A.L. PIERRIS

ROADS TO EXCELLENCE

THE METAPHYSICS OF EDUCATION IN PLATO AND CONTEMPORARY REALITY. IS OPTIMAL SELF-REALIZATION METAPHYSICALLY NEUTRAL?

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PLATO’S PHILOSOPHY OF EDUCATION AND ITS RELEVANCE TO CONTEMPORARY SOCIETY AND EDUCATION IN THE ANCIENT WORLD

PRETORIA
Human activity is governed by some fundamental \textit{life-experience}, energized by a basic \textit{drive}, and focused in its exercise by a particular sense of overarching \textit{purpose}. It draws from a source of potential, it has a \textit{motivation}, and it serves an \textit{end}, the three parameters operating in consonance simultaneously, when the body-politic is healthy and effective. Thus Man’s existence assumes a coherent character, it manifests a certain definite collective profile of material and spiritual culture, it exhibits a specific form of ordinary and higher life.

The “Classical” modality of human beingness, both as a historical category and a universal phenomenon, is accordingly defined by its constitutive corresponding triad of formal, efficient and teleological causal factors.

1) The form is one of resplendent \textit{Beauty}: the underlying experience is one of paramount \textit{Harmony}, revealed or hidden. Not that there are no shades in the ancient Greek World permeated as it is, and infused, by light. On the contrary; here is \textit{not} Elysium: \textit{κλαῦσά τε καὶ κώμυσα ἰδὼν ἀσυνηθέα χώραν} (“I wept and wailed when I saw the unfamiliar place”, Empedocles, 31B118 DK). The chthonian specters are many: in fact they spring from an eternal, primeval Darkness, fertile cosmic Womb of all existence, the \textit{Night} of the World. The metaphysical position of the dark source varies: it starts at the awesome absolute beginning of things, then moves to the conjugal place as Infinity by the side of lightning Limitation, and ends up as nursing receptacle and material vehicle at the bottom of reality. But whatever its construal, Darkness is always there, constituting the Tragedy of Existence. \textit{The Greek Age of Reason is also the Age of Tragedy}. However, not only is darkness necessarily part of the World; it is moreover \textit{necessary} part of the cosmic \textit{perfection}. Harmony exists because there is Light and Darkness in the World: \textit{ἐπει δὲ ταί ἀρχαί ὑπάρχον οὐχ ὤμοιοι οὐδ’ ὀμόφυλοι ἔσσαι, ἣδη ἄδύνατον ἣς καὶ αὐταῖς κοσμηθήναι, εἰ μὴ ἄρμονία ἐπεγένετο}. (“But since the first principles
were not by nature alike or akin, it would be impossible for them ever to have been arranged beautifully, had not harmony supervened”, Philolaus, 44B6 DK). In fact every real, powerful opposition (unless it causes a breakdown on its inadequate material) enhances the harmony which it feeds; or, the other way round, underneath all harmony yawns the chasm of disorder, the primal omni-generative Chaos. Contrast increases the tension, and thus the power of the cohesive harmony is heightened: οὐ ξυνιάσιν ὁκώς διαφερόμενον ἐως ἑξιμφέρεται παλίντονος ἀρμονίη ὁκωσπερ τόξου καὶ λύσης. (“They do not apprehend how being brought at variance it is being brought together with itself; a back-stretched harmony, such as in the bow and the lyre”, Heracleitus Fr. 27 Marcovich = 22B51 DK) [1]. Harmony is an eminently dynamic reality. “Static harmony” is a contradiction in terms.

Absorbing darkness and empowered by it, the total outcome of being is beautiful. We promptly thus understand how the sense of tragic flourished par excellence precisely in the era of perfection. Ugliness is rather partiality than genuine negativity; taking more depth and perspective into account, apparent disorder is sublated to more pervasive order, and reveals it. Or it is impotence, when the necessary tension of a harmony destroys itself, or rather its bearer. A whole, to be a whole, must be beautiful. And beauty is wholeness.

The constitutive experience is one of dominant καλόν. Poetry and Art bear ample testimony; Philosophy elaborates it.

2) The dominant drive inside the ancient man is towards excellence [2]. To excel is what he aspires to, and the motive which really pushes incessantly him on. The principle is enshrined in that monument of superlative value in the classical culture, the Homeric corpus. It is also explicitly formulated there: αἰεν ἀριστεύειν καὶ ὑπεύροχον ἐμμεναι ἄλλων. Virtue itself is excellence, superlative ability. One possesses ἄρετή if one is eminently “good at something” (ἀγαθός ἐν ύσμίνῃ, πυγμή ἄριστος, σκυτοτόμων ὁχ’ ἄριστος, καθαριν ἄριστος, ἄριστος βουλή) [3].
Such preeminence presupposes and involves sharp antagonism, the Hesiodic noble strife (ἀγαθή ἐρις). [4] It also demands single-minded devotion to the pursuit of a particular excellence, that to which by nature one is best adapted (Republic 370a-c) [5].

What holds good of every expertise, art and science, is a fortiori valid for the supreme human perfection of those free from any other care and profession (Laws, Z, 806d-808c). Complete and sufficient acquisition of such perfection is hardly to be attained even by an unceaseable application to it without any distraction: πάρεγγον γὰρ οὐδὲν δεὶ τῶν ἄλλων ἔργων διακόλυμα γίγνεσθαι τῶν τῷ σώματι προσηκόντων εἰς ἀπόδοσιν πόνων καὶ τροφῆς, οὔτε αὐτῇ ψυχῇ μαθημάτων τε καὶ ἐθῶν, πάσα δὲ νυὲ τε καὶ ἡμέρα σχεδὸν οὐκ ἔστιν ἴκανή τούτῃ αὐτῷ πράττοντι τὸ τέλεον τε καὶ ἴκανον αὐτῶν ἐκλαμβάνειν (807d). (In Jowett’s translating words: “For there ought to be no bye work interfering with the greater work of providing the necessary exercise and nourishment for the body, and instruction and education for the soul. Night and day are not long enough for the accomplishment of their perfection and consummation”.) [6]

The principle of excellence should reign supreme in society. A life devoted to the search of highest wisdom may illumine the ripe soul with the light of exact knowledge (Laws 968d-e; cf. Epist. VII 341c-d. And cf. the age span of the philosophic education in the Republic). All should aspire at attaining some excellence, however subordinate. For as Socrates put it, the good at nothing is useless (Xenophon, Memorabilia, III, 9, 15 – above quoted). No natural potential should be left uncultivated, for this would reduce what can be achieved below the level set by nature. Thus the left hand ought to be exercised as much as the right one, nature having almost balanced the potential of the one against the other (Laws, 794d-795d) [7]. And similarly women should undergo the same training as men, since they are capable of it, even though with a normally less successful
outcome; otherwise we would almost halve the attainable level of effective results, which is a folly (Laws, 804d-805c [8]; cf. Republic E, 451c-457b; 466c-467e).

The principle of excellence is the spirit of ancient Education [9]. We have to do with that training of body (gymnastics) and mind (music) which raises their respective endowments to the peak of their capacity. In cases of superlative merit, the result is the divine likeness glowingly celebrated in the immortal words of Pindar. Cf. Nemean Odes VI, 17:

'Ἐν ἀνδρῶν, ἐν θεῶν γένος· ἕκ μιᾶς δὲ πνεόμεν
ματρός ἀμφότεροι· διεἰργεῖ δὲ πάσα κεκριμένα
dύναμις, ἅς τὸ μὲν οὐδέν, ὃ δὲ χάλκεος ἀσφαλές
aiēn ēdos
μένει οὐρανός. ἀλλὰ τι προσφέρομεν ἐμπαν ἢ μέγαν
νόον ἦτοι φύσιν ἀθανάτοις,
καίτερ ἐφαμερίαν οὐκ εἰδότες οὐδὲ μετὰ νύκτας
ἀμμε πότμος
οίαν τιν’ ἐγραψε δραμεῖν ποτὶ στάθμαν.

(“One is the race of men, one is the race of gods, and from one Mother do we both derive our breath; yet a power that is wholly sundered parteth us, in that the one is naught, while for the other the brazen heaven endureth as an abode unshaken for evermore. Albeit, we mortals have some likeness, either in might of mind or in our bodily constitution, to the immortals, although we know not by what course, whether by day, no nor yet in the night watches, fate hath ordained that we should run”) [10].

Notice here too the highly positive life-attitude of excellence despite the otherwise pessimistic nothingness of mortality vis-à-vis divine eternity; and compare with Laws Z, 803b-804b and A, 644d sqq., the classic disparagement of humanity as a plaything of gods.
3) The drive towards excellence pushes on; the end of well-being pulls mightily all human endeavour.

Well-being is the promised goal of being: it is inscribed within being as its natural conclusion, just as the full development of an organism evolves necessarily and spontaneously out of its embryonic seed. (The lexical root of the ameliorative prefix εὐ and its cognates, as well as of significant positive valuatives εὐ-ε-στῶ, ἐσ-θλός, ὑ-ὑ-ζ, seems to have its origin in the root of εἰμí, *es) [11]. The world is not constituted so that being must suffer unfulfilled. Radiant joy is the tonality of feeling, most clearly manifest in Archaic mentality, in the glorious Lyric Poetry, sacred and profane, in the marvel of (especially early) sculpture. Such overflowing delight at being is so tremendously powerful, that not even a pessimistic eschatology of emaculate infernal ghosts can initially shake it. One is ravished by the sheer fact of existence: the rapturous gladness must have its roots deep down indeed not to be perturbed by the touch of the engulfing Night.

The foundation is provided by the hard rock of being’s success. The metaphysical construed, in one way or another, of the dark principle as co-implicated, not only necessarily but also profitably, in the marvel of existence; its harnessing under the spell of harmony in the conjugal bond of being together with the principle of luminous determination; the consequent overcoming of the pessimistic note in human life; all this worked in practice. Greek mind required tangible proofs. Joy presupposes satisfaction, and this springs from fulfillment, which again requires achievement. The life of things is, on the whole, a success story: the normal state of existence is one of κατόρθωμα, not of failure.

The Aristotelian εὐδαιμονία aims exactly at capturing this tonality of feeling, amidst the classical upheaval. Later responses to the same desideratum form the guiding lines of the Hellenistic Philosophies of human life. But Plato was the first to face squarely the doubts cast on that world-view by the turmoil that accompanied the transition to the classical era.
There is then the experience of beauty; there is the drive towards excellence; and there is the aim at well-being. The fundamental, classical question of life, valid for all time, is simply this: Do beauty, excellence and well-being go together or not? There is nothing peculiarly “moral” (in the modern, sentimental sense of the word) about it; on the contrary, the issue is one of ontological adaptation or otherwise. This explains the obvious objectivism and specific a-morality of ancient Ethical Theory [12].

The metaphysical seriousness that ushered the classical era is well reflected in the then prevailing austere sculptural style. Tragedy and Comedy faithfully express the darkening picture [13]. They both stem from the Great Schism which late Archaism saw emerging, and gained momentum from its acute awareness. Tidings of sadness afflict the heart of Classicism: excellence and achievement may diverse; the working of an unseemly wedge, incomprehensible, sinister yet forceful, tends to separate perfection from success; fulfillment and accomplishment assume curious hues of variation. The ἐσθλός can be unsuccessful, and hence useless. This is the ultimate anathema to the ancient Greek mind. Virtue must be profitable – or it is valueless [14]. The robust Greek sense of realism was shocked at the perspective of an inoperative vir-tus, ἀρετή [15]. Virtue is naturally fertile goodness; it involves the power of attaining good [16].

Should the rupture between excellence of being and well-being, between perfection of existence and success in existence, go unchallenged and unrevoked, the classical reality and experience are at an end; one mighty implication is the shattering of the ancient educational values. Education was geared to excellence; if the latter is a futile narcissism, then the former should be re-oriented towards success, and accordingly reshaped. That was precisely in essence the challenge of the sophistical movement. Special sciences had to be introduced, linguistic, historical, rhetorical, mathematical – and a way taught of achieving results,
through their dexterous employment, under any given circumstances [17]. There are obvious analogies to contemporary issues and agonies.

Plato’s greatness is not least glaring in his titanic task of re-establishing the coherence of the fractured spiritual edifice [18], [19].

Five factors helped decisively as solid bases for the undertaking [20].

a) The disruption in the spontaneous collaboration between drastic drive and overall purpose little affected the Greek feel of, and passionate attachment to, κάλλος. It is not accidental, nor is it a mere artistic device, that Plato lays such stress on ἔρως καλοῦ and beauty both in the content of his doctrine and in the form of expressing it. The otherwise peculiar emphasis on καλόν in Moral Philosophy generally, also betrays the significant role it played in providing the clue how to reconcile diverging momenta. For the general pattern was well put by Philolaus 44B10DK: ἔστι γὰρ ἀρμονία πολυμεγέων ἐνώσις καὶ δίχα φρονεόντων συμφόροντος (“For harmony is the unification of the manifoldly commixed and the conspiring of the divergingly minded”). Beauty as harmonious blend of limiting and indeterminate parameters, as optimal determination of variational possibilities, was a striking sensible illustration of the general Pythagorean structure of reality, to which Plato basically adhered. Hence beauty’s immense “anagogic” value [21].

b) Power is the mark of true being. For something to be, it must make a difference in the World beyond the sheer fact of its existence. Influence is a proof of existence. To exercise influence, or, at least, to suffer it, shows the reality of the entity in question, its entering into real relationships with the rest of the existence. Isolated existence is non-existence. Relative impotence implies inferior grade of being, and absolute impotence is, again, non-existence. So, power is the essential characteristic of being (Sophist, 247e) [22]. The ancient Greek acute sense of reality could not escape from the fascination of power. Thus Divinity was easily ascribed to the absolute rulers and mighty lords of realms, to those whose power was
manifest, to the ἑπιφανείς Gods. Powers being insensible realities, they are
distinguished by their observable effects on the field on which they operate and
which their exercise is referred to (Republic, 477c sqq.) [23].

c) Being is bounded and circumscribed: it is (in each case) of a definite
identity [24]. This determinateness of being is its nature, and the nature of the
things constituted by it. There is no existence without nature, no free-floating
existence, so to speak, in search of a being-determination. To exist is to be (leaving
aside the ontological status of the First Principles of reality). In this sense existence
is being, considered in abstraction from its limiting content of being-
determination. Definiteness in the identity of being implies otherness from different
determinations, and particularity (partial being).

d) Existence is intrinsically teleological [25]. Being has meaning, To be is to
serve a purpose. To be in perfect condition both fulfills the inner teleology of the
being in question and best suits the external purpose for which it exists. This
subservience to the external teleology is the reason for its existence. In artificial
products such inherent combination of perfection and functionality, of perfect
condition and perfect use, is evident. Ancient mind saw the same teleology
operating a fortiori in nature [26]. Parts of natural things also completely obey this
teleological lawfulness (Cf. Galen, De Usu Partium).

e) Goodness is intrinsically beneficial. There can be no harmful goodness
qua goodness. The evil is injurious; no profit can come out of it. Goodness is
advantageous; it is highly useful [27]. Evil as such is useless: it cannot be put to a
profitable application; it creates havoc; it is damaging; it hurts. It injures itself
more than, and before, it harms another [28]. Just as goodness is advantageous
first of all to itself.

The appropriate weaving [29] of these five threads together forms the way
out of the impasse which Classicism found itself in.
Starting with the unshaken datum, the first moment (a). *Beauty as ontological harmony* (and no mere mode of subjective apperception) is a dynamic reality. *Harmony is the tension of being:* it conjugates the primal antithesis between determinateness and indefiniteness and thus binds together opposing indeterminacies. By imposing, e.g., the proper measure on the variational field of temperature, it effects that proper mixture of heat and coldness which constitutes (depending on the measure realized) the healthy temperature for the human body or the temperance of the seasons [30]. *The optimal determination of a variational field represents a privileged point of acute natural resonance:* it enhances the tension of being to its maximal intensity. *Beauty is therefore the power of being.* The way to strengthen a thing, and the way to beautify it, is one and the same (as fitting gymnastic training shows most clearly) [31]. *First transition.*

Turning now to the second moment (b). Power is that which makes a thing enter into actual relationship (acting and undergoing action) with other things; through this interaction the thing is being established as a factor in the nexus of reality: its existence is thereby affirmed. But the optimal determination of being is that which maximizes its power; beauty therefore, and the harmonious resonance that it expresses, constitutes the real existence of a thing as a dynamic focus of action and passion [32]. *Harmony being exquisitely determinate* [33], *the being defined by its specificity is of a characteristically definite identity* [34]. *Second transition.*

Moving on to the third moment (c). The definite identity of (each) being has been grounded on the optimal determinateness of its defining dynamic harmony. A thing and its identity is not something that can exist without its characteristic power and the latter’s exercise. To affirm its identity, to activate its power and to vibrate, so to speak, in its harmony, is one and the same thing for a being. *Excellence* is indeed inscribed within the nucleus of being, at the very root of its existence: it is the optimal determination which defines its identity; it is its *constitutive harmony* [35]. What education aims to do is to help this harmony
manifest itself most clearly; just as medicine should endeavour to prepare the way for the healing action of nature herself. *Perfection and being at bottom coincide*; existence in space and time makes their congruence a converging process constituting the thing’s development.

