

THE FORM OF THE GOOD
WHAT IT IS, AND HOW IT FUNCTIONS WITHIN THE ETHICAL PROGRAMME OF THE
REPUBLIC

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PART I: A QUESTION ABOUT THE PLOT OF THE *REPUBLIC*

Plato does not stand in first place in my philosophical pantheon. That position is reserved for Socrates, Plato's peerless teacher – if you can call what Socrates did 'teaching' – and also Plato's endless inspiration. That said, Plato *is* my favorite philosophical *author*, and indeed my favorite dramatist of all (in spite of stiff competition from three very great predecessors, and an incredible epic poet, not to mention a few impressive moderns).

That Plato *is* a very great dramatist is often concealed for people by the fact that the action of his dramas is *intellectual*, so that understanding the drama is a matter of understanding how the over all dialectic goes (as well as how all the many dialectical and personal encounters go that make up that over all dialectic). But a grasp of how individual dialectical passes go, and of how the over all dialectic goes, is itself no trivial matter to acquire. This is because of the extremely radical nature of the largely Socratic thoughts Plato embodies in his dialogues.

Let me give an example, one which I frequently dine out on: *Apology* 25C-26A. Here Plato engages in a little mini-dialogue with the hapless Meletus. Paraphrased and slightly condensed, it runs as follows:

—Is there anyone who prefers to be harmed to being benefited? —Obviously not.

—Do I corrupt the young willingly, or unwillingly? —Willingly.

—Am I so ignorant as not to realize that harming others leads to my harm? (For nothing else would lead me to commit this grave offense willingly.) So, you see, either I do not corrupt the young or I do so unwillingly, and either way your accusation is false. If I do this unwillingly, then what I need from you, Meletus, is not to be dragged into court to be punished, but to be taken aside privately and instructed – what is needed is not *kolasis* but *mathêsis*.

What we see in this extraordinary, but entirely characteristic Socratic argument is two key Socratic thoughts: no one errs willingly [at getting his or her own happiness], and virtue is knowledge. What is hardly spelled out is just how sweeping this argument is, if correct. For it actually covers absolutely every case of harming others – and it would make punishment *never* appropriate.

Harming others ends up in harm to you.

No one willingly does what ends up in harm to himself or herself

So, punishment is never appropriate to one who harms others, but only

instruction.

Upright Athenians of the stripe of Anytus and Meletus *knew* this man was a dangerous radical. But they had no idea just exactly how dangerous. No wonder Socrates had little inclination towards legal proceedings, let alone towards practical politics. And no wonder that the Athenians, given their occasional murderous instinct towards those they perceived to be dangerous, would put him to death. The point here is how difficult it is to see just what he was up to. (It is even the case that legions of scholars are unaware of this unstated implication of Socratic thought.)[1]

A second example of the difficulty of grasping Plato's thought (here only partly Socratic) shows up in the so-called city-soul analogy. Since this will emerge of its own accord very shortly, I postpone discussion of this example till later

The general point is this: Take the kind of common assumptions about human understanding, the good, human goodness, love, aspiration, achievement, right and wrong, responsibility, political action, irrationality, and the like, of the sort that we realize we must hold on to as we make our way through the grand schemes of a Shakespeare, a Tolstoy, or a George Eliot. If, as I think, Socrates and, for the most part, Plato, hold the truth about such things to be far more radical than our great novelists and dramatists suppose, then we may expect to find our thought much more stretched in trying to grasp the philosophical plots, suggestions, and upshots of the

Platonic dialogues, than even when we view the breathtaking vistas opened by a Shakespeare, a Tolstoy, or a George Eliot.

Indeed, once one sees this difference, one sees how these common assumptions about human understanding, the good, love, aspiration, and so forth seemed to Socrates and Plato to be, effectively, *conventions* – conventions as to the truth which dramatists (or novelists) pander to in making their work seem lifelike. Socrates and Plato saw these conventions as mere imitation and ignorance, at any rate by comparison with the truth.

While I am on this theme, let me add that it often seems to me that cultivated amateur enthusiasts for the writings of Plato frequently understand the appropriateness of Plato for proper literary/philosophical study rather better than certain groups of professional students of Plato. Such amateurs include many proud Greek nationals and expatriates, who, like the Leventis foundation, wish to see this extraordinary culture preserved; but it also includes many others. With these enthusiasts, I contrast two professional groups. First, there are those analytical philosophers who tend to regard the dialogues as a bunch of particular individual arguments (to be formulated as propositions which are then treated as premises entailing certain other propositions as conclusions). These individual arguments – each, it is supposed, more or less self-contained – analytical philosophers tend to see as containing precious gold to be panned for important analytical points, even when they are embodied in a largely irrelevant literary stream of

consciousness, the charms of which one has to resist in order to get at *the real stuff*. (I say this, notwithstanding the facts that the analytical philosophers are amongst the greatest interpreters of Plato ever and indeed that I myself owe to them most of what little I have grasped about Plato.) I also have in mind here, second, a very large body of classicists, common to many Classics departments in the USA – where the philosophical study of Plato is all too often regarded as not part of a Classics education. (Except, possibly, in a purely linguistic study in lower level Greek classes *without* attention to philosophical plot – as if the *literary* study of Plato could fail to be the *philosophical* study of Plato. To this I say: you might as well try to study the *Agammemnon*, while bracketing all gender considerations in thinking about the plot.) What a good thing that in the great British Classics departments, of which Edinburgh is a distinguished representative, the serious study of Plato the philosopher is still welcomed. And how wonderful that the Leventis Foundation supports so generously the work of this splendid department. I am myself overwhelmed by the opportunity – not to mention the great honour of my scholarly life – which this department and the Leventis foundation have given me to pursue this work that I place above all other intellectual and cultural work.

With this much by way of preface about the difficulties of seeing what Plato the dramatist is up to, I turn to business. My main theme today is an apparent difficulty in the plot of the *Republic* – a difficulty which, if we allow it to stand, will do Plato little

credit as the towering dramatist which I think he is. It is true that the *Republic* appears to be a sprawling mass of a dialogue, branched by means of a considerable number of digressions, and barnacled with apparent irrelevancies. Indeed many interpreters will undoubtedly agree with my impression that one of the hardest things in the world is to find a straight line through the *Republic* that will hold it together as a unity. At the same time, it seems clear to me that a little intellectual effort will bring to light plainly enough just such straight lines of plot in shorter works preceding the *Republic*. (I include here such masterpieces of irony and philosophical exposition as the *Hippias Minor*, the *Ion*, the *Apology*, the *Crito*, and the *Euthyphro*.) So it would be nice if we could find rather more of a straight line through the *Republic* and not see it as just an accumulation of digressions – each, no doubt, more fascinating than its predecessor.

I do not attempt this larger task here of finding a single straight line through the *Republic*, with only a few (hopefully well-motivated) digressions. I simply attempt to remove one plot-difficulty that tends to make readers of the *Republic* despair of there ever being such a line, and to despair of Plato's ability to stick to the point – any point.

Let me set up my problem by reminding you very briefly of certain crucial features of the plot of the *Republic* up to the moment in Book IV when the famous 'parts of the soul' doctrine is introduced. Book I begins with Socrates asking *what justice is* and investigating one answer offered by Polemarchus and two answers offered by

Thrasymachus. I suppress all of the interesting details of these three related answers in order to concentrate on Thrasymachus' second answer which I believe to be Plato's main concern not only in Book I, but in the whole of the *Republic* – as indeed I think it is in the whole of the *Gorgias*

I formulate Thrasymachus' answer – a slight reformulation of the attempts in Polemarchus' account and in Thrasymachus' first account – as follows. (As will be obvious, I 'interpret a little' as scholars often say – though all this does is to alert their readers to the inevitable.)

