μέσον τὸ ἱσον ἀπέχον ἀφ’ ἐκατέρου τῶν ἀκρῶν, ὅπερ ἐστὶν ἐν καὶ τοῦ αὐτοῦ πάσιν, πρὸς ἡμᾶς δὲ ὃ μὴ ἀναλογίαν ἔστιν πρὸς ὑμᾶς πρὸς τὴν ἂντικροσίαν πρὸς τὸν μέσον χρόνον καὶ τὸ δόσον. οὐδὲ δὲ ταῦτα πάσιν. οἷον εἰ τὰ δέκα πολλὰ τὰ δὲ δύο χρόνα, τὰ ἐξ μέσας λαμβάνουσι κατὰ τὸ πράγμα· ἰσον γὰρ υπέρεχε τε καὶ υπερέχει τῇ καθαρότητι ἀναλογίαν. τὸ δὲ πρὸς ἡμᾶς ἀνυποτελέον· οὐ γὰρ εἰ τῶ δέκα μιαί φαγεῖν πολύ δύο δὲ ὄλιγον, ὁ ἀλλήπις ἐξ μιᾶς προστάζει· ἐστὶ γὰρ ἱσόν καὶ τοῦτο πολὺ τῷ λήψομένῳ ἡ ἁλίγον· Μίλων μὲν γὰρ ἁλίγον, τῷ δὲ ἀρχόμενῳ τῶν γυμνασίων πολύ (Arist. EN 1106a29-b4). [By the intermediate in the object I mean that which is equidistant from each of the extremes, which is one and the same for all men; by the intermediate relatively to us that which is neither too much nor too little – and this is not one, not the same for all. For instance, if ten is many and two is few, six is the intermediate, taken in terms of the object; for it exceeds and is exceeded by an equal amount; this is intermediate according to arithmetical proportion. But the intermediate relatively to us is not to be taken so; if ten pounds are too much for a particular person to eat and two too little, it does not follow that the trainer will order six pounds; for this also is perhaps too much for the person who is to take it, or too little – too little for Milo, too much for the beginner in athletic exercises (ROT).] Cf. Pl. Philebus 284e.
least some forms with numbers. 233 With the exception of the special case of the form of the good, forms seem to be the paradigmatic bearers of being (οὐσία). Perhaps it would be better to use the word ‘essence’ or ‘nature’ for οὐσία. 234 Thus for the most part when Plato speaks of οὐσίαι he can be taken to be referring to forms. By the time he wrote the Philebus, Plato may have thought certain essences (οὐσίαι) could be expressed mathematically, as means or proportions. Just as part of health might be to have a certain bodily temperature which is a mean between too hot and too cold, so what it is to be a certain animal might involve having various proportions of elements.

To return to Philebus 66a, on this interpretation the limit, and thus unity and goodness, is the cause of means. As the immediate offspring of the limit, means receive first place among the ranking of goods. On this interpretation, this is the same as to say that certain essences (οὐσίαι) receive first place. Thus the good itself is off the scale, as it should be since this is a ranking of the goods in the mixture. Recall that the limit, which we are identifying with goodness and unity, is only one of the four classes out of which all things are composed: limit, the unlimited, the mixture and the cause of the mixture. The good/one/limit by itself is not part of the mixture. When the limit is mixed with the unlimited the result is a compound of elements mixed according to a certain ratio, or mean, or proportion. The limit is responsible for this ratio/mean/proportion. But strictly speaking the good/one/limit itself is “beyond” means or proportions in the Philebus,

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233 I am not saying here that Plato’s apparent increasing use of or interest in mathematical concepts is inconsistent with anything in his earlier work. He may simply have found a way to incorporate certain mathematical insights into his already developed metaphysics.

234 For the distinction between a form and its nature see Gerson, God and Greek Philosophy: Studies in the Early History of Natural Theology, pp. 40-52.
just as the good is beyond being/ essence (οὐσία) in the Republic. It is “beyond” by being the cause or principle of the mean.

What then are we to make of those objects in the second and third rank of goods? In particular, why do proportion/ commensurability (σύμμετρον), beauty (καλόν), perfection/ completion (τέλεον), and sufficiency (ἱκανόν), get second place in the ranking of goods? The answer is that these are all qualities which follow from or supervene upon means. An object is beautiful, perfect, and sufficient because it possesses mean or proportion – where ‘proportion’ like σύμμετρον can be a synonym for ‘mean.’ The presence of means and proportions brings along with it commensurability, beauty, perfection, and sufficiency. This is in fact confirmed by what is said earlier in the Philebus at 25d-26b, where Socrates characterizes the class of the limit.

ΣΩ. Τὴν τοῦ ἰσου καὶ διπλασίου, καὶ ὀπόση παύει πρὸς ἄλληλα τάναντια διαφόρως ἔχοντα, σύμμετρο ὅδε καὶ σύμφωνα ἐνθεῖσα ἀριθμὸν ἀπεργάζεται. ΠΡΩ. Μανδάνω· φαίνῃ γὰρ μοι λέγειν μειγνὺς ταῦτα γενέσεις τινὰς ἐφ’ ἐκάστων αὐτῶν συμβαίνειν. ΣΩ. Ὄρθως γὰρ φαίνομαι. ΠΡΩ. Λέγε τοίνυν. ΣΩ. Ἀφ’ ὡ τὸν καὶ τοὺς ὀρθὰς κοινωνίας τὴν ὑγείας φύσιν ἐγένησεν; ΠΡΩ. Παντάπασι μὲν οὖν. ΣΩ. Ἐν δὲ ὅξει καὶ βαρεί καὶ ταχεῖ καὶ βραδεῖ, ἀπειροὶ οὐσία, ἀρ’ οὐ ταῦτα [ἐγγενομένα] ταῦτα· ἁμα πέρας τε ἀπηργάσατο καὶ μουσικὴν σύμπασαν τελεώτατα συνεστήσατο; ΠΡΩ. Κάλλιστά γε. ΣΩ. Καὶ μήν ἐν γε χειμώσιν καὶ πνίγεσιν ἐγγενομένη τὸ μὲν πολὺ λίαν καὶ ἀπειροὶ ἀφεῖλτο, τὸ δὲ ἐμμετρον καὶ ἁμα σύμμετρον ἀπηργάσατο. ΠΡΩ. Τί μήν; ΣΩ. Ὄποιον ἐκ τούτων ἄρα τε καὶ ὅσα καλὰ πάντα ἥμιν γέγονε, τῶν τε ἀπειρῶν καὶ τῶν πέρας ἐχόντων συμμειχθέντων;


236 Cf. Philb. 25a-b.
Soc: [The class of the Limit] contains the equal and double, and whatever else puts an end to the conflicts there are among opposites, making them commensurate and harmonious by imposing a definite number on them. Pro: I understand. I have the impression that you are saying that, from such mixture in each case, certain generations result? Soc: Your impression is correct. Pro: Then go on with your explanation. Soc: Is it not true that in sickness the right combination of the opposites establishes the state of health? Pro: Certainly. Soc: And does not the same happen in the case of the high and the low, the fast and the slow, which belong to the unlimited? Is it not the presence of these factors in them which forges a limit and thereby creates the different kinds of music in their perfection? Pro: Beautiful! Soc: And once the right combination comes to be in frost and heat, it takes away their excesses and unlimitedness, and makes them moderate and commensurate? Pro: Quite. Soc: And when the unlimited and what has limit are mixed together, we are blessed with seasons and all sorts of beautiful things of that kind. Pro: Who could doubt it? Soc: And there are countless other things I have to pass by in silence: With health there come beauty and strength, and again in our soul there is a host of other beautiful things (tr. Cooper, ed., rev.).

Here we are told explicitly that the equal and the double, ratios/proportions, make things commensurate, perfect, and beautiful – three of the four characteristics given second place in the final ranking of goods at 66a ff.237

The only word which might cause difficulty in the final ranking of goods is σύμμετρον, which I have so far translated as either ‘proportion’ or ‘commensurability.’

In the first place it should be noted that although ‘symmetry’ is the direct transliteration of συμμετρία, the modern English sense of ‘symmetry’ is alien to the Greek

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237 Much the same thing is said at Statesman 284a-b: ἀπασχολεῖται γὰρ αἱ τοι αἱ προδρόμαι τοῦ τοῦ μετρίου πλέον καὶ ἐλαττὸν σὺν ως οὐκ ὁν ἀλλ’ ὡς ὁν χαλέπιν περὶ τὰς πράξεις παραφυλάττουσι, καὶ τούτῳ δὴ τῷ τρόπῳ τὸ μέτρον σωζόνται πάντα ἄγαθα καὶ καλά ἀπεργάζονται. [For I imagine all such sorts of expertise guard against what is more and less than what is in due measure, not as something which is not, but as something which is and is troublesome in relation to what they do. It is by preserving measure in this way that they produce all the good and beautiful things they produce (tr. Cooper, ed., rev.).]
συμμετρία.\textsuperscript{238} Since the 18\textsuperscript{th} century the scientific meaning of the term refers roughly to the property of an object which remains invariant under transformation.\textsuperscript{239} But this is not the original Greek sense of the word. Originally, according to LSJ, it had the sense either of ‘proportion’ or ‘commensurability.’\textsuperscript{240} However, we must be careful with the word ‘proportion’ because it has different senses in English. It has a mathematical meaning and a different meaning in ordinary discourse. In mathematics ‘a proportion’ signifies the equality of two ratios, where ‘ratio’ signifies the relation of one quantity to another (a fraction). Thus in mathematics ‘proportion’ signifies the relation between four terms, while ‘ratio’ signifies the relation between two. But in ordinary discourse it means either an appropriate relation between things or parts of an object, or the ratio or fraction of one quantity to another. It is in this second, non-mathematical sense that ‘proportion’ is a suitable translation of συμμετρία.\textsuperscript{241} The reason why in Greek συμμετρία can have the sense of either the proportionate or the commensurable is that whatever is

\textsuperscript{238} See Giora Hon and Bernard R. Goldstein, \textit{From Summetria to Symmetry: The Making of a Revolutionary Scientific Concept}, ed. Jed Buchwald, vol. 20 (Springer, 2008), p. vii. They argue that Adrien-Marie Legendre instituted the modern sense of the term in 1794, when he defined it as follows: “Two equal solid angles which are formed (by the same plane angles) but in the inverse order will be called angles equal by symmetry, or simply symmetrical angles.” Hon and Goldstein, \textit{Symmetry}, p. 2. Brading and Castellani for \textit{Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy} write: “In addition to the ancient notion of symmetry used by the Greeks and Romans (current until the end of the Renaissance), a different notion of symmetry emerged in the seventeenth century, grounded not on proportions but on an equality relation between elements that are opposed, such as the left and right parts of a figure. Crucially, the parts are \textit{interchangeable with respect to the whole} — they can be exchanged with one another while preserving the original figure.” Katherine Brading and Elena Castellani, “Symmetry and Symmetry Breaking,” \textit{The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy} (Fall 2008), http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2008/entries/symmetry-breaking/.

\textsuperscript{239} “Symmetry in its current scientific usage refers either to a mathematico-logical relation or to an intrinsic property of a mathematical entity which under certain operations leaves something unchanged – invariant.” Hon and Goldstein, \textit{Symmetry}, p. 2.

\textsuperscript{240} See LSJ s.v. They also note, incorrectly, that ‘symmetrical’ is an acceptable translation.

\textsuperscript{241} See \textit{Republic} 529e-30a, where Socrates refers to “the equal, the double, or any other proportion (συμμετρία).”
commensurable can be expressed as a ratio or proportion of whole numbers, or integers.242

Thus σύμμετρον at Philebus 66a should be translated as either ‘proportion’ or ‘the commensurate.’ However, if we translate σύμμετρον at 66a as ‘proportion’ then we run into a problem, because we said that proportion (or mean or ratio) was in the first rank since it is the common notion expressed by the words μέτρον (measure) μέτριον (mean) καίριον (timely). We could resolve this problem merely by stating that we should therefore translate σύμμετρον ‘commensurate’ at 66a, but such a solution would be more convincing if there were other evidence in the Philebus that what Plato means by σύμμετρον is ‘commensurate,’ rather than ‘proportional.’ And such evidence exists, for as we have already seen at Philebus 25d-e Socrates states:

ΣΩ. Τὴν τοῦ ἴσου καὶ διπλασίου, καὶ ὁπόση πανεῖ πρὸς ἄλληλα τάναντία διαφόρως ἔχοντα, σύμμετρα δὲ καὶ σύμφωνα ἐνθεῖσα ἀριθμὸν ἀπεργάζεται.

Soc: [The class of the limit] contains the equal and double, and whatever else puts an end to the conflicts there are among opposites, making them commensurate and harmonious by imposing a definite number on them (tr. Cooper, ed., rev.).

And at 26a he states:

ΣΩ. Καὶ μὴν ἐν γε χειμῶσιν καὶ πνίγεσιν ἐγγενομένη τὸ μὲν πολὺ λίαν καὶ ἀπειρον ἀφείλετο, τὸ δὲ ἐμέτρον καὶ ἀμα σύμμετρον ἀπηργάσατο (Phlb. 26a).

Soc: And once [the right combination] comes to be in frost and heat, it takes away their excesses and unlimitedness, and makes them moderate and commensurate (tr. Cooper, ed., rev.).

242 Zero and negative numbers are irrelevant since we are concerned with comparing two magnitudes.
The idea in both cases is that the imposition of due proportion or ratio makes harmonious what was previously in a state of chaos and at war with itself (πρὸς ἄλληλα τάναντια διαφόρως ἔχοντα). And this making harmonious and moderate is supposed to be conveyed also by the term σύμμετρον in these lines. Thus it is not ad hoc to translate σύμμετρον at 66a ‘commensurate,’ and to understand that the reason it gets second place, along with beauty, perfection, and sufficiency, is that it is an effect of or caused by proportion/mean/ratio.

The loose ends which remain to be tied are, first, what happened to truth in the final ranking and, second, why do mind and wisdom get third place? Commentators have noted that whereas beauty and commensurability are assigned second place, truth is nowhere to be found in the final ranking. But truth was mentioned along with commensurability and beauty at 65a as one of the three forms by which the good must be captured. Bury and Gosling argue that truth is implicitly in the third rank, along with mind and wisdom (νοῦς καὶ φρόνησις). This interpretation is supported by the suggestive mention of truth (ἀλήθεια) in the sentence describing the third candidates.244

But I would agree with Hackforth, though for different reasons, that if truth goes anywhere, it should be in the second rank. The reason is that two of the three forms by

243 Bury, Philebus, p. 209. Gosling, Philebus, p. 225. Harte argues that truth is not in any one rank, but that it determines the order of the last three elements. Harte, "Quel prix pour la vérité," pp. 396-400. I think my interpretation could be made consistent with Harte’s by saying that truth gets second place and determines the order of the last three elements.

244 Τὸ τοίνυν τρίτον, ὡς ἐμὴ μαντεία, νοῦν καὶ φρόνησιν τιθεὶς οὐκ ἀν ἀν μέγα τι τῆς ἀληθείας παρεξέλθοις (66b). [If you give third rank, as I divine, to reason and intelligence, you cannot stray far from the truth (tr. Cooper, ed.).]