Optimal determination, harmony, beauty, power, identity and excellence of being, all have been brought under a single compass [36]. Fundamental life-experience and basic drive have been thus shown to cohere. The *crux* of the matter has been reached, at the point of the *third transition*. Is also blessed well-being (as well as beauteous perfection) “promised” to being (exactly as the ancient Greek mentality instinctively expected)? Does being’s excellence secure by right (so to speak) success?

For this we need the *functionality of excellence*: that the activity (and corresponding passivity) of the power of being serves a purpose. Success means that the perfection of being is *useful*. Then there is achievement, and the true fulfillment of existence which does not only consist in the inner perfection of its being, but on the *effective* working of its operation as well. For the activity to be effective, to bear fruits, according to the nature of the power which it manifests, it should be exercised unimpeded [37]. Hindrance implies frustration and dissatisfaction. Well-being (beyond the perfection of the excellence in itself) is inconsistent with obstruction and regular external restraint. Well-being requires maximal freedom of action as precondition of success. Natural Systems are intrinsically deregulated, or rather *unregulated*, without of course being disorderly. Natural order is unintervened; hence free and stable.

A thing brought to the perfection of its nature acts *spontaneously* to the highest intensity of its power in accordance with the optimal determination which its identity consists in. To enjoy well-being, such action, in an environment of absence of constraints, must be successful. Then the perfection of being (τέλειον) and its end (τέλος) coincide absolutely. *That functionality of being, beauty and*
excellence, or, in other words, the usefulness of perfection, means, given moment (e), that excellence is inherently good. Further, this functionality of perfection obtains in general automatically when there is a natural adjustment among the variety of things. If things are intrinsically co-ordinated, their activities are not, in the normal state of things, mutually inhibitive, thwarting and frustrating [38]. Thus excellence is necessarily good if being is coherent. And being is coherent if it is derived from a supreme First Principle.

To bridge the apparent gap between perfection and well-being, we therefore need the postulate of the goodness of excellence, i.e. of the full-blown goodness of beauty and harmony. (There is no harmful excellence). And we also require the postulate of the coherence of being.

The former postulate is derived from the second: if being is objectively coherent, then single-minded pursuit of excellence on the part of every being, and maximalised activity in accordance with each individual entity’s proper perfection, both fulfil the particular being in question and raise the total level of fulfillment for the entire co-ordinated system as well; if being is objectively coherent, then the excellence of each individual being and its exercise are thoroughly good, that is, both constitutive of the well-being of the particular being in question, and instrumental to the general well-being of the system.

Furthermore, the second postulate presupposes the ultimate principle (the ἀνυπόθετον) of Goodness as Oneness [39]. For if the ultimate Principle of reality is the One, then being necessarily and “automatically” coheres, i.e. it is bound together in an ordered system of co-ordinated beings. And if being coheres, then excellences (perfections of being) secure the well-being of being, individually and collectively.

Since harmony is the optimal determination in a field of opposition which binds together in proper mixture contrasting tendencies, harmony is necessarily good if Goodness is Oneness. On the other hand, if Oneness is the principle of being, then
being is coherent. Now Oneness is indeed the principle of being, if being is essentially mathematical in character [40]. But being as harmonious determination in diverse variational fields, is mathematical in nature. So everything converges and conspires together, and the Platonic resolution of the perennial moral, educational and political tangles appears in all its grandeur [41].

For optimal self-realization to be successful, and thus for being to be fulfilled and dynamically contented, an appropriate metaphysical structure is presupposed.

Ethical, Educational and Political Theory are based on Metaphysics.

Crucial of this foundational work is the treatment of moral virtues [42] as general, pervading excellencies.

Moral virtues are, first, being given their natural, ontological turn [43]. For wisdom or phronesis and valour or right spiritedness, manliness (valour), this simply brings us back to the archaic archetypes [44], [45]. Temperance is also in effect the result of the archaic, Delphic virtue of knowing one’s own exact position in the overall scheme of reality and responding accordingly [46]. Justice finally and most importantly is in essence ὀίκειον προαγία [47]. Ethical virtues are really excellences and perfections in faculties, powers and operations; in this respect they are just like other skills and expertises; there is nothing specifically “moral” in them [48].

They differ from the special expertnesses in that they are consummate basic skills, related to fundamental faculties of the human soul, with the broadest field of operation; and in that the principal among them can be fully enlightened by supreme knowledge of reality and of its absolute, first Principle (Goodness – Oneness), which alone renders all science unerring, all skill and opinion stable and unaltering, hence virtue successful, i.e. really beneficial, that is thoroughly good.


istros being perfections of the fundamental constituents of human soul, they are necessary for, indeed constitute, the *perfection of human nature* in the individual.

They are thus (more or less) *universally useful*, as against the special profitability of any other particular skill.

*Furthermore, *σοφία* at its culmination involving the certain intellection of the ultimate cause of reality, it turns everything (including the other virtues) securely into good, i.e. to the benefit of man; virtue is thus necessary for the *well being of human nature* as well [49]. The beauty, perfection and well-being of man depend on highest skills and highest knowledge. Human nature has its excellence of being and fruition of excellence grounded on supreme cognition.

NOTES

[I wish to thank in particular Heather Reid, Philip Beely, Andrew Nash and Christos Evangelioi for their comments in the discussion. My response to them will be found elaborated in several notes; explicitly in nn. 2, 14, 19, 27, 32, 38, 44, 46, 48, 49. The development in n. 47 regarding vocational flexibility grew out of my reply to a challenging remark by Yvonne Seng in the midst of a conversation on (near and middle Eastern) Mysticism.

A recurring them in the Conference was the nature of the Platonic *ἀρετή*: has it to do with *morality* and *character* in the modern sense or does it essentially refer to *skill* and *knowledge*? My argument in favour of the second position is sketched chiefly in n. 48. The implications for the correct understanding of education are far-reaching. Cf. also n. 42].
The variant ὀρμολογεῖν for ξυμφέρεται is equally possible. Πιλίντονος is better than the also attested παλίντροπος.

For the legitimacy and explanatory power of this notion ("drive towards excellence"), a question appositely raised by Andrew Nash in the discussion, v. infra n. 19. But one preliminary objection should be cleared up. Nash wondered whether ‘drive’ is not necessarily pre-conceptual while ‘excellence’ necessarily conceptualized, in the sense that it cannot exist without its concept, unlike animal drives. Now excellence is not conceptualized in the classical context, except in cases where it involves true knowledge, stricto sensu. For there are bodily excellences (e.g. foot-excellence, ποδῶν ἀρετή, Homer Y, 411), side by side with others involving some sort of expertise (fighting) and indeed with the purely intellectual ones (O, 642-3: παντοιας ἀρετάς, ἡμέν πόδας ἴδε μάχεσθαι, καὶ νόσον εν πρῶτοις Μυκηναίων ἐτέτυκτο). Thus in Plato we find ἀρετή σώματος (Republic I, 403d3; Gorgias 479b4; 499d7; 504c9). In fact, excellences pertain to animals, even to inanimate things. There is an ἀρετή κυνῶν, another ἱππῶν, just as there is human perfection (Republic, A, 335b. Cf. ἀρετή ἱππῶν, Herodotus III, 88, 3). There is also excellence of (farm) land (ἀρετή χώρας, Laws, E, 745d3; πεδίων ἀρετή ἰκανόν, Critias 113c6); and so we have ἀρετή γῆς (Thucydides I, 2, 4); excellences of diverse lands are compared in Herodotus, IV, 198. In Republic, I 601d an appropriate excellence and beauty and correctness is associated to each and every thing (implement), animal and action: ἀρετή καὶ κάλλος καὶ ὀρθότης ἐκάστου σκέυους καὶ ζῴου καὶ πράξεως. (Cf. ἀρετή βίου in 618c and ἀρετή πολιτείας in Laws, 886b). There is a virtue-excellence in every thing having a proper function and work, as in eye, ear, horse, soul, etc.; Republic 353b: οὐκοῦν καὶ ἀρετή δοκεῖ σοι εἶναι ἐκάστῳ ὑπὲρ καὶ ἐρχόν τι προστέτακται etc. (Cf. n. 49). A Hellenistic Pythagorean text aptly generalizes the point: ἀρετά ἐντε ἀνθρώπων τελειώτας φύσις ἀνθρώπων ἐκατόν γὰρ τῶν ἐνότων τέλειον καὶ ἀρκόν γίνεται κατὰν οἰκείαν τὰς ἀρετάς φύσιν. ἰππῶ τα ἄρο αρετά ἐντε α ἐς τὸ ἀρκόν ἀγοισα ῖν τὸ ἵππον φύσιν, καὶ ἐπὶ τῶς μερέων δὲ τῶς καθ’ ἐκατόν ὁ αὐτός λόγος (Metopus Peri ἀρετής apud Stob. Elogiae III, 1, 115 p. 66 Hense = p. 87 Centone = p. 116 Thesleff).

Excellence is an objective perfection of a particular nature. The movement of a being to its own peculiar perfection is also the work of an objective, inherent, natural tendency. When the nature of the being in question is mental, then the impetus is also conscious and "conceptualized". For as Heracleitus puts it: τὸ φρονεῖν (with Diels) ἀρετή μεγίστη, καὶ σοφία ἀληθέα λέγειν καὶ ποιεῖν κατὰ φύσιν ἑπαίνοντας (DK 22B 112).

For an analysis of Homeric aristocracy, a truly functional meritocracy, as the fundamental factor of ancient Greek social experience v. my study «Αἱ ἄριστευειν καὶ ὑπειρόχον ἐμειναι ἄλλων. Η μεσοτακτική τῆς Ἀριστείας εἰς τὴν Αρχαία Ελληνική Κοινωνία», in Α.Λ. Πιερής, Peri τέλους, 1996, pp. 1-68. For the usefulness and profitability of goodness in Homer v. esp. ibid, pp. 4-7. For the specific excellences covering the entire field of human activity and production, Cf. ibid. pp. 23-4.

The classical passage, Hesiod, Opera et Dies, vv. 11-26:

οὐκ ἂρα μοῦνον ἔχῃ ἔριδον γένος ἀλλ’ ἐπὶ γαϊάν εἰπὶ δῶν τὴν μὲν κεν ἑπαίνησε νοσήςατο ἢ δ’ ἐπιμαμητή διὰ δ’ ἀνδίκα θυμόν ἔχουσιν.

. . .

17 τὴν δ’ ἐτέρην (sc. the praiseworthy type of strife) προτέρην μὲν ἐγείνατο ὁ Νέξ ἐρεβενή, θήκε δὲ μν Κρονίδης ψήπινος αἰθέροι ναιῶν
The honourable strife is good, useful. Alien achievement creates in the spirited professional emulation to perform equally successfully, indeed the craving to surpass the co-practitioner’s feat: fierce competition conduces to perfection individually and corporately.

The acute rivalry of potters is well illustrated by the inscription in an amphora by Euthymides (Munich 2307 = Beazley, ARV p. 26): as οὐδέποτε Ἑφόρονος. The very transcendent perfection of ancient Greek pottery testifies to the existence of both the mighty drive towards excellence which resulted in it and the conditions of unrestricted competition which made that possible.

[5] Ἐννοοῦ γὰρ καὶ αὐτὸς εἰπόντος σοῦ, ὅτι πρῶτον μὲν φύεται ἕκαστος οὗ πάντος ὁμοίως ἐκάστῳ, ἀλλὰ διαφέρον τὴν φύσιν, ἀλλὸς εἰς ἕκαστον οὐκ ἐρρέησεν. Πότερον κάλλιον πράττει ἀν τις εἰς ὅν πολλάς τέχνας ἐργαζόμενος, ἢ ὅταν μίαν εἰς; Ὅταν, ἢ δ’ ὃς, εἰς μίαν... Εκ δὴ τούτων πλείω τε ἐκάστα γίγνεται καὶ κάλλιον καὶ τρόπον, ὅταν εἰς ἔν χαίρεται καὶ ἐν καρπῷ, σχολὴ τῶν ἄλλων ἄγων, πράντη. Cf. 374a: ὁμολογούμενοι δὲ ποιεῖν, εἰ μέν προς ταύτα ὀκτὼ πολλάς καλῶς ἐργάζεται τέχνας. Cf. also ΙΓ, 394e-395b. In ΙΓ, 397e the principle of exclusive occupation is exemplified: ...ὅτι οὐκ ἐστὶν διπλῶς ἄνηρ παρε’ ἡμῖν (i.e. in the best polity) οὐδὲ πολλαπλῶς, ἐπειδὴ ἕκαστος ἐν πράττει. – Όσκοιν διὰ ταύτη ἐν μόνη τῇ τοιαύτῃ πόλις τὸ σκυτοτόμον σκυτοτόμῳ εὐρήσομεν καὶ οὐ κυβερνητήν πρὸς τῇ σκυτοτομίᾳ, καὶ τὸν γεωργόν γεωργόν καὶ οὐ δικαστὴν πρὸς τῇ γεωργίᾳ, καὶ τὸν πολεμικὸν πολεμικόν καὶ οὐ χρηματοσκοτικὴν πρὸς τῇ πολεμικῇ, καὶ πάντας οὕτως; And so in the recapitulation of the main features of the first part of the Republic in Timaeus the principle is enjoined, 17c10 sqq.: καὶ κατὰ φύσιν διδάσκετε τὸ καθ’ αὐτὸν ἔκαστον προσφέρον ἐν μόνον ἐπιτηδεύειν, μίαν ἕκαστον τέχνην etc. The use of highly articular Medicine to sustain unfunctional life (and indeed even non-maximally functional life) is condemned, ΙΓ, 406c: Asclepius does not patronize such medicine, εἰδὼς ὅτι πάσα τοῖς εὐνομομένοις ἔργον τι ἔκαστον ἐν τῇ πόλει προστείται, ὁ ἀναγκαῖον ἐργάζεσθαι, καὶ οὐδενὶ σχολὴ διὰ βίου κάμινον ἰσχυρομένως. This practice of simplicity in human avocations enhances individual and, hence, social unity; Δ, 423d ...πρὸς ὣς τις ἐφόρετο, πρὸς τούτο ἕνα πρὸς ἕκαστον ἔργον δεὶ κομίζειν, ὅπως ἂν ἐν τῷ αὐτῷ ἐπιτηδεύειν ἓκαστος μὴ πολλοὶ ἅλλ’ ἐκ ἐργαζόμενος ἐργάζεσθαι, καὶ οὕτω δὴ συμπασα ἡ πόλις μιὰ φύσιν ἀλλὰ μὴ πολλαὶ. The general principle (each should occupy himself with that function and work in society, which his particular nature has been generated to be best adapted to serve and promote) is enunciated succinctly in Δ, 433a: ... ὅτι ἕνα ἕκαστον ἐν δεύο ἐπιτηδεύειν τῶν περὶ τὴν πόλιν, εἰς ὃ αὐτὸς ἡ φύσις ἐπιτηδεύεται περίκοιν εἰς. The same principle in the same sense is strictly enunciated also in the Laws, Ἡ, 846d-847b. V. esp. 846d7: δύο δὲ ἐπιτηδεύεται ἡ δύο τέχνας ἀκόμβολα διαποιεῖται σχεδὸν οὐδεμία φύσις ἑαυτῆς τῶν ἀνθρωπίνων, οὐδέ αὐτὴ τὴν μὲν αὐτὸς ἑαυτὸς ἀσκεῖν, τὴν δὲ ἄλλον ἀσκοῦν ἐπιτηδεύειν. The aim of each one in any occupation is to excel in it, to become an excellent professional (ἀριστος δημιουργός); cf. Republic, 421b-c. (Cf. further n. 47, also for monovocationalism versus occupational flexibility). This principle of specialization must have been Socratic; v. Xenophon Memorabilia III, 9, 3 and 15. He who is good at nothing is neither useful nor dear to the gods (ibid. §15: τὸν δὲ μηδὲν εἰς πράττοντα οὕτε χρήσιμον
Therefore there must be formed a full programme, ordering completely life for the entire day and night to that purpose; 807d-e: οὕτω δὲ τούτων περιφυότων, τάξιν ἰδίᾳ γίγνεσθαι πάσιν
toις ἔλεγχοις τῆς διαπρεβῆς περὶ τὸν χρόνον ἄπαντα, σχεδὸν ἀρξάμενον ἐξ ἐω μέχρι
tῆς ἐτέρας αἰεί συνεχῶς εὕτε καὶ ἡλίου ἀναπόλης.