Thr2 All there is to the so-called 'virtue of justice' is certain commands of those who are 'strong', i.e., 'in power'. 'The strong' here are to be understood as employing the 'power' available to them in accordance with the (alleged) science or expertise of *pleonexia*, the science of gaining your own good (or happiness) at the expense of the good of others.[2] These commands, the 'strong' conventionally *declare* to be 'just'. Hence in reality,[3] all there is to so-called 'justice' is obedience by the weak to these (allegedly) science-based exploitative commands of the strong – such obedience representing the best policy available to the weak in their particular circumstances.[4] That said, it must also be said that being just is *not a virtue*. The real virtue here is the

'complete injustice' of the 'strong' who are in power and have the (alleged) science of exploitation – the (alleged) science of getting your own good (i.e., your own happiness) by harming others.

The thought behind this claim about justice is that

Thr2a The completely unjust – as characterized in (Thr2) – are happier than the just.

Obviously, and by common consent amongst interpreters, this thought becomes the central focus of investigation in the rest of the *Republic*.^[5]

Books II-IV then set up Socrates' defense of the claim that, contrary to Thrasymachus' view, justice makes us happier than complete injustice – even if one factors out the rewards of a good reputation for being just. Socrates suggests we first need to know what justice *is* before we can understand the main question. Socrates then proposes a method for determining what justice is that seems, at first glance, utterly reasonable. The method in question *appears* to be this: Start by constructing justice in a city or *society*, and then infer from the resulting account of what justice is in a society what justice will be in the individuals who are members of that society.

When I say this method for determining what justice is in an individual is perfectly reasonable, I am pointing to a quite general method that is also employed by other great moral philosophers. (John Rawls comes to mind.) The thought behind the use of this method is that for a society to be just, certain relations internal to that society must

hold between the parts of that society (the members of that society). Then surely the justice of individual citizens should consist in their standing in precisely those relations to other individuals in the society – relations internal to the city which are nevertheless *external* to the individuals so related. (For example, in Rawls, the society is just if, internally, its individual members behave *fairly* towards each other. Hence the individual members are just if, *externally*, they behave fairly to each other. What is internal to the society is external to the individual members.) How from the point of view of a modern moral philosopher could there not be this identity between the relations that hold internally to a just society and the relations that hold externally between the individual members of that society?

But now there is a stunning plot twist: a *coup de théâtre*. What Plato does, in arguing from the justice of a just society to the justice of an individual is precisely *not* to argue from the relations internal to the just society to the relations external to the individual members of that society. Instead, he argues from the relations internal to the just society to the relations *internal* to individual just people – and, at that, individual just people of *no matter what society*.^[6] That is, he argues that

JI If justice in a just city consists in certain internal relations between the city's parts – the three classes consisting of, first, the intellectuals, second, the soldiers and the police, and, third, the wage-earners – then justice in the soul of an individual *of no matter what society* consists in precisely the

same *internal* relations between the *soul's* three internal parts.

Thus justice in an individual is no longer a matter of such external relations between individuals as we easily visualise in terms of the intuitive notion of fairness, but rather a matter wholly internal to the individual. Justice in an individual turns into *a certain form of psychological well-adjustment between the parts of one's soul*.

Plato then proceeds to employ the same procedure to argue from the wisdom of the just city, the courage of the just city, and the temperance of the just city to the wisdom of the individual, the courage of the individual, and the temperance of the just individual. In a city, wisdom is a *science of the good* – not just the good of medicine, or the good of carpentry, or the good of farming,[7] but of a good which 'does not take counsel about some particular thing in the city but about the city as a whole, and how it gets on best (*arista homilo*) within itself and with other cities' (428D1-3). Similarly, courage is the virtue of the soldier class, and temperance the virtue of agreement between the three classes (as to who should rule), while justice is the virtue whereby each of the three classes does its own and does not interfere with the other classes doing *their* own.

So now the project is to apply these accounts of the virtues of the just city to the individual. But wait a second! The application of such accounts of virtues in the just city will have application to an individual only if the soul has three internal parts in just the

way the ideal city has three internal parts. So the plot-twist now requires the huge task of arguing that the soul has three parts. Political analysis now leads to psychological analysis.

Plato proceeds to make two arguments of startlingly differing quality to establish that the soul has three parts corresponding to the three parts of the city – an intellectual part, a spirited part, and an appetitive part. The first of these two arguments I regard as of quite extraordinary ingenuity – at any rate relative to the (mistaken) anti-Socratic assumptions Plato makes here about the desire for good.[8] This first Platonic argument submits that the study of irrational action can reveal – contrary to the views of the Socrates of almost all the earlier dialogues – that the soul does indeed have two conflicting parts: a rational part and an irrational part (corresponding to the intellectual and wage-earning classes of the city). Thus, for me, the first part of this task – the division of a rational part from an irrational part – is triumphantly carried out. At any rate it is successfully carried out relative to the anti-Socratic assumptions Plato makes here (assumptions I have myself argued against many times). Plato then has Socrates argue – this time, alas, rather carelessly and entirely unconvincingly – that he can in the same way get a third part which can simultaneously conflict in the relevant way both with rational and irrational parts.[9] I shall say no more here about the merits of Plato's arguments here. The fact that these anti-Socratic arguments are the main source of error in this extraordinary literary and philosophical masterpiece lies to the

side of my present interests.

This said, it must also be said that what is *not* anti-Socratic here is the idea that *what justice is*, is a matter *entirely internal to the soul*. (It's simply that for Socrates it is a matter of internal understanding alone, while for Plato it is a matter of an internal structuring of the psyche, involving character as well as understanding.) So whatever we say about Plato's arguments for parts of the soul, it remains the case that this switch from

(a) justice having to do with one's external relations to others

to

(b) justice being entirely a matter of relations *internal* to the individual psyche is plainly an extraordinary and wrenching Socratic-Platonic plot-twist. (I did say that the sorts of assumptions Socrates and Plato bring to common notions are *very* radical.) We are in for a wild ride!

I shall not discuss the question what on earth Plato is up to here in suggesting that justice is a matter of what goes on in your own psyche, and only secondarily (at best) about your relations to others. That question has to do with the connection of the Platonic account of justice with the Socratic account of justice as knowledge or science or expertise. Of this connection between Plato and Socrates I have spoken at length in the forthcoming 2005 issue of the online journal for the International Plato Society. In

any case, what I want to do now is to move on from this plot-*twist* to the quite extraordinary plot-*difficulty* – consequent to the plot twist – that is my main focus in this lecture. This is that Socrates prefaces his arguments for there being three parts of the soul with the following remark about the application of the account of the four virtues in the just *city* (with its three parts) to the finding of these virtues in the soul of the individual.

But now the city was thought to be just because three kinds of natures existing in it [= the three classes, intellectual, soldiering, and wage-earning] performed each its own function, and again it was temperate, brave, and wise because of certain other affections and habits of these three kinds.... Then , my friend, we shall thus expect the individual also to have these same forms in his soul [the three parts: intellectual, spirited, and money-making or appetitive]; and, by reason of identical affections of these [parts of the soul] with those in the city, to receive properly the same appellations ['wisdom', 'courage', 'temperance', 'justice']... Goodness gracious, ..., here is another trifling inquiry into which we have plunged, the question whether the soul contains three forms [= the intellectual, spirited, and appetitive parts] in itself or not. (*Glaucon*: It does not seem to me at all trifling....) That's apparent (*phainetai*)!... and let me tell you, Glaucon, that in my opinion we shall never apprehend this matter accurately from such methods (*methodôn*) as we are now employing in discussion. For there is another longer and more considerable road (*hodos*) that conducts to

this. [435B??-D??]