245 Hackforth thinks that by ‘perfect’ (τέλεον) and ‘adequate’ (ἱκανόν) Plato means ‘truth.’ Hackforth, Philebus, p. 139. However, there is no textual support for this interpretation.
which the good must be captured at 65a, namely commensurability and beauty, are in the second rank. If two of the three forms at 65a are found in the second rank, one would expect the third one should be there too, unless Plato explicitly states otherwise or there are good theoretical reasons for it to be elsewhere. In addition, there is a good theoretical reason for truth to be in the second rank. We argued earlier that proportion/mean was the Phileban equivalent of some essences (οὐσίαι) in the Republic. But truth supervenes\textsuperscript{246} upon or is the effect of proportion/mean/ratio just as much as commensurability, beauty, perfection, and sufficiency do. The form of the good gives [the power] to be known to the things which are known (R. 509b). By instilling proportion into reality the form of the good not only allows things to be but also to be known and understood. We understand something, it seems he is saying, when we know its number, which is a mean. There could be basically the same hierarchy in the Philebus and the Republic. In the Republic the idea of the good (which is the one) produces being/essence (οὐσία) on which truth supervenes. In the Philebus limit (which is the one) produces proportion/mean on which commensurability, beauty, perfection, sufficiency, and, I argue, truth supervene. The reason truth and beauty come second and mind and wisdom come third may be that truth and beauty are between mind and its object.

\textsuperscript{246} ‘Supervene’ is perhaps not the best word. What I am trying to express is that the mathematical nature of means and proportions which are the essences of substances allows them to be known, and truth is the object of knowledge. In this way truth rests or depends upon proportion.
3.5. Conclusion:

We have seen there is strong evidence Aristotle is right that Plato identified the good with unity. Some of the strongest textual evidence for this comes from the *Republic*, where Socrates argues that just as the good man is the man who is truly one, so the good city is the city which is truly one. But we also saw that the opposition between one and many runs throughout much of his thought, and the one is always valued above the many. For Plato the one or unity seems ontologically, epistemologically, and ethically prior to the many.

Evidence for the identification of goodness and unity was also found in the *Philebus*, yet there were also indications in that work of a difference between goodness and beauty. Beauty is one of the forms by or through which the good must be captured, and beauty gets second place in the final ranking of goods. In order to evaluate the relation between beauty and goodness we must be careful to distinguish when we or Plato is speaking about forms and when about concrete particulars. It seems Frede is right that at the end of the dialogue, in the final ranking of goods, Plato is speaking about the goods in the mixture of a human life. The inclusion of pleasure in the final ranking seemed to confirm that the human life under discussion was thought of as being in the realm of concrete particulars. Thus the view of the connection between goodness and beauty could be explained on the model of the “more sophisticated answer” in the Phaedo. Goodness or limit is instantiated in concrete particulars through means or proportions, and these get first prize in the final ranking of goods. But means and
proportions always bring along with them commensurability, perfection, sufficiency, truth, and beauty.

The final ranking of goods in the mixture of human life at the level of concrete particulars was, however, also supposed to represent relations surrounding the good at the level of the forms. If this is so then it is reasonable to infer that just as goodness itself, in the form of means and proportions, gets first place in the final ranking of goods, while beauty etc. get second place, so in the realm of the forms it would seem that goodness must be something separate from beauty, i.e., the form of the good is separate from the form of beauty. In the next chapter we will find more evidence for a distinction between goodness and beauty, and we will discuss the consequences of this distinction.
CHAPTER 4

ON THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN GOODNESS AND BEAUTY

4.0. Introduction:

In the second chapter we argued that Plato believes in the coextension of goodness and beauty. In the third we found reasons for this belief in Plato’s metaphysics. But the question might still arise whether beauty and goodness are essentially identical. In this chapter we will argue that there are reasons to believe beauty and goodness are not essentially identical for Plato. In the first place nowhere in his corpus does he say they are identical, though there are plenty of places where it would have been appropriate to do so if that is what he believed, e.g., Hippias Major 297c, Symposium 204e, Philebus 64a, Republic 452d-e. And in the second place, it seems τὸ καλὸν and τὸ ἀγαθὸν are more like our concepts of beauty and goodness than is usually believed, such that just as it would seem simply wrong to say today that the concept of goodness is identical to the concept of beauty, so it would be simply wrong to say in Ancient Greece that τὸ καλὸν is essentially the same as τὸ ἀγαθὸν. It is possible to argue that the same things are always καλὸν and ἀγαθὸν or that the presence of one brings along with it the presence of the other, but very difficult to argue that the concepts are identical without changing what the concept of one of them is. More
concretely, however, there are hints in Plato’s text which point to a different understanding of each. At Symposium 204e Diotima substitutes ‘good’ for ‘beauty’ but later she seems to drive a wedge between them when she tells Socrates that love wants goodness (205e-6a), but not beauty (207e). This textual difficulty points to a philosophical one: what is going on when we are attracted to beauty? On the picture developed so far, a beautiful object is also to that extent good, and vice versa. And according to Plato when we perceive beauty we feel desire. But desire for what? Plato says two things about desire or eros in the Symposium: first, desire is always for the good, and second, it must be for something we do not possess. Thus when we see something beautiful and therefore feel desire, we must desire and not possess the good. But this would seem to separate beauty and goodness, for to see or in some way perceive beauty would seem to be what it means to possess it. Once one sees beauty sufficiently clearly, there is no more beauty to pursue; at that point it seems one has it to the extent it can be possessed. And yet Plato states that when we see beauty we still want something. Thus, on the one hand, goodness and beauty are extensionally equivalent but, on the other, the Symposium and other passages in Plato, as we shall see, suggest they are not identical.

But the reintroduction of a difference between goodness and beauty in Plato once again raises the possibility that the two may differ extensionally. The first set of problems concerns the relation of pleasure to beauty and goodness. Pleasure seems like a prime candidate to be a counterexample to the theory that beauty and goodness are coextensive. It might seem that pleasure is good, but what sense does it make to say that it is beautiful? If pleasure is good but not beautiful then it cannot be the case that
goodness and beauty are extensionally equivalent. The *Philebus* can be seen as Plato’s last major attempt to sort out the relation between goodness, pleasure, and beauty.

The second set of problems concerns the status of beauty in the physical or sensible world. In the first place, we think we see beauty in the physical world all the time, but there is a question whether Plato thinks anything in the physical world is truly beautiful. Anything which is tall (from one point of view or when compared to one thing) is also short (from another point of view or when compared to something else).\(^{247}\) A maiden may be beautiful when compared to a pot or an ape but ugly when compared to a god.\(^{248}\) Such reasoning could, apparently, be extended to anything in the physical world, such that no instantiation is really more one way than another. This is usually given as the reason for saying that the physical world is the realm of appearance and becoming, as opposed to reality and being. But if this is so, what happens to our belief that certain things are beautiful in the physical world? If physical objects are no more beautiful than ugly how can they serve as the first stepping stones to a life of philosophy, as the *Symposium* and *Phaedrus* suggest? In a way there is nothing different or special about beauty with respect to these problems. The same difficulties attend any other instantiation of a form. What is peculiar about beauty is that in the *Phaedrus* Plato claims that we can in some sense *see* instances of the form of beauty in the physical world, in a way in which we cannot see instances of any other form (Phdr. 250d). Some account must be given of why Plato thinks this is so. Connected to beauty’s instantiation

\(^{247}\) *Phd.* 74b, R. 523e.

\(^{248}\) *Hi. Ma.* 289a-b.
is also the problem raised from the very beginning in Homer and Hesiod, namely the possibility of the beautiful evil. Nowhere in the dialogues is this problem brought more sharply into focus than in the Symposium: Socrates is good but not beautiful; Alcibiades is beautiful but not good. How can we maintain the coextension of goodness and beauty in light of the explicit contrast between these two characters?

And finally there is also the difficulty posed by mathematical objects. Plato is quite clear that certain triangles, lines and other geometrical objects are beautiful, but how can they be good? If beauty and goodness are extensionally equivalent then mathematical objects should be good if they are beautiful. Presumably we can understand how mathematical objects can be beautiful, but what sense does it make to say they are good? This, as we shall see, is exactly why Aristotle disagrees with Plato about the extensional equivalence of goodness and beauty. But his disagreement on this point itself provides evidence that indeed Plato does think there is a sense in which goodness is applicable to mathematical objects.

We will begin by considering the problems posed by desire with respect to beauty and goodness. Then we will turn to the questions raised by pleasure, and then those raised by the instantiation of beauty in the physical world and in mathematics.

4.1.0. Goodness, Beauty, and Desire:

In Chapter 2 we found that Diotima’s substitution of good for beautiful at Symposium 201c provides evidence either for the coextension of beauty and goodness, or
for the conditional ‘if beautiful then good.’ But it turns out that the Symposium may also provide evidence that Plato distinguishes the two. The difference between beauty and goodness is established, in the first place, by the fact that Diotima explicitly maintains the two following theses: 1. Love wants goodness, 2. Love does not want beauty, and in the second place by the fact that Diotima appears to use different language when she speaks about the relation between love and goodness and the relation between love and beauty. When she mentions the relation between love and beauty she uses the preposition περί, which usually means about or around, plus the accusative; when she speaks about love and goodness, she uses the genitive of goodness. The few times where she uses the genitive of beauty with respect to beauty, e.g., ἔρως τοῦ καλοῦ, she attributes the thought to Socrates.

Let us first take up Diotima’s explicit distinction between goodness and beauty with respect to love. A number of commentators on the Symposium believe beauty is the object of love. Vlastos, for example, writes, “[Diotima] begins with things Socrates says he knows already: We love only what is beautiful.”\(^{249}\) And according to Nehamas, “What we do learn is that, despite its many forms and various objects, all love – whether we know it or not – is directed at the very nature of Beauty.”\(^{250}\) And we can see why they think so. At 203c Love is said to be “by nature a lover of beauty (φύσει ἐραστὴς ὃν περὶ

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τὸ καλὸν),” and 204b he is said to be “the love of beauty ⟨ἐφύς περὶ τὸ καλὸν⟩.”251 But, as we shall see, there is some reason to question these passages, because of the peculiar use of the περὶ (usually translated ‘about’ or ‘around’) plus the accusative when speaking about the object of love. Additionally, later, Diotima states that the proper object of love is goodness: at 205e-6a she states, “what men love is nothing other than the good (οὐδέν γε ἀλλο ἐστὶν οὐ ἐφύς ἀνθρωποί ή τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ).”252 And her fullest definition of love is as follows: “Love is of having the good forever ⟨ὁ ἔφυς τοῦ τὸ ἀγαθὸν αὑτῷ εἶναι ἀεί: 206a⟩.”253 It certainly seems clear, then, that Diotima’s considered view is that the proper object of love is goodness. And this should not surprise Plato’s reader. Additionally, at 206e Diotima suggests that beauty is not the proper object of love. The text reads:

ēστιν γάρ, ὦ Σώκρατες, ἐφή, οὐ τοῦ καλοῦ ὁ ἔφυς, ὡς σὺ οἴει...

For, Socrates, [Diotima] said, love is not of beauty, as you think...

Thus we have two claims. The first is that love is for or of goodness and the second is that it is not for or of beauty. This would seem to indicate that there is some sort of

251 Also at 203d he is said to be a “schemer after beautiful and good things” (ἐπίβουλός ἐστι τοῖς καλοῖς καὶ τοῖς ἀγαθοῖς).

252 The whole sentence is: οὐ γάρ τὸ ἐαυτῶν οἴμαι ἐκαστοι ἀσπάζονται, εἰ μὴ εἰ τις τὸ μὲν ἀγαθόν οἰκεῖον καλεί καὶ ἐαυτοῦ, τὸ δὲ κακόν ἀλλότριον· ὡς οὐδέν γε ἀλλο ἐστὶν οὐ ἐφύς ἀνθρωποί ή τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ (205e-6a). [I don’t think an individual takes joy in what belongs to him personally unless by ‘belonging to me’ he means ‘good’ and by ‘belonging to another’ he means ‘bad.’ That’s because what men love is nothing other than the good (tr. Cooper, ed., rev.).]

253 The whole sentence is: Ἐστιν ἄρα συλλήβδην, ἐφή, ὁ ἔφυς τοῦ τὸ ἀγαθὸν αὐτῷ εἶναι ἀεί (206a). [In a word, then, she said, love is of having the good forever (tr. Cooper, ed., rev.).] Cf. 205d: Οὕτω τοίνυν καὶ περὶ τὸν ἔρωτα. τὸ μὲν κεφάλαιον ἐστὶ πάσα ἡ τῶν ἀγαθῶν ἐπιθυμία καὶ τοῦ εὐδαιμονεῖν ὁ μέγιστος τε καὶ δολερὸς ἔρως παντί. [The main point is this: every desire for good things or for happiness is ‘the supreme and treacherous love’ in everyone (tr. Cooper, ed.).]
difference between goodness and beauty. And, indeed, we might have been prepared for this by 204d-e, where Socrates does not know what one will have when one has beautiful things, but he does know that happiness is the result of the possession of good. This indicates a distinction, at least in Socrates’ mind, between goodness and beauty.

The second indication that Diotima distinguishes between beauty and goodness is that when she wishes to speak about the relation of love to beauty she generally uses περί plus the accusative; whereas when she speaks about love and goodness, she puts goodness in the genitive.

That is why Love was born to follow Aphrodite and serve her: because he was conceived on the day of her birth. And that’s why he is also by nature a lover of beauty, because Aphrodite herself is especially beautiful (tr. Cooper, ed.).

For wisdom is among the most beautiful things, and love is love of the beautiful, with the result that it is necessary that love is a philosopher, and a philosopher is between being wise and ignorant (tr. Cooper, ed.).

Though περί plus the accusative is usually translated ‘about,’ this is not its only correct translation. LSJ indicates that περί may be used “generally of all relations.” The

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254 Cf. 206d-e: δὴν δὴ τῷ κυνοῦντι τε καὶ ἢδη σπαργῶντι πολλῇ ἢ πτοίησις γέγονε περὶ τὸ καλὸν διὰ τὸ μεγάλης ἐκδήλως ἀπολύειν τὸν ἔχοντα. ἔστιν γὰρ, ὥς Ὁσκράτης, ἔφη, ὅποι οὐ τοῦ καλοῦ ὁ ἔρως, ὡς σὺ οἶκει [This is the source of the great excitement about beauty that comes to anyone who is pregnant and already teeming with life: beauty releases them from their great pain. You see, Socrates, she said, Love is not of beauty, as you think (tr. Cooper, ed.).]

255 See LSJ s.v. In the same place they note that περί plus the accusative may sometimes be used in place of the genitive. However, all of the examples they give are of the subjective genitive,
preposition is flexible enough to be correctly translated ‘of’ even with the accusative. Nonetheless, it is less usual, and the consistency with which she uses it, even if it is only twice, seems too deliberate to be insignificant.

That she uses the genitive when speaking about the relation of love or desire to goodness, passages already quoted attest:

...οὐδέν γε ἄλλο ἐστὶν οὐ ἐρώσιν ἁνθρώποι ἤ τοῦ ἄγαθοῦ (207e-6a).

...what men love is nothing other than the good.

Οὕτω τοίνυν καὶ περὶ τὸν ἐρώτα. τὸ μὲν κεφάλαιον ἐστὶ πάσα ἤ τῶν ἄγαθών ἐπιθυμία καὶ τοῦ εὐδαιμονείν ὁ μέγιστός τε καὶ δολερὸς ἐρως παντὶ (205d).

The main point is this: every desire for good things or for happiness is ‘the supreme and treacherous love’ in everyone (tr. Cooper, ed.).

ὁ ἐρως τοῦ τὸ ἄγαθον αὐτῷ εἶναι ἄει (206a).

Love is of having the good forever.