The general principle is this: (805a) λογισμὸν δὲ... περὶ τούτων τοιοῦτον τινά ἐχὼν φημί,
εἰπὲ ταῦτα οὕτω συμβαίνειν ἐστίν δυνατά, πάντων ἀνόησιστα τὰ νῦν ἐν τοῖς παρ᾽ ἑαυτῷ
tόποις γίγνεσθαι τὸ μὴ πάση φύσιν πάντας ὀμοθυμαδὸν εἰπεῖσθαι ἄνδρας γυναιξίν
tαύτα. σχεδὸν γὰρ ἄλλων πᾶσα ἡμείσα πολίς ἀντὶ διπλασίας οὕτως ἐστὶν τε καὶ γίγνεται
ἐκ τῶν αὐτῶν τελῶν καὶ πόσων. Cf. 806c-5; Republic 466c.

Excellence (being functional) went hand in hand (almost indistinguishable from)
achievement: hence that quintessentially ancient Greek craving for “being first in one’s
category” (ἀριστεύειν, ὑπερίορον ἐμμεναι). The feeling was of life as a multifaceted contest,
where the hard rock meaning of life lies in winning. The so-called “agonistic ideal of life” was
the common reality, as well as the common experience, of life. Cf. J. Burckhardt’s analyses in
Griechische Kulturgeschichte, passim (e.g. II pp. 365 sqq.; IV pp. 89 sqq.). Cf. n. 14.

The eloquent translation is Sandys’ (from his Loeb edition of Pindar) but for one point; he
renders ἢ μέγα νόον ἦτοι φύσιν as: “either in might of mind or at least in our nature”. The
“at least” is out of place here; in fact it is easier to resemble divine excellences in respect to
bodily endowments than with regard to mental faculties and intellectual greatness. More
importantly, φύσις in such contexts signifies bodily constitution and development, as it is
correctly captured by the ancient scholia to the Pindaric passage (7α, III p. 102.22-4
Drachmann): ἐμφερέτει τι ἔχομεν τοῖς θεοῖς, ἢ κατὰ τὸν νοῦν... ἢ κατὰ τὰς εὐφυίας τῶν


V. esp. n. 49.

For the nature of this dark side of quintessential classicism, the general setting within which
it becomes meaningful and its consequences in the development of Hellenistic philosophical
attitudes and world-views, v. A.L. Pierris, Hellenistic Philosophy: Continuity and Reaction in an

οὐδὲν ἐφ’ εἶναι ὀύτε θεοφιλή). Cf. also the Persian specialization, Cyropaedia VIII, 2, 5-6. –
Aristotle expands the scope of the principle to the entire nature (at least the organic realm),
Política A, 1252b1-5: οὐδὲν γὰρ ἢ ψύχες ποιεῖ τοιοῦτον οἶον χαλκότυποι τὴν Δελφικὴν
μαχαίραν (a many-purpose knife produced at Delphi) πενιχρῶς, ἀλλ’ ἐν πρὸς ἐν ὄντω γὰρ
ἀν αποτελοῖτο καλλίστα τῶν υγράνων ἐκαστον, μὴ πολλοὶς ἔργοις ἀλλ’ ἐνι ὄνυχον. Cf.
De Part. Anim. 683a22. For some partial exceptions see the passages in Newman’s The Politics
of Aristotle, vol. II p. 109, n. ad loc. The πενιχρῶς in the Politics passage is revealing:
multipurpose objects are works of penury, of which Nature’s lavish exuberance knows
normally nothing.

[6] The general principle is this: (805a) λογισμὸν δὲ... περὶ τούτων τοιοῦτον τινά ἐχὼν φημί,
εἰπὲ ταῦτα οὕτω συμβαίνειν ἐστίν δυνατά, πάντων ἀνόησιστα τὰ νῦν ἐν τοῖς παρ᾽ ἑαυτῷ
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tαύτα. σχεδὸν γὰρ ἄλλων πᾶσα ἡμείσα πολίς ἀντὶ διπλασίας οὕτως ἐστὶν τε καὶ γίγνεται
ἐκ τῶν αὐτῶν τελῶν καὶ πόσων. Cf. 806c-5; Republic 466c.

[7] 795c: ...χρὴ προσδοκάναι ὅρθων, ὅτι τὸν διττὰ δει κεκτημένων, οἷς ἀμύνοιτο τ’ ἀν καὶ
ἐπιτίθετο ἄλλοις, μηδὲν ἀργόν τούτων μηδὲ ἀνεπαίσθητον εὰν εἶναι κατά δύναμιν:
Ἡρώνον δὲ γε εἰ τις φύσιν ἔχων ἢ καὶ τὴν Βριάρεω φύσιο, ταῖς ἐκαστὸν χερσὶν ἐκατὸν δεὶ
βέλῃ ρίπτεις δυνατόν εἶναι.

[8] The general principle is this: (805a) λογισμὸν δὲ... περὶ τούτων τοιοῦτον τινά ἐχὼν φημί,
εἰπὲ ταῦτα οὕτω συμβαίνειν ἐστίν δυνατά, πάντων ἀνόησιστα τὰ νῦν ἐν τοῖς παρ᾽ ἑαυτῷ
tόποις γίγνεσθαι τὸ μὴ πάση φύσιν πάντας ὀμοθυμαδὸν εἰπεῖσθαι ἄνδρας γυναιξίν
Foot-excellence (ἀρετή ποδῶν) is necessarily manifested in running fastest, like winning foot-races; so Homer, Y, 410-2:

καὶ οἱ φόλτατος ἐσκε, πόδεσι δὲ πάντας ἐνικα·
dή τότε νιητέρης, ποδῶν ἀρετὴν ἄναφαινον,

θύνε διὰ προμάχων etc.

The manifestation (ἀναφαίνων) of excellence (ἀρετῆς) is to win (ἐνικα) in relevant competition-situations, to excel, prevail and outdo in the operational field of the virtue in question. Cf. Herodotus I, 176, 1: καὶ μαχομένων ὁλίγων πρὸς πολλῶν ἀρετῶν ἀπεδείκυντο, displayed excellencies in brave deeds. Cf. IX, 40. Cf. n. 9.

The organic connection between excellence and its rewards (a point questioned by Heather Reid in the discussion) is clearly revealed in the use of the word ἀρετῆς to signify precisely such rewards as (social) distinction and glory. Thus in Hesiod, Opera et Dies 313: πλοῦτως δ’ ἀρετή καὶ κόσος ὁπηδεῖ, the word refers to the prestige, distinction and glory which (together with κόσος, renown, fame) accompany the wealthy man. This use of ἀρετῆς was observed by Plutarch, de aud. poetas, 24 with reference to the Hesiodic passage and Homer Y 242 (Zeus δ’ ἀρετήν ἀνδρεσκίαν ὀφελέει τε μενύθει τε): αὐτή δόξης ἢ δυνάμεως ἢ εὐτυχίας ἢ τινος ὀμοίου τῇ ἀρετῇ κεχρήσθη τὸν ποιητὴν ἤγεισθω. (Cf. Eustathius in Odys. λ 359, p. 1690.44).

Theognis often employs the word in such significations; cf. 30; 129 sq.; 402 sq. The Plutarchean point is taken up by Harpocratian s. v. ἀρετή: ἀντὶ τοῦ εὐδοξία Ἀνδροκίδης καὶ Θουκυδίδης ἐν α’. (The same, without mention of the first book of Thucydides, Bekker, Anecdota Graeca, 443.33 and Suda, s.v.). The Thucydidean reference is probably to I, 33, 2: (The Corcyreans argue in favour of Athens taking side with them against Corinth) τὰς εὔπροσδοκίας στανειντέρα, ἢ τις τοῦ πολεμίου λυπηροτέρα, εί, ἢ υμείς ἀν πρὸς πολλῶν χρημάτων καὶ χάριτος ετέμησαθε δύναμιν υμίν προσγενέσθαι, αὕτη πάρεστοι αὐτεπαγγελτός, ἀνέως κυνάνων καὶ δαπάνης δύναν ἔστην, καὶ προετέ σφενονε ἐς μὲν τοὺς πολλῶν ἀρετήν, οἷς δ’ ἐπαμιμενεῖτε χάριν, ὑμῖν δ’ αὐτοῖς ἵπποι. Virtus for virtutis gloria is also employed by Virgil, Aen. VI, 807: et dubitamus adhuc virtutem extendere factis? It was a Graecism.

Clearly the point is being made in Lycurgus, Or. Contra Leocratem §§48-9; those that heroically fell in battle take of the prices of war, freedom (ἐλευθερία) and glory (ἀρετή): τὰ γάρ ἄθλα τοῦ πολέμου τοῖς ἀγάθοις ἀνδρεσκίαις ἐτην ἐλευθερία καὶ ἀρετή ταῦτα δέ ἀμφότερα τοῖς τελευτασαί κοίρω. This sense of ἀρετή is explained a few lines before: τῆς γάρ ἀρετῆς οὐ ἔσσετε ἀπολαύσεις, ἀλλὰ τελευτασαί τινα δόξαν καταλελούσης etc. Cf. the parallel passage in Lysias, 2 (Epitaphios), 26.

The smooth transition from excellence, to the immortal memory of excellence and thence to immortal excellence coupled with renowned glory, is well illustrated in Plato, Symposium, 208d: would anyone perform deeds of unparalleled excellence, even to self-sacrifice, μὴ οἰονεύνους ἀθανατον μήμην ἀρετῆς πέρι ἐαυτῶν ἔσσεται, ἢ νῦν ἡμέν ἕχομεν; πολλὸν γε δει, ἐσθι, ἀλλ’ οἰμα υπὲρ ἀρετῆς ἀθανατον καὶ τοιαύτης δόξης εὐκλείους πάντες πάντα ποιούσιν, όσο ἄν οἰμείνους ὑμᾶς, τοσοῦτο μᾶλλον τού γὰρ ἀθανατὸν ἔρωσιν. And

Ἀρετή as victory appears in Pindar, *Nem.*, V 52-3: ἐλείν Ἐπιδαύρῳ δεσπόζα νυκώντ᾽ ἁρετάν. And as praise, renown and glory from victory in *Olymp.*, VIII, 5-7: μαμομένων μεγαλάν ἁρετάν θυμῷ λαβέν (in the contests), τῶν δὲ μόχθων ἀμπνον. Similarly *Nem.*, X, 2-3: φιλέγεται (sc. Argos) δ’ ἁρετάς μιρίσαι ἔργων θρασέων ἔνεκεν, it is burning with countless glories by reason of deeds of prowess.

In the LXX and the N.T ἀρετή applied to God seems to cover the meaning-field from power to marvels to praise. Isa. XLII, 8: εὐγενὸς ὁ Θεός, τούτο μου ἐσιν τὸ ὅνομα, τὴν δόξαν μου ἐτέρω οὐ δώσω, οὐδὲ τὰς ἁρετὰς μου τοῖς γυναικώι. And 12: δόσουσι τῷ Θεῷ δόξαν, τὰς ἁρετάς αὐτοῦ ἐν ταῖς νήσοις ἀναγγέλουσιν. XLIII, 21: λαὸν μου ὁ περιποίησάμην τὰς ἁρετάς μου διηγείσαται. Hab. III, 3: ἐκάλυψεν σώφρονος ἡ ἁρετή αὐτοῦ καὶ αἰνείσθη τὸ πλῆθος· ἦ γάρ. Similarly 1 Pet. ii, 9: ὅπως τὰς ἁρετάς ἔλαβες ἐξενεκείλητο τὸν ἐκ σκότους ὑμᾶς καλέσαντος ετς., 2 Pet. i, 3: τοῦ καλέσαντος ὑμᾶς ἵδα δόξη καὶ ἁρετή. (In i, 5, ἁρετή, lying between πίστις and γνώσει, seems to signify power. Such use is identical with the ancient core sense: ἁρετή is what something is worth of, its power, efficiency and praise.

Perhaps the most eloquent testimony to the intrinsic connection in ἁρετή between excellence, power to effect good, usefulness and efficacy, as well as resulting glory, between in other words distinction in perfection, capacity and renown, is the formula «ἁρετής ἐνεκεν» (often with the addiction τῆς ἐς τὸν δήμον or τὴν πόλιν) inscribed in innumerable dedications offered by the city-communities to their eminent citizens. ἁρετή is now active merit, it is an excellence which involves the power, and the disposition to exercise it, as well as its actual exercise, to the benefit of some recipient of the grace: it is ἁρετή ἐς τινας (Thucydides III, 58: ἁρετής τῆς ἐς τοὺς Ἐλλήνας), or περὶ τινας (Xenophon, *Anabasis*, I, 4, 8: τῆς πρὸ σθεν ἐνεκα περὶ ἐμε ἁρετής) or ὑπὲρ τινων (Demosthenes, XIX, 312: τάς ἁρετάς ὑπὲρ αὐτῶν). Such noble service and beneficence is expected to be paid back, although such repayment is more obscure and unclear than the sharpness and fidelity of the active graceful bestowal in the first place; Thucydides II, 40, 4: καὶ τὰ ἐς ἁρετὴν ἡμαριωμέθα τοῖς πολλοῖς· οὐ γὰρ πάσχοντες εὐ, ἀλλὰ δρόντες καταμέθα τοῖς φύλοις. βεβαίωτορος δὲ ὁ δράσας τὴν χάριν, ὡστε φεσελιωμένην δι’ εὐνοίας ὁ δεδουκε σώζειν ὁ δ’ ἀντοφείλον ἀμβλύτερος, εἰδος σύν ἐς χάριν, ἀλλ’ ἐς φεσελίμα τὴν ἁρετὴν ἀποδοών. In Homer’s *Odyssey* (v, 45) ἁρετή is even used for the well-being of the persons involved, with clear the connotation of prosperity: θεοὶ δ’ ἁρετὴν ὑπάτεευν παντοτε. Appropriately the ancient scholia observe on ἁρετὴν: ν’ ἐν τὴν εὐδαιμονίαν ὡς το «ἁρετῶσι δε λαοὶ ὑπ’ αὐτοῦ» (τ, 114): people are fulfilled (are happy and prosperous).

[15] ἁρ-ε-τή from AR (cf. ἀραβίσκον, ἀρμονία, ἀρ-ε-, ἁρεῖον, ἁρεῖος, ἁρτικός, ἀρτιος, ἀρθρον, ἀρθρίς, ἀρτιος etc): fitness. And fitness is always highly functional. The Latin virtus (connected to vis, vir-es and to the Greek ἰκ — cf. ἰκε, ἰκεῖον, ἰκι) bears more evidently the mark of the meaning strength, power, might. The emphasis is shifting from the best condition to the strength deposited in the best condition.

[16] The criticism of this view in *Menex*, 76b-e is purgative. If we fix the notion of goodness according to its ordinary acceptance (involving health, wealth, honours etc.), then the statement breaks down as a definition. We have a dexterous indication that the solution to the basic problem would require the correct understanding of goodness.
V. Aristotle, *Politics*, 1337a34 sqq., esp. 1337a39-b1: ἐκ τε τῆς ἐμποδίων παιδείας (sc. the actual educational practices) ταραχοῦσι ή σκέψεις, καὶ δὴλοιν οὐδὲν πότερον αὐσκεῖν δει τὰ χρῆσιμα πρὸς τὸν βίον ἢ τὰ τεινούτα πρὸς ἀρετήν ἢ τὰ περιττά (πάντα γάρ εἰληφῇ ταῦτα κριτᾶς τυπας) etc. *Arts useful in life* (χρήσιμα), *training aiming at excellence* (ἀρετή) and *arcane studies* on exquisite or abstruse matters (περιττά) are neatly distinguished as alternative educational orientations.

Aristotle reputedly singled out to celebrate in his Elegy on Plato this Platonic contribution towards rehabilitating the archetypal wholeness of life; E. Diehl, *Anthologia Lyrica Graeca*, vol. I, p. 115 (Fr. 1.4-7) = M. L. West, *lambi et Elegi Graeci*, vol. II, pp. 44-5 (Fr. 673):

ός (sc. Πλάτων) μόνος ἢ πρῶτος θυγατέρων κατεδείξεν εναργῶς οἰκεῖοι τε βίω καὶ μεθεύοις λόγων, ὡς ἀγαθὸς τε καὶ εὐδαίμοναν ἀμα γίνεται ἀνήρ, οὐ νῦν δ’ ἐστι λαβεῖν οὐδεν ταῦτα ποτε.