Socrates and Glaucon agree not to take up this 'longer road' at this point, resting satisfied with the arguments of somewhat lower standard which come next.

Now, Socrates does not tell us here what this 'longer road' is. But the impression this passage gives, taken just by itself, is that Plato thinks of the longer road in question as a longer road to *showing that the soul has precisely these three parts*. But when, in Book VI.504A4-505A4, Plato comes to take up the challenge of explaining the longer road, it turns out that the 'longer road' is the *megiston mathêma*, the greatest thing to be learned, and indeed that the greatest thing to be learned is precisely the Idea of Good. This creates immediately the problem that it is very far from clear how on earth knowledge of the Form of the Good – or anything Socrates says about the Form of the Good in Books VI and VII – has the slightest bearing on the question of getting a more adequate account of the division of the soul into three parts. What is more, when we come to the following books, Books VIII-IX, the explanation in Book VI of the 'longer road' appears not to have resulted in any modification whatever of the parts of the soul doctrine of Book IV. Yet the 'longer road' must, on any account, make *some* difference to the results apparently gained in Book IV.

This is of course the point at which interpreters tend to say to those who ask the question what the Form of the Good has to do with division of the soul into three parts:

Look, when Plato gets to the Form of the Good, it is quite clear that he has the bit between his teeth. He has been staying more or less on course with his investigation of the question whether justice makes us happier than incomplete injustice – at any rate, give or take a few fascinating digressions about the communism of property, children, and wives; about the equality of women; and about the possibility of realizing the ideal city Socrates has constructed in theory. But, having introduced the Form of the Good without telling us how it bears on the question about parts of the soul, he appears to simply goes off on a metaphysical tear – introducing the famous and inspirational images of the Sun and the Divided Line, and the Allegory of the Cave. These wonderful passages, by any account, seem designed to represent the intellectual centre of the *Republic* – the very heart of the work. Don't they simply show that Plato has forgotten coming back to the 'longer road'?

On this view, the discussion of the Form of the Good simply *is* a metaphysical digression unrelated to the problem it was designed to solve – a kind of philosophical *anacolouthon*, one of the many perfectly extraordinary and utterly fascinating digressions that Plato is forever dragging in without any very obvious attempt at showing relevance, the present metaphysical digression being the most fascinating and seminal of all of them.

The thought here is:

Look, the author Plato, this most fascinating of all controversialists, *proceeds* by digressions – just dragging things in whenever it suits him. Everyone knows that, organizationally speaking, the *Republic* is a mess! Get used to it!

This kind of insouciance towards the question of Plato completely losing his way in the discussion of whether the just are happier than the completely unjust seems to me to need guarding against. We need to press the question, 'How does the "longer road" bear on the supposed inadequacy in Book IV?'

The first thing to notice here is that there is a slightly different account of the point of the 'longer road' when it is returned to in Book VI. What happens in Book VI is that, as part of his description of the training of the guardians, Socrates makes the transition from emotional and physical training to intellectual training by speaking of 'the greatest things to be learned' (504D2-3). Glaucon asks what these greatest things to be learned are; and it is in Socrates' reply to this question that a reference to the longer road appears once more. Socrates says:

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

Now what are 'these things' here (*auta*)? What does *auta* refer back to? The natural reading of the context is surely that the neuter plural refers back to the implied four occurrences (each neuter) of *what each is* (*ho hekaston eiê*). In that case, the longer road is there to determine not how the soul has three parts, but to see how the tripartite account of the soul will enable us to grasp what Justice, Temperance, Courage, and Wisdom are in the individual.

So our two passages appear to tell in opposite ways. The Book IV passage seems to tell us that the 'longer road' is there to cure an inadequacy in the account of the soul's division into three parts. But the Book VI passage seems to say that the point of the 'longer road' is rather to cure an inadequacy in the accounts of the four virtues when, having shown the soul has three parts, we attempt to apply the accounts of the virtues of the just city to the virtues of the individual. Is there a contradiction here? Certainly there will be for those who believe in propositions, since for believers in propositions, the Book IV account of the 'longer road' *must* be different from this Book VI account, since the *proposition* that the soul is divided into three parts is quite distinct from the *proposition* that justice represents the very same ordering – the same *politeia* – of the parts of the soul that we see in the ordering of the parts of the just city. But for those not hypnotized by propositions, a different solution is possible, assimilating one of the accounts to the other. Thus it would be entirely possible to argue that the tripartite division apparently said to be inadequate in Book IV is *the tripartite division which*

makes possible the application of the accounts of the virtues of the just city to the accounts of the virtues of the individual. (What is inadequate in talk of the parts of the soul is the way in which they are used in getting our account of the virtues.) Thus I am proposing that we assimilate (a) talk of inadequacy in our story about how the soul is divided into three parts to (b) the talk of the inadequacy of the accounts of the virtues in terms of the three parts of the soul.

This suggestion can be supported by looking at the slightly larger context in which the reference to the tripartite division is introduced in Book IV. Thus at 434D-E, just before the first mention of the 'longer road', Socrates introduces that tripartite definition. He says, in effect:

Let us now see whether this account of the virtues in the city *does* apply to justice in the individual: if it does, all will be well; if not let us go back and forth between city and individual and see what we can determine about either as a result. (434D-E)[11]

(This mutual adjustment involves not only correcting our account of the virtues in the individual if they don't fit our account of the virtues of the city, but also connecting our accounts of the virtues in the city if they don't fit our account of the virtues in the individual. We strike each against the other in hopes a flash of light will be cast on both. This is no mindless application of our account of virtues in the city to virtues in the individual.) I shall return to the question, 'Why this back and forth? Why this

gesture towards Rawlsian (Goodmanian) “reflective equilibrium”?’

There is a hint as to the answer to this in the reference to the Book IV account as giving us only a outline (*hupographê*: 504D6) of the virtues. If, as we are supposing, the inadequacy is (not just , more narrowly, the inadequacy of our methods of dividing the soul into parts but) the need to fill in these accounts of the virtues which are, so far, mere outlines or sketches, then it *might well* be necessary to supplement (from each other) *both* the accounts of the virtues in the just city and the accounts of the virtues in the individual. *Both* will be, as they stand, mere outlines or sketches.

Very well, but what in the accounts of the virtues is sketchy? And how is the Form of the Good to fill in these outlines in such a way as to cast light on the question what the virtues are? Or, at any rate, how will thinking of the Form of the Good cast any more light on what the virtues are than it cast on the question how the soul is divided? Well, let’s look at what the accounts *are* in Book IV of the four virtues. Justice and Wisdom are the two crucial cases, I suggest.

Consider what justice is in the individual (and in the just city) as determined by the methods of Book IV. Justice in an individual, like justice in the just city, is the three parts of the soul (or city) each *doing its own* – each fulfilling its own function, as Jerry Santas has shown – and not interfering with the other parts from doing *their own*, or

fulfilling *their* function. Most importantly, then, what is it for the *Rational part* in the individual to do its own? The answer is 'to rule, being wise and exercising forethought on behalf of the entire soul' (441E3-4). What is the *being wise* referred to here? It is the science the rational part has of what is beneficial (*tou sumpherontos*) to each of the three parts and to the whole these parts constitute (442C5-7). Similarly, switching momentarily to justice in the city, what the intellectual class, the guardians, are supposed to look to is not the happiness of any one class, but the happiness of the whole city (420B5-7, C1-4, 421B5-C5, 466B5-6, compare 519E2-3, 520A1). With the city, the wisdom involved is

the science (*epistêmê*) ... by means of which one does not deliberate about some particular thing [as do the sciences of carpentry, of how wooden things should be the in the best state (*echoi beltista*); or the sciences of bronzesmithing and of farming do about how bronzes, or crops should do best] but about the whole – how the whole city[10] best gets on (*arista homilo*) with itself and with other cities (428D1-4 with B7ff).