But, it might be objected, there are other places where she says love is of beauty, using the genitive, i.e., using the construction ἔρως τοῦ καλοῦ. This is true, but in each instance she attributes the thought to Socrates. The following are the only instances where Diotima uses the construction ἔρως τοῦ καλοῦ:

whereas here in the Symposium we have the sense of an objective genitive. Dover writes that περὶ τὸ καλὸν simply means ‘of beauty,’ in this context.” Kenneth James Dover, Plato: Symposium (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1980), p. 142. Precedent for the use of ἔρως περὶ plus the accusative may be found at Laws 782e: ταῦτα δ’ ἐστὶν ἐδωδὴ μὲν καὶ πόσις εὐθὺς γενομένοις, ἢν περὶ ἀπασαν πάν ζώον ἐμφυτὸν ἐρωτα ἔχον… [From the moment of their birth men have a desire for food and drink. Every living creature has an instinctive love of satisfying this desire whenever it occurs…” (tr. Cooper, ed.).] Cf. Smp. 188d: Οὕτω πολλὴν καὶ μεγάλην, μάλλον δὲ πάσαν δύναμιν ἔχει συλλήβδησιν μὲν ὁ πάς Ἐρως, ὁ δὲ περὶ τἀγαθὰ μετὰ σωφροσύνης καὶ δικαιοσύνης ἀποτελούμενος καὶ παρ’ ἡμῖν καὶ παρὰ θεοῖς, οὕτως τὴν μεγίστην δύναμιν ἔχει... [So the whole of Love has very great, or rather, all power, but that completed about [of? for the sake of?] good things with temperance and justice, both among us and with the gods, this one has the greatest power...]

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έστι μὲν γὰρ δὴ τοιούτος καὶ οὕτω γεγονὼς ὁ Ἐρως, ἐστὶ δὲ τῶν καλῶν, ὡς σὺ φης. εἰ δὲ τις ἡμᾶς ἐρωτεύεται: Τί τῶν καλῶν ἐστιν ὁ Ἐρως, ὡς Σωκρατές τε καὶ Διοτίμα; ἢδε δὲ σαφῆστερον; ἔρα ὁ ἐρωτά τῶν καλῶν· τί ἐρα (204d);

So far I’ve been explaining the character and parentage of Love. Now, according to you, he is love of beautiful things. But suppose someone asks us, ‘Socrates and Diotima, what is the point of loving beautiful things?’ It’s clearer this way: ‘The lover of beautiful things has a desire; what does he desire (tr. Cooper, ed., rev.)’

έστιν γὰρ, ὡς Σωκρατές, ἔφη, ὡς τοῦ καλοῦ ὁ Ἐρως, ὡς σὺ οἶει. Ἀλλαί τι μὴν; Τῆς γεννήσεως καὶ τοῦ τόκου ἐν τῷ καλῷ (206e).

You see, Socrates, she said, Love is not of beauty, as you think it is. Well, what is it, then? Reproduction in beauty (tr. Cooper, ed., rev.).

Thus in the places where Diotima does say that love is of the beautiful in the genitive, she attributes the thought to Socrates. But it is difficult to know how much to make of

256 The following sentence differs slightly from these, but again the thought is attributed to Socrates: Ἀλλαί μὴν Ἐρωτα γε ομολογητικάς δι’ ἐνδεικτικῶν τῶν ἀγαθῶν καὶ καλῶν ἐπιθυμεῖν αὐτῶν τούτων ὧν ἐνδείκτικα ἐστιν (202d). [What about Love? You agreed he needs good and beautiful things, and that’s why he desires them – because he needs them (tr. Cooper, ed.).]

257 The following passages are problematic for the thesis that beauty is not the object of eros, and that the only object of eros is the eternal possession of the good: κατὰ δὲ αὐτὸν πατέρα ἐπισκυλῆς ἐστι τοις καλοῖς καὶ τοῖς ἀγαθοῖς (203d). [On Love’s] father’s side he is a schemer after beautiful and good things (tr. Cooper, ed., rev.).] διὰ ταύτα οὐ οἴμαι πάγκαλος ἐφαίνετο ὁ Ἐρως. καὶ γὰρ ἐστι τὸ ἐρωτεύματο τῷ ὡντι καλοῦ καὶ ἄβεβη καὶ τέλεους καὶ μακαριστὸς (204c). [I think that’s why Love struck you as beautiful in every way: because it is what is really beautiful and graceful that deserves to be loved, and this is perfect and highly blessed (tr. Cooper ed.).] τοῦτο δ’ ἐννοησάντα καταστήσατε πάντων τῶν καλῶν σωμάτων ἐραστήν, ἐνός δὲ τῷ σφόδρα τούτῳ χαλάσαι καταφρονήσαντα καὶ σμικρὸν ἡγησάμενον (210b). [When he grasps this, he must become a lover of all beautiful bodies, and he must think that this wild gaping after just one body is a small thing and despise it (tr. Cooper, ed.).] πολλοῦ γε δεί, ἐφη, ἀλλ’ οἴμαι υπὲρ ἀτεχνείας ἀθανασίας καὶ τοιαύτης δόξης εὐκλείους πάντας Πάντα ποιοῦσιν, ὡς ἄν αἰμινους ἄσις, τοιοῦτοι γὰρ θανάτου ἐρασίν (208d-e). [Far from it, she said. I believe that anyone will do anything for the sake of immortal virtue and the glorious fame that follows; and the better the people, the more they will do, for they are in love with immortality (tr. Cooper, ed.).] These are all the potential counter-examples I can find for my thesis. The first, second, and third could be taken as a problem for the view that Diotima thinks beauty is not the object of eros. The fourth indicates that love is of immortality, full stop, whereas I had said that love is of having the good forever. Answers could be given to all these counter-examples. For instance, in the first passage ἐπισκυλλία differs from love. Socrates may be a “schemer” after beautiful and good things without it being the case that love is of beauty. Love may desire beauty instrumentally, as it were, but the final goal of love is one’s own immortal possession of
this difference in expression, especially since, as we have noted, περὶ plus the accusative can be translated ‘of’ quite as much as if the object of the preposition were placed in the genitive. Perhaps the most that can be said for it is that it is distinctive.

These two factors, then – the fact that Diotima says love is not of beauty and the fact that she seems to express the relation of love to beauty differently from the way in which she expresses the relation of love to goodness – suggest a difference in Diotima’s (and therefore we assume Plato’s) mind between goodness and beauty. But the question is what are the philosophical grounds for this distinction? The philosophical ground must be that it is simply true that the primary object of all desire is goodness. This is so, as Diotima points out, because of the almost analytical connection between goodness for humans and happiness. Whereas it is not as clear that there is an analytical connection between happiness and beauty, or between goodness for humans and contemplation of the beautiful. Even before we know what the good is, we may know that once we have the good we will be happy. The question what the good is, is a different question.

Nowhere is the primary desire for goodness more clear than at Republic 505d, where Socrates states that in the case of beauty and justice people are satisfied with what is merely believed to be the case, but in the case of goodness everyone wants what is really the case, and not what is merely believed to be so:

Goodness. And in the second excerpt, in addition to the fact that she could be attributing the thought to Socrates, the sense of the sentence could be something like, “I think that’s why love appeared completely beautiful, for (you reasoned) that what is loved is truly beautiful and graceful and complete and blessed.” But even if Diotima is not as consistent as I might like, her explicit denial that love is of beauty, her statement that love is of nothing other than the good, her definition of the object of love as having the good forever, and her use of ἔρως περὶ τὸ καλὸν and ἔρως τοῦ ἁγαθοῦ – all these facts point toward the view that Diotima thinks the object of love is not beauty, but goodness, or rather having the good forever.
τόδε οὐ φανερόν, ὡς δίκαιαι μὲν καὶ καλὰ πολλοὶ ἀν ἐλοιντο τὰ δοκοῦντα, κἀν <εί> μὴ εἰπ, ὅμως ταύτα πράττειν καὶ κεκτῆσθαι καὶ δοκεῖν, ἀγαθὰ δὲ οὐδὲν ἕτερον ἐὰν δοκεῖ τὰ δοκοῦντα κτάσθαι, ἀλλὰ τὰ ἄντα ζητοῦσιν, τὴν δὲ δόξαν ἐνταῦθα ἤδη πᾶς ἀτιμάζει (R. 505d);

And isn’t this also clear? In the case of just and beautiful things, many people are content with what are believed to be so, even if they aren’t really so, and they act, acquire and form their own beliefs on that basis. Nobody is satisfied to acquire things that are merely believed to be good, however, but everyone wants the things that really are good and disdains mere belief here (tr. Cooper, ed.).

By ‘beautiful things’ here is probably meant the ways and customs of society, much as the author of the Dissoi Logoi speaks mostly about mores and customs when he turns to the subject of beauty. But here Plato is as clear as he can be that goodness and the goodness alone is the proper end and object of desire. Thus there seems to be a real distinction between goodness and beauty. And perhaps this should not surprise us, for beauty has never been simply a synonym for goodness – not in Ancient Greece nor in our own time. The two terms simply have different senses and connotations. It is always possible to question whether beauty is good and whether what is good is always beautiful. And this very possibility implies the two concepts are distinct.

Given this apparent identification and differentiation of goodness and beauty, how should the doctrine of the Symposium be understood? By itself, Diotima’s speech is complex and many factors contribute to the difficulty of finding a satisfactory interpretation. At one point it seems as if it is the possession of the good which makes us want to give birth (212a), and at other times it seems as though we give birth in order to achieve or attain the good (207a). But there is so much going on in the text that it almost seems as though Plato is trying to do too many things at once and that he ends up by
being less clear than he might have been. One cause of this seems to be that he tries to connect man’s desire for woman and childbirth with the intellectual apprehension of the highest principle and virtue. Matters are made even more difficult when Diotima tries to substitute the love of an older man for a young boy for the love of a man for a woman. The principle by which she tries to connect all these matters is that humans do not merely desire the good; they desire to have the good forever: “Love is of having the good forever (ὥ ἐρως τοῦ τὸ ἀγαθὸν αὐτῷ εἶναι ἀεί: 206a).” And in order to achieve this goal humans will have to try to achieve some sort of immorality. But while we might concede that children afford some kind of immortality, Diotima’s claim that giving one’s ideas to a young boy yields the same thing is significantly less plausible.

And when the lover finally ascends to the vision of the beautiful itself Diotima seems to say that the result will be the generation of true virtue in the lover himself, forgetting about the young boy.

Whether Plato is right or convincing that the same sort of thing is going on when one desires to bear children and when one becomes virtuous through the contemplation of the first principle is questionable. But the most significant part of Diotima’s speech is when she describes the final stage of the ascent of the higher mysteries, when the lover sees the beautiful ‘itself by itself’ and gives birth to true virtue.

Or haven’t you remembered, she said, that in that life alone, when he looks at beauty in the only way that beauty can be seen – only then will it become possible for him to give birth not to images of virtue (because he’s in touch with
no images), but to true virtue (because he is in touch with the true beauty) (tr. Cooper, ed.).

What exactly is the mechanism here? Why should seeing true beauty result in becoming truly virtuous? An answer can be given along the lines of our interpretation of goodness and beauty. What is supremely beautiful is unity. But also our good consists in becoming truly one, as is clear from Republic 443d-e (quoted below). Thus it is almost as if unity is contagious. The sight or mental apprehension of beauty or unity also causes us to become unified, and this is what Diotima means when she says that the sight of true beauty gives birth to true virtue.

In order to understand how this unification works, it is necessary to have a better grasp of what Plato means by unification when a man or a city becomes unified. It may, indeed, have been objected long ago that Plato cannot have identified the good with oneness precisely because everything that exists is one, but not everything is good. Plato must mean something more than mere numerical unity when he identifies goodness and unity. What he means, evidently, is that a man becomes truly unified when all his parts perform their function properly such that the whole is harmonized.

μὴ ἔσαντα τάλλοτρα πράττειν ἕκαστον ἐν αὐτῷ μηδὲ πολυπραγμονεὶν πρὸς ἄλλα τὰ ἐν τῇ ψυχῇ γένη, ἄλλα τῷ ὅντι τὰ οἰκεία εὐ θέμενον καὶ ἀφεντα αὐτὸν αὐτοῦ καὶ κοσμήσαντα καὶ φιλον γενόμενον ἕαυτῷ καὶ συναφόσαντα τρία ὅντα, ὥσπερ ὄρους τρεῖς ἁρμονίας ἀτεχνῶς, νεάτης τε καὶ υπάτης καὶ μέσης, καὶ εἰ ἄλλα ἄττα μεταξὺ τυγχάνει ὅντα, πάντα ταῦτα συνδήσαντα καὶ παντάπασιν ἕνα γενόμενον ἐκ πολλῶν, σώφρονα καὶ ἴμικομένον (R. 443c-e).

One who is just does not allow any part of himself to do the work of another part or allow the various classes within him to meddle with each other. He regulates well what is really his own and rules himself. He puts himself in order, is his own friend, and harmonizes the three parts of himself like three limiting notes in
a musical scale – high, low, middle. He binds together those parts and any others there may be in between, and from having been many things he becomes entirely one, moderate and harmonious (tr. Cooper, ed.).

And the same goes for the city. Of course any city is numerically one, but only that city is truly one in Plato’s sense where each part does its proper work, such that there is harmony and order throughout the whole.

In the Symposium we are not told how seeing the beautiful unifies the subject, but some sort of account can be seen in the ascent of the higher mysteries. The first great step in the ascent is when the lover realizes that the beauty of physical bodies is all the same.

ἐὰν όρθως ἡγῆται ὁ ἡγούμενος, ἐνὸς αὐτὸν σώματος ἐρᾶν καὶ ἐνταύθα γεννᾶν λόγους καλούς, ἐπειτα δὲ αὐτὸν κατανοῆσαι ὅτι τὸ κάλλος τὸ ἐπὶ ὀρθῶν σώματι τῷ ἐπὶ ἐπτέρῳ σώματι ἄδελφόν ἐστι, καὶ εἰ δεὶ διώκειν τὸ ἐπὶ εἰδει καλὸν, πολλὴ ἄνοια μὴ ὅχι ἐν τε καὶ ταῦταν ἰγείοθαι τὸ ἐπὶ πᾶσιν τοῖς σώμασι κάλλος· τοῦτο δ’ ἐννοήσαντα καταστήναι πάντων τῶν καλῶν σωμάτων ἑραστήν, ἐνὸς δὲ τῷ σφόδρᾳ τούτῳ χαλάσαι καταφρονήσαντα καὶ σμικρὸν ἤγησάμενον (Smp. 210a-b).

First, if the leader leads aright, he should love one body and beget beautiful ideas there; then he should realize that the beauty of any one body is brother to the beauty of any other and that if he is to pursue beauty of form he’d be very foolish not to think that the beauty of all bodies is one and the same. When he grasps this, he must become a lover of all beautiful bodies, and he must think that this wild gaping after just one body is a small thing and despise it (tr. Cooper, ed.).

Diotima gives no explanation how the lover will realize that the beauty of one body is akin to the beauty of any other body, and indeed this might seem to fly in the face of experience to the extent we think that the beauty of any body is always different from that of another, and that beauty lies precisely in what makes the beloved different from the others. Despite the lack of explanation and the bare assertion that this simply must
happen if the lover is to pursue the higher mysteries properly, we can agree that it would take a considerable mental leap to reach the conclusion that the beauty of bodies was all the same, and in this mental leap may lie the first great step towards psychic unification. The mental strength required to see all physical beauty as basically the same and thus not to be overly impressed by the beauty of any one particular body, may already imply a considerable identification of the lover with his mind, and this identification may be the first step towards the unification of his soul. Certainly Socrates stresses the necessity to identify oneself with the mind in the Phaedo when he explains what he means by saying that philosophy is a practice for death (Phd. 64a).  