The grand design of the *Republic* is to prove just as much: that the virtuous and the “well-to-be” man is one and the same. So, after the colossal and crucially important, necessary digression consisting of the middle books (Ε, ΣΤ, Ζ) of the *Republic* (cf. Η, 543c: ἀναλημνήσθωμεν πόθεν δεύο ἐκτραπήμεθα, ἣν πᾶλιν τὴν αὐτὴν ἰώμεν), Plato retraces the thread of the argument interrupted at the beginning of book E, and states the overall purpose of his endeavour; 544a: The defective forms of polity were going to be analysed, together with their respective determinative faults, and then the corresponding basic types of man defined, ἵνα πάντας αὐτοὺς ἱδώντες καὶ ὁμολογήσαμεν τὸν ἁριστὸν καὶ τὸν κακῶταν ἀνδρὰ ἐπισκεψαίμεθα, εἰ ὁ ἁριστὸς εὐδαιμονέστατος καὶ ὁ κακότατος ἀθλιώτατος ἢ ἄλλους ἔχων. (Cf. 545a). This answers exactly to the position of the problem at the beginning of Book B; cf. in particular 361d: the just and the unjust man must be presented in their respective purity of character, as extreme examples of thorough justice and injustice correspondingly ἵνα ἀμφότεροι εἰς τὸ ἔσχατον ἐληθεύσει, ὁ μὲν δικαιοσύνης, ὁ δὲ ἁδικίας, κρίνονται ὁπότερος αὐτῶν εὐδαιμονεστέρος. In the final book Θ of the *Republic* (Book I being of the nature of an Appendix) this question is treated conclusively (cf. 576c; e; 577b; 580b: ὅτι ὁ Ἀριστωνος ὡς τὸν ἁριστὸν τε καὶ δικαίωταν εὐδαιμονέστατον ἔκρινε..., τὸν δὲ κακῶταν τε καὶ ἁθλιώτατον ἀθλιώτατον etc.). The same basic point is incalculated also in the *Laws*. Thus B, 660e1: ὡς ὁ μὲν ἁγαθὸς ἀνὴρ σωφρόνων ἄν καὶ δίκαιος εὐδαιμόνι ἐστι καὶ μακάριος. (Cf. E, 742e4: σχέδον μὲν γὰρ εὐδαιμόνες ἀμα καὶ ἁγαθόν ἀνάγκη γίγνεσθαι... ἐὰν δὲ ἁριστοὶ... τότε ὁ δὲ ἁδικός, ἀλλὰς τ’ ἐστι καὶ ἀνισορὸς ᾦ. V. Gorgias, 470e9: τὸν μὲν γὰρ καλὸν καὶ ἁγαθόν ἄνδρα καὶ γυναίκα εὐδαιμόνα εἰναι φήμη, τὸν δὲ ἁδικὸν καὶ ποιημὸν ἀθλιον.

In the argument of *Laws*, B, 660e-664d, pleasure is also brought under the same umbrella with virtue and well-being. V. esp. 662d1 sqq. Thus the good for the virtuous man is pleasurable: τί γὰρ δὴ δικαίων χαριζόμενον ἱδνὴς ἁγαθόν ἄν γίγνετο; (663a1-2). *Firstly,* to separate the pleasurable from the just, the good and the noble is destructive of the sociopolitical order: οὐδεὶς γὰρ ἂν ἐκῶν ἐθέλοι πειθεῖαι πράττειν τούτῳ ότῳ μὴ τὸ χαίρειν τοῦ λυπεῖσθαι πλεον ἐπειται (663b4-6; cf. the reasoning in 662d-e). Thus ὁ μὲν μὴ χαριζόν λόγος ἴνα τε καὶ δίκαιον καὶ ἁγαθὸν τε καὶ καλὸν πιθανὸς γ’, εἰ μηδὲν ἔτερον, πρὸς τὸ τινα ἐθέλειν ἔξον τὸν ὄνομ καὶ δίκαιον βίον etc. But, *secondly,* what appears pleasurable and painful depends on the condition of the feeling subject: a virtuous constitution experiences pleasure at the virtuous things and feels pain at the wicked ones; while the reverse is the case with the defective constitution. 663e2 sqq.: τα μὲν ἁδικὰ τῷ τῶν δικαιῶν ἐναντίως φανούμενα, ἐκ μὲν ἁδικοῦ καὶ κακοῦ ἐαυτῶν θεωρούμενα ἤδεα, τὰ δὲ δίκαια ἀπόστατα, ἐκ δὲ δικαιῶν πάντα ταναντία παντὶ πρὸς ἀμφότερα. (This is a
particular application of the general principle regarding the affinity and attraction of the similar by the similar). Yet in such varied appearances there exists also the truth of the matter, and it is the criterion of the perfectly constituted soul (i.e. the soul possessing the excellence of its nature = the virtuous soul) which corresponds to the objective state of affairs: the de alithèiain of the krasiao koiros koiros éinai fòwmen; pòteron tìn tìn tìn kheúnonas 'pouchi' tìn tìn bélitòino; – Anagkaián pò tìn tìn améinon (663c7-d1). And hence (663d2-4): anagkaión ára tòn ádikòn bion óú mónon aisthī kai moikhthróteron álala kai ádéstereon tì alhēiia tòn dikaiòwn tìn einai kai ósios bion. The best life is then the same with the most pleasurable life: tòn áutòn òdion tìn kai òriston òpò theon bion légesebai passokontes, álithèstata érōmen ánima, kai mállon péiωmen óú déi péithen (664b7-c2). With this, we have overcome the last resistance in accepting the insight that a life in possession of all things commonly called goods (like health, beauty, wealth, sensitivity, power to do as one desires, physical prowess and manly valour, even immortality; cf. 661a5-b4; 661d6-e1) and furthermore in want of all things commonly called bad, if it betrays injustice and hybris, is not an exemplar of well-being, but on the contrary of wretchedness (661d6-e4).

The results here in the Laws, tally exactly with the positions established in the Republic Θ and its calculus of pleasure (Θ, 580d-588a). Notice in particular Θ, 588a7-10: óukoun eí tósoúton òròvn kivn ò agathós te kai dúkious tòn kakón te kai ádikón, amhékan de ósow pleióna vnikhei eunychiòsúnì te bión kai kallei kai áretì. [19]

The fault-line between excellence (of the soul) and well-being is expressed in Plato by the question of the relationship between áretì and eudaimoniá, the problem which constitutes the core of his moral and political theory. The two notions are often coupled, contrasted and associated; cf., besides the above quoted passages (n. 18), e.g. Symposium 180b7 (eí áretìs kai eudaimoniáas kthión anákhwos kai òwos kai telesphoráson); Laws, I, 899d8-e3; B, 661d6-e4; Republic, I, 606d6; Θ, 576c10; Alcib. Α′, 134a sqq.; Theaetetus 175b9-c8 and 176e3-4.

Now the moral áretì is defined as the excellence of the soul according to its main divisions and faculties. While eudaimoniá signifies the fulfillment, contentment and satisfaction when all is well (eú) with the being in question. (The inclusion of pure, harmless pleasure – the fundamental analysis of the Philebus gives depth and perspective to the arguments in the Republic, Θ and Laws, B – in eudaimonia highlights the point). The opposite of the former is some deformity and depravity of the soul (kakía); while that of the latter is misery (áthlìotìs).

Well-being consists in the possession of the (really) good (things). Thus with eudaimoniá we have reached the end of the teleological explanation. To the question what one desires, the answer is good (things). To the question what one desires good (things) for, the answer is to possess them (to be attributed to him) and thus be eudaimón. To the question what one desires to possess good (things) for or, in other words, what one desires to be eudaimón for – there is no further reply other than tautological repetition. Symposium, 204d-205a; esp. 204e2 sqq.: ϕθέρε, ὲ Σώκρατες, ἐφι ἐρων τῶν ἀγαθῶν τί ἐφι; Γενέσθαι, ἦν δ’ ἐγώ, αὐτώ. Καὶ τί ἔσται ἐκείνῳ ὧν ἄν γενήται τάγαθα; Τούτ’ εὐπορώτερον, ἦν δ’ ἐγώ, ἐχω ἀποκρίνασθαι, ὅτι εὐδαιμόνις ἔσται. Κτῆσθαι γὰρ, ἐφί, ἀγαθῶν οἱ εὐδαιμόνες εὐδαιμόνες, καὶ οὐκέτι προσδεί ἐρείσθαι ἵνα τί δὲ βούλεται εὐδαιμονείν εἰναι ὁ βουλόμενος, ἀλλὰ τέλος δοκεῖ ἐχεῖν ἢ ἀπόκρισις. (Cf. Citophron 410e: ἐμποδίων τὸ πρῶτον ἀρετῆς ἑλθόντα εὐδαιμόνα γενέσθαι).

The idea which defines well-being as possession or attribution of goods (kêris, geinésthai tà ἀγαθα τῖνι) is criticized in Euthydemus, 278e-282d. But the bearing of this criticism is different. The starting point for the argument is that precisely idea; only év práttein is substituted for eudaimonein. Thus pántes ἀνθρώπων βουλόμεθα év práttein (278e3); and
έπειδή Βουλόμεθα εν πράστεν, πώς ἂν εν πράττομεν; ἢ ἂν εἰ ἡμῖν πολλὰ κάγαθα εἴη; But then equivalently: ὡμολογήσαμεν γὰρ, ἐφήν, εἰ ἡμῖν ἁγάθα πολλὰ παρείη, εὐδαιμονεὶν ἂν καὶ εἰ ν πράττεν (280b5; cf. b7); and finally: ἔπειδη εὐδαιμονεῖς μὲν εἶναι προθυμομέθεα πάντες etc. (282a2). The substance of the argument consists in showing that with the commonly held good (things) it is not their possession (κεκτήσθαι, κτήσις, or presence, παρουσία) but their correct use (ὅρθως χρήσθαι), that constitutes well-being (εὐδαιμονία) and well-acting (εὐπραξία). The upshot of the argument is, therefore, to establish that what is ordinarily considered good (wealth, health, beauty, other bodily excellences, nobility, powers, honours, (moral) virtues, wisdom, good luck; cf. 279a-c) is mostly not necessarily useful by itself, and therefore not really and absolutely good – with the sole exception of knowledge and wisdom. 280b7 sqq.: ἢ ἂν εὐδαιμονοῖμεν ἂν διὰ τὰ παραντὰ ἁγάθα, εἰ μηδὲν ἡμᾶς ὠφελοὶ ἢ εἰ ὠφελεῖ; - εἰ ὠφελεῖ, ἐφή. - ἢ ὠφελοὶ ἂν εἰ ὠφελοὶ, εἰ εἰ ὑμὸν ἡμῖν, χρώμεθα δ’ αὐτοίς μή; ... (280d) Τί δέ, τίς τε κεκτήσεως εἰπ πλούσιον τε καὶ δ’ νυν ἐλέγομεν πάντα τὰ ἁγάθα, χρυσό δέ αὐτοῖς μή, ἢ ἂν εὐδαιμονοῖ διὰ τὴν τούτων κτήσιν τῶν ἁγάθων; - Οὐ δήτα, ἢ Σῶκρατες – Δει ἁρα, ἐφήν, ὡς ἐοκεν, μὴ μόνον κεκτήσθαι τὰ τοιαῦτα ἁγάθα τὸν ἐλλοντα εὐδαιμονα ἔσεσθαι, ἀλλὰ καὶ χρήσθαι αὐτοῖς· ἢ οὐδὲν ὄφελος τῆς κτήσεως γίγνεται. Still more, it is not the mere use of the common goods that constitutes well-being, but the correct use; and this depends on knowledge (ἐπιστήμη), phronesis and wisdom (σοφία). There follows that, strictly speaking, the common goods are really neutrals, and only wisdom is good and ignorance (or stupidity) is bad; 281e: τῶν μὲν ἄλλων οὐδὲν ὅν εἶτε ἁγάθον οὔτε κακὸν, τούτων δὲ δύον οὔτοι ἢ μὲν σοφία ἁγάθον, ἢ δέ ἀμαθία κακὸν. We have thus reached the essence of Stoicism.

The Euthydemian passage therefore aims at clarifying the notion of goodness – something crucial for the treatment of all moral questions and rightly focused upon by Aristotle in his presentation and critique of the Platonic theory. Real goodness is perfect (τέλεον), also sufficing and sufficiently potent (ἰκανόν) as explained in Philebus (20d; 22b): the thing that “possesses” it stands in no need of anything else; ibid. 60b10-c4: τὴν τάγαθον φύσιν διαφέρει τῶδε τῶν ἄλλων. – Τίν; - Οἱ παρεῖ τούτ’ αἰεὶ τῶν ἄλλων διὰ τέλεος πάντων καὶ πάντη µὴνεσον ἔτερον ποτε ἐπι προδέσθαι, το δὲ ἱκανον τελεωτατον ἐχει. The distinction between possession and (correct) functional use is cancelled: true goodness cannot be inactive or dependent on something else for its activation. This is in fact why every being aims at the good and minds nothing else except also what follows upon the acquisition of goodness; 207d sqq.: τὸ δὲ γε µὴν (sc. its sufficing character), ὡς οἴμαι, περὶ αὐτοῦ (sc. τάγαθος) ἀναγκαστατον εἶναι λέγειν, ὡς πᾶν τὸ γιγνόσκον αὐτὸ θηρεύει καὶ ἕρεται βουλόμενον ἐλεῖν καὶ περὶ αὐτοῦ κτήσασθαι, καὶ τῶν ἄλλων οὐδὲν φροντίζει πλην τῶν ἀποτελομένων ἀμα ἁγάθοις. (Cf. 61a: οὐκοῦν τὸ γε τέλεον καὶ πᾶν αἴρετον καὶ τὸ παντάπασαν ἁγάθων etc.)

Τὰ αποτελομένα ἀμα ἁγάθοις are the consequences of the possession of true goods. For Plato it is a proof of the superlative potency of good that it is not only desirable in itself (something which each and every being, being in itself, universally aims at), but also useful and beneficial, i.e. desirable for its effects. Such goods are fertile (γόνιμοι) in the poignant formulation of Republic, B, 367d2. Thus the classification of goods in Republic, B, 357b-358a, divides them into three kinds: a) goods that we want to have for their own sake alone, and not by virtue of their results (like rejoicing, χαῖρειν, and harmless pleasures), b) goods that we aim at both for their own sake and also for their consequences (like understanding and seeing and being healthy, τὸ φρονεῖν καὶ τὸ ὀρᾶν καὶ τὸ ὑγιάνειν); and finally c) goods in themselves laborious and onerous (never to be desired for themselves) but advantageous and profitable because of their accruing recompense and other beneficial consequences, τῶν µισθῶν τε χάριν καὶ τῶν ἄλλων ὡσα γίγνεται απ’ αὐτῶν (like physical exercise and
undergoing medical treatment for the restoration of health). Justice is explicitly put into the second class, which is proclaimed nobler and beautifulest, 357d-358a: ἐν τοῖς (sc. εἰδέ), ἠρώτ, τούτων τὴν δικαιουσάτην τίθης; ἐγὼ μὲν οἶμαι, ἢν δ’ ἐγὼ, ἐν τῷ καλλίστῳ, ὁ καὶ δὴ ἀκτὸ καὶ διὰ τὰ γεγονόμενα ἀπ’ αὐτοῦ ἀγαπητέον τῷ μέλλοντι μακαρίῳ ἐσεθεία (cf. B, 367c). To the first kind belongs pure pleasure, unaccompanied by any consequence beneficial or harmful (Laws, B, 667d-e).

There is thus present in Plato, under full capacity and sway, the reality of final causality but for the Aristotelian term τέλος. In fact the above analysis is recapitulated in Nicomachean Ethics, A, 7, 1097a15-b21. The two main characters of true Platonic goodness (τέλειον, ἱκανόν) are repeated as τέλειον (a28) and αὐτάρκες (b8): τέλειον δὴ τι φαίνεται καὶ αὐτάρκες ἢ εὐδαιμονία, τῶν πρακτῶν οὐδέ τέλος (b20-1). Such ultimate end is that which does not stand in need of further explanation, i.e. that for which the question “why do we aim at it” has no real sense (the ἀνυπόθετον has been reached); cf. A2, 1094a18-22. This is Platonic; v. supra the Symposium passages. A difference appears to emerge in the relative valuation between the kinds of goods or (as Aristotle says) ends. In N.E. 1097a25-b6, Aristotle gives absolute precedence to that end which is aimed at for itself and never for the sake of something else, καὶ μηδέποτε δ’ ἄλλο, 1097a33; such is εὐδαιμονία, as against honour and pleasure and intelligence and all virtue (1097b2). But the difference need not be sharply construed: Plato, as has been observed, means to assert the power, fertility, functionality and profitability of the supreme good in effecting a whole series of beneficial consequences ranging through the entire field of existence and action for the being possessing it. It is goodness itself which in fact renders all other excellences (including moral virtues) advantageous (cf. n. 48).

However this may stand, teleology and final causality is already there in Plato, but for the Aristotelian names, explicitly developed. Worries about the general legitimacy of their employment (a question which was significantly raised by Andrew Nash in the discussion) may thus be composed. On the other hand, we need not be committed to the Aristotelian concept of process or movement in analyzing the theory of Goodness teleologically (V. n. 25). Still further, I endeavour in this paper to locate the Platonic theory within the context of parameters that pervade the entire development of ancient Moral Philosophy. In such analysis, terminology with superior explanatory power may be more freely employed, even if it belongs properly to one particular phase of the development.