As the references just given show, 'doing best' here is to be understood in terms of the city as a whole being both advantaged and *happy*.

Very well. But is there a connection here with the Form of the Good? Is there some way the Form of the Good would fill in the outline or sketch, did we but have knowledge of it? I suggest there is – though making this connection will involve us in employing a

number of hypotheses which themselves will need defending. I cannot do an adequate defense of these hypotheses in the present lecture, but I shall state them and offer a little initial discussion.

It will be obvious by now what my proposal is going to be. It is that what has been left merely in outline in the accounts of the virtues of just city and of the virtues of an individual is (a) what the *good* is that the rational class of the just city aims to work out for each of the three classes, and for the city as a whole; and (b) what the *good* is that the rational part of the soul aims to work out for each of the three parts of the soul, and for the soul of the individual taken as a whole. The problem of ascertaining *what the good is* will be the same, I suggest, for just city and for individual soul. (That, I was suggesting, might be a reason for the proposed search for 'reflective equilibrium'.)

The question 'What is merely sketchy in the Book IV accounts of the virtues?' will receive an answer, then, if coming to know the Form of the Good could be somehow intimately connected with coming to know the good of a given organic whole such as the just city or the individual soul. Can this be done? I believe that it can – at any it can relative to four hypotheses I shall offer.

PART II: EXTRAORDINARY IMPLICATIONS FOR THE UNDERSTANDING THE THE
ETHICS OF THE *REPUBLIC*: FOUR HYPOTHESES

How then might the Form of the Good be so intimately connected with the good of a just city and its parts, and the good of an individual soul and its parts, that one will only come to know what justice, wisdom, and the like are to the extent to which one comes to know the Form of the Good? I can at any rate tell you of one account of the good which the Form of the Good is the Form *of*, so to speak, that will not come anywhere near to capturing a sufficiently intimate connection. I advert to the now standard view of the Form of the Good:

SV The good which, in Socrates (as in Aristotle), we all desire is undoubtedly happiness,[13] more precisely, the agent's own happiness. But while Socratic ethics (like Aristotelian ethics) aims at the happiness of the individual, Platonic ethics, aiming at this quite new metaphysical object, the Form of the Good, provides the guardians – and the rational part of the individual soul – with an altogether new object of rational desire. This new object of desire is not less pregnant with consequences for moral philosophy than Kant's alleged discovery of another new object of desire – or at any rate another new object for one's motives. (In Kant this new object for one's motives is the moral law that is presupposed by the categorical imperative.) As Morris puts it, 'the philosopher is moved by the knowledge of the Idea of the good, not by desire for his own good'. What the Form of the Good gives us is the *good in itself* – as that expression would be employed by moral philosophers of the past century and more, namely – the intrinsic good, the good *as such*. This is a perfectly general and *non-relational* good – a good which, if not exactly identical

with the moral good in its generality and impersonality, is as close to the moral good we all know and love as anything in Plato. It is the furthest thing from the Socratic ethics that is exclusively happiness-based. (One hears Prichard cheering.)

I say this *cannot* reasonably be taken to be a Form of the Good that it would be much use to look to if one aimed to work out the good of the city and of each of its parts, or the good of the individual soul and of each of its parts. For surely the good intended in the case of each of the organisms – city and individual soul – is not some impersonal and non-relational good. What these goods should be, in each case, if we are to make any sense of this account of the 'longer road', is precisely the benefit or advantage of each organism (each city, each individual). Accordingly, I now propose the following as the first of the four hypotheses I shall appeal to in my explanation of the 'longer road'.

H1 The good that the Form of the Good is the Form *of* is *benefit* or *advantage* – not (as above) the *intrinsic good*, or *the good in itself*, or some *impersonal entirely non-relative good* – let alone some *moral* good.[14]

This is plainly a very consequential hypothesis, since, as I have just now been suggesting, it departs from virtually all treatments of the Form of the Good for a very long time.[15]

Let me mention immediately three reasons for taking this hypothesis seriously, and one consequence – of absolutely central importance – of this hypothesis. On the reasons for adopting this hypothesis, notice, first, that the conclusion which (H1) formulates – that

the Form of the Good that the guardians and one's rational part look to is the Form of *benefit or advantage* – is the inevitable result of my present thesis about the 'longer road'. For it is obvious, I'd have thought, that what the guardians and one's rational part look to is the *benefit or advantage* of each of the parts and wholes in question. Indeed what is looked to for the entire city and the entire individual is happiness, both in the case of the three classes and of the city as a whole, and in the case of the happiness of the soul of the individual as a whole.[16] For surely the good the guardians look to in order to see to the good – indeed happiness – of each of the three classes and the good – indeed happiness – of the whole is *benefit or advantage*. And the same applies to one's rational part looking to the good of each of the three parts and the good of the entire soul is not *simply* benefit or advantage, but *happiness*. To dress up these goods of classes of the city, and of the whole city, and of the individual, as intrinsic goods or whatever hardly speaks to the point of these passages in the *Republic*.

Second, on the account of the Form of the Good I am offering, the great metaphysical discussions of the Forms and especially the Form of the Good now for the first time in a good while because relevant to what all must surely admit is the central question of the *Republic*. I speak of course of the question whether it is the just person or the completely unjust person that is happier. Analytical philosophers who are already have tendency enough to atomize the *Republic* into self-contained arguments, are also quite

happy to speak of the great central books of the *Republic* as (in effect) a metaphysical digression that leaves behind questions of individual happiness. By contrast, my account of the 'longer road' both makes it relevant to Book IV *and* makes Book VI relevant to the main question of the *Republic*.

I might also add, third, that this account of the good makes highly appropriate Socrates' remark (337C9-10, 339A6-9, B3-4) in Book I that he would not be surprised if justice turned out to be a form of advantage – though obviously not the advantage of the stronger (339B1-4). Or, more exactly – since Socrates and Plato would evidently both have thought that Justice really *was* the advantage of the 'stronger' quite as well as the advantage of the 'weaker' – justice would not be

TJ the advantage of the 'stronger' if that is understood as Thrasymachus understands it, as the advantage which the stronger gain by exploiting others, and so taking away from them *their* advantage.

The important consequence of (H1) to which I wish to draw attention is this: that for Plato in the *Republic*, quite as much as for the Socrates of the Socratic parts of the early dialogues,

ESP The ethics of the *Republic* represents a purely factual approach to ethics as does the ethics of the Socratic parts of the early dialogues. It's a question of fact what happiness is – however difficult it may be in practise to give a really good answer to that question; and so it is also a question

of fact what leads to that happiness.

(This is so, even though Socratic psychology of action – Socratic intellectualism, a species of psychological egoism – differs from Platonic psychology of action: the ethical parts of their theories of the human being are identical otherwise.)

The point is that in discussing the Form of the Good, or the good in Plato, we are not talking about anything normative or evaluative or purely *moral*. We are talking about benefit or advantage – in the case of humans, happiness.

So much for now about my first hypothesis. My next two hypotheses I introduce by way of the following difficulty:

The good for the city is presumably different from the good for the individual – the one apparently being the happiness of the just city and its three classes, and the other being the happiness of the individual. But then surely the Form of the Good differs from both – at least it is, unless you deploy some kind of Aristotelian ambiguity to 'good' that will get us different goods for each kind of thing. Anyhow, the Form of the Good is a great big metaphysical entity with properties or attributes all its own. So how on earth are you going to get any kind of identity between the Form of the Good and individual happiness or the happiness of the city?