The second major step in the ascent is when Diotima says that the lover must find the beauty in people’s souls more valuable (τιμιώτερον) than that of their bodies (210b). Again, no explanation is given how this will occur; we are simply told it must (δέι, from 210a4) happen. But perhaps the idea is that once one has begun to identify with the mind then the minds or souls of others become more significant. One begins to recognize that one’s true being and self resides in the soul and especially the mind, and therefore it is possible to see that what is truly essential about another person is his or her mind or soul as well. We see that what is important about us is our soul and

\[258\] Εἰς δέ γε θεών γένος μὴ φιλοσοφήσαντι καὶ παντελῶς καθαρῶς ἀπίωντι οὐθεὶς ἁμαβαθεῖν ἄλλῳ ἂ τῷ φιλομαθεί. ἀλλὰ τούτων ἐνεκα, οὐ ἑταίρει Σιμμία τε καὶ Κέβης, οἱ ὅρθως φιλοσόφοι ἀπέχονται τῶν κατὰ τὸ σῶμα ἐπιθυμιῶν ἀπασῶν καὶ καρτεροῦσι καὶ οὐ παραδιδοὺσιν αὐταῖς ἑαυτοὺς οὐτὶ οἰκοφθορίαν τε καὶ πενίαν φοβοῦμενοι, ὡσπερ οἱ πολλοὶ καὶ φιλοχρήματοι (Phd. 82b-c). [No one may join the company of the gods who has not practiced philosophy and is not completely pure when he departs from life, no one but the lover of learning. It is for this reason, my friends Simmias and Cebes, that those who practice philosophy in the right way keep away from all bodily passions, master them and do not surrender themselves to them (tr. Cooper, ed.).]
especially our minds and therefore draw the same conclusions about others. The complexity which can be grasped by the mind and therefore unified is certainly far greater than that of the body, and therefore also the beauty of the mind may also be far greater. The unifying power of the rest of the ascent may lie in the fact that it requires great study. One’s whole life will need to be directed more and more toward intellectual study as one gets closer and closer to seeing true beauty itself through seeing the unity of beauty behind laws, sciences, and the realm of the forms itself.

To return now to the sameness and difference of goodness and beauty in the *Symposium*, all persons desire their own good, but for the most part during their lives they do not know what that is.²⁵⁹ Beauty is one of the few things which tells us or, if we accept the doctrine of the *Phaedrus*, reminds us what goodness is – it is unity. But further, the very sense of beauty seems to have a unifying effect on us for, according to Diotima, when we see beauty we desire to give birth (206d). We desire to give birth because only in this way can the mortal nature achieve any kind of immortality, and as we know, the ultimate object of love is to possess the good forever. But it would not make sense to desire immortality without having the good. This is why it must be the case that the desire for immortality comes after the possession of the good. It also makes sense that the sight of beauty should be some kind of good because the sight of beauty

²⁵⁹ Ὄ δὴ διώκει μὲν ἅπασα ψυχὴ καὶ τούτου ἕνεκα πάντα πράττει, ἀπομαντευομένη τι εἶναι, ἀποροῦσα δὲ καὶ οὐκ ἔχουσα λαβεῖν ικανῶς τι ποτ’ ἐστιν οὐδὲ πίστει χρῆσασθαι μονίμῳ οἷα καὶ περὶ τάλλα, διὰ τούτο δὲ ἀποτυγχάνει καὶ τῶν ἄλλων εἰ τι όφελος ἐγ’ (R. 505d-e) [Every soul pursues the good and does whatever it does for its sake. It divines that the good is something but it is perplexed and cannot adequately grasp what it is or acquire the sort of stable beliefs it has about other things, and so it misses the benefit, if any, that even those other things may give (tr. Cooper, ed.).]
usually causes pleasure of some kind. In the *Philebus* Plato is willing to admit that some pleasures are good, at least for process-bound beings like us, and these come from the apprehension of things which are truly beautiful, such as the straight or the round and the geometrical shapes constructed from these (*Phlb. 51c*).

Thus it seems beauty not only tells or reminds us what goodness is, the apprehension of it also makes us good to some extent. And if we are to continue in our identification of goodness and unity this must mean that the apprehension of beauty also unifies us to some extent. Perhaps it begins only by unifying one of our senses, such as sight or hearing, but more sophisticated kinds of beauty might call upon the mind to discover the unity in the complexity. The possession of some goodness and unity provided by the apprehension of beauty causes us to seek to go on living and in the end to seek immortality and at the same time to achieve greater unity by discovering more beauty until finally complete unity is achieved in the vision of beauty itself.

4.1.1. Goodness, Beauty, and Mathematics:

Another fact which points to a separation in Plato of the concepts of goodness and beauty is the way in which Plato seems to go through beauty to connect goodness with mathematical ideas. For instance, to return once again to *Timaeus 87c*, Timaeus states:

\[\pi\alpha\nu\ \delta\eta\ \tau o\ \acute{a}gath\circ\nu\ \kappa a\lambda o\nu,\ \tau o\ \delta e\ \kappa a\lambda o\nu\ \ovnu\ \acute{a}m\acute{e}t\rho o\nu\ \kappa a\i i\ \acute{z}h\i o\nu\ \ovnu\ \tau o\ \tau oio\upsilon\tau o\nu\ \acute{e}so\mu\acute{e}m\nu\nu\ \sigma\acute{u}m\acute{m}\acute{e}t\rho o\nu\ \theta e\tau\iota\upsilon\nu.\]
Now all that is good is beautiful, and what is beautiful is not ill-proportioned. Hence we must take it that if a living thing is to be in good condition, it will be well-proportioned (tr. Cooper, ed.).

We have already seen this passage several times, but for difference reasons. The first time we saw it was as a proof-text for the ‘if good then beautiful’ thesis. Now we highlight it to show how Plato seems to use beauty as a bridge between goodness and the mathematical notion of measure. Beauty for Plato seems, at least initially, to be more securely connected with measure than goodness is, but then beauty is also strongly connected with goodness. There are many places where Plato connects beauty with mathematical notions. Among the more prominent examples we could mention are *Philebus* 25d-6b, 51c, 64d-6b, and *Timaeus* 53e-4a. It may also be worth quoting *Philebus* 64e, just to reveal the similarity between this passage and *Timaeus* 87c:

Νῦν δὴ καταπέφευγεν ἡ τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ δύναμις εἰς τὴν τοῦ καλοῦ φύσιν· μετριότης γὰρ καὶ συμμετρία κάλλος δήπου καὶ ἀρετὴ πανταχοῦ συμβαίνει γίγνεσθαι (*Phlb*. 64e).

But now we notice that the force of the good has fled for refuge to the nature of the beautiful. For measure and proportion turn out everywhere to be beauty and excellence (tr. Cooper, ed., rev.).

Here again we have language connecting goodness to beauty and beauty to mathematical notions. The nature of the beautiful (τὴν τοῦ καλοῦ φύσιν) seems especially connected with measure and proportion (μετριότης γὰρ καὶ συμμετρία). The significance of this for our purpose now is that these passages also seem to suggest a difference between goodness and beauty, for if goodness has to flee for refuge to the nature of the beautiful, then it would seem to be something other than beauty, at least it seems distinguishable from beauty. Likewise, the fact that at *Timaeus* 87c goodness is
connected with measure through beauty seems to suggest that beauty is somehow closer to measure and thus again distinguishable from goodness. These texts then seem to provide further evidence of a difference between goodness and beauty in Plato.

4.2. Goodness, Beauty, and Pleasure:

The difference between beauty and goodness in Plato reintroduces the possibility that they could differ extensionally, even if there is no evidence that they do in the text. The connection between the experience of beauty and pleasure raises the question whether it wouldn’t be best to describe beauty as a subset of the good. A case could be made that Plato thinks pure pleasure is a good, even if it is not a very valuable one. If pure pleasure is good, we could ask whether it is beautiful. To answer this question it is necessary to distinguish between the cause of the pure pleasure and the pure pleasure itself. In the *Philebus* one cause of the pure pleasure is pure beauty (*Philb. 51b-e*), but that is not the question. What we are asking is whether the pure pleasure itself is beautiful, and it must be admitted that an answer is not immediately forthcoming. Prior to looking at the evidence in Plato’s text, it would seem pleasure is not beautiful because it is not the sort of thing to which aesthetic predicates apply. But if it is good then we have a counterexample to the thesis that everything good is beautiful, or ‘if good then beautiful.’
Plato seems to espouse different attitudes toward pleasure at different times in his dialogues.\textsuperscript{260} In the \textit{Protagoras}, as we have seen, Socrates secures agreement that pleasure is the good (\textit{Prt}. 351c) and then goes on to show that the art of measurement is required in order to maximize pleasure throughout one’s life. However, this view seems explicitly rejected at \textit{Phaedo} 68e-69a, where measuring one pleasure over another constitutes only \textit{popular} moderation. Plato seems to think that in general pleasure is a bad thing; it binds persons to their bodies (\textit{Phd}. 83d, \textit{Tim}. 86b-c), and it has more power than anything else to deprive them of correct beliefs (\textit{R}. 430a). But he also appears to admit that some kinds of pleasure might be good. For instance at \textit{Gorgias} 499e Socrates asks,

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\text{ἡ ἄρα τούτων αἳ μὲν ἴψιοιαν ποιοῦσαι ἐν τῷ σώματι, ἡ ἰσχὺν ἡ ἄλλην τινά ἀρετήν τοῦ σώματος, αὐταὶ μὲν ἄγαθαι, αἳ δὲ ἄναντία τούτων κακαί;}
\]

Do some of these [pleasures] produce health in the body, or strength, or some other bodily excellence, and are these pleasures good, while those that produce the opposites of these things are bad (tr. Cooper, ed.)?

And at \textit{Republic} 584e-587a we get an argument that the pleasures of the mind are the only true and real pleasures, whereas those of the lower parts of the soul are less real. The most extended treatment of pleasure is in the \textit{Philebus}, but even here Plato seems unable to decide whether some pleasures are good or whether none are. Socrates’ initial view is that only knowledge is the good (\textit{Philb}. 11b-c), but then he admits that no one would chose to have only knowledge without any pleasure (\textit{Philb}. 20b-c). The best human life, therefore, must be some kind of mixture of both pleasure and knowledge. In

\textsuperscript{260} For a brief summary of Plato’s views on pleasure, see Tarrant, \textit{The Hippias Major Attributed to Plato: With Introductory Essay and Commentary}, pp. lxviii-lxxv.
order to determine which pleasures should be part of the best life, he distinguishes between pure and impure pleasures, along the lines of Republic 584e-587a (Phlb. 51a-53c). The pure pleasures are then given fifth place in the final ranking of the elements in the good life at Philebus 66a ff. This would seem to indicate that he thinks the pure pleasures are good or at least part of the good. But at Philebus 53c-e he argues that pleasure is not good at all, on the ground that it is a process of becoming, whereas the good belongs to being:

ΣΩ. Ἀρ’ οὖν ἡδονή γε εἶπερ γένεσις ἐστιν, εἰς ἀλλὴν ἢ τὴν τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ μοίραν αὐτὴν τιθέντες ὅρθως θησαμεν; ΠΡΩ. Ὀρθότατα μὲν οὖν. ΣΩ. Οὕκοιν ὅπερ ἀρχόμενος εἶπον τοῦτον τοῦ λόγου, τῷ μυνώςαν τῆς ἡδονῆς πέρι τὸ γένεσιν μὲν, οὐσίαν δὲ μηδ’ ἠντικοῦν αὐτὴς εἶναι, χάριν ἔχειν δὲιδήλον γὰρ ὑπὸ σύντος τῶν φασικόντων ἡδονῆς ἀγαθὸν εἶναι καταγελᾶ (Phlb. 54d).

Soc: But if pleasure really is a process of generation, will we be placing it correctly, if we put it in a class different from that of the good? Pro: That too is undeniable. Soc: It is true, then, as I said at the beginning of this argument, that we ought to be grateful to the person who indicated to us that there is always only generation of pleasure and that it has no being whatsoever. And it is obvious that he will just laugh at those who claim that pleasure is good (tr. Cooper, ed.).

And, in fact, Socrates drops hints throughout the Philebus that he is never completely in agreement that the best life requires pleasure. For example, at 22c he states that his own reason may not be able to be identified with the good, but that true and divine reason can.261 And at 55a he seems to say that the best life would be one with neither pleasure

261 ΣΩ. Ως μὲν τοίνυν τὴν γε Φιλήβου θεόν οὐ δεῖ διανοεῖσθαι ταύτων καὶ τάγαθον, ἰκανός εἰρήσθαι μοι δοκεῖ. ΦΙ. Οὔ δέ γὰρ ὁ σῶς νοῦς, ὡς Σώκρατες, ἐστι τάγαθον, ἀλλ’ ἔξει ποι ταῦτα ἐγκλῆματα. ΣΩ. Τάχ’ ἄν, ὡς Φιλήβε, ὃ’ ἐμὸς- οὐ μὲντοι τὸν γε ἀληθινὸν ἁμα καὶ θείον οἶμαι νοῦν, ἀλλ’ ἄλλως πας ἔχειν (Phlb. 22c). [Soc: Enough has been said, it seems to me to prove that Philebus’ goddess and the good cannot be regarded as one. Phil: Nor is your reason the good, Socrates, and the same complaint applies to it. Soc: It may apply to my reason, Philebus, but
nor pain. All these facts may point to the conclusion that the only reason Socrates accepts that the human good includes pleasure is because humans belong to the realm of becoming. Since pleasure is a process it belongs to the realm of becoming and therefore, strictly speaking, it cannot be said to be good. But since humans themselves belong to the realm of becoming – we have physical bodies and undergo change – pleasure may be said to be a good, not absolutely or in reality, but only for us.

The reason we are investigating pleasure is that it seems a prime candidate for something which could be considered good but not beautiful. We raised serious questions as to whether Plato ever truly believes it is good, but even in those places where he says it is good we may wonder what sort of predication he is using. Readers of Vlastos are familiar with the notion of “Pauline predication,” according to which the statement ‘justice is pious’ is taken to mean a just thing or person is pious. Something of the same sort seems to be going on in some of the instances where Plato states that some pleasures are good. Take, for instance, the passage already quoted at Gorgias 499e, where Socrates states that some pleasures produce health and strength in the body and that these may be said to be good. Surely he does not actually mean that the pleasures

certainly not to the true, the divine reason, I should think. It is in quite a different condition (tr. Cooper, ed.).]  
262 ΣΩ. Τὴν δὴ φθορὰν και γένεσιν αἵροῖτ ἂν τις τοῦθ’ αἵρούμενος, ἀλλ’ οὐ τὸν τρίτον ἐκείνον βίον, τὸν ἐν ὑπὲρ σωφρόσυνην, φρονεῖν δὲ ἐν [παθητόν] ὡς οἶον τε καθαρώτατα. ΠΡΩ. Πολλῆ τε, ὡς έσείς, ὡς Σωκράτες, ἀλογία συμβαίνει γένεσθαι, ἐάν τις τὴν ἱδονὴν ἢς ἀγαθὸν ἢς τιθήναι (Phlb. 55a). [Soc: So whoever makes this choice would choose generation and destruction in preference to that third life which consists of neither pleasure nor pain, but is a life of thought in the purest degree possible. Pro: So a great absurdity seems to appear, Socrates, if we posit pleasure as good (tr. Cooper, ed.).]  
themselves cause health and strength of body; rather, he must mean that the activities which cause these pleasures cause health and strength of body. Likewise, when he allows “necessary pleasures” into the mixed life at Philebus 62e, surely he does not mean that some pleasures are actually necessary; rather, he must mean that some activities which are pleasant are necessary, and since the activities, like eating and intercourse, must be admitted, so must the pleasures which accompany them.