Thus I employed the Aristotelian theory of causality to distinguish between beauty, excellence and well-being as, respectively, the formal, efficient and final cause of human endeavour and activity; but also I had recourse to the Stoic notion of spermatic evolution when speaking of the “drive towards excellence”. These applications are called forth in particular by, and articulate the possibility of, separatedness between what in a different context is seamless and divisionless. On a certain level of experience and analysis beauty (harmony), excellence (perfection) and well-being (fulfillment and satisfaction) are necessarily coimplicated: harmony constitutes the excellence which ensures well-being; then, their unified power is easily subsumed under finality: beauty is the object of love (ἔφικτος) and acts by attraction; the end and purpose (τέλος) of a being is precisely the perfection (τέλος) of its nature, which again consists in its own peculiar harmony; and every natural excellence is a beauty and an end to which all beings susceptible of it inherently desire to achieve as completion of their nature. In such perspective there is no apparent reason to differentiate between the three things which I distinguished in the way I did. In particular one cannot then properly speak of a “drive towards excellence”; ends act as final causalities in the processes of their attainment, as “motives” not as “motors”. This was brought home by Andrew Nash, when he questioned the effective explanatory power of my idea, as against its mere metaphorical value (cf. also n. 2).
Now when we extend the analysis of human activity to a level beyond the unperturbed one signified above; when we have to conceptually account for the possibility of ruptures occurring in the unified field of the triad beauty – excellence – well being, as well as for the possibility of overcoming them and restoring unity again; when, in short, the unity has become a triad with fault-lines in the field; then it is less correct to distinguish essentially between the three moments as different (and possibly competing) kinds of finality or, worse, as alternatives for the true understanding of finality. For the process towards perfection of a being is normally the result of an inherent tendency in it to optimize its nature; it is like an inborn movement towards the fullest realization of its nature; like the development from a seed, the effect of a spermatic power (in the Stoic sense) unfolding itself to is completionest manifestation. This is why I spoke of a drive towards excellence. Being itself being a sort of perfection as existence, in the Pythagorean and Platonic sense (i.e. as a privileged determination of an underlying indefiniteness), it contains “inwritten” the potent drive towards the heightening of its constitutive harmony, i.e. towards its own excellence. The nature and seriousness of the fault-line between excellence and well-being consists precisely in the fact that what is the natural development of being may not lead to its fulfillment and satisfaction, which ἐνδιάμονια on the other hand is the natural end of its activity. Efficient and final causalities can thus appear to act divergingly. We might then speak of two irreconcilable ends of human life, but this is less accurate. Nature has made the drive towards excellence rather the effective means of achieving ἐνδιάμονια for a particular being under normal circumstances. (Although she more probably utilizes on the cosmic scale the aiming at well-being in order to allure living, and esp. conscious, things to their perfections, which are partially constitutive of her over-all grand perfection). A being is internally driven towards its perfection; but it would not aim at perfection apart from the fulfillment and satisfaction of well-being; and for well-being to be realized other additional conditions have to be met relating to the external cosmic structure, as we shall see. Conversely, a being aims at well-being; but it is not internally driven to well-being if this loses its automatic correlation with excellence; then it would have to become inured by habituation to cultivate a condition (different from its proper excellence) which secures well-being with the highest degree possible of probability, but which runs against its own natural inclination. To signify the automatic, intrinsic, necessary urge and goading of every being towards its own perfection, I have spoken of the drive towards excellence: the idea is meant to carry great explanatory significance, and is not a metaphor.

The Stoic idea of spermatic cause synthesizes the Aristotelian material and efficient causal concepts. The completeness of being unfolds itself out of its seed-condition, but the spermatic power within the seed also effects the development with no need of an external moving potency. The material principle involves internally the efficient cause of the evolution towards the state of excellence which is not only potentially (according to the Aristotelian acceptation of the term) present in the initial condition, but also potently and efficiently there, and thus, in a sense, actually, although not fully developed. Thus the final end (τέλος) of perfection (τέλος) does not merely attract and pull, but its effective prefiguration moves and pushes, too. A point which is highlighted by the underlying fact that being in itself consists in that very characteristic harmony which is intensified in the corresponding completion and perfection. (The Pythagorean-Platonic construal of reality compared with the Stoic tension, τόνος). This complex situation is captured by the idea of a “drive towards excellence”.

Of course, although this analysis is occasioned by the necessity to account for the disruption of the initially unified field of beauty, excellence and satisfaction, the insight once clarified is valid also in the case of their unperturbed coimplication.
One other point: there is occasionally “systematic ambiguity” in Plato between good and possession of good, between e.g. ἰδέα and χαίρειν, σοφία and φιλοσόφοι, ὑγεία and ὑγαίειν etc. Thus we may say, in particular, either that well-being (εὐδαιμονία) consists in the possession of the good, or that it is the good. This does not pose a serious difficulty. Strictly speaking, one loves a good; one aims at possessing or having it; the desire is of the latter (cf. Philebus, 34e-35d).

For Platonic teleology v. also n. 25. For love of beauty v. n. 21.

[20] As has been observed in the previous note, these factors are constant parameters permeating the entire field of ancient Greek experience, thought and spirituality, even though they are more or less expressed in terms of formulations characteristic of particular phases and periods in their development – those actually in which the factors have been raised to maximal intellectual transparency.

[21] Beauty is the proper object of love (ἐρως καλοῦ). Its attraction would be thus in this respect a case of final causality. The argument however of n. 19 regarding the distinction between excellence and well-being in terms of their respective derivative or genuine finality, can be repeated correspondingly for the pair beauty and well-being. The results thus achieved can then be applied to the serene case where beauty automatically constitutes excellence and secures well-being.

The possibility of a rupture between beauty and excellence rests on the fact that the second, but not directly the first, is result-oriented, as it implies maximal preparedness to act or perform appropriately. (Cf. nn. 14, 19, 27, 48, 49). For something to be in excellent condition involves fitness and ability to do its work best. Thus there emerges an analogy between beauty and excellence on the one hand, form and power to act on the other. Hence I called beauty the formal cause of human life and activity. For beauty is involved in the very fact of existence: being is constituted by the harmony of a definite determination (limit, πέρας) of a field of indefiniteness (infinity, ἀπειρόν). Beauty is, so to speak, very near the existential core of being, and therefore most immediately felt; it is like what is the form of a thing to the thing.


[23] V. esp. 477c-d: δύναμεως γὰρ ἐγὼ οὔτε τινα χρῶν ὅρω οὔτε σχῆμα οὔτε τι τῶν τοιούτων, οίνον καὶ ἄλλων πολλῶν, πρὸς ὁ ἀποβλέπων ἔννα διαφόροιμα παρε' ἐμαυτὶ τὰ μὲν ἄλλα εἶναι, τὰ δὲ ἄλλα δύναμεν χ' εἰς ἐκεῖνο μόνον βλέπει, ἐφ' ὧ τε ἐστὶ καὶ δ' ἀπεργάζεται, καὶ ταυτή ἐκατέστην αὐτὸν δύναμιν ἐκάλεσα, καὶ τὴν μὲν ἐπὶ τῷ αὐτῷ τεταχμένην καὶ τὸ αὐτὸ ἀπεργαζομένην τὴν αὐτὴν καλῶ, τὴν δὲ ἐπὶ ἐτέρῳ καὶ ἔτερον ἀπεργαζομένην ἄλλην.

[24] The Pythagorean-Platonic idea of being as definite limitation of a field of indeterminacy.
On Platonic Teleology v. n. 19. There is absolute goodness, common for every being, whose possession or presence renders all other relative goods really good, i.e. useful and profitable, v. n. 48. Here lies a Platonic foundation for the distinction between excellence and well-being which I established. Possession of a good commonly so thought, a particular excellence, may be disadvantageous for the possessor; such a good is not good in itself: it can easily turn to be bad, so much in fact worse than its opposite, i.e. than a bad thing commonly so thought, as it is far more potent than this latter, the former being a (partial) excellence. E.g. Euthedemos, 281d sqq.: κινδυνεύει σύμπαντα ὁ πρῶτον ἐφαίμεν ἀγαθά εἶναι, οὐ περὶ τοῦτο ὁ λόγος αὐτοῖς εἶναι, ἀλλʼ ὡς ἔσχεν ὁδʼ ἔχει ἐὰν μὲν αὐτῶν ἐχθρία ἀμαθία, μείζω κακά εἶναι τῶν ἐναντίων, διόνοντα ὑποτετρα ἐπηρετεῖν τῷ ἐπουμένῳ κακώ όντι, ἐὰν δὲ φρονοῦσι τε καὶ σοφία, μείζω ἀγαθά, αὐτά δὲ καθ’ αὐτά ὑποτετρα αὐτῶν ὑδεονος ἀξία εἶναι. And similarly in the Laws, B, 661b-c, where the point is concluded by the general statement, 661d: τὰ μὲν κακὰ λεγόμενα ἀγαθὰ τοῖς ἄθικοις εἶναι, τοῖς δὲ δικαίοις κακά, τὰ δ’ ἀγαθὰ τοῖς μὲν ἄθικοις ὀντῶς ἀγαθὰ, τοῖς δὲ κακοῖς κακά. In the Laws passage from the common goods are excluded δικαίοσύνη καὶ ἀρετή ἀπασχολεῖ (on whose possession the goodness of the rest depends), whereas in Euthydeus, included is τὸ σώφρονα τε εἶναι καὶ δικαίου καὶ ἀνθρεφίου (279b5). This inconsistency regarding the “moral” virtues is only apparent. Ἀπασχολεῖ ἡ ἀρετή in the Laws involves phronesis and wisdom, on whose presence the profitability and, hence, the real goodness of the common goods depends according to the Euthydemus. Supreme wisdom is the knowledge of absolute Goodness; and it is on the Idea of Good that the moral virtues depend for their goodness, as is definitively stated in Republic, ΣΤ, 505a-d, a passage that will be quoted and treated in n. 48.

The true end for Plato is therefore absolute Goodness or rather (in systematic ambiguity, cf. at the end of n. 19) its legitimate presence or acquisition. Excellences are not such ends, and therefore they do not exercise final causality on human life and action. For if we combine (a) the general point that the object of will is the purpose of action (ὅι ἀνθρώποι τοῦτο ὑπελείποι οἷς πράγματος ἐκάστος ἢ ἐκεῖνο οἷς ἔνεκα πράγματος τούθ’ ὁ πράγματος; Gorgias, 467c sqq.) and therefore the good intended (ἕνεκα τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ ἀπασχολεῖ ταῦτα ποιώμενοι οἱ ποιοῦντες, 468b7), and (b) the Platonic view concerning the unique absolute Goodness; it follows that the real end of human action is absolute Goodness (and its proper possession) alone, and not common, relative goods like particular excellences.


It is hardly possible to overestimate the solid realism of Platonic Idealism and of ancient Greek ideality in general. The profitability, functionality and efficiency of virtue-excellence, its instrumentality to success, is a capital relevant case. Heather Reid expressed in the discussion conceptual worries about such pragmatic “realism”. Her point gets its full weight in the context of the “morality” (ethical tone or otherwise) of the Platonic moral virtues, and as such it will be treated in n. 48. (Cf. also nn. 14 and 19).

The functionality of excellence is embedded in the ancient Greek experience of the world and of life in it. Virtue entails fitness to perform adequately, capacity to achieve results, ability to do the right thing in the appropriate field of variation. An excellent knife, is a knife that cuts well. When things are in their proper state of normality, the beauty of a knife consists in such a form as enables it to excel in its proper work, i.e. in
cutting. And further, also, cutting is in such a way integrated within the operational field of activities that cutting well is significant as an achievement which means that there is necessarily a reward, of one sort or another, for the achievement. Here is displayed in the simplest form the archetype of the fundamental moral question: the congruity (or alternatively, maladaptation) between beauty, excellence and well-being.

In the quintessentially Hellenic, Homeric life-experience, as well as in the common feeling, ἄρετη is both the virtue or excellence, and its reward (V. n. 14). At the beginning of the more sustained and serious treatment of the archquestion of Morality in the Republic (the relationship between excellence and well-being) the point is emphasized: Justice (the central moral virtue) belongs to the best kind of goodness, the one which is pursued both for its own sake in itself and because of its consequences (ἐν τῷ καλλίστῳ - sc. εἰδί - ὤ καὶ διὰ αὐτὸ καὶ διὰ τὰ γεγονόμενα ἀπὸ αὐτοῦ ἀγαθεῖτον τῷ μέλλοντι μακαρίῳ ἔσεσθαι, Republic, B, 358a1-3; cf. the context in n. 19). The basic question has to be faced with the credentials of virtue being established on its own nature in itself and not in connection with whatever wage or remuneration exists for virtue (καλλίστῳ ἄρετῇς, B, 363d; μισθοὺς καὶ δόξας πάρεις, B, 367d): this is Glauco’s setting of the problem; cf. 362e sqq. (justice is usually recommended not on its own merit, but for the sake of its results and credits, εὐδοκιμίσεις). At the conclusion of the following gigantic enterprise, in Θ, the virtuous life of excellences is proven to be even the most pleasurable in itself (v. n. 18). And then in I, 612b sqq. the overarching argument is closed by an examination of the rewards of virtue both in this life and after death: Ὅσοιον, ἢν δ’ ἐγὼ, τὰ τὰ ἄλλα ἀπελευθέρωσε ἐν τῷ λόγῳ, καὶ οὐ τὸν μισθὸν οὐδὲ τὰς δόξας δικαιοσύνης ἐπηνεκράμεν,..., ἀλλ’ αὐτὸ δικαιοσύνην αὐτῇ ψυχῇ ἁρπάσων ἴχνομεν, καὶ ποιητέον εἶναι αὐτῷ τὰ δίκαια... νῦν ἥδη ἀνεπιφθονὸν ἐστίν πρὸς ἐκεῖνος καὶ τοὺς μισθοὺς τῇ δικαιοσύνῃ καὶ τῇ ἀλλή ἄρετῇ ἀποδόναι, ὅσοις τε καὶ οὓς τῇ ψυχῇ παρέχει παρ’ ἀνθρώποις τε καὶ θεοῖς, ζωντος τε ἐπὶ τοῦ ἀνθρώπου καὶ ἐπειδὰν τελευτήσῃ. And indeed the divine work ends with the Myth of Er.

Genuine religiosity is indeed very pragmatic in the same way: e.g. χαίρετε καὶ ἀγαλλιάσθε, ὅτι ὁ μισθὸς ὑμῶν πολὺς ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς (Ev. Math., V, 12). Cf. XIX, 29; Ev. Luk. X, 7; 1 Cor. III, 8; 14; 2 John 8; Apocal. XXII, 12).

[28] In turns out that to prove this is not the most difficult task of Moral Philosophy.


[30] V. Philebus, 25d-26d. The conjugation of the limiting and the indeterminate factors (those that determine and those that are inherently susceptible of more and less) gives birth to the (relatively) stable “becoming to being”, that is, existence in this world: τὸ τούτων ἐγγυόν ἄτια, γένεσιν εἰς οὗτον ἐκ τῶν μετὰ τοῦ πέρατος ἀπεφασμένων μέτρων (26d). Thus ἡ τοῦτων ὀρθὴ κοινωνίᾳ τὴν ὑγείας φύσιν ἐγέννησεν (25d7-8); ἐκ τούτων ἄρα τε καὶ ὅσα καλά πάντα (26b1)... μεθ’ ὑγείας κάλλος καὶ ἰσχὺν (b6) etc.

[31] A point of higher strength than that corresponding to the optimal determination appears to be possible in cases. But on closer scrutiny it can be shown that either that same point really
constitutes the achievable optimum for the particular case; or the non-optimal condition of maximal tension is unstable, like all determinations of the variational field save the privileged one. The optimal resonance is the really stronger one stably and on the whole.

[32] What follows is in elaboration of my response to an important issue raised in the discussion by Philip Beeley. It concerns the relationship between the dynamic and the absolute reality of being.


Equally dynamic, under a different construal, is the Heracleitean existence, as harmonic tension between opposites. In fact, there is systematic “interface” regarding the dynamism of being between Heracleitean and Pythagorean metaphysics. A harmonious (and thus correspondingly stable) synthesis of opposites is the same reality with the optimal determination of that field of variation which is defined by those opposites. The Pythagorean insight consisted in substituting as fundamental polarity in place of the opposition between indefinites (e.g. hot and cold) that between limit and indeterminacy (normative, optimal determination of temperature versus the temperature field of variation). The common polarity of opposites then was re-introduced into the second pole by Plato, as more and less, great and small or indefinite Dyad. Cf. Philebus, 24a-25a; Aristotle brings this forth as one of the peculiarities of Plato vis-à-vis the Pythagorean system, e.g. Metaphysics, A, 987b22 sqq.; τὸ μὲντο γε ἐν ὑσίαις εἶναι, καὶ μὴ ἔτερον τι ὑπὸ λέγεσθαι ἢν, παρατηρήσεως τοῖς Πυθαγορείοις ἔλεγε (sc. Plato), καὶ τὸ τοῦτο ἀρκηθεύς αἰτίας εἶναι τοῖς άλλως τῆς ὑσίαις ὥσαντος ἐκεῖνος. τὸ δὲ ἀντί τοῦ ἀπειροῦ ὡς ἕνος διάδα ποιησα, τὸ δ’ ἀπειροῦ ἐκ μεγάλου καὶ μικροῦ, τοῦ ἰδίου.