This objection is well wide of the mark, even for those anxious – as I am not – to embrace

Aristotle's distinction between universals and Forms as capturing a difference between Socrates and Plato. Leaving aside for the moment any argument based upon the form-universal distinction, consider only the point that for Socrates,

S1 we all desire the same thing – namely, the good (or, if you will, happiness).

Surely this point is meant to be (and is) compatible with the view that

S2 I desire *my* good (*my* happiness) while *you* desire *your* good (*your* happiness).

The 'same thing' in (S1) can only be the *universal* good. But that too is different from my good and your good. What we need to do, therefore is to see the situation as follows:

S3 'We both desire the *universal* good (or the *universal* happiness)' says precisely

that what I desire is that the universal *good* be instantiated by *my* life, while you desire that the universal good be instantiated by your life.

There is no contradiction here between us both desiring the same thing, *good* or *happiness*, and our each desiring different things, I desiring *my* good or *my* happiness, while you desire *your* good or *your* happiness. And notice that this by itself removes the parallel difficulty about the Forms.[17] For suppose that

P1 We all – all guardians and all individuals – seek the Form of the Good.

Why should we not understand this as saying essentially the same thing as that

P2 I desire that *my* life partake in the Form of the Good, and

you desire that *your* life partake in the Form of the Good.

This gets us, in turn, that

P3 'We all seek the Form of the Good' says precisely that what I desire is that *my*

life partake in the Form of the Good, while what you desire is that *your* life

partake in the Form of the good.

Turning now to the difficulty that my individual good (which I seek) is not the same thing as the good of the entire city (which the guardians seek), it is now easy to extrapolate to the following conclusion:

P4 to say 'the guardians look to the Form of the Good in ruling and deliberating' is to say that what the guardians desire is that the just city as a whole partake in the Form of the Good, while to say 'the rational part looks to the Form of the Good in ruling and deliberating for itself' is to say that what the rational part desires is that the entire soul partake in the Form of the Good.

This gets rid of the difficulty that the good I desire (my happiness) is a different thing from the good which the guardians desire (the happiness of the city as a whole).

Indeed, there is another difficulty this gets rid of. This is the difficulty that happiness – the happiness of the individual (or the individual soul) *or* the happiness of the just city – seems to be quite different from the Form of the Good. The above lines of thought suggest that we should think of the Form of the Good in the following way.

P5 to say that humans partake in the Form of the Good is to say that their lives are happy, while to say that trees partake in the Form of the Good is to say that their lives involves adequate moisture, sunlight, growth, and so forth.

For the Form of the Good to be the end and aim of all things will nevertheless get us that what it is for that Form to be the end in the case of humans will be different (in accordance with what a human being is) from what it is for that Form to be the end in

the case of trees (in accordance with what a tree is). I shall say that the same good is involved for both humans and trees, namely what *benefits* or *advantages* humans or trees.[18]

I have now, in effect, arrived at my next two hypotheses:

H2 For the good which the Form of the Good is the Form *of* to be benefit or advantage implies that

* for me to partake in the Form of the Good is for *me* to receive benefit or advantage, while

* for you to partake in the Form of the Good is for *you* to receive benefit or advantage,

and so forth.

H3 Benefit or advantage in the case of humans is happiness, or at any rate the maximum of happiness attainable by them in their circumstances. So that

* for humans to partake in the Form of the Good is for the benefit of happiness to characterize their lives – or at any rate the maximum of happiness attainable by them in their circumstances, even while

* for trees to partake in the Form of the good – in Platonic-Aristotelian teleological science – will be something quite other than for them to be happy.

And similarly for the cosmos as a whole, or for the four elements.

There can be no real difficulty with these two hypotheses, I believe, if the rest of what I

am saying can be defended.

One question remains, then. This is the question 'What *is* that relation between the Form of the Good and the attribute of good, benefit, or advantage which must obtain if looking to the Form of the Good will bring benefit or happiness to the city or to the individual? I shall propose, in my fourth hypothesis, that the relation in question is the simplest relation – namely, the relation of identity. If you ask what the Form of the Good is, the answer is that it is benefit or advantage. Thus my fourth and final hypothesis is that

H4 The Form of the Good = the good *tout simple*, which we say the Form of the Good is the Form *of*.

I cannot, within the scope of this lecture, give this hypothesis the kind of explanation it deserves. I shall rest content with the following brief remarks only.

First, it will seem extraordinary to some that I should identify the Form of the Good with the attribute *good*, even if we waive Aristotle's (ill-judged) objection that attributes are *such-es* (universals), while the Form of the Good is a *this* (an individual). For some will say

Surely there are many more attributes than there are Forms. While there is an attribute of *not speaking Greek*, there is no *Form* of non-Greek speaker ('barbarian').

I believe, on the contrary, that the lesson of the paradoxes is that we *cannot afford* to

suppose that there is an attribute for just any predicate. (We need to be *much* more circumspect in postulating abstract objects.) But then, what attributes are there? Surely there will be *some*? My answer, which for now must be merely dogmatic, is that there are no attributes over and above Forms. The Forms are the only attributes there are. (And the objector *was* right about there being many fewer Forms than one might suppose: I can now add that there are far fewer attributes than one might imagine. And it should now be easy to see how this suggestion coheres with (H4).)

Our objector may come back at us as follows:

But what *prima facie* case can possibly be given for representing the Form as a mere attribute? (I don't grant this way of framing the question, given what I said about attributes in the preceding paragraph. But let us leave this aside.) Doesn't the Form of the Good, like all the Forms, itself have attributes? (Compare Aristotle's famously distinguishing within attributes of the Forms (a) those that are attributes of all Forms, because they are attributes of any Form *qua* Form, e.g., being eternal, unchanging, being the sort of thing to be partaken in, and so forth; and (b) those that are attributes of a given Form by virtue of precisely what the given Form is the Form *of*, e.g., the Form of Human having something to do with being composed of soul (including reason) and body, being a biped, and changing all the time, while the Form of the Tree has nothing to do with being composed in part of a soul (including reason). And even if one does not grant that the Forms are self-predicational, i.e., each having the very attribute

that the Form is the Form *of*, it is still surely the case that there are all sorts of attributes which the Form of the Good must have – e.g., being harmonious and unified, as at *Republic* 500B-C. Consider, for example the extraordinary metaphysical attributes attributed to the Form of the Good in the Image of the Sun.

This is an objection that deserves a very full reaction. I do not have space to offer such a reaction here. In particular, I cannot lay out here my account of the Form of the Good in the Image of the Sun. I remark only two things, by way of hints as to what I would say in a wider context. First of all, I have the gravest reservations about seeing things according to the Aristotle/Frege grammatical realism which forces everything into corresponding in category to the grammatical categories of *name* and *predicate* (or, in Frege's case, the linguistic distinction between *numerals* and *function symbols*) – let alone the more sophisticated categories of logical grammar or of deep structure. When we are talking about the most fundamental entities required by our sciences – such entities as *being* or *existence*, *one*, *same*, *other* on the one hand, or *good* on the other – we have to be patient. The categories of the fundamental entities – if they have categories (which I doubt) – are likely to be the last things to emerge. (Consider the categories – if any – to which belong of quanta, force, mass, energy, and so forth.)