In other places, however, Plato does seem to speak about pleasure itself, as opposed to its cause. One of these places is in the argument at the end of the Protagoras. There Plato states that pleasure itself is good or the good, as opposed to the activity which causes the pleasure:

Τί δή, ὦ Πρωταγόρα; μή καί σύ, ὡσπερ οί πολλοί, ἥδε’ ἀττα καλεῖς κακὰ καὶ ἄνιαρὰ ἀγαθὰ; ἐγὼ γὰρ λέγω, καθ’ ὁ ἥδεα ἐστίν, ἀρὰ κατὰ τούτῳ οὐκ ἀγαθά, μή εἰ τι ἀπ’ αὐτῶν ἀποβήσεται ἄλλο; καὶ αὖθις αὖ τὰ ἄνιαρὰ ἄσαντας οὐτῶς οὐ καθ’ ὃσον ἄνιαρα, κακὰ (Prt. 351c);

What, Protagoras? Surely you don’t, like most people, call some pleasant things bad and some painful things good? I mean, isn’t a pleasant thing good just insofar as it is pleasant, that is, if it results in nothing other than pleasure; and, on the other hand, aren’t painful things bad in the same way, just insofar as they are painful (tr. Cooper, ed.)?

Another such passage is at Philebus 52d-53c, where Socrates speaks about pleasures in relation to truth. Just as a small amount of pure white is more truly white than a larger amount of impure white, so a smaller amount of pure pleasure is more truly pleasure than a larger amount of pleasure mixed with pain. Here too Plato seems to be speaking about the pleasure itself as opposed to what causes it. But, most significantly, he actually calls the pure pleasure here beautiful as well!
Τί οὖν; οὐ δήπου πολλῶν δεισόμεθα παραδειγμάτων τοιούτων ἐπὶ τὸν τῆς ἡδονῆς πέρι λόγον, ἀλλὰ ἀρκεῖ νοεῖν ἣμῖν αὐτόθεν ὡς ἀρα καὶ σύμπασα ἡδονὴ σμικρὰ μεγάλης καὶ ὀλίγη πολλῆς, καθαρὰ λύπης, ἡδίων καὶ ἀληθεστέρα καὶ καλλίων γίγνοιτ' ἂν (Phlb. 54b-c).

Well now, we don’t need to run through many more examples to justify our account of pleasure, but this example suffices to prove that in the case of pleasure, too, every small and insignificant pleasure that is unadulterated by pain will turn out to be pleasanter, truer, and more beautiful than a greater quantity and amount of the impure kind (tr. Cooper, ed.).

Despite the fact that pure pleasure has some truth and therefore beauty, it still gets fifth and last place in the final ranking of the ingredients of the good life at 66a ff. Even at its best Plato thinks pleasure is the least valuable ingredient of the good life, and strictly speaking it is not valuable at all in itself, but only for embodied humans because they are process-bound. At least if we go by the Philebus, it seems Plato does not think pleasure is good or a kind of good at all, except in the qualified sense that it is a good for process-bound creatures like ourselves. Thus it is doubtful pleasure can pose a counterexample to the thesis that ‘if good then beautiful.’ But we might still think of other subjective conditions, for example, happiness: surely happiness is a legitimate good for Plato in that it is something which humans correctly desire. Thinking along these lines might be the impetus for saying that the beautiful is a subset of the good and that there must be things, especially subjective states, which are good but with respect to which it makes no sense to say they are beautiful. And it is possible to make a strong case that beauty is a subset of the good in Plato. First, there is the supremacy of the Form of the good at Republic VI. Then there are the three Forms – beauty, proportion, and truth – by which the good must be captured at Philebus 65a. One could also point to
Republic V (452d-e), where Plato says that it is silly to take as a standard for what is beautiful anything other than the good. And then there is Phaedo 97b-98d, where Socrates states that the sort of explanation he wanted was a teleological explanation in terms of the good. These and other passages might well be taken to show the supremacy of the good, and that beauty is somehow subordinate to it.

The danger of taking beauty to be a species of the good is that it leads to the conclusion that beauty is somehow subordinate to the good, and that therefore the primary task is to discover what Plato means by goodness. But, despite all the above-mentioned passages, it seems rather that Plato took his notion of the good – the true good – from his notion of beauty, that beauty tells us what true goodness is. A great deal of the space of his dialogues is taken up trying to prove that things like justice, wisdom, and moderation are what is truly good, all of which are difficult, not obviously rewarding, and certainly separated from pleasure, at least to the agent. But all of these things are certainly beautiful. In the search for the good we are immediately tempted to look within ourselves, into our own internal, private fears and desires.264 But such a procedure is liable to fail because of its inherently perspectival nature. It seems to be Plato’s view that if there is a true answer to the question “what is good?” it must be something which is able to be discovered and agreed upon by all. The truths of mathematics are not true for one person but not for another; they are equally true for all who are able to understand them. This shows us the similarity between truth and beauty, two terms which are so often found together in Plato. Truth, like beauty, is

inherently unhidden in the sense that nothing is true for one person but not for another; what is true is, like beauty, tied to appearance in the sense that it is out in the open for everyone to see equally. Now we can see what is really meant by saying that true goodness is beauty. True goodness is the sort which, like truth itself, is open, visible, and able to be agreed upon by everyone. Anything which is not so open and universally available could have no claim to truth and thus a fortiori no claim to be true goodness.

But then what are we to make of all those passages mentioned earlier which together seem to form such a strong case that beauty is only a subset or species of goodness? One could certainly use Philebus 65a as a proof text in an argument that beauty is a species of goodness. After all, we are told outright that beauty is one of the three forms by which the good must be grasped. Since he uses the word ἰδέα there, which in Plato is thought to be usually interchangeable with εἶδος and which can be translated ‘form’ or ‘species,’ we could argue that Plato is explicitly saying here that beauty is a species of the good. But if beauty is a species of the good then this passage also states that proportion and truth are species of the good. We might perhaps understand how beauty could be a kind of good, but what sense does it make to say that proportion and truth are kinds or species of good? What are the differentia of the genus, good, which would result in the species truth and proportion? We might, indeed, understand how Plato would want to say that beauty, proportion, and truth are good things, but surely there is a difference between being good and being a kind or species of the good. Wisdom may indeed be good or the only human good, but it does not necessarily follow that it is a kind or species of good. A legitimate distinction, on the
other hand, which could divide goodness qua genus into species could be the distinction between instrumental and intrinsic goods (R. 357b-c).

Thus we see that though pleasure might be considered a counterexample to the thesis that everything good is also beautiful, it is probable Plato does not think pleasure a good in reality. At best, it seems he thinks it is a qualified good: to the extent humans are embodied they are process-bound, and therefore since pleasure is either a process or accompanies processes, it could be a good for humans. Nor does it seem there is sufficient reason for thinking beauty a species of the good. But even if beauty were a species of good, it would be an odd sort of species, for it would apply both to the genus of which it is a species and to all the other species of its genus. That goodness itself is supremely beautiful we know from Republic VI (508e). And if Philebus 65a is taken to prove beauty a species of goodness then beauty applies also to the other species of goodness listed there, namely proportion and truth, for surely no one would want to maintain that Plato does not think what is proportionate or true is beautiful as well. Thus if beauty were a species of goodness for Plato, it would be a strange sort of species.

4.3.0. The Instantiation of Beauty:

Further difficulties for the thesis of the coextension of beauty and goodness arise from the instantiation of beauty. First among these is the question whether anything in the physical world can truly be considered beautiful. Aristotle tells us that in his youth Plato was influenced by Heraclitean thought, and that these beliefs became part of his
philosophy throughout his life. This is certainly borne out in Plato’s dialogues. We may recall that Hippias’ first attempt to answer Socrates’ question, “What is beauty?” in the *Hippias Major* is to say that a beautiful girl is beautiful. Part of Socrates’ refutation of this answer is to show Hippias that in fact any girl is no more beautiful than ugly. His reasoning is that just as the most beautiful pot is ugly when compared to a beautiful girl, so a beautiful girl is ugly when compared to a goddess.

If you put the class of girls together with the class of gods, won’t the same thing happen as happened when the class of pots was put together with that of girls? Won’t the most beautiful girl seem ugly (tr. Cooper, ed., rev.)? The result according to Socrates is that when asked “What is the beautiful?” Hippias answered with something that is no more beautiful than ugly.

Then, he’ll say, when you were asked for the beautiful, do you answer with something that turns out to be no more beautiful than ugly, as you say yourself? Apparently, I’ll say (tr. Cooper, ed., rev).

The same sort of reasoning was apparently supposed to apply to the instantiations of all the forms: nothing is absolutely tall, but only taller than one thing and smaller than another. But if nothing in the physical world can be considered beautiful, in what sense can the philosophic journey begin with the sight of beauty? The answer to this question takes us into the theory of forms and their instantiations. But it is safe to say

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265 *Phd.* 74b, R. 523e.
that Plato does not conclude from this Heraclitean line of reasoning that therefore it is illegitimate or meaningless to say that anything in the world is tall or beautiful. We simply have to recognize these attributions as abbreviated comparative attributions. That is, when, for instance, we say that a certain tree is tall, we do not mean, or it would be false to say, that it is absolutely tall; rather, we mean that it is taller than the average tree. Likewise, when we say that a person is beautiful, we do not or should not mean that she is absolutely beautiful, but rather that she is more beautiful than most. Thus it is possible to retain the Heraclitean insight, and yet still be able to say that certain things in the world are beautiful and others are not.

4.3.1. The Instantiation of Beauty and the Phaedrus:

But, in addition to the general problem of instantiation of forms, Plato seems to say that the form of beauty is unique among forms in that it is the only one whose instantiations we can in some sense see with our eyes.

Now beauty, as I said, was radiant when it was among the other objects; and now that we have come here we grasp it sparkling through the clearest of our senses. For vision is the sharpest of our bodily senses, although it does not see wisdom. It would present a terribly powerful love if an image of wisdom came through our sight as clearly as beauty does, and the same goes for the other
objects of love. But now beauty alone has this privilege, to be the most clearly visible and the most loved (tr. Cooper, ed., rev.).

Now at least in the first line beauty must refer to the form of beauty, for it is said to have been “radiant when it was among those things” (μετ’ ἐκείνων τε ἐλαμπεν ὄν), and “those things” must refer to Justice, Moderation and the “other objects honored by souls” which some souls saw before being embodied (Phdr. 250b). But once embodied those souls are said to see not the form of beauty itself but its image. This is clear from Socrates’ reference to the image of wisdom in the next line: ἐαυτῆς ἐναργὲς εἴδωλον, Phdr. 250d. But if Socrates is not saying that we see the form of beauty but only images or instantiations of it, how does this differ from the way we see instantiations of any other form? After all, surely we can see the instantiations, or what Plato calls here “images,” of the form of man or horse just as well as we can see those of beauty.

In order to answer this question we must determine the range of forms being spoken of here in the Phaedrus. At first one might think that it is all the forms, because Socrates states that the souls which manage to see “outside heaven (ἐξω τοῦ οὐρανοῦ, Phdr. 247c)” see Reality and Truth. But when Socrates says beauty is unique for its

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266 Justice and self-control do not shine out through their images down here, and neither do the other objects honored by souls: δικαίωσινς μὲν οὖν καὶ σωφροσύνης καὶ ὡσα ἄλλα τίμια ψυχας οὐκ ἔνεστι φέγγος οὐδὲν ἐν τοῖς τῆς ὁμοιώμασιν: Phdr. 250b.

267 ἡ γὰρ αἰχμαλωσίας τε καὶ ἀστυχμάτως καὶ ἀγαθῆς ἀνθρώπου οὐσία ὄντως οὐσία, ψυχῆς κυβερνήτη μόνον θεου κακῆς, περὶ ἴν τὸ τῆς ἀληθοῦς ἐπιστήμης γένος, τούτων ἔχει τὸν τόπον, ἀτ’ οὖν ἄνθρωπο διάνοια νῦ τε καὶ ἐπιστήμη ἀκραῖτω τρεφομένη, καὶ ἀπάθης ψυχῆς ὡσα ἄν μέλη τὸ προσήκον δέξασθαι, ἴδον διὰ χρόνον τὸν ἄγαπα τε καὶ θεωροῦσα τὰληθῆ τρέφεται καὶ εὐπαθεῖ, ἔως ἂν κύκλῳ ἡ περιφέρεια εἰς ταύτων περιενέγκη (Phdr. 247c-d). [What is in this place is without color and without shape and without solidity, a being that really is what it is, the subject of all true knowledge, visible only to intelligence, the soul’s steersman. Now a god’s mind is nourished by intelligence and pure knowledge, as is the mind of any soul that is concerned to take in what is appropriate to it, and so it is delighted at last to be seeing what is real and
instantiations being visible to the body’s eye, he limits the range of its uniqueness to those things “honored by souls.”

δικαιοσύνης μὲν οὖν καὶ σωφροσύνης καὶ ὄσα ἄλλα τίμη τύχας οὐκ ἔνεστι φέγγος οὐδὲν ἐν τοῖς τῇ δε ὀρμομασίν, ἀλλὰ δὲ ἀμυδρῶν ὀργάνων μόνης αὐτῶν καὶ ὁλίγοι ἐπὶ τὰς εἰκόνας ἱόντες θεώνται τὸ τοῦ ἐκασθέντος γένους· κάλλος δὲ τότ’ ἦν ἵδειν λαμπρόν, ὅτε σὺν εὐδαίμονι χορῷ μακαρίαν ὀψι καὶ θέαν, ἑπόμενοι μετὰ μὲν Διὸς ἡμεῖς, ἄλλοι δὲ μετ’ ἄλλου θεῶν, εἰδὸν τε καὶ ἐτελούντο τῶν τελετῶν ἣν θέμις λέγειν μακαριωτάτην (Phdr. 250b).

Justice and moderation do not shine out through their images down here, and neither do the other objects honored by souls; the senses are so murky that only a few people are able to make out, with difficulty, the original of the likenesses they encounter here. But beauty was radiant to see at that time when the souls, along with the glorious chorus (we were with Zeus, while others followed other gods) saw that blessed and spectacular vision and were ushered into the mystery that we may rightly call the most blessed of all (tr. Cooper, ed.).

What these other things honored by souls are, Plato does not say, but we may guess from the other things mentioned – namely justice, moderation, knowledge (247d), and beauty (250b-e, 254b) – that they would also include at least the remaining virtue, courage (wisdom may be included at 247d in knowledge), and goodness itself. If this is the range of the forms under discussion then it is true that beauty is the only one of these which we say can be seen or sensed with the physical senses. Beauty is the only thing “honored by souls” which can be seen. In this we may begin to see the special role beauty performs in Plato: it is the only reminder to the soul of its true desiderata which comes through the senses.268 Plato notes other ways one might begin philosophical inquiry, for example the “callers” (παρακαλοῦντα) in Republic VII (523c), but these call

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268 “The ontological function of the beautiful is to bridge the chasm between the ideal and the real.” Gadamer, “The Relevance of the Beautiful,” p. 15.
the soul by puzzling it, not by providing it with immediate goodness. But to return to
the point: if all Plato means is that beauty is the only (proper) desideratum of the soul
which can be sensed by the physical senses, then certainly this is true and there is no
difficulty about the fact that we can also see instantiations of the forms of man and horse
just as well.