Dynamism pertains intrinsically to being no less for Aristotle, only again its analysis is conducted differently. Form involves the power to act (move and actualize), matter the capability to undergo action and the definite propensity to be in-formed actually according to the potentiality that it ontologically involves. (Distinct from privation, matter is ὁ πέρικεν ἐφύσεια καὶ ὑγειονεια αὐτοῦ - sc. τοῦ θείου καὶ ἀγαθοῦ καὶ ἐφετοῦ, form and entelechy - κατὰ τὴν αὐτοῦ φύσιν. Physics, A, 192a18-9; matter aims at, reaches after and yearns for formative actuality).

For the Stoic eminently dynamic conception of being, v. my treatment in the paper referred to in n. 22.

To this common dynamic conception of being there is sharply contrasted the Parmenidean absolute being. For the former, the higher in the scale of independence a being is, the more powerful it is; the more perfect it is, the mightier it is, the more extensive the exercise of its power is. Where there is an absolute, self-subsisting being (the Heracleitean Fire-Logos; the Aristotelian separate, divine Intellect; the Stoic Universal God), it is maximally dynamic. A major problem indeed arises within the Pythagorean-Platonic current: originally, the
dynamism of existence comes characteristically from the second principle of fertile infinity (απειρό), as against the stabilizing, delimiting, ‘crystallizing’, fixing, ordering function of the first principle (πέρας). But this possesses also a variant dynamism, that of the formative power; and in any case, all reality, consisting in the mixture of the two principles, involves necessarily the dynamism of both.

In the Eleatic tradition, on the other hand, the dynamic and the absolute reality of being are contrasted. The same holds good basically for the Atomism as well (Classical and Hellenistic), this peculiar progeny of Eleatism. Further, the contrast was also implicit in the “logical Atomism” of the εἰδόν φιλο (248a) against whom Plato elaborately proceeds in the Sophist. They are the “idealists” of the spiritual Gigantomachy (246a) that goes on; their substantial forms (cf. 246b-c) are beyond the power to act or be acted upon (δύναμις τοῦ παράγον καὶ παρῆλθεν, 248c). Plato argues on the contrary that complete and perfect being (τὸ παντελῶς ὄν, 248e) involves intellelction, life, soul, movement; 248d-249b. Those who construe the forms as static realities are in the wrong (249c). The fundamental point is analysed in 251d sqq.: true beings can enter into communion (κοινωνία), or be mixed up (συμμείγνυον), with other true beings (although it is shown that not every real being communes with every other). The essential relationship and communication entails mutual influence and the power to exercise it (δύναμις ἐπικοινωνίας, 251e; 252d); which influence again involves the idea of movement. Movement (in this broader acceptance as energy and actuality of power and dynamic effect) is part of the world of perfect being; and so is even non-being (256e). These and similar consequences follow from the interrelationship of true being. The alternative is to postulate a rigid logical atomism of uncommunicable entities (like the Parmenidean One-Being multiplied into many one-beings, as Melissus explained), which doctrine cancels the possibility of articulating statements and reasonings (259d-e).

Thus the notion of true being as motionless and immovable, as solemn and sacred but also idle, was disposed of by Plato. Notice particularly the form and force of the denunciation in Sophist, 248d6 sqq.: Τι δὲ πρὸς Διὸς; ώς ἀληθῶς κίνην καὶ ἐων καὶ ψυχήν καὶ φορόντον ἢ σωμάτως πεποθημομέθα τῷ παντελῶς ὄντι μη παρέχονται, μηδὲ μαθῇ μὴδὲ φορέσαι, ἔλλα σεμίναι καὶ δίκαιον, νοῦν οὐκ ἔχον, ἀκίνητον ἐστός εἰναι;

Henceforth in the ancient philosophical tradition the dynamism of real being was again crucial in all positive doctrines – with the virtual exception of Epicureanism. Classical atomic theory was inconsistent or unclear about the origin of movement, as was pointedly criticized by Aristotle (Metaphysics A, 985b19; De Caelo, Π, 300b8 sqq.; Physics, Θ, 252a32 sqq.; Β, 186a24 sqq.). The Democritean whirling (δύνας) and impact (πληγή) are external to the atomic fullness of being, the former also unaccountable. Some admission to a more, but minimally, dynamic conception of full being may be represented by the weight (pondus) of the Epicurean atoms, if interpreted as a potential of energy within themselves; but this is doubtful, as it is also the mysterious declination (climamen) from the rectilinear free “falling” of the atoms in the vacuum.

Apart from the atomistic turbulences, a solid consensus understood power as inherent in beingness. The intrinsic dynamism of reality was further fundamental for the Neoplatonic ontological derivations and hierarchical structures. In philosophical theology, the divine Logos was the Power of the first hypostatical principle, through which power the invisible and visible worlds were created.

The ancient opposition between a dynamic and a static concept of being is reflected, as was aptly observed by Philip Beeley in the discussion, in the contrast of Leibniz’ Monadology to Gassendi’s Atomism.

Beeley correctly pointed out that my concept of dynamic harmony is meant to reconcile the dynamic with the absolute reality of being. He wondered whether such reconciliation should be understood in the sense of the Aristotelian concept of movement, esp. as there would
appear to be a distinction in Plato between excellence and striving for excellence. The goal of the motion, its *terminus motus*, is in that concept considered to lie outside the movement itself, which, on the other hand, constitutes the process of realization of the goal. In this perspective, the end (*τέλος*) strived for is the absolute reality of being, whereas the process of its attainment exhibits the dynamism of being. This would however effectively destroy the chances of a meaningful synthesis between the absolute and the dynamic. So Beeley.

Now, *first of all*, the original experience was that of a thoroughly *dynamic beingness*. An impotent being is nothing. To be is to ontologically affirm an identity, and such power as is required to raise something out of nothing. *Dynamism lies at the existential core of being*. The Pythagorean-Platonic construal articulates precisely this dominant experience: *what constitutes the power and the perfection of being constitutes being itself.*

We do not start from the sense of the division between the absolute and the dynamic, working up towards their mutual integration afterwards. On the contrary, their division is the result of the Parmenidean rule-making, an artificial game if left unchecked (Eristics, Megaric philosophy, other “Socratic” remnants), useful if controlled (Plato).

*Secondly*, being is thoroughly dynamic in all respects for Aristotle as well. Form is what makes out of (the appropriate) matter a thing of such and such a kind; matter has the capacity and the tendency to be formed accordingly. Existence is either potential or actual: every potentiality yearns for its actualization; every actuality is, and is manifested as, activity. An efficient cause is an actuality; a final cause is an actuality; a formal cause is an actuality; a material cause is a potentiality. Being is *vibrant* in all its aspects. In fact, Aristotle represents an alternative model of being fully permeated with dynamism to that of the Pythagorean-Platonic tradition. Real existence is determined by activity (*ἐνέργεια*) (Cf. *Metaphysics*, Θ, 1050b2: ὥστε φανερὸν ὅτι ἡ οὐσία καὶ τὸ εἶδος ἐνέργεια ἐστίν); in the case of absolute being, God is *pure activity* (ibid., Α, 1071b19 sqq.: δεῖ ἄρα εἶναι ἀρχήν τοιάτου ἥς ἡ οὐσία ἐνέργεια. ἐτί τοιοῦτον ταύτας δεῖ τάς οὐσίας εἶναι ἀνευ ὄλης αἰώνος γὰρ δεῖ, εἰπεῖ γε καὶ ἀλλο πι ἄιδον ἐνέργεια ἄοι). In an Aristotelian perspective, the key concept synthesizing dynamism and beingness is not that of movement (*κίνησις*), but eminently its correlative, *activity*, perfect actuality (*ἐνέργεια*). The difference between ἐνέργεια and κίνησις (in strict, technical senses) is that the end is included within the former, but not in the latter: thus κίνησις is essentially, ἀτελής (e.g. *Metaphysics*, Θ, 1048b29). To be in movement is *not* to have achieved the purpose of the movement: thus, if one is walking, one *has not already walked* (= reached his destination). On the contrary, *ἐνέργεια* is an action which by its very actualization has realized its end: for example, to see means to have already seen; the end is involved in the action itself and does not follow as a result of it, as something effected by it. For this very reason, a movement must of internal necessity stop, once its end is achieved; whereas on its own merit, ἐνέργεια can be eternal, once in existence. Thus in the dense and difficult passage, *Metaphysics*, Θ, 1048b18-36; v. esp. 1048b18-23: ἐπεὶ δὲ τῶν πράξεων ὄν ἔστι πέρας (i.e. a limit, a final point, an end in the sense of finish) οὐδεμιά τέλος ἀλλὰ τῶν περὶ τὸ τέλος, οίνον τοῦ ἰσχυαίνειν ἢ ἰσχυαία αὐτὸ (i.e. of the process of thinning the end to be achieved is thinness, leanness; ἰσχυαία rather than ἰσχύαία is the process itself, and it should be read in b29 in the latter’s place), σωτά (sc. the parts of the thing in the process of emaciation) δὲ ὅταν ἰσχυαίην οὕτως ἔστιν ἐν κινῆσι, μὴ ὑπαρχόντον (the reading needed to make sense) ὄν ἐνεκα ἢ κίνησις (i.e. things in movement do not already possess that for the sake of which the movement is taking place), οὐκ ἔστι ταύτα πράξεις ἢ οὐ τελείᾳ γε’ οὗ γάρ τέλος: ἀλλ’ ἐκείνη ὅρε ἐνυπάρχει τὸ τέλος καὶ [ἡ] πράξεις. (Perfect) action is the one which involves intrinsically its own end. (Then follow the examples). Κίνησις may thus be described as an imperfect activity, ἀτελής ἐνέργεια (*Physics*, Γ, 201b27; *de anima*, Β, 417a16; Γ, 431a6; *Metaphysics*, Κ, 1066a17-22; etc.). While ἐνέργεια is a whole, complete and perfect at
each moment of its duration; cf. in particular the treatment of ἐνέργεια in connection with pleasure in Nicom. Ethics X, 1174a13-b14; v. esp. 1174a14-21: dokei γὰρ ἢ μὲν ὀρέσσες (an example of ἐνέργεια) ἣν' ἀντιστοιχον χρόνον τελεία εἶναι' οὔ γὰρ ἐστιν ἐνέργεις οὐδένος ὁ εἰς ὑποτευθον γινόμενον τελεωσει αὐτῆς τὸ εἶδος· τοιοῦτω δ' ἔοικε καὶ ἡ ἱδρυνή. ὅλον γὰρ τι ἐστί, καὶ κατ᾿ οὐδένα χρόνον λάβοι τὰ ἐὰν ἱδρυνήν ἢς, ἐπὶ πλείω χρόνον γινομένης, τελεοθήσεται τὸ εἶδος, διότι οὐδὲ κίνησις ἐστίν. ἐν χρόνῳ γὰρ πᾶσα κίνησις καὶ τέλους τινὸς, οἴον ἢ οὐκοδομική, καὶ τελεία ὅταν ποιήσῃ οὐ ἔφεταιν· ἢ ἐν ἀπαντὶ δὴ τῷ χρόνῳ ή τούτῳ (sc. τελεία ἐστί). Ἐνέργεια is perfect in the present, at any moment of its duration: τὸ γὰρ ἐν τῷ νῦν ὅλον τι (1174b9); τῆς ἱδρυνῆς δ' ἐν ὑποτευθον χρόνῳ τελειών τὸ εἶδος (1174b5-6).

Movement then is the actuality of the potential qua potential: τὴν τοῦ δυνάμει ἢ τοιούτων ἐστιν ἐνέργειαν λέγω κίνησιν (Metaph. K, 1065b16; v. the entire passage, 1065b14-1066a34; and, basically, Physics, I, 1-3). It is not the actuality of the potential when this has been cancelled, because then there exists full actuality; it is the actuality of the potential as such, when it is still preserved as potential, and therefore its full actuality has not yet been achieved, but is in the process of realisation. Κίνησις is such “in between” state, neither of mere potentiality nor of full actuality; Physics, I, 201b27: τὸ δὲ δοκεῖν ἀόριστον εἶναι τὴν κίνησιν ἀίτιον ὅτι ὡστε εἰς δύναμιν τῶν ὀντῶν ὡστε εἰς ἐνέργειαν ἐστὶ θείαι αὐτὴν ἁπλῶς; etc.

Ἐνέργεια is for Aristotle the clear manifestation of the dynamism of being: the dynamic and absolute reality of being coincide there perfectly. Even in movements which are productions, there is complete ἐνέργεια realized — the activity of the art or science which results in the production and the work produced. The house as actuality involved in the actuality of the building-art (i.e. in the actuality of the corresponding knowledge) is the real factor in the efficient causality which constructs the actual house out of the building materials in a process of movement. Thus in any case, every movement presupposes generally the actuality of the efficient cause which effects it: ὡστε φύσει γίγνεται ἡ τέχνη, ὃτ' ἐνέργεια ὄντος γίγνεται εκ τοῦ δυνάμει τοιοῦτον (De Gener. Anim. B, 734b21).

The Pythagorean-Platonic model is different. Yet it is as thoroughly teleological (v. n. 19). It is moreover more pragmatic.

[33] I said that harmony, as optimal determination, represents an acute natural resonance. Minimal variation on the one axis around the point of acute resonance results in maximal change on the other axis. This is precisely what happens with the beauty of things and its constitutive factors.

[34] This identify is of course normally complex. But it is never a paratactic list of parameters; it is always a whole with a unifying principle and a specific structural order. So we can speak of one determination and one harmony, naturally involving many subordinate ones, all standing in definite relationships to each other and to the integrating one. - The integration of a multitude into a complex whole with a particular definite identity is ultimately the work of the Principle of Oneness; this confers unity on the multitude by harmonizing its differing elements and diverging momenta.

[35] Harmony of opposites as constitutive of the definiteness and power of being is also a Heracleitan insight. V. principally, the above quoted Fr. 27 Markovich = 51DK. Cf. Fr. 32M = 59DK; 33M = 60DK; 34M = 103DK; 35M = 61DK; 39M = 48DK; 40M = 12DK; 41M = 88DK; 42M = 126DK; 43M = 57DK; 44M = 111DK; 45M = 23DK; 46M = 58DK; 47M = 62DK; 48M = 26DK; 49M = 21DK; and very significantly 50M = 15DK.
The superiority of the Pythagorean model resides in that it defines the general nature of the opposition, and provides for the possibility of determinate and pragmatic understanding of Heracleitus’ secret harmony. On the other hand, Heracleitus also reduced all opposition to the kindling and extinguishing of fire according to measure; Fr. 51M = 30DK (cf. 54M = 90DK; 55M = 65DK; 56abM = 84abDK).

[36] This results from the Pythagorean-Platonic model of the dynamism of being. V. n. 32.

[37] We may legitimately expand thus the Aristotelian insight that pleasure essentially accompanies the unimpeded activity of a power. V. Eth. Nicom. 1153a14-15; b9-12. Cf. in particular b16-19: οὐδεμία γὰρ ἐνέργεια τέλειος ἐμποδιζόμενη, ἢ δ’ ἐυδημονία τῶν τελείων· διό προσδεῖται ὁ εὐδαιμόνι τῶν ἐν σώματι ἀγαθῶν καὶ τῶν ἕκτω καὶ τῆς τύχης, ὅπως μὴ ἐμποδίζεται ταύτα.

[38] This provides the ulterior answer to Christos Evangeliou’s question in the discussion, whether optimal self-realization is (politically) correct and desirable. By striving after sharpest determination of their identity, for maximal power, utmost perfection and strongest action of their being, individual entities do not illegitimately hinder or obstruct each other’s actually (as against imagined) optimal self-realization, nor do they degrade the corporate level of achievement for the entire system – provided they form a co-ordinated structure of objectively ensured coherence. This is why a specific metaphysical foundation is needed to sustain the pragmatism of only minimally and naturally regulated self-interest and self-attainment with its accompanying acute competition (the Hesiodean ἀγαθὴ ἔρις, v. n. 4).

Such climactic self-realization, if left to itself, establishes spontaneously a stable equilibrium, given the metaphysical presupposition. Every individual achieves its own optimal self-realization, while the system attains the highest possible degree of collective perfection as well. It is only the disastrous notion that optimal self-realization should be normatively the same for all individuals concerned which can cast doubt on the justice of the natural equilibrium resulting from the multifarious balancing antagonisms of independent self- affirmations. Jusice is Conflict declared Heracleitus; Fr. 28M = 80DK: εἰδέναι χρή τὸν πόλεμον ἐόντα Ξίνιν καὶ δίκην ἔριν καὶ γινόμενα πάντα κατ’ ἐριν καὶ χρεών.

The naturally ordered system does not safeguard the same, common maximal attainment for all its members, but the maximum that each is capable of; this is the optimum for the whole as well.

The Platonic metaphysical foundation for antagonistic optimal self-realization (different for each individual, yet corporately maximal) has been analysed in an as yet unpublished paper of mine entitled “Justice and Goodness in Plato’s Republic: Philosophical Essentialism and the Metaphysical Foundations of Political Realism” (8th International Conference on Greek Philosophy, Athens-Samos, 4-12 July 1996).