My second remark is a further claim connecting the ethics of the *Republic* with Socratic ethics even more closely than I have suggested so far. If we look at the things said of

the Form of the Good at 505A2-B3, 505E1-506A7, and compare them with the things said of the human good, i.e., happiness or wisdom in the Socratic parts of the early dialogues, we see, surprisingly enough, that they are the same. This is a result for which there is a natural explanation if the attribute *good* in Socrates (which in the case of humans gives us the attribute of *happiness*) is identical with the Form of the Good. Thus the first of these two passages says of the Idea of the Good that it is that by using which all other things become useful and beneficial, and that which, if we acquire things without the good, it does us no good, no matter how much we know about other things. And the second passage says that the Good for the sake of which we pursue all things is such that if we don't know it, we miss even such good as we might get from other things. I will not need to tell anyone here that these are just the things that are said of the wisdom which in the Socratic parts of the early dialogues is identified with the knowledge of the good, i.e., the knowledge of happiness. Thus, when Socrates says at 504E6-7 that Glaucon has often heard what Socrates is going to say about the Form of the Good, there is no need to speak of esoteric teachings, or to suggest that Glaucon is familiar with the Theory of Forms. For on the present hypothesis, what the *Republic* says Glaucon has often heard is just what is said in the Socratic parts of the early dialogues. We too have heard it often in earlier dialogues.[19]

PART III: WHY BE INTERESTED IN PLOT: ISN'T IT PLATO'S *ARGUMENTS* THAT COUNT?

There is a moral to this paper which I had hoped to have time to point to, but on which I can at the moment only issue a promissory note. This has to do with the temptations of interpreting what Plato is saying (or what his characters are saying) by means of their sentences in terms of what their *sentences* say. This offshoot (or perhaps origin) of the 'linguistic turn' in great thinkers such as Frege, Hilbert, Russell, Wittgenstein, Davidson, and so forth, brings it about that we think of what Plato or his characters are saying in terms of *propositions* (individuated by the logical powers of sentences), *entailment*, the *validity* of their arguments, and so forth.[20]

What is so bad about careful analysis of what the sentences of Plato and of his characters say? What is so bad about seeing what [propositions] follows from what [propositions]? All I can do here by way of indicating the general locus of my point is to adduce an example already discussed in certain aspects. Can we get what *Thrasymachus* (the person) is saying solely by looking at the sentence 'Justice is the interest of the stronger'? Surely not – and on several counts. For one thing, the stronger in question are those in power politically, who declare that what *they* call 'justice' *is* justice. But actually, this purely conventionalist account of justice is also not what *Thrasymachus* is saying – since, as Socrates' questioning reveals to *Thrasymachus*, what he had in mind to speak of was not those strong people who, through ignorance, turn out to be *bad* at exploiting others, but those who have the

science of intelligent exploitation. And even here, when we see Socrates saying that he wouldn't be surprised if Justice was some sort of advantage, but apparently backing off from saying it is the advantage *of the stronger*, he is plainly taking it that Thrasymachus, the person, is not merely saying that

T1 Justice is the advantage of the strong gained by means of the science of exploitation,

but also that

T2 Justice is the advantage of the strong gained by means of the science of exploitation *applied to taking away the good from them and arrogating that good to oneself.*

And if the matter italicised in (T2) is part of what Thrasymachus, the person, is saying that Socrates is backing off from, then, since no corresponding *words* for this are used in the text at this point, what Thrasymachus' *sentences* say will be particularly irrelevant to what is going on here.[21] (And of course the point generalizes for the whole *Republic*.) To understand what is going on, we need to see enough of the over all context to see what the speaker is up to – and not just what the speaker's *sentences* say according to a particular semantic interpretation of the words of the sentence. Now, over all plot is precisely one sort of context that I believe we ignore at our peril if we want to see what Plato's speakers are up to, and not just what their sentences say. Such is the considerable importance I place in this paper on the question of plot.

CONCLUSION

I have argued that the 'longer road' fills in the outlines of the virtues of both just city and soul, by raising the question what the *good* is that the guardians look to for the city as a whole, and what the *good* is that the individual looks to for the individual as a whole. I inferred from my answer to this question that the Form of the Good is precisely the Form of Benefit or Advantage. This enabled me to connect the discussion of the Form of the Good in the great metaphysical central books of the *Republic* with the question of giving proper accounts of the virtues of the just city and of the individual soul – restoring the metaphysical matter of Book VI to a position where it is relevant to the ethical material of Book IV. As an added bonus, my account of the 'longer road' also shows how the great central books are also relevant to the main question of the *Republic* as a whole: the question whether the just person is happier (better off) than the completely unjust person.

It is true that my claim that the Form of the Good is the Form of benefit or advantage still leaves open what the precise relation is between the Form of the Good (the Form of benefit or advantage) and benefit or advantage. All that is certain, if my suggestions so far have been correct, is that to *partake in* the Form of the Good is to be benefited or advantaged. In theory, a wide range of choices would be available to us within this restriction. What I have done is merely to indicate, without further argument, that I myself opt for the simplest such relation, namely, identity – so that the Form of the

Good just *is benefit or advantage*.

Finally. I note one result of my attempt to identify the 'longer road': that the ethical part of Platonic ethics does not differ from the ethical part of Socratic ethics, provided only that we make allowances for such changes that must be implemented because of the fact that Socrates and Plato hold radically different psychologies of action. I hope to say a bit more about some of these matters at the Leventis conference on March 2-5, 2005.[22]

Endnotes to

1 A parallel case: Prichard famously remarks, when trying to explain how it is that legions of scholars have missed the fact (as Prichard sees it), that Plato holds *both* that *dikaiosunê* means morality *and* that justice always makes us happier. (The context is this: the claim that justice makes us happier, Prichard rightly takes to represent an attempt to refute sophists of the stripe of Thrasymachus. This attempt Prichard thinks profoundly misguided: why on earth would one so much as suggest that if an action does not make one happy, it is not just? Surely, he thinks, it is of the essence of morality that it can require you to act in a way that will *not* makes you happiest. So how come we all go along with Plato when we see him basing the central argument of the *Republic* on this anti-sophistic strategy?) Prichard remarks:

Just because Plato takes for granted that this is the only way to refute the Sophists, we are apt in reading him to do the same, *especially as our attention is likely to be fully taken up by the effort to follow Plato's thought.* (in *Moral Obligation*, 2nd ed., 1968 [1928], 208: my emphasis).

This *obiter dictum* concerning just how difficult it is to be sure what Plato is up to in the *Republic* represents a *cri de coeur* that will surely resonate in the heart of anyone with the slightest devotion to the reading of Plato.

2 We see here how Socrates has introduced the idea of the sciences or expertises into Thrasymachus' attempt to convey his thought clearly – Polemarchus of course suffered the same fate. At first, this introduction of the idea of the sciences or expertises into the views of others seems quite gratuitous. In the end, however, especially in the case of Thrasymachus, this introduction actually gives Thrasymachus his best shot at getting across this position of his which is often (but I think wrongly) characterized as *immoralist*. (As if what Socrates was into was *morals*.) The salient characteristic of Thrasymachus' position is not any supposed 'immoralism', but his believing that harming others will be advantageous to *him*. (Incidentally, I do not think

Thrasymachus' embrace of a science of exploitation would have led him to give up the conventionalist (positivist) idea that the strong declaring certain actions 'just' makes them just.)

3. This is of course Thrasymachus' version of reality – a reality which could exist only if reality was least partly created by concepts the 'strong' have introduced. (What other reality could there be, many modern scholars and philosophers ask, but that created by the concepts of someone? But no Platonist or devotee of Socrates will ever take this line.)

4. So far, this is just social contract theory – and if the 'strong' in question are the people, it is the democratic social contract theory in the variant which Socrates rejects in Book II.