4.3.2. The Instantiation of Beauty and the Beautiful Evil:

But the uniqueness of beauty in this way among the soul’s desiderata still raises
the possibility that the extension of beauty differs from that of goodness. And, indeed,
one of the greatest reasons for thinking beauty and goodness are not coextensive is
precisely that something may appear beautiful, and yet not be good. A prime example of
this in Plato is the juxtaposition in the Symposium of Socrates and Alcibiades: Socrates is
reputed to be good but not beautiful and Alcibiades beautiful but not good. But we have
already seen how easily Plato solves this problem, which looms so large over the Greek
conscience, in the Alcibiades. It only requires making a simple distinction: helping a
friend in battle is beautiful insofar as it is courageous, but bad insofar as it results in
injury (Alc. 115b ff.). Likewise, Socrates is ugly and good in different senses: he is
reputed to be ugly in body or in physical appearance but he is good in soul, while
Alcibiades is beautiful in body but ugly in soul. Thus the problem of the beautiful evil is
remarkably easy to solve, despite the persistence of the view that a person like
Alcibiades constitutes a counterexample to the thesis that what is beautiful is good.
But the question remains whether Alcibiades’ body is good because or to the extent it is beautiful. To answer this question we must understand what Plato means when he or Socrates states that a body is beautiful. We know already from the *Philebus* that proportion will be crucial for beauty, and this is confirmed at *Timaeus* 87c. But in this proportionality also lies the body’s goodness, for as Timaeus makes clear it is when the body lacks proportion that it can no longer perform its function properly:

οἷον οὖν ὑπερσκελὲς ἢ καὶ τινα ἐτέραν ὑπέρεξιν ἀμετρον ἑαυτῷ τι σῶμα ὅν ἀμα μὲν αἰσχρόν, ἀμα δ’ ἐν τῇ κοινωνίᾳ τῶν πόνων πολλοὺς μὲν κόπους, πολλά δὲ σπάσματα καὶ διὰ τὴν παραφορότητα πτώματα παρέχον μυρίων κακῶν αἴτιον ἑαυτῷ (87e).

Imagine a body which lacks proportion because its legs are too long or something else is too big. It is not only ugly but also causes itself no end of troubles. As its parts try to cooperate to get its tasks done it frequently tires itself out or gets convulsive, or, because it lurches this way and that, it keeps falling down (tr. Cooper, ed.).

Thus Plato would say that a body is good because or to the extent that it is beautiful, and therefore that Alcibiades’ body is good if it is beautiful. But an argument could also be made that he thinks Socrates physically more beautiful than Alcibiades – and not just in soul. For, among the different proportions that there are, the most important for Plato is that between the soul and the body:

οὐδ’ ἑννοούμεν, ὅτι ψυχὴν ἱσχυρὰν καὶ πάντῃ μεγάλην ἀσθενέστερον καὶ ἑλαττων εἰδός ὅταν ὅχη, καὶ ὅταν αὐ τούναντιον συμπαγήτον τούτω, οὐ καλὸν ὅλον τὸ ἔως—ἀσύμμετρον γὰρ ταῖς μεγίσταις συμμετρίαις—τὸ δὲ ἐναντίως ἔχον πάντων θεαμάτων τῷ δυναμένῳ καθοράν κάλλιστον καὶ ἐρασμιώτατον (Ti. 87d).

Nor do we realize that when a vigorous and excellent soul is carried about by a too frail and puny frame, or when the two are combined in the opposite way, the living thing as a whole lacks beauty, because it is lacking in the most important of proportions. That living thing, however, which finds itself in the opposite
condition is, for those who are able to observe it, the most beautiful, the most desirable of all things to behold (tr. Cooper, ed.).

Much the same idea is expressed at Republic 402d. Thus while Alcibiades’ body was beautiful and to that extent well-proportioned and strong, it may well be that Alcibiades was not the most beautiful sight for Plato, since his (Alcibiades’) soul is not strong and healthy in proportion to his body. On the other hand, given his definition of beauty, it may be that he did not concur in the popular view that Socrates was ugly, for the Symposium itself provides evidence of Socrates’ almost superhuman physical fortitude (Smp. 219e-220d). If all that Plato means by a person’s beauty is that the strength of body match the strength of soul, one could argue that he thought Socrates was physically beautiful as well.

4.3.3. The Instantiation of Beauty and Mathematics:

Thus physical beauty does not seem to pose the threat to Plato’s coextension thesis it might seem to. More problematic for the coextension of beauty and goodness

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269 Οὐκοῦν, ἢν δ’ ἐγὼ, ὅτου ἀν συμπίπτη ἐν τῇ ψυχῇ καλὰ ἡθῇ ἐνόντα καὶ ἐν τῷ εἰδει ὀμλογοῦντα ἑκείνος καὶ συμφωνοῦντα, τοῦ αὐτοῦ μετέχοντα τύπου, τούτ’ ἂν εἰ τὸ καλλιστόν θέαμα τῷ δυναμένῳ θεάσθαι (R. 402d); [Therefore, if someone’s soul has a fine and beautiful character and his body matches it in beauty and is thus in harmony with it, so that both share in the same pattern, wouldn’t that be the most beautiful sight for anyone who has eyes to see (tr. Cooper, ed.)?]

270 In order to complete our investigation of physical beauty, it should also be added that Plato distinguishes between real and false beauty in the case of physical beauty. For at Hippias Major 294a-b Socrates argues that if something, like an article of clothing, makes a person seem more beautiful than he is then it is not real beauty: Οὐκοῦν εἴπερ καλλίω ποιεῖ φαίνεσθαι ἢ ἐστι τὸ πρέπον, ἀπάτη τις ἂν εἰή περὶ τὸ καλὸν τὸ πρέπον, καὶ οὐκ ἂν εἰή τούτο ὃ ἡμεῖς ζητοῦμεν, ὃ Ἰππία (Hp. Ma. 294a-b); [Then if the appropriate makes things be seen to be more beautiful than they are, it would be a kind of deceit about beauty, and wouldn’t be what we are looking for, would it Hippias (tr. Cooper, ed., rev.)?

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are mathematics and geometrical objects. These are paradigmatically beautiful for Plato.

For instance, at *Timaeus* 53d-e, he says that the five regular solids are the most beautiful bodies, out of which the Demiurge created the world,\(^\text{271}\) and that these regular solids themselves are created out of the most beautiful triangles.\(^\text{272}\) We can also see this in his account of true beauty in the *Philebus*:

σχημάτων τε γὰρ κάλλος οὐχ ὅπερ ἀν ὑπολάβοιεν οἱ πολλοὶ πειρώμαι νῦν λέγειν, ἢ ἡγάν ἡ τινων ζωγραφημάτων, ἀλλ᾽ εὐθὺ τι λέγω, φησίν ὁ λόγος, καὶ περιφερέξας καὶ ἀπὸ τούτων δὴ τὰ τοις τόρνοις γιγνόμενα ἑπτεδά τε καὶ στερεὰ καὶ τὰ τοῖς κανόσι καὶ γωνίας, εἰ μοι μανθάνεις, ταῦτα γὰρ οὐκ εἴναι πρὸς τι καλὰ λέγω, καθάπερ ἄλλα, ἀλλ᾽ ἀεὶ καλὰ καθ᾽ αὐτὰ πεφυκέναι (*Phlb. 51c*).

\(^{271}\) δεὶ δὴ λέγειν ποία κάλλιστα σώματα γένοιτ᾽ ἀν τέτταρα, ἀνόμοια μὲν ἕαυτοῖς, δυνατὰ δὲ ἔξ ἄλληλων αὐτῶν ἀττα διαλυόμενα γέγνεσθαι· τούτου γὰρ τυχόντες ἐχομεν τὴν ἀλήθειαν γενέσεως πέρι γῆς καὶ πυρὸς τῶν τε ἀνὰ λόγον τούτων ἡμᾶς φύσιν ἱκανῶς εἰληφέναι (*Ti. 53d-e*). [We should now say which are the most beautiful four bodies that can come to be. They are quite unlike each other, though some of them are capable of breaking up and turning into others. If our account is on the mark, we shall have the truth about how earth and fire and their proportionate intermediates came to be. For we shall never concede to anyone that there are any visible bodies more beautiful than these, each conforming to a single kind. So we must wholeheartedly proceed to fit together the four kinds of bodies of surpassing beauty, and to declare that we have come to grasp their natures well enough (tr. Cooper, ed., rev.).] These most beautiful shapes turn out to be the five regular solids: the tetrahedron, the octahedron, the icosahedron, the cube, and the dodecahedron, the first four of which he assigned to fire, air, water, and earth, respectively (the dodecahedron is assigned to the whole universe: *Ti. 55c*).

\(^{272}\) τοῖν δὴ δυοῖν τριγώνων τὸ μὲν ἴσοσκελὲς μίαν εἶληχεν φύσιν, τὸ δὲ πρόμηκες ἀπεράντους· προαιρετέον ὁμοίως οὐ καὶ τῶν ἀπειρῶν τὸ κάλλιστον, εἰ μέλλομεν ἀρξάσθαι κατὰ τρόπον. ἀν οὖν τις ἐραίροις ἐκλεξαμένους εἰπέν εἰς τὴν τούτων σύστασιν, εἶκεινς οὐκ ἐχθρὸς ἀλλὰ φίλος κατεύθεμα δ’ οὖν τῶν πολλῶν τριγώνων κάλλιστον εἰ, ὑπερβάντες τάλλα, εξ οὐ τὸ ἵσοσκελον ἤπειρων ἐκ τρόπων συνεστήκεν (*Ti. 54a-b*). [Of the [right-angled] triangles, the isosceles has but one nature, while the scalene has infinitely many. Now we have to select the most beautiful one from among the infinitely many, if we are to get a proper start. So if anyone can say that he has picked out another one that is more beautiful for the construction of these bodies, his victory will be that of a friend, not an enemy. Of the many [scalene right-angled] triangles, then, we posit as the one most beautiful, surpassing the others, that one from [a pair of] which the equilateral triangle is constructed as a third figure (tr. Cooper, ed., rev.).]
By the beauty of shape, I do not mean what the many might suppose, namely that of a living being or of a picture. What I mean, what the argument demands, is rather something straight or round and what is constructed out of these with a compass, rule, and square, such as plane figures and solids. Those things I take it are not beautiful in a relative sense, as others are, but are by their very nature forever beautiful by themselves (tr. Cooper, ed.).

We may agree that such geometrical objects are beautiful, but in what sense can we say they are intrinsically good? This is, in fact, a major point of difference between Plato and Aristotle. Aristotle claims that while beauty extends to mathematical objects, goodness does not. However, Aristotle’s very insistence on the fact that goodness does not extend to mathematical objects provides further evidence that Plato and some of his followers believed that it does. We have already pointed out that according to Aristotle, Plato connected the good and the one. This could be evidence enough that Aristotle thinks Plato extended goodness even into the realm of mathematics. But in an already quoted passage from the Eudemian Ethics, Aristotle also shows that Plato and some of his followers placed goodness in the realm of mathematics:

273 ἐπεὶ δὲ τὸ ἀγαθὸν καὶ τὸ καλὸν ἐτερον (τὸ μὲν γὰρ ἀεὶ ἐν πράξει, τὸ δὲ καλὸν καὶ ἐν τοῖς ἀκινήτοις), οἱ φάσκοντες οὐδὲν λέγειν τὰς μαθηματικὰς ἑπιστήμας περὶ καλοῦ ἢ ἀγαθοῦ ψεύδουνται. Λέγουσι γὰρ καὶ δεικνύουσι μάλιστα· οὐ γὰρ εἰ μὴ ὀνομάζουσι τὰ δ’ ἐργα καὶ τοὺς λόγους δεικνύουσιν, οὐ λέγουσι περὶ αὐτῶν. τού δὲ καλοῦ μέγιστα εἰδή τάξις καὶ συμμετρία καὶ τὸ ὄρισμένον, ἃ μάλιστα δεικνύουσιν αἱ μαθηματικαὶ ἑπιστήμαι. καὶ ἐπεὶ γε πολλῶν αἰτία φαίνεται ταῦτα (λέγω δ’ οἴον ἡ τάξις καὶ τὸ ὄρισμένον), δήλων ὅτι λέγοιεν ἀν καὶ τὴν τοιαύτην αἰτίαν τὴν ὡς τὸ καλὸν αἰτίαν τρόπον τινά (Metaph. M, 1078a32-b5). [Now since the good and the beautiful are different, for the former is always in action, while the beautiful is also in motionless things, those who assert that the mathematical sciences say nothing of the beautiful or the good lie. For these sciences say and prove a very great deal about them; for if they do not expressly mention them, but prove their results or their formulae, it is not true to say that they nothing about them. The chief forms of beauty are order, proportion and definiteness, which the mathematical sciences demonstrate especially. And since these (e.g., order and definiteness) are obviously causes of many things, evidently these sciences must treat this sort of cause also (i.e., the beautiful) as in some sense a cause (ROT, rev.).] This passage is difficult in several respects, but it seems relatively certain that beauty extends to mathematical objects but goodness does not.
ἀνάπαλιν δὲ καὶ δεικτέον ή ὡς νῦν δεικνύουσι τὸ ἀγαθὸν αὐτό. νῦν μὲν γὰρ ἐκ τῶν ἀνομολογουμένων ἔχειν τὸ ἀγαθὸν, ἔξ ἐκείνων τὰ ὑμολογούμενα εἶναι ἀγαθὰ δεικνύουσιν, ἐξ ἀριθμῶν, ὅτι ἡ δικαιοσύνη καὶ ἡ ὑγίεια ἀγαθῶν· τάξεις γὰρ καὶ ἀριθμοὶ, ὡς τοῖς ἀριθμοῖς καὶ ταῖς μονάσιν ἀγαθὸν ὑπάρχουν διὰ τὸ εἶναι τὸ ἑν αὐτὸ ἀγαθὸν (EE 1.8, 1218a16-21).

But we should show the nature of the good *per se* in the opposite way to that now used. For now from what is not agreed to possess the good they demonstrate the things admitted to be good, e.g., from numbers they demonstrate that justice and health are goods, for they are arrangements and numbers, and it is assumed that goodness is a property of numbers and units because unity is the good itself (ROT).274

With respect to evidence in Plato’s own works, we might also appeal to the end of the *Philebus*, where Socrates states that goodness and beauty are both connected with measure:

Νῦν δὴ καταπέφευγεν ἡμῖν ἡ τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ δύναμις εἰς τὴν τοῦ καλοῦ φύσιν· μετριότης γὰρ καὶ συμμετρία κάλλος δήπου καὶ ἀρετὴ πάντα χεῖ συμβαίνει γίγνεσθαι (Phlb. 64e).

The force of the good has taken refuge in an alliance with the nature of the beautiful. For measure and proportion turn out everywhere to be beauty and excellence (tr. Cooper, ed., rev.).

But what does it mean to say that certain mathematical or geometrical objects are not only beautiful but also good? Here it seems Aristotle must surely be right, though perhaps he does not express himself clearly enough. Aristotle seems to think some sort of subjectivity is a necessary condition for the existence of goodness. In the *Metaphysics* M passage he calls it ‘activity’ (πρᾶξις), and in the *Eudemian Ethics* he calls it ‘desire.’275

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274 For the argument that these beliefs are attributed to Plato and some of his followers, see Chapter 3.