The same metaphysical foundation which grounds the desirability of optimal self realisation, also establishes its possibility. Perfection of being is an enhancement of (so to speak, the tonality of) harmony which constitutes the being itself: the optimal determination of appropriate underlying variational fields. This answers to the basic ancient Greek experience: being exists in beauty. Being is ontologically entitled to its perfection. And a World in which this requirement would remain even doubtful (let alone negated) is a meaningless phantasm indeed.

[39] From a formal point of view, if Goodness were not the ultimate principle of reality, perfections would be generally noxious to each other and self-detrimental. Just as without fixing the noetic eye of the soul on the supreme principle through fundamental περαιγωγή
from the processes of becoming to the world of true being, abilities and capacities can turn to
be shrewd engines of mischievous machinations (Republic Z, 518e-519a). But behind the
formal aspect of things there is their real structure and constitution which explain it. Just as
behind the Theory of Forms there is the Platonic Pythagoreanism of, say, Timaeus and the
Unwritten Doctrines. (Cf. for a sustained argument in support of this unificatory view of
Platonic Philosophy my study referred to in n. 29). So we need the real “mechanism” at
work behind the formal description, the reality of ideality. And this is provided in the present
connection by the insight that Goodness consists in oneness.

[40] And if we apply Dialectics to Mathematics in the way indicated methodologically in the
Republic, Politicus, Philebus, Laws and carried on doctrinally in the Περί τά γιαθοῦ and the
Unwritten Doctrines (v. my study mentioned in n. 29), Dialectics is set over all special
sciences (those culminating in the various branches of Mathematics) and over the
Sophistical, segregated acceptance of sciences and (political) wisdom of life.

[41] Aristotle objected strongly to the Old Academic mathematical Pythagoreanism. He averted
the threatened breach between being and well-being by invoking instead moment (d) of the
Greek experience, and effecting a different teleologization of the World, as thorough as its
teleological mathematization by Plato.

[42] There is much talk of morality being the foundation of the ancient theory (and practice) of
education and politics. This is no doubt formally correct: moral issues and concepts play a
crucial role in the formulation, discussion, appreciation and resolution of educational and
political, even economical (Aristotle), problems. But values in ancient thought are normally
ontological eminences. Evaluative statements are factual statements about the essential structure and
order of reality. The Republic presents a breathtaking example of precisely grounding Ethics,
Education and Politics on Metaphysics (or, should this term exhale objectionable
connotations, on general Theory of Reality).

The structural correlation between these disciplines can be put quite simply. There is a
common object of Moral, Educational and Political Theory: namely, the perfection and well-being of
human nature. Despite what is usually maintained regarding the supposed “socialism” of
Ancient Political thought, the precedence of society as a whole upon the particular human
being is instrumental and not final: societal correct order and corporate well-being provide
the best environment for individual perfection and achievement. But the excellence and
fulfillment of human nature can only be realized if individuals excel and are thoroughly
satisfied. There is stark individualism underlying the apparent but formal preoccupation with social
integration. (Thus in the Republic one uses the macrocosm of society in order to better discern
what is happening within the microcosm of the human soul with regard to passions and
virtues (πάθη and ἀρεταί); but virtues primarily pertain to the individual, and it is from
there that they can mark the character of the whole society and its political structure; v.
Republic, Λ, 435e).

The common object of the Human Sciences, and its fundamentally individualistic
interpretation, explain also the moral accent in educational and political analyses. For moral
virtues are just the pervading, universal excellences of human nature in its objective
articulation (theory of the parts of soul etc.). For this grand ancient idea, and its concomitant
intellectualism, in a modern dress, cf. e.g. the Leibnitean dictum: “moral perfection is physical
perfection in minds themselves” (On the Untimate Origination of Things, Engl. Tr. in The
Monadology and other Philosophical Writings by R. Latta, p. 345).
[43] Moral virtues are defined in relation to the parts of faculties of the soul, their respective excellences and optimized functioning (*Republic, Δ, 434d-444a*). Similarly, the (ultimately derivative) application of moral virtues to the city at large is also conducted with reference to the essential, constitutive, functional parts of society, their best condition and perfect working (*ibid., Δ, 427e-434c*). The completely ontological foundation of ethical character is emphatically asserted when virtue is described as the health, beauty and fitness of soul, 444d13-42: άρετή μὲν ἄρα, ως ἐσικευ, ύμεια τε τις ἀν εἰη καὶ κάλλος καὶ ενεξία ψυχῆς, κακία δὲ νόσος τε και ἁίτιχος καὶ ἀσθένεια.

[44] Political wisdom (it is called σοφία, *passim*, but also φρόνησις, *Republic, Δ, 433b8; d1*) is knowledge (ἐπιστήμη) having as object the best constitution and functioning of the State internally and in its external relationships to other States; 428c11 sqq.: εστι τις ἐπιστήμη in the state ἡ οὐχ ὑπὲρ τῶν ἐν τῇ πόλει τινὸς βουλεύσεως, ἀλλ’ ὑπὲρ αὐτῆς ὅλης, ὅτι χρῶσκαν αὐτή τε πρὸς αὐτὴν καὶ πρὸς τὰς ἄλλας πόλεις ἁρπάσαι ἀξίως. (In fact such knowledge is preeminently to be called wisdom, 429a1-3). It belongs to the small, alone legitimate, rightfully governing body – defined precisely by its possession of this wisdom.

Correspondingly, (moral) wisdom belongs to the strictly rational part of the soul (τὸ λογιστικόν), the naturally ruling faculty, and consists in the knowledge of what is beneficial to itself, as well as to the other parts and the entire soul (442c5-8).

Moral (and political) wisdom is the practical aspect or application of that holistic wisdom which is the proper excellence of the thinking (reasoning and calculating) faculty or part of the soul, and is eminently functional: it consists in the knowledge of what is best, i.e. advantageous (τὸ συμφέρον), to it, and to the whole to which it belongs, under any given circumstances (442c5-8).

The underlying, non-technical, general sense of σοφία was consummate skill, and this either in handicraft and art or in matters of life esp. societal and political. The word is a *hapax legomenon* in Homer; it occurs in O, 412 in connection with the exquisite expertise in carpentry of a craftsman divinely guided and whose hands know his craft:

Ο 411 τέκτονος εν παλαμίτην δαίμονον, ως φα τε πάσης
ev eιδή σοφίης υποθημεύσην Αθήνης, etc.

(The ancient Scholia *ad loc. notice the singularity of the occurrence; some held the fact so important as to consider the nonexistence of the word in the *Odyssey* as an argument in favour of its different authorship; v. 412b', *Scholia graeca in Homeri Ilidem (Scholia Vetera), H. Erbse*, vol. IV, p. 97). Σοφία is matched with τέχνη in *Hymn. Hom. in Merc.* 483 and 511. Later the employment of the word in this signification is characteristic (examples in L. and S. sub. voc.). In the great Protagorean myth (Plato, *Protagoras*, 321d1), all expertise in artisanship is called ἐντεχνὸς σοφία σὺν πυρὶ Ἡραίων καὶ Ἀθηναίας (a saving gift to man from Prometheus), and is contrasted as ἡ περὶ τὸν βιόν (concerning the material needs and interests of life) σοφία to the πολιτική σοφία. (Cf. *ibid. 319a-d*). This former sense of σοφία is well epitomized by Aristotle *Eth. Nicom., VI, 1141a11*: οὕθεν ἄλλο σημαίνει τὸν σοφίαν ἢ ὅτι ἀρετή τέχνης εστίν. It is an excellence in a given art.

Similarly, accomplished skill in matters of common life, sound judgement and intelligent choice in practical concerns, constitute (moral and political) wisdom, like prudence - φρόνησις. This life-wisdom (in individual or collective regard) seems to have been the natural meaning of σοφία taken absolutely, without reference (explicit or implicit) to any particular skill or artistry. So Plutarch, *Themistocles*, 2, 6 (112d): τήν τότε (in Themistocles’ times) καλουμένην σοφίαν οὖσαν δὲ δεινότητα πολιτικήν καὶ δραστηρίων ἀνέσεων, political shrewdness and active, efficacious sagacity. Plutarch significantly refers this practical wisdom back to Solo, the wordly-wise legislator. (Cf. Herodotus I, 29-30 for the Solonian wisdom. Dicaearchus considers the group of early wise-men (οἱ ἐπίστα σοφοί) as
eminent in sound practical understanding and political architecture or statesmanship ("legislation"). But he would not call them wise or philosophic. Diogenes Laertius, I, 40 (= Dicaearchus, Wehrli fr. 30): ἵπποι δὲ Δικαίαρχος οὐτὲ σοφοὶ οὐτὲ φιλοσόφοι φθεῖν αυτοῖς γεγονέναι, συνετοὺς δὲ τινὰς καὶ νομοθέτικους. The descriptive words may well be the source of the Plutarchean formulation. The wisdom abnegated by Dicaearchus from the Wise Men of old is meant, of course, in the classical, philosophical sense). Herodotus reports as a general view that the Athenians are collectively as citizens first among the Greeks in wisdom, in that life-prudence of intelligent dexterity in practical matters (I, 60, 3). This sense of wisdom involves naturally a negative hue as well, that of dexterous machination in achieving a desired result, of cunning and craft (cf. e.g. Herodotus VII, 23; I, 68; al.).

Equally objective and a-moral (in the modern sense) is the primary signification of φρονεῖν, φρόνησις. In fact, the meaning-field of this word is articulated analogously to that of σοφία, σοφός. From a more general sense of understanding, comprehending, grasping, the expression is particularly appropriated to signify such intelligence in practical matters and affairs of life. To understand correctly the real nature of any situation in all its dimensions secures of itself the right attitude and the correct response to it. Thus such discerning excellence is the greatest virtue, Heracleitus 22B112 DK: τὸ φρονεῖν (with Diels, against Kranz, Marcovich et al.) ἀρετή μεγίστη, καὶ σοφία ἀλήθεια λέγει καὶ ποιεῖν κατὰ φύσιν ἐπαίνοντας. It is the highest possession of man, Sophocles Antigone, 683: πάτερ, θεοὶ φύσιν ανθρώπων φρένας, / πάντων ὡς' ἐστὶ κτημάτων υπέρτατον. Cf. Aeschylus, Agamemnon, 927; Isocrates, Ad Demonicum, (I), §40. It occupies naturally the first place in the ordering of the four general virtues effectuated in Laws, A, 631c; in fact here the three other virtues, as goods, involve phronesis. And so Epicurus, Ep. Ad Menoeceum, 132: τοιῶν δὲ πάντων ἀρχή καὶ τὸ μέγιστον ἀγαθὸν φρόνησις. διὸ καὶ φιλοσοφίας τιμωτέρων ὑπάρχει φρόνησις, ἐξ' ἢς αἱ λοιπαὶ πᾶσαι περίφημαι ἀρεταί etc. The idea is methodically applied by Plutarch, in such a way that virtue other than phronesis is just phronesis in a specified field of situations and corresponding responses (passions and actions): De Fortuna, 2, 97E: ...μαλλόν δὲ τὴν ευβουλίαν γέ τοι καὶ φρόνησιν εἰ μὲν ἢδονας ἀγαθοῖς παρεχομένην ἐγκράτειαν καὶ σωφροσύνην καλούμεν, ἐν δὲ κινδύνους καὶ πόνους καρτηρίαν καὶ ἀνθρακαθίαν, ἐν δὲ κινονήμασι καὶ πολιτείαις εὐνομίαν καὶ δικαιοσύνην. Cf. Plato, Symposium, 209a, where wisdom in the ordering of affairs of state is said to be called σωφροσύνη καὶ δικαιοσύνη: τῆς φρονήσεως ἢ περὶ τὰ τῶν πόλεων τε καὶ οἰκίσεων διακόσμησις, ἢ δὲ ὅνομα ἐστὶ σωφροσύνη τε καὶ δικαιοσύνην.

It was part of the common ancient Greek experience of life that the excellence of the thinking part of the human soul is the key to the right life. And naturally so, since the twin summit of divine perfection for man consists in corporeal and mental excellence. Cf. Α.Λ. Πιερής, Περὶ Τῆλος, 1996, pp. 28-32. For a Platonic instance of the idea, cf. Republic, E, 461a, ἀκμὴ σοφίας καὶ φρόνησεως.

It was equally constitutive of the common world-view that excellence IS functional. Virtues are profitable. (Here the point raised by Heather Reid in the discussion may yet again be approached from a complementary angle; cf. n. 14; cf. also nn. 19, 27 and 48). Τὸ συμφέρον is contained in the definition of moral wisdom in the above referred to passage, Republic, 442c5-8; given the essential usefulness and advantageousness of goodness, the same point is involved in the definition of political wisdom, ibid. 428c11 sqq. (ὄντινα πρῶτον... ἄραιτα ὄμοιοι). It was a Socratic tenet that to exercise phronesis entails teaching τὰ συμφέροντα; Xenophon, Memorabilia, I, 20, 10: ἐγὼ δ' ὁμία τοὺς φρόνησιν ἀσκοῦντας καὶ νομίζοντας ἰκανοὺς εἶναι τὰ συμφέροντα διδάσκειν τοὺς πολιτάς etc. Lack of (practical) wisdom is bad, i.e. it harms. Sophocles, Antigone, 1050-1: ὅσω κράτιστον κτημάτων εὐθυμία. / ὡσπέρ, ὁμία, μὴ φρονεῖν πλείοστη βλαβή. And v. the gnomic finale, 1353: πολλῷ τὸ φρονεῖν εὐδαιμονίας πρῶτον ὑπάρχει. Wisdom is crucial for well-being.
The pragmatic nature of ancient Greek aretology is conspicuous in poetic texts. Pindar, *Nemea*, III, 70-5, speaks of three virtues corresponding to the three age-periods: youth – manhood – old age; but there are four excellences for our life-span, and the root of them (and fourth) is wisdom in apprehending what lies in front, at present and in immediate presence:

ἐν δὲ πείρᾳ τέλος
diaphainetai ὄν τις ἐξοχώτερος γένηται,
ἐν παιία νέοις παις, ἐν ἀνδράσιν ἀνήρ, τρίτον
ἐν παλαιότητοι, μέρος ἕκαστον ἰόν ἔχομεν
βρότεοι ἔθνος; ἐλά δὲ καὶ τέταρτος ἀρετάς
<δ> θνατὸς αἰών, ορονεῖν δ' ἐνέπει τὸ παρκείμενον.

It may be that the three virtues of the three ages are temperance – manly valour – justice, to which phronesis is added, not particularly characteristic of, or confined to, any given age; this seems to have been Aristarchus’ interpretation (v. Scholia Vetera in Pindari Carmina, 129a, vol. III, p. 60.7 sqq. Drachmann). Cf. Christ ad loc., who makes the correspondence; Bury, *The Nemean Odes of Pindar*, p. 42; Bowra, *Pindar*, pp. 179-181. In any case, as Bowra following Woodbury well observes, the four classical moral virtues appear in *Isthmia*, 8, 23-25a (Snell) in relation to the excellences of Leacus and his offspring; he δαμόνεσις δίκας ἐπείραν (which is δικαιοσύνη), while his sons ἀρίστευον... ἀνρέα (i.e. ἀνδρεία), and σωφρόνες τ' ἐγένοντο πινοτε τε θυμόν (σοφοσύνη and σοφία). However this may be, ὀρονεῖν τὸ παρκείμενον is revealing. Intellectual wisdom is tested and proven by its penetrating apprehension and sound judgement regarding the particular, present situation. The right attitude, disposition and response are then evident.

The same pragmatic spirit is also manifested in Theognis. Σοφία is coupled with ἀρετή in 790 as the supreme object of human care. But the properly adapted, prudent response to a particular situation, guided by an accurate understanding of its specific character, is mightier than the (other) virtues; 1071-4:

Κύριε, φίλους πρὸς πάντας ἐπίστρεφε ποικιλον ἦθος
συμμίσγων ὄργην οἰος ἐκαστος ἐφιν.

We are close to an aristocratic, divine *occasionalism* – which the uninitiated will condemn as opportunism. Cf. St. Paul 1 Cor. 9.19-22).

The point is emphasized by Aeschylus, Fr. 390: ὁ χρῆσιν ἐίδως, οὐχ ὁ πόλλα ἐίδως σοφός.

[45] (Political) Valour is a sort of salvation (*Republic*, Δ, 429c5: σωτηρίαν ἔγωγ', εἴπον, λέγο τινα εἶναι τήν ἀνδρείαν); namely salvation of the right belief (ὀρθὴ δόξα), concerning things terrible (ἀδινῶν), in all circumstances and vicissitudes when the individual is found and tested among pains and pleasures and desires and fears (429c-d2). And so generally (430b2-4): τήν δὴ τοιαύτην δύναμιν καὶ σωτηρίαν διὰ παντός δόξης ὀρθῆς τε καὶ νομίμου δεινῶν τε πέρι καὶ μή ἁγιαίον ἔγὼγε καλῶ καὶ τίθημαι.