5. Does the substitution of

Justice makes us happier

for

Justice is the advantage of the stronger

amount to a change of subject on Socrates' part? It certainly does on the usual philosophical assumptions about what people are saying by means of the sentences they use. For on these assumptions about 'propositions' – assumptions which I myself do not accept – what a given speaker is saying by means of certain sentences is given by what their sentences say. On those assumptions, the above substitution give us two totally different proposition. For neither will entail the other – not unless one has in tow a further proposition, namely, that supposedly expressed by 'A person's advantage consists in that person's happiness'. My own view is that whether or not the sentences say the same thing, when Thrasymachus use these sentences, he uses it to say the same thing. Hence Socrates has not changed the subject on Thrasymachus.

As against this, it is perfectly true that Socrates says that before we can know

whether or not justice makes us happier we have to know what justice *is*. But this is quite compatible with its being the case that what Socrates and Thrasymachus intend to refer to when they use the word 'justice' in asking 'Does justice make us happier' is anything other than *what justice really is*. The point of the two different ways of referring to justice in the two questions 'Does justice make us happier?' and 'What is justice' it to refer to the very same thing in different ways that point our interest to one feature of justice more than to another. But it is the same thing being talked about. (As Socrates sees, it is *that real nature of justice which makes us happier*.) These features are of course not neutrally identifiable as *propositions*. One has to know the truth about justice in order to know what one intends to refer to. See Penner and Rowe (forthcoming), ch.10

6. Notice: the justice of individuals quite generally, no matter what society they are members of. Contrary to what may *appear* to be the case, Plato's concern with the justice of individuals is not aimed at determining the justice solely, or even primarily, of *members of the just society*. See Penner, 'Platonic Justice and what we mean by "Justice"', forthcoming in *Plato*, online journal of the *International Plato Society*, Vol.5, 2005.

7 For Socrates and Plato all sciences or expertises (*epistêmai, technai*) are sciences of a certain *usual* or *standard* good (as I shall put it). Health is *usually*, but not quite always, a good: see *Euthydemus* 279B-281E, *Meno* 87E-89A. The only thing that is always a good is (in the case of humans) happiness – and, derivatively from this, wisdom. (Though wisdom for Socrates is entirely an intellectual matter, while for Plato, there is some serious (non-intellectual) training of non-'character' required as a precondition to the acquisition of wisdom.

8. Plato here (all but explicitly) rejects the key claim of Socratic psychology of action: that all so-called irrational action proceeds from the agent's ignorance of where his or

her own good lies. (For Socrates, it's all a matter of human understanding or the lack thereof.) Plato is now saying there is another form of pathology in action where one's desires or emotions simply *overwhelm* one's reason, and so bring about action the agent realizes is *contrary* to what would be best for him or her. Plato does not go so far as Aristotle does in suggesting that such actions are actually *voluntary* actions. They are nevertheless what we would call intentional or internally motivated actions, reflective of character. Character is a notion I believe Socrates entirely eschewed.

9. He cites the anger towards one's irrational part (but why shouldn't that be *Reason* that is angry with the irrational part?) and he cites excessive spiritedness towards one's rational part (but why shouldn't that be *the irrational part* that is behaving in a spirited way towards Reason?) Plato's effort to meet the standards of the first, ingenious conflict-of-opposite-movements argument with a second such argument is of singularly low quality. My views on the poverty of Platonic argument for *thumos* as a separate part of the soul remain what they were in my 'Thought and Desire in Plato' of 1971. In spite of the apologies many scholars have offered for him, Plato cannot meet such standards.

I realize that it will be suggested, for certain purposes, that what is important about the tripartite division is simply the presentation of one method of classification of human desires (from amongst indefinitely many pretty well equally viable alternative classifications of human desires), which is shown to be useful in Books VIII and IX. One should not worry, one is assured, that in Book IV Plato does not really provide an argument for separating *thumos* out from the soul that will work in anything like the conflict-of-opposite-movements way in which appetite and reason are separated out in the first argument. It is clear, however, that Plato did not share this insouciance. For the whole point of introducing the lame example of Odysseus rebuking his *thumos* is precisely to invoke the conflict-of-opposite-movements criterion.

[10] There is a kind of compression here, as I see it, the *holês hautês* doing duty both

for the whole science of goods (not just woodworking goods, crop goods, and the like) and also for the whole city.

[11] Glaucon replies (434D4),

'Now you're talking *kath' hodon* – in the right way (*hodos*: road); and that is how we should proceed.'

(I take the idea of talking *kath' hodon* to be the idea, 'You're on your way, man'. It seems to me eminently possible – and even more probable than not – that the reference to a way or road is, as it were, a deliberate pun, setting up Socrates' important remark immediately below to the effect that, actually, we are going to have to take a *longer way* around.) If this *is* a deliberate pun, referring forward to the longer road lower down (435D2-3), then Socrates would be here indicating that the longer road in question is a longer road not to dividing the soul in three, but to applying the account of virtues in the city to the account of virtues in the individual, perhaps correcting the one from the other. But since it seems imprudent to place much weight on this possible pun, I rest my case entirely on the other considerations I have adduced in the main text.

[12] 505E1-506A7 with 505A2-B3; and with the Socratic-looking question 'Is pleasure the good, or is knowledge?' – which might at first blush seem not to be about the Form of the Good at all. But – strange as it looks – it must surely be. Compare 506B2–4 (which once more looks like a reference to the Form of the Good) together with 506D4 and (which are certainly references to the Form) 506E2 and 507A3. This shows – importantly for my over all project – that, for Plato in the *Republic*, even if you are one of the many, to wonder whether pleasure is the good *is* to wonder whether pleasure is the Form of the Good. (This whether the many realize it or not.)

[13] I ignore for present purposes what Socrates sometimes says the good is, namely, wisdom. Even if one says this, what makes wisdom good is that it is the one thing

which always leads to happiness, since it is the one thing, which if used, always leads to happiness. The point would therefore not be different if we made this modification.

[14] When I say that the Form of the Good is the Form of Benefit or Advantage, I am thinking of the benefit or advantage of, say, organisms like human beings. The word 'benefit' easily suggests the idea of beneficial *means* to some end. I have no desire to deny that beneficial means are a benefit. Medicines or regimens prescribed by a doctor, like the doctor himself or herself, are beneficial because they are means to a certain end, the end of the science of medicine, namely, health. But health is itself beneficial to the organism. That is, even if health were the be-all and end-all of the human good then health would be beneficial (to the organism). Similarly, human happiness, like the one thing always good as a means to it, namely, wisdom I take as beneficial. (As for health, it is only usually a good – since it is not only not always a good thing, but sometime even a worse thing than sickness if the health is unwisely used. I like to say, however, that health is *standardly* a good, since it is the fact that health is *usually* a good which in my view explains the fact that the science of medicine is the science of health and not the science of sickness, even though expertise at bringing about health *does* give one the equal ability to bring about sickness, the opposite of health.) But the point that happiness is a benefit should not be taken to suggest that doctors and prescribed medicines or regimens are not benefits, even if they are mere means. It is true that the most important benefit, happiness, is the end of the human being, and indeed the good of the human being. On the other hand, goodness of its kind for organisms (and derivatively for professions, organs and artifacts: see *Lesser Hippias* 373C-375D), for example, being a good *person*, is also a good and a benefit. But it involves goodness, and benefit, as a *means*. (Incidentally, *goodness of its kind* that has so profitably preoccupied modern analytical philosophy, is not the basic goodness for a decent theory of goodness and functions. Goodness of its kind is, with apologies to Kant, a species of *hypothetical* good. A good doctor is good of his kind only because what he does is a means to an end which is itself at least *standardly* a good. Without

there being the standard categorical good in question, there would be no reason to treat the idea of a *good doctor* as in any way an explanandum. This point appears to have been entirely missed by modern analytical philosophy.)