275 That Aristotle is thinking of the subject of desire as belonging to the realm of mathematics itself is clear from EE 1218a24-8: παράβολος δὲ καὶ ἡ ἀπόδειξις ὅτι τὸ ἐν αὐτῷ τὸ ἀγαθὸν, ὅτι αἱ ἄριθμοὶ ἐφίενται· ὥστε γὰρ ἡ ἐφίενται λέγονται φανερῶς, ἀλλὰ λιγότερον τοῦτο φασί, καὶ ὅρεξιν εἶναι πῶς ἂν τις ὑπολάβῃ ἐν οἷς ζωῆ µὴ ὑπάρχει; [And it is a bold way to demonstrate...
Both of these imply some sort of subjectivity: for something properly to be said to be good something else must desire it, or it must be the object of an activity (πρᾶξις). But in this Plato may simply have disagreed with Aristotle. And this may show that Plato’s disposition is more objectivist than Aristotle’s. For Plato a unified man is good merely by being unified, quite apart from how that man feels about it. The subjective reaction of the man himself or of anyone else is quite irrelevant to his goodness and unity. If goodness then is so separated from all considerations of subjectivity, then there is no difficulty in saying that things, like mathematical objects, devoid of subjectivity are just as good as they are beautiful. And this is as it should be, for Plato ought to be able to say e.g., that a knife is good, even though it has no subjectivity, or “inner life.” A knife is good when it is unified (by its purpose). Thus we can maintain our thesis that unity just is the goodness of the object, while beauty is its veridical appearance. Or, to put it another way, goodness is the unity of the object with respect to the object itself, while beauty is the object’s unity with respect to the other, or another.

4.4. Conclusion:

We argued in the second chapter that goodness and beauty are extensionally equivalent for Plato, and in the third that they both seem somehow connected with unity. Does it follow from this that they are essentially identical? The Symposium, that unity is the good per se to say that numbers have desire; for no one says distinctly how they desire, but the saying is altogether too unqualified. And how can one suppose that there is desire where there is no life (ROT)]
Philebus, and other dialogues point to a distinction between the senses of beauty and goodness. It seems Plato always thinks the ultimate object of all desire is goodness. In this lies the beginning of a difference between goodness and beauty. Goodness, not beauty or anything else, is the ultimate object of all desire. There are hints of this distinction in the Symposium, but nowhere is this more apparent than at Republic 505d, where Socrates states that most people are satisfied with what is merely thought to be just and beautiful, but when it comes to goodness no one is satisfied with what is merely thought to be the case. The conclusion is that goodness is unity, or for an object to be good is for it to be unified, while beauty is its external aspect. Persons desire what is really good because this concerns their being most of all.

The priority of goodness in relation to desire raised the possibility that something could be good without being beautiful and that therefore beauty might be either a subset or a species of goodness. The most promising candidate for something which is good but not beautiful is pleasure. But we found that despite some statements to the contrary, Plato does not think pleasure is unqualifiedly good even in the best case. What is said at the end of the Protagoras must be an aberration, said only for dialectical purposes, and the Philebus shows that even in the best case – the case of pure pleasures – pleasure is only part of the good for process-bound beings. Happiness could be another candidate, but it seems Plato is such an objectivist that he considers the important aspect of happiness is the objective condition of the soul and not any subjective feeling. And this objective condition of the soul when it is unified could be considered as beautiful as it is good.
If beauty is the external aspect or veridical appearance of unity, however, there is still the possibility that the extensions of goodness and beauty could differ in their instantiations in the physical world. The beautiful evil drove a wedge in the Greek mind between goodness and beauty from the very beginning. But it turns out that the solution to this problem was relatively simple for Plato, even if in his mind it required the theory of forms. As long as a distinction is made between real and false beauty, along the lines of the *Hippias Major*, beauty is coextensive with goodness even in their physical instantiations. The more difficult problem is the case of mathematics. Geometrical objects may be beautiful but how could they be good? On this matter Aristotle is forced to part ways with Plato, and it is difficult to disagree with him for doing so. The only way it seems to rescue Plato’s view is to say that goodness relates to the being of unity, while beauty is the real appearance of it, that is, it is the appearance of unity when it is tied to actual unity, when actual unity is there.
CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

We began our investigation noting how important beauty was both for Plato and for Greek society generally. It was the sort of thing which could immediately justify Antigone’s behavior, at least for her. It was so fundamental to the Greeks that Aristotle did not feel the need to explain what he meant when he said that beauty, τὸ καλόν, is the only legitimate goal and aim of the truly virtuous person. And if beauty was important to the Greeks in general it was even more so to Plato. It is the central concern in the *Hippias Major*, and the ascent of philosophy in both the *Symposium* and *Phaedrus* culminates in the vision of τὸ καλόν. But that curious word is found in all his works, and some of the most provocative things said about it are in the *Republic*, *Philebus*, and *Timaeus*. Given its evident significance, it is puzzling that there are so few full-length studies of it in Platonic scholarship. One reason for this may be that τὸ καλόν is often treated merely as a translation problem. If καλός has the sense not only of ‘beauty,’ but also of ‘good,’ ‘right,’ ‘noble,’ and especially ‘fine,’ then perhaps it is just an oddity of the Greek language, and the word is best treated as a general term of approbation – so it seems the reasoning goes. But some acquaintance with the Greek language and Greek literature suggests that this is not the case, and that the Greeks actually meant something definite when they said this or that was καλόν. It suggests that it was not just a general
term of approbation, and it was not just a synonym for ‘good.’ Thus it was necessary to go back through some of the exemplars of Greek literature, to see how the word was actually used and what it meant for the authors who used it. When we did so we found that much of the evidence for translations of καλός other than ‘beautiful’ simply constitutes no such evidence. From the fact that we would use the word ‘good’ or ‘well’ in a certain situation, it does not follow that that is what the Greek author must have meant by καλός. The Greeks had words for ‘good’ (e.g., ἀγαθός) and ‘well’ (εὖ) and could have used them if that were what they were trying to convey. Rather, we found that in the great majority of cases καλός definitely has the sense of ‘beautiful.’ Sometimes, it is true, it would take some work to see how something could be called beautiful. But this might only show how different Greek thought is from our own.

The question whether the word καλός should be translated ‘beautiful’ must also be distinguished from the reason why an object or action is called καλόν. It may be that something is called καλόν because it is morally good or useful, but it does not follow that the correct translation in these cases is ‘morally good’ or ‘useful.’ There is no reason why an object or action should not be called beautiful precisely because it is useful or morally good. This raises the question whether there was not some particular reason things were generally called beautiful. We found that indeed there was, but it was difficult to characterize otherwise than by saying that objects or actions seemed to be called καλόν when they had an “absolute” quality about them. It was easiest to explain this by contrast with the Greek word ἀγαθός, ‘good.’ In general things are said to be ἀγαθός for something or someone; but when things are said to be καλόν because they
are good, what seems to be meant is that they are just plain good, or absolutely good, not good for some particular person or thing.

Having thus sufficiently established that καλός was not merely a general term of approbation, we then turned to τὸ καλὸν in Plato. There, our first question was what is its relation to the good? We began our investigation into this question by asking whether goodness and beauty were at least coextensive. This involved determining both whether all that is good is beautiful, or ‘if good then beautiful,’ and whether all that is beautiful is good, or ‘if beautiful then good.’ We found strong evidence for the conditional ‘if good then beautiful’ in the unquestionably Platonic Lysis, Symposium, Republic, and Timaeus. And we found statements of ‘if beautiful then good’ in the Alcibiades, Protagoras, Charmides, Laches, and Meno. But the Gorgias seemed to provide counter-evidence to ‘if beautiful then good.’ If the beautiful is what is either beneficial (i.e., good) or pleasant then there may be some pleasant, and therefore beautiful, objects which are not good. But there was reason to doubt the seriousness of Socrates’ argument at that point in the Gorgias, for he is only able to win the argument by changing the sense in which something is pleasant. Also, we found that in the Hippias Major, which includes a more sophisticated examination of both pleasure and benefit, Socrates explicitly denies that beauty can be either what is pleasant or what is beneficial. Not only this, but the same dialogue provides the strongest statement of the biconditionality of goodness and beauty in the Platonic corpus: the beneficial is rejected as a possible definiens of τὸ καλὸν precisely because it would result in the most absurd consequence, namely that the beautiful would not be good and the good would not be beautiful. When this was
combined with strong evidence for ‘if beautiful then good’ in the *Charmides, Laches, Meno,* and *Symposium,* it was concluded that Plato’s general view must be that beauty and goodness are in fact coextensive.

Given that beauty and goodness are coextensive, we asked ourselves how this could be so. In the first place we noted that according to Aristotle Plato identified the good with the one. Evidence for Aristotle’s claim was also found in Plato’s own writing. The connection between beauty and goodness in concrete particulars could be explained from a metaphysical point of view by the connection between forms, or their immanent characters, outlined in the *Phaedo.* Just as threeness always brings oddness with it, so goodness could also always bring beauty with it. The only difference between these two examples is that while threeness is not the only thing which brings oddness along with it – any other odd number does as well – goodness must be the only thing which brings beauty along with it, due to the bicondition relation between goodness and beauty. From a less metaphysical and more intuitive standpoint we might then say that goodness is the being of unity while beauty is the cognitive or veridical appearance of unity. Or, alternatively that while goodness is the unity of an object with respect to itself, beauty is the unity of an object with respect to the other or another.

But, while beauty and goodness are coextensive, Plato’s text provides evidence that they differed qua forms. The differences surface in the *Philebus, Symposium, Republic* and *Phaedrus.* What sets goodness apart from all else is expressed at *Republic* 505d, where Socrates states that most people are satisfied with what simply appears just or beautiful but when it comes to the good no one is satisfied with mere opinion. The
reason is that, as Plato repeatedly states, the sole object of all desire is the good – not beauty, not justice, but goodness alone. Beauty, on the other hand, is most often characterized, first, by what we called its “absolute” character, and, second, by its connection with mathematical properties, like measure, limit, proportion, and structure. But goodness is also more ontic, that is, it is more associated with being, and it is also more associated with unity. Perhaps goodness, and therefore unity, has to express itself in the world of particulars through structure. This could account for the coextension of beauty and goodness in Plato.

These differences in the senses of beauty and goodness caused us to go back again into the question of the coextension of the two, but this time, instead of focusing primarily on the explicit words Plato uses when speaking about goodness and beauty, we investigated more theoretically whether pleasure, instantiation, and mathematics could cause beauty and goodness to come apart. Pleasure seemed like a prime candidate for something which is good but not beautiful. But it turns out to be doubtful whether Plato ever thought pleasure was a good at all. Giving up pleasure, we might ask whether happiness is good but not beautiful. But it seems what Plato thinks is good about happiness is the objective state of the soul, as opposed to any subjective feeling, and this objective state of the soul is as beautiful to contemplate as it is good to have.

The instantiation of beauty in physical bodies and in mathematics could also separate beauty from goodness. But Plato solves the first problem by pointing out that they are beautiful and evil in different senses. More difficult was the problem of mathematical objects: these are paradigmatically beautiful for Plato, but what sense does
it make to say they are good? The solution was simply that Plato held so strongly to his conviction that unity is goodness that he placed goodness in mathematics and geometrical objects despite their not seeming to be the sort of thing susceptible to goodness.

But we must not stop merely with the thesis that goodness is unity and that unity always brings beauty along with it. We must go further and try to say why Plato connected beauty and goodness to the extent that he did. This will demonstrate why it is so important not to reduce beauty to being a subset or species of goodness. If beauty is somehow relegated to being a subset of goodness then it may seem as though the important question is not what beauty is for Plato but rather what is goodness. And we will know what beauty is once we have discovered what he meant by goodness. The problem with the search for goodness, as Murdoch explains, is that we may try to begin the search by introspection, and our psyches are deeply deceptive places to look for truth. If we begin by asking what is good for ourselves, prime candidates are pleasure, wealth, honor – all the things we would be ashamed to admit coveting. Everywhere in Plato in the search for goodness it always turns out that justice, courage, wisdom, and moderation are the human good, in other words, it always turns out that what is supremely beautiful is what is good. This is because, through its connection to appearance, beauty has the same structure as true goodness.

For Plato the human being is a nexus of being and perceiving, and I mean ‘perceiving’ here in the broadest possible sense, such as to include intellectual perception. Humans are essentially or most of all minds, and the essential activity, work,
or function of the mind is to perceive or contemplate truth or, in Plato’s case, the forms. Given that we are most of all minds and that it is the work of the mind to contemplate truth, Plato could deduce what is truly beautiful, or what it pleases the mind to contemplate. And this is nothing other than unity. Truth, which is the mind’s object, and in which the mind takes joy and fulfills its function, is, again, tied to unity. The forms are the unity behind the multiplicity of particulars. In the experience of the beauty of truth the mind becomes good and truly happy, and this is the same for Plato as to say that in the experience of unity the human being becomes supremely unified.

So, at any rate, seems to be Plato’s understanding of beauty and its relation to goodness. In closing we may wonder what if anything Plato’s understanding of beauty could contribute to our own lives and society. In the first place we may note the almost complete disappearance of beauty from ethical discussion. This might be a cause for concern given how important it was to the ethics of both Plato and Aristotle. But both these thinkers had a substantive notion of what was beautiful; for neither was beauty a subjective phenomenon. For both these thinkers it seems to have to do with that sense of absolution or absolute rightness, and it seems at least Plato thought that a concern with or disposition toward such absolute rightness was especially conveyed by the study of mathematics and geometry. Without this inherent disposition for the beauty of truth it seems both these thinkers despaired of embarking someone on the road to true virtue. And in this it is worth considering whether they were right.
APPENDICES

APPENDIX I:

Further Examples of the Use of Καλός in Action in the Tragedians:

Additional noteworthy quotations from Sophocles, translated by Hugh Lloyd-Jones:276

χρόνω γάρ, οἱδ’ ἐγώ, γνώσῃ τάδε, | ὥθοινεκ’ αὐτὸς αὐτὸν οὔτε νῦν καλα’ | δρὰς οὔτε πρόσθεν εἰργάσω, βία φίλων | ὄργη χάριν δοὺς, ἢ σ’ ἀεὶ λυμαίνεται (OC. 852-5).

Creon (to Oedipus): For in time, I know it, you shall realize this, that neither what you are doing now nor what you did before was right, since you yielded to your anger, which has always been your ruin.

ἀλλ’ ἤμιν εἰκε. λιπαρεῖν γὰρ οὐ καλὸν | δίκαια προσχρῄζουσιν, οὐδ’ αὐτὸν μὲν εὖ | πάσχειν, παθόντα δ’ οὐκ ἐπίστασθαι τίνειν (OC. 1201-3).

Antigone (to Oedipus): Come, yield to us! It is not right that those whose wish is good should have to implore, nor to fail to make return for the kindesses one has received.

Αγ. σὺ ταῦτ,’ Ὀδυσσεῦ, τοῦδ’ ὑπερμαχεῖς ἐμοί; | Ὅδ. ἔγωγ’· ἐμίσουν δ’, ἡνίκ’ ἴν μισεῖν καλόν. | Αγ. οὐ γὰρ θανόντι καὶ προσεμβήναι σε χρή; | Ὅδ. μὴ χαῖρ,’ Ἀτρείδη, κέρδεσιν τοῖς μὴ καλοῖς (Aj. 1346-9).

Odysseus and Agamemnon (arguing over how to treat Ajax’s corpse): Ag. Odysseus, are you fighting for this man against me? Od. Yes! I hated him when it was honorable to hate him. Ag. Now that he is dead, should you not trample on him? Od. Son of Atreus, do not take pleasure in a superiority that is ignoble.