[15] It is sometimes suggested that a Form of Benefit or Advantage would be egoistic. But this is an entire mistake. If naked altruism were possible, then what nakedly altruistic desires would involve would be simply desires that the lives of others partake in Benefit or Advantage or happiness – regardless of whether or not one's own life did. The Form of Advantage of Benefit, if that is what the Form of the Good is, is merely relational, not self-interested. But the Form of Benefit or Advantage does give to Plato a theory of ethics which has nothing to do with morality, or the evaluative, or the normative. If the question whether or not someone is happy is itself a purely factual question – however difficult answering such questions may be in practise – then Platonic ethics (in this respect indistinguishable from Socratic ethics) will have nothing to do with norms, or values, or morality. It will simply be a matter of the objective, factual nature of the good. In this respect it will be quite different from all modern moral philosophy or ethics that I know of.

[16] I doubt that the two lower parts of the soul – though they may desire and feel pleasure – can be happy or unhappy. Nor indeed do I see any point to the anthropomorphic suggestion that the rational part is happy. What the rational part is there *for* is not for the rational part itself to be happy, but for the individual as a whole to be happy.

I realize, of course, that Plato speaks in terms of the good of the entire soul as opposed to the good of the body. But within the context of discussion the good for humans souls *in this life*, we surely have every reason to treat this as the good of the person as opposed to the good of the body. (When we come to talk of the soul in connection with immortality, as in Book X, the situation is quite different of course.)

As for the point that the analogue to the good which the guardians seek in the just city (the good of the entire city) is the good of the entire individual, this point is often forgotten by those scholars anxious to suggest that, in the description of being sent down again into the cave, Plato is embracing – at least for the moment, and indeed perhaps permanently – a justice which may sometimes involve pure altruism (and even a Christian impulse). For the analogue to the good of the whole city which guardians seek is the good of the individual himself or herself, and not some altruistic good.

[17] It also removes the silly difficulty that logically-minded interpreters raise about the opening of the *Nicomachean Ethics* – that Aristotle appears to commit the fallacy of reversing the quantifiers arguing from 'Every action aims at some good' $[(\forall x)(\exists y)Rxy]$ to 'There is some good at which every action aims' $[(\exists y)(\forall x)Rxy]$. Of course Aristotle would not be happy speaking about Forms. Nevertheless, I have suggested in an unpublished paper that with his preoccupation with *this-es* and *such-es*, Aristotle *would* have been happy with a parallel solution to that given in the main text for the Forms, but using second order quantification: $(\exists F)(\forall x)(x \text{ seeks } F \text{ things})'$. [So the inference is now not to $(\exists y)(\forall x)Rxy'$, but to $(\exists F)(\forall y)Fy'$, where 'F' ranges over *such-es* – while for Plato, without going to second order logic, we have the inference to $(\exists y)(\forall x)R^*xy'$ where the relation (or function) 'R*' stands for a relation (or function) systematically related to 'R' – the sort of relation or partaking (whatever that might be: *Phaedo* 100D) indicated in the main text.] All we need here is what we have above in (H3): that to want to partake in the Form of the Good is, for humans, to want to be happy (or as happy as one can be in the circumstances with which one begins – the luck of the draw, so to speak). That the goodness of individuals is different from the good of the just city does not flow from a difference in what the good is in the two cases – so there is no need for Aristotle's systematic ambiguities – but from a difference in what an individual is from what a city is. (Compare Quine vs Ryle as depicted by Morton White, *Towards Reunion in Philosophy*.)

[18] Notice also that to say that the good is the intrinsic good or the impersonal good,

or the entirely non-relational good would make no sense in terms of the good to which Socrates wishes to appeal in the *Phaedo*. Such teleological goods, like *benefit* or *advantage* are, for Plato, entirely a scientific (and so factual) matter.

[19] Another place where interpreters like to suggest that Socrates is implying that some of his hearers are in on a Platonic doctrine existing in esoteric surroundings (within a Platonic school), is the place (475E6-7) where the point Socrates is about to explain would not be easily seen by others, though it would be by Glaucon (475E6-7). What? Others would not see easily that beautiful and ugly are one, and are together two? I think not – at least not unless we are talking about certain beings who are committed to denying precisely this – the (nominalistic) lovers of sights and sounds. I have discussed this matter fully elsewhere (in my *AFM*).

[20] See my De Vogel lecture at the 7th triennial meetings of the International Plato Society in Würzburg, in July 2004, an *editio minor* of which will come out in the Proceedings of those meetings.

[21] See my response to a certain now classic accusation leveled by David Sachs (*Philosophical Review*, 1963) against Plato in the *Republic* in my 'Platonic Justice and the meaning of "justice"' (forthcoming in Volume V of the online journal of the International Plato Society for 2005). I argue there that there is even more to what Thrasymachus, the person, is saying than simply (T1) or (T2). This is because there is even more that Thrasymachus intends to refer to by means of his use of 'justice' than any semantic analysis of his words could possibly give us. Sachs's accusation says (in effect) that Socrates' response to Thrasymachus' claim that *injustice makes one happier* equivocates, since Thrasymachus was saying that *breaking the rules* makes you happier, whereas Socrates' reply merely says that (on the contrary!) *being psychologically well-adjusted* makes you happier. (This is equivocation because of the use of two different meanings of 'justice' and 'injustice'.) I reply that all that is

necessary is that Socrates and Thrasymachus agree, in the end that they *intend to refer to the same thing* when they use the words 'justice' and 'injustice'.

How do I get that they intend to refer to the same thing? What I argue *op. cit.* is that

what Thrasymachus *thinks* he intends to refer to is:

* the real nature of justice (whatever it may really be – and if I, Thrasymachus, make some error in verbally identifying it, *you fix it up*: that's what I intended to refer to)'

i.e. (and now I am going to tell you what that real nature is)

* the advantage of the stronger,

i.e.,

* the advantage which the stronger gain by taking away from others *their* advantage.

Should the first 'i.e.' *come apart* (so to speak) and Thrasymachus be forced to grant that there can be no good gained by harming others, then Thrasymachus has only three choices:

A to say, 'I never intended to speak about the real nature of justice, so that my contribution to the debate was irrelevant';

B to say, as many a Socratic interlocutor says, 'By Zeus, Socrates, I no longer know what to think, or what it is I am referring to';

and finally

C to resign, saying, 'O.K., you're right, justice isn't the advantage of the stronger as I was conceiving it.

(Obviously I am suggesting that (C) is the only viable option for Thrasymachus.)

The charge of ambiguity is a pure artifact of the belief that what speakers are saying is given by what their sentences say (by what their *words* say – by what the meanings of the word determine – given some semantic interpretation of their words.

It may be wondered why the fact that 'the interest of the stronger' and 'psychological well-adjustment' differ in meaning is so important to a fallacy. Wouldn't it be better – at any rate if we are not trying to talk about other possible worlds – to say that what is important is that the reference determined in this world by the one meaning be the same as the reference determined in this world by the other meaning? But as our remarks earlier in this note suggest, we need more than the reference determined by the meaning of the expressions (since, according to Plato, being psychologically well-adjusted *is* in the interest of the stronger, properly understood). What we need to insist that Plato assure is not 'equivocating' is that what Thrasymachus (the person) *intends to refer to* be the same thing as what Socrates (the person) intends to refer to. (The real issue is not so-called 'equivocation' at all. For that notion belongs to the realm of meanings.)

22 Succeeding parts of the material of the present lecture will be presented in my opening paper at the Leventis conference, March 2-5, 2005. I am grateful members of the Departments of Classics and Philosophy at Edinburgh, conversations with whom, in seminars and in the halls of David Hume Tower, fed into the present version of my lecture. I am also grateful to the Leventis Foundation for making possible this lecture and this conference.