ἀνδρα δ’ ὕφελειν ἀφ’ ὃν | ἐχω τε καὶ δύνατο κάλλιστος πόνων (OT. 314-5).

276 Lloyd-Jones, Sophocles.
Oedipus (to Tiresias): For a man to use his qualities and his powers to help is the noblest of labors.

eῦν νῦν τόδε ἵσθι, τούτων εἰ βαλεῖτε ποι, | βαλεῖτε χήμας τρεῖς ὀμοῦ συγκειμένους. | ἐπεὶ καλὸν μοι τοῦδε ὑπερπονουμένω (1310) | θανεῖν προδήλως μᾶλλον ἢ τῆς σῆς υπὲρ | γυναικός, ἢ σοῦ τοῦ θ’ ὁμαίμονος λέγω (Aj. 1308-12);

Teucer (to Agamemnon): Know it for certain, if you hurl him aside, you shall hurl aside also the three of us along with him, since I am proud to die before all fighting for him rather than for your wife, or shall I say for you and your brother?

τί δ’ ἐς δόμους ἄγεις με; πῶς, τόδ’ εἰ καλὸν | τούργον, σκότου δεῖ, κοῦ πρόχειρος εἰ κτανεῖν (El. 1493-4);

Aegisthus (to Orestes): If this act is honorable why must it be in darkness, and why are you not ready to kill me?

... ὡς ἐλευθέρῳ | ψευδεῖ καλεῖσθαι κήρ πρόσεστιν ὀὐ καλή (Tr. 453-4).

Deianeira (to Lichas): For a free man it is a discreditable affliction to be called a liar.

τὰς πάνθ’ ὀρώσας Εὔμενίδας ὂ γ’ ἐνθάδ’ ἄν | εἰποι λεώς νιν· ἄλλα δ’ ἀλλαχοῦ καλά (OC. 42-3).

Peasant (to Oedipus): The people here call them the all seeing Eumenides; but different names are right in different places.

ταῦτ’ οὖν ἐπειδὴ λαμπρὰ συμβαίνει, τέκνον, | δεῖ σ’ αὐ γενέοθαι ὥδε τάνδρι σύμμαχον, (1175) | καὶ μὴ ’πιμεῖναι τούμον ὀξύναι στόμα, | ἀλλ’ αὐτὸν εἰκαθόντα συμπράσσειν, νόμον | κάλλιστον ἐξευρόντα, πειθαρχεῖν πατρί (Tr. 1174-8).

Heracles (to Hyllus): So now that this is clearly being fulfilled, my son, you must fight at my side, and not wait until my words grow sharp, but comply and work with me, finding that it is the noblest of laws that bids a man obey his father.

ἀεὶ καλὸς πλοῦς ἔσθ’, ὅταν φεύγῃς κακά (Ph. 641).
Philoctetes (to Neoptolemus): It is always good sailing weather when one is escaping from trouble.

πάντα γάρ καιφώ καλά (OT. 1516).

Creon (to Oedipus): All things are good that are in season.

Additional quotations from Euripides, translated by David Kovacs:

An. οὐκ αὖ σιωπῆι Κυπρίδος ἀλγήσεις πέρι; (240) | Ερ. τί δ’; οὐ γυναιξι ταῦτα πρώτα πανταχού; | Αν. ναί, καλῶς γε χρωμέναισιν· εἰ δὲ μή, οὐ καλὰ (Andr. 240-2).

Antigone: Will you not suffer in silence your troubles in love? Hermione: What? Is not this the first interest of women everywhere? Antigone: Yes, for those who make honorable use of them. Otherwise, they are not.

...ἀν δ’ ἔκαστι, παρθένῳ λέγειν | οὐ καλόν... (Or. 26-7).

Electra (of the reason her mother killed her father): Why she did so it is not fine for a maiden to say.

ἐς ὀχλον ἐρπεῖν παρθένοισιν οὐ καλόν (Or. 108).

Helen (to Electra): It is not fine for unmarried girls to appear in public.

οὐκ εὖ λέγειν χρῆ μὴ ’τι τοῖς ἔργοις καλοῖς· | οὐ γὰρ καλὸν τούτ’ ἄλλα τῇ δίκηι πικρόν (Ph. 526-7).

Chorus: Men should not speak fair about ignoble deeds. That is dishonorable and hateful to justice.

...οὐδὲ γὰρ ψαύειν καλὸν (1315) | θεῶν πονηρᾶι χειρί, τοῖσι δ’ ἐνδίκοις... (Ion 1315-6).

Ion (to Creusa): It is not right for an evil hand to touch the gods but only a righteous one.

...τί γάρ; | πρὸς τοὺς σθένοντας θεοὺς ἁμιλλᾶσθαι καλὸν (IT. 1478-9);

277 Kovacs, Euripides.
Thoas (to Athena): How can it be an admirable thing to strive against the mighty gods?

 долг' эς гуна́икаς пαρθένω καρ' ου καλόν (945) | λέγειν σιωπώ... (El. 945-6).

Electra (to dead Aegisthus): Your conduct toward women (since it ill befits a virgin to describe it) I pass over in silence...

τί δή τόδ' ἔχερον τοιοίδ' οὐ καλόν κτανείν (Hercl. 965);

Alcmene (to Servant): What is the meaning of this? Do men here not approve of killing their enemies?

στέργοι δὲ με σωφροσύνα, δώρημα κάλλιστον θεών... (Med. 636).

Chorus: May moderation attend me, fairest gift of the gods.

τὸ σωφρονεῖν δὲ καὶ σέβειν τὰ τῶν θεῶν (1150) | κάλλιστον' οἴμαι δ' αὐτὸ καὶ σοφώτατον | θνητοῖσιν εἶναι κτήμα τοῖσι χρωμένοις (Ba. 1150-2).

Second Messenger (to Chorus): The best thing of all is to practice moderation and worship the gods. That is also, I think, the wisest possession a mortal can make use of.

φεῦ φεῦ, τὸ σωφρόν ως ἀπανταχού καλόν | καὶ δόξαν ἐσθλὴν ἐν βροτοῖσ καρπίζεται (Hipp. 431-2).

Chorus: Oh what a fine thing is chastity everywhere, and how splendid is the repute it gains among mortals.
APPENDIX II:

Further Examples of the Use of Καλός in the Presocratic Theorists:

*Thales:*

We do not know whether Thales wrote anything, and we do not have any genuine fragments; however, Diogenes Laertius (DL), attributes the following to him:

κάλλιστον κόσμος: ποίημα γὰρ θεοῦ (DL, 1.35).

The most beautiful is the universe, for it is God’s workmanship.278

φίλων παρόντων καὶ ἀπόντων μεμνῆσθαι φησι· μὴ τὴν ὄψιν καλλωπίζεσθαι, ἄλλα τοῖς ἐπιτηθεύμασιν εἶναι καλὸν (DL, 1.37).

He tells us to remember friends, whether present of absent; not to pride ourselves upon outward appearance, but to study to be beautiful in character.

The natural product of a divine being is most beautiful, and beauty is commended in practices (ἐπιτηθεύμασιν).

*Protagoras:*

Protagoras is worth quoting both for his relativism and for his measure doctrine.

πάντων χρημάτων μέτρον ἐστὶν ἄνθρωπος, τῶν μὲν ὄντων ὡς ἔστιν, τῶν δὲ οὐκ ὄντων ὡς οὐκ ἔστιν (Sextus Empiricus: *Adversus Mathematicos,* 7.60; cf. Pl. *Tht.* 152A.).

Of all things man is the measure, of beings that they are and of non-beings that they are not.

278 All translations of Diogenes Laertius are those of R. D. Hicks.
The significance of this passage lies for our purposes in the fact that Protagoras chooses to use the word μέτρον. As we have seen, the Pythagoreans connect καλλοσύνη with measure and number. The same phrase said by Polyclitus or a Pythagorean might mean that the measure or proportion which is found in man is found in all things. But given other reports of Protagoras’ belief this was probably not his meaning. The following passages reveals Protagoras’ relativism about the καλόν:

επεὶ οἷά γ’ ἀν ἐκάστη πόλει δίκαια καὶ καλὰ δοκῇ, ταύτα καὶ εἶναι αὐτή, ἐὼς ἀν αὐτὰ νομίζῃ... (Pl. Tht. 167C, DK 80A21a).

Since whatever seems just and beautiful to each city, these things also are for it, as long as it considers them <so>.

Gorgias:

In his Encomium of Helen Gorgias defends Helen from the charge of being the cause of the Trojan war. Either she was fated to go to Troy, or she was forced physically, or by words, or by love. In neither case is she responsible, for all of these things, it is argued, have the power to rob agents of their autonomy. While Gorgias tries to exonerate Helen, it seems he thinks her beauty might still have been the cause of all the trouble. The problem is the subject of ἐνειργάσατο in section 4:

ἐκ τοιούτων δὲ γενομένη ἔσχε τῷ ἱσόθεον κάλλος, ὁ λαθοῦσα καὶ οὐ λαθοῦσα ἔσχε· πλείστας δὲ πλείστοις ἐπιθυμίας ἔρωτος ἐνειργάσατο, ἐνὶ δὲ σώματι πολλά σώματα συνήγαγεν ἀνδρῶν ἐπὶ μεγάλως μέγα φρονοῦνταν, ὅν οἱ μὲν πλούτου μεγέθη, οἱ δὲ εὐγενείας παλαιὰς εὐδοξίαν, οἱ δὲ ἀλκῆς ἰδίας εὐεξίαν, οἱ δὲ σοφίας ἐπικτήτου δύναμιν ἔσχον· καὶ ἦκον ἅπαντες ὑπ’ ἐρωτός τε φιλονίκου φιλοτιμίας τε ἀνικήτου (Gorgias, Hel. 4).

Born from such stock, she had godlike beauty, which taking and not mistaking, she kept. In many did she work much desire for her love, and her one body was the cause of bringing together many bodies of men thinking great thoughts for great goals, of whom some had greatness of wealth, some the glory of ancient
nobility, some the vigor of personal agility, some command of acquired knowledge. And all came because of a passion which loved to conquer and a love of honor which was unconquered (tr. Kennedy).

Grammatically, Kennedy is correct that the subject is Helen. But if Helen worked much desire for her love in many, then it would seem that she is to a certain extent culpable. The sense might rather be that it was her beauty which worked much desire for love in many. In what immediately follows many bodies convene for one body, namely Helen’s, but in section 1 beauty is κόσμος to the body. So the sense might be that many bodies convened for or on account of the beauty of one body, namely Helen’s. If this interpretation is correct, Helen might be innocent but her beauty is still suspect.

Democritus:

We have a surprising number of fragments and testimonia from or about Democritus concerning the καλόν. To look at all of them would take too much space, and is unnecessary. We will review a fragment about poetry, fragments connecting the καλόν with mind or intelligence, fragments connecting the καλόν with pleasure, and a fragment connecting the καλόν with the equal. On the connection between beauty and divine inspiration in poetry:

ποητής δὲ ἄσσα μὲν ἀν γράφη μετ’ ἐνθουσιασμοῦ καὶ ἱεροῦ πνεύματος, καλὰ κάρτα ἐστίν (Clement: Strom. 6.18.168).

What a poet writes with inspiration and the breath of the gods is very fine.279

Plato agrees with Democritus on this point in the Ion and Phaedrus. On the connection between τὸ καλόν and mind or intelligence:

279 All translations of Democritus fragments and testimonia are those of C. C. W. Taylor (Toronto).
σώματος κάλλος ζωιῶδες, ᾗν μή νοὺς ύπη (DK 68 B105).

Beauty of body is animal-like, if there is no intelligence behind it.

This remarkable fragment seems to imply that physical beauty has a different character in intelligent and unintelligent beings.

θείου νοῦ τὸ ἀεὶ τι διαλογίζεσθαι καλὸν (DK 68 B112).

It is the mark of a divine mind always to be thinking of something fine.

On the connection between τὸ καλὸν and pleasure:

αἱ μεγάλαι τέρψεις ἀπὸ τοῦ θεᾶσθαι τὰ καλὰ τῶν ἔργων γίνονται (DK 68 B194).

Great delights come from beholding fine deeds.

ἡδονήν οὐ πᾶσαν, ἀλλὰ τὴν ἐπὶ τῶι καλῶι αἱρεῖσθαι χρεών (DK 68 B207).

One should choose, not every pleasure, but pleasure in what is fine.

δίκαιος ἔρως ἀνυβρίστως ἐφίεσθαι τῶν καλῶν (DK 68 B73).

It is righteous love to desire what is fine without wantonness.

On τὸ καλὸν and equality:

καλὸν ἐν παντὶ τὸ ἴσον∙ ὑπερβολὴ δὲ καὶ ἐλλειψίς οὐ μοι δοκέει (DK 68 B 102).

In everything what is equal is fine; excess and deficiency do not seem so to me.

Here we see Democritus use the term τὸ ἴσον, where we might expect τὸ μέτριον, or something of that nature. But it is possible to see how the two terms could be interchangeable since both equality and the mean are opposed to excess and deficiency.
APPENDIX III:

On the Translation of *Philebus* 65a:

The translation of οἷον ἑν at *Phlb*. 65a is difficult, but translators are generally agreed that it should be translated ‘as one.’ Let us look at some recent translations of this passage:

Fowler for the Loeb edition:

Then if we cannot catch the good with the aid of one idea, let us run it down with three – beauty, proportion, and truth, and let us say that these, considered as one, may more properly than all other components of the mixture be regarded as the cause and that through the goodness of these the mixture itself has been made good.\textsuperscript{280}

Auguste Dies for the Budé edition:

Si donc nous ne pouvons saisir le bien sous un seul caractère, saisissons-le sous trois, beauté, proportion, vérité, et disons que, par leur commune action plus que par toute autre, nous avons le droit d’expliquer les qualités du mélange et de déclarer que, étant bonne, par elle le mélange est bon.\textsuperscript{281}

Hackforth:

Then if we cannot hunt down the Good under a single form, let us secure it by the conjunction of three, Beauty, Proportion, and Truth; and then, regarding these three as one, let us assert that that may most properly be held to determine the qualities of the mixture, and that because that is good the mixture itself has become so.\textsuperscript{282}

Gosling for the Oxford edition:


\textsuperscript{282} Hackforth, *Philebus*. 
Then if we cannot use just one category to catch the good let’s take this trio, fineness, commensurability, truth (*aletheia*), and treating them as a single unit say that this is the element in the mixture that we should most correctly hold responsible, that it is because of this as something good that such a mixture becomes good.283

Dorothea Frede, for the Akademie der Wissenschaften und der Literature zu Mainz edition:

Wenn wir aber das Gute nicht in einer Form einfangen können, dann wollen wir es in dreifacher Gestalt fassen, als Schönheit, Angemessenheit un Wahrheit, und erklären, daß es wie eine Einheit zu Recht für die Konsistenz der Mischung verantwortlich zu machen ist und daß seinetwegen, wei es gut ist, eine ebensolche Mischung zustandegekommen ist.284

And for the Hackett edition:

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 be held responsible for what is in the mixture, for its goodness is what makes the mixture itself a good one.285

Except for Dies, who covers the reference to the one with his “commune action,” all these scholars translate the οἷον ἕν simply “as one” or “as a single unit” or “wie eine Einheit.” Thus it seems we may safely take the Socrates to be saying that beauty, proportion, and truth are to be considered as one, and that this unity is what goodness is.

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283 Gosling, *Philebus*.
285 Frede, *Philebus*. 


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