Correspondingly for the valour in each individual, it is the power of keeping unswervingly to, i.e. saving, whatever course fearful or not the reason judges and commands in the midst of any pains and pleasures. It represents the perfect state of the natural function of the θυμωνιώσεις (the spirited faculty in the soul).

Valour is therefore the proper excellence of the relevant class in society or of the relevant part of soul. When the class or the part is in such condition, *they are fit to perform their proper work*. This involves right apprehension and right attitude regarding things fearful; and the fitness also consists in the power to persevere in that judgement and response whatever the rest of the society or the rest of the soul feels. This *justified* (reasonable) *obstinance and*
unyieldiness is for the best of the entire state and the entire soul as well as for the benefit of the principal parts of them: they are saved through it. Such is the required furtherance of the analysis, as intimated by Plato (430c-4-6).

The saving function of valour as manly spiritedness is thoroughly Homeric. Questions of honour relate exactly to the touchiness and unyieldiness of such spiritedness and to the acute awareness of merit involved in carrying out the plans of wisdom in the midst of the adversion which they generate.

[46] The philosophically adequate definition of σωφροσύνη vis-à-vis δικαιοσύνη in Plato is notoriously a thorny subject. Cf. e.g. Adam’s notes in Republic 430d sqq. and 433b9. The crux of the matter consists in that, as soon as we ascend from the popular views on temperament and justice to a more precise understanding of their essential character, the two appear to coalesce. For they both seem to ultimately signify the natural harmony of the parts in a given whole, whereby these parts function in accordance to their own respective natures and, in so doing, uphold the existence and excellence of the whole. Such a harmony renders the self-interested (so to speak) operation of the several parts into an orderly collaboration sustaining and promoting the being, power and activity of the whole. In such harmony and order reside both temperament (cf. Republic, Δ, 430e6 sqq.; 431e8; 432a) and justice (cf. ibid, Α, 351d5 sqq.); justice is like a blending of the other three virtues, Laws, Α, 631c7-8; v. esp. Republic, Δ, 443d-e). No great wonder that the definition of justice in the Republic, Δ, as οἰκειοστραγία (doing one’s own, or minding one’s one business) is (as Heather Reid was quick to observe in the discussion) applied to temperament in Charmides, 161b sqq. (where there follows a Socratic-critical examination of the thesis). The view is ascribed proximately to Critias, who, in defence of it, interprets its real meaning as identifying temperament with self-knowledge (γνώσισις ἰατρόν) in accordance with the old gnomic statement of the wise men and the Delphic injunction γνῶθι σαυτόν (164d-165b). The interpretation is adhered to in Timæus, 72a: ἀλλ’ εὐ καὶ πάλαι λέγεται τὸ πράττειν καὶ γνώναι τὰ τε αὐτῶν καὶ έαυτόν σωφρονὶ μόνω προσήκειν. It is an idea of old (πάλαι), cultivated in sophistical (Κριτίων ἢ ἄλλου τῶν σοφῶν, Charmides, 161b8) and philosophical circles. Adam’s suggestion to resolve this conundrum is plausible, that in Republic 433a9 we should read σωφροσύνη in place of δικαιοσύνη: the view that δικαιοσύνη is οἰκειοστραγία is novel, and will be argued in the sequel, whereas the one associating self-functioning with σωφροσύνη is old and has been actually examined by Plato before: καὶ μὴν ό γε τὰ τοῦ αὐτοῦ πράττειν καὶ μή παλαπαραγόμενοι σωφρότητι ἔστι, καὶ τοῦτο ἄλλος τε πολλόν ἀρχαίας καὶ αὐτόι πολλακες εἰρήκαμεν. Then follows the reasoning in favour of justice consisting in such οἰκειοστραγία. On the other hand the essential connection of justice with οἰκειοστραγία is present in Alcibiades A, 127c5-6.

The harmonious order in a whole makes every part exercising so much authority as its being, power, function and merit deserve and as its contribution to the well-being of the whole entitles it to, is the foundation of σωφροσύνη. Σωφροσύνη is such a concord distributing authority according to the substantial roles. Republic, Δ, 432a6 sqq.: ὅστε ὀρθότατ’ ἂν φαίμεν ταύτην τὴν ὀμοίωσιν σωφροσύνην εἶναι, χειρόνος τε καὶ αμείνονοι κατά φύσιν συμφωνών ύπόπτερον δεί σῶμεν καὶ ἐν πόλει καὶ ἐν ἔνι ἔκαστῳ. And, 442c10 sqq.: σωφρόνοι οὐ τῇ φύσει καὶ συμφωνία τῇ αὐτῶν τούτων (sc. of the parts of the soul), ὅταν τὸ τε ἄρχον καὶ τὸ ἀρχομένον τὸ λογιστικὸν ὁμοδεξώσι δεῖν ἄρχειν καὶ μὴ στασιάζωσιν αὐτῶν;

The active cause of such concord and congruence is οἰκειοστραγία. When each part of a whole performs the function for which it is by nature adapted to, there is harmonious order in the whole; the thinking part will understand things and direct actions; the spirited part will subserve sound judgement and thoughtful command. In other words, if there is justice,
there will be temperance and phronesis and valour. Justice is that which enables the other virtues to take hold of their proper subjects and work their proper effects, in the state as in the soul (433b-d). V. esp. 433b9-c1: τούτο εἶναι (sc. the remaining fourth virtue, justice), ὁ πάσιν ἐκείνοις (the three other virtues) τὴν δύναμιν παρέσχεν ὡστε ἐγγενεύθαι, καὶ ἐγγενομένος γε σωτηρίαν παρέχειν, ἐστερω ἀν ἐνη. And, clearly, 433b4-7: πολὺς γε ἐδοξῶν εἶναι δυκαία ὅτε ἐν αὐτῇ τριτὰ γένη φύσεων (the three fundamental classes) ἐνόπλα το αὐτῶν ἐκαστὸν ἐπάρτη, σωφρόν πε ἀκο καὶ ἀνδρεία καὶ σοφὴ διὰ τῶν αὐτῶν τοιῶν γένον ἀλλ’ ἄττα παθὴ καὶ ἔξεις. So σωφρόν is the state when all classes mutually agree on their respective roles in the power-structure; ἀνδρεία when the military class upholds the ruling of the rulers; σοφὴ if the rulers possess real knowledge of things and situations. How this crucial role of justice in establishing the harmony of parts (σωφρόσυνη) and their respective perfect functioning (φονήσεως, ἀνδρεία) can be envisaged, is described in 443c9-444a2. The unity of the virtues has been vindicated in a legitimate way, as necessary co-existence and co-implication.

The theory in the Δ of the Republic explains the difficulty (and provides its resolution) in extricating the closely related philosophical concepts of temperance and justice one from the other (Strabo, VII, 3, 4, observed this philosophical near coincidence of the two, but for a particular and derivative reason). Their close interrelationship is explicated in 442c10-444a2. Justice consists in every part of the human whole doing properly its own according to its nature, in connection with ruling and being ruled (443b1-2); the analogy to the health of the body makes this evident (444c5-d11). Temperance expresses the state of harmonious friendship and orderly agreement which obtains when that mutual οἰκειοστραγγία is established (442c10-11). Cf. 443c9-444a2: making the parts do their own proper and natural work, ipso facto establishes their harmony, their fitting together and adaptation, which is precisely their temperance (tempered blending).

The old wise dictum, sanctioned by the authority of the Delphic Oracle, the Γνώθι σαυτόν, was thought to convey essentially the perennial maxim: know your position in the World-order and act in accordance with it. To know one’s own place in the general scheme of things as well as in the conjunction present at any moment of life, and therefore to act consonantly to the pattern of relationships really holding in any given situation, provided for the archaic mind the unified foundation of virtue in man and of the goodness of his action. No officious deontological imperative, whether empirical, divine or transcendental, as normative regulation of will, plays any role in this naturalistic and existentialist ethics.

[47] The discussion on justice in Republic, Δ, opens with an explicit invocation of the general Principle of the Division of Function and Work (433a; v. in extenso n. 5). The validity of this ontological principle provides the foundation of the moral virtue. What is a fact of reality is also an ethical value. Justice is somehow to τα αὐτῶν πράττειν (433b4). More elaborately in 433e12-434a1: ἡ τοῦ οἰκείου τε καὶ ἐστών ἐξεις τε καὶ πραξις δικαιοσύνη ἀν ὀμολογοῦται. This holds good in all applications. Specifically, with reference to the three basic social classes, 434c; 441d8-10. With reference to professional classes, 443c4-7. (In fact this οἰκειοστραγγία in the division of labour is a derivative result from the basic οἰκειοστραγγία in relation to appropriateness in ruling and being ruled, 443b-c). With reference to the parts of human soul, 441d12-e2; 443b; 443c9 sqq. Conversely the πολιτικὸς πολιτέας and ἀλλοτριοστραγγίσθη (the meddling in several types of activity and the involvement in another’s business) of the parts of the soul constitute all four main vices and badness in general (444b). Similarly in unnatural meddling between different classes, professional and political, the result is disaster (434a3-c2).

The crux of the matter is that, for Plato, by doing one’s own, in self-interested perfection and achievement, each part of a whole helps best the whole achieve the highest level of perfection, and
therefore helps best the other parts as well. I have expounded the thesis in the paper of mine mentioned in n. 38. Cf. also n. 49.

It may appear that such rigid, monovocational professionalism underestimates the significance and usefulness of flexibility in one’s attachment to his occupation. In fact, high adaptivity to the market differential demand for different kinds of work seems to be considered a very strong asset on the supply side of labour, services and products. Individuals should be prepared, ready and able to change careers in case of failure or dissatisfaction; and corporate entities ought to reorientate their conceptions, tasks and plans according to market requirements and open-field profit maximization. The factors of economy are asked to be volatile.

The contrast is only apparent. Platonic unioccupationism is based on the factual principle that any entity is by nature best suited to perform mot successfully one singular task (Cf. n. 5 supra). What the task is in any given case and how the existing natural suitability is discovered, tested and confirmed, is a different matter. For Plato this would be settled relatively quickly under a demanding and varied educational unsystematic “system” of apprenticeship and learning, with full emphasis on individual choice; or at most under the severe pressure of an almost totally unregulated antagonistic practice in the very early phases of whatever career. In both cases, achievement and success would normally be the decisive criterion – as is the case at present. The diachronic experience is that one needs all the power and energy he can command to really be perfected and excel in any work (esp. significant work, but even basic labour falls under this description, although such devotion in this case is not economically significant). After all no one wants to exchange a success story for a novel experiment, unless (a) one is effectively challenged in his primacy and cannot uphold it; or (b) wants to prove a point: that his qualifications and accomplishments raise him above the particular performance and his proven success in it. Vocational change implies either (relative) failure or excessive success; to be forced in, or consider and embark on such, a course one is either underqualified and underperforming or overqualified and overperforming.

Such conditions and that change used to be rare. The determination regarding the proper adaptation of any individual to an occupation was taking place pretty early in his life, and it was mostly correct.

The principle of occupational volatility signals the increasing frequency of such phenomena of vocational change. This means two things: 1) The growing multiplicity of required tasks and the heightening intricacy of the work-structure renders impracticable the one-to-one correspondence between appropriate training and specific employment. More and more, the particular training for the job and the checking as to the ability of the trainee to absorb it efficiently, must be done while he is in actual work (and indeed sufficiently progressed in it). Hence the possibility of change must be left wide open. And 2) less than optimal performance is not sufficient any more, and has to be discarded, in a society geared to excellence and supremacy; the limits of variation around the acute resonance in perfection and success, are contracting; simultaneously, the variety and complexity of the work-pattern required, makes feasible the idea of allocating the human resources so that most will perform optimally (i.e. within the narrow band) in their respective, appropriate jobs, - thereby maximizing the total effect. This optimal distribution-pattern of men versus tasks requires for its realization rapidity of re-allocations.

All this is thoroughly Platonic. Plato explicitly endorsed the principle of maximal total effect (cf. in the main text, supra). The principle of flexibility and volatility, on the other hand, presupposes the principle of one-to-one correspondence between entities and optimal individual performances. The idea of optimal allocation of tasks to people (securing thus maximal total effect) is close to his heart. In fact, the notion of overqualification (in the sense
defined above), is a direct Platonic progeny: there exists higher-order competence which enables man to overperform in various lower-order pursuits. Ultimately such competence is based on Philosophy – as (general) Theory of Reality, and not, in particular, as (analytical) conceptualism, existentialism or (Marxian) dialecticism. There is, on the other hand, unclarity in the contemporary context as to what constitutes the foundation of a “general skillfulness”, i.e. of an adroitness in handling skillfully various differing, even divergent, specific kinds of task. In significant particular, one leaves the question of leadership (and of the corresponding expertness) in virtually a theoretical vacuum, with only little more than a purely experiential status (rules of thumb etc.). But this renders e.g. statesmanship even less of an art than Art, merely tantamount to a mere knack. For Plato, on the contrary, leadership is a science, in fact the supreme science of Philosophy. (Such Philosophy is a very definite type, apt to represent adequately the structure of reality. Since this latter is Pythagorean, the former is (Platonic) Dialectics of Mathematics). There is thus a science of general competences, as well as an education for them. They rest on teachable knowledge.

[48] Plato goes to the extent of assimilating them to bodily excellences cultivated by habit and exercise (cf. Phaedo, 82a10-b3). The locus classicus in the de-moralisation of virtues, and their concomitant intellectualization, is Republic, Z, 518d9 sqq.: αι μεν τοινυν αλλα άρεται καλούμεναι ψυχής κανθανατίσθησαι ἢγες τι εἰναι τῶν τῶν σώματος — τῷ οίνῳ γάρ οὐκ ἐνοικία πρότερον ύστερον ἐμποιεῖσθαι ἔθεσι καὶ ασκήσειν -. κε δε του φρονήματι παντός μάλλον θειότερον τινός τυγχάνει, ὡς οὐκετί, οὐδείς, δή τιν τοῦ δύναμιν οὐδέποτε ἀπόλλυσιν, ὑπὸ δὲ τῆς περιαγωγῆς χρησίμων τε καὶ ἀφέλημον καὶ ἀχήροτον αὐτί καὶ ἐλεφαντίζον γίγνεται, ή οὕτω ἐννενόκτης τῶν λεγομένων πονηρῶν μὲν, σοφοῦν δὲ, ὡς ὅμων μὲν βλέπει τὸ ψυχαίριον καὶ ἄλεξαν διορα ταύτα εὕρη τέτρατται, ὡς οὐ φαύλην ἔχον τῆν ὀψιν, κακία δ’ ἡναγκαιομένην ὑπηρετεῖν, ὡστε οὐθ’ ἀν ἐξύπερον βλέπῃ, τοσοῦτο πλεῖω κακά ἐργαζόμενον;

The moral (or political, cf. Phaedo loc.cit.) virtues fall under the formal description of virtue in Meno, 72a: καθ’ ἐκάστην γὰρ τῶν πράξεων καὶ τῶν ἡλικιῶν πρός ἐκαστὸν ἔργον ἐκάστοτε ἡμῶν ἀρετή ἐστιν. It needs to be added that there is a consummate skill or excellence which constitutes an ἀρετή in a given field of action and work. Heather Reid appropriately questioned in the discussion, whether by the side of expertises in particular technai there does not exist for Plato a kind of arete (moral virtue) that everyone should strive for.

Such view on the universality of moral virtue is indeed ascribed by Plato to Protagoras in the dialogue under his name. The ἐνέχυος σοφία is there distinguished and contrasted to the πολιτική περὶ βίου (321d sqq.). Zeus ordained that practical wisdom be allotted to all men, and this is the rationale for the Athenian democratic practice: moral ἀρετή pertains to all, and so all may participate in discussions involving political issues, whereas only the specialists are heard in technical problems requiring specialized knowledge (322c-323c).

This however is the Sophistical position on liberal or political arts and knowledge on the one hand, and special sciences and artisanships to the other – and definitely not the Platonic. The universality of moral virtue is severely qualified in Plato, for two main reasons, so that there is little more than a trivial tautology that remains in it.

First, real eminence in handling e.g. dangerous situations belongs to the professional military; or to those whose spirited part of the soul (θυμός) has the power to ensure the inflexible following of the dictates of reason. All spiritedness has the tendency to withstand the onslaught on what is thought to be inviolable (e.g. honour); but this does not mean that every spiritedness is valour.

Second, true moral excellence presupposes not merely the ordinary excellence of the λογιστικῶν, but the turning around (περιαγωγή), the fundamental conversion of the mind
from the world of becoming to the world of true being and its ultimate principle (Idea of Goodness, the μέγιστον μαθήμα, 505a2). In fact complete virtue presupposes possession of the supreme science of Dialectical Mathematics. To establish this is the object of the required μακροτέρα περίοδος in the accurate analysis of virtues (Republic, ΣΤ, 504a sqq.). The αικρηβεστέρα παύει (Laws, IB, 965b1) indispensable in the possession of virtue (965d5-62), is the knowledge reserved for the members of the Nocturnal Council, which is densely indicated in 967d3-968a4. (Cf. my analysis in the paper referred to in n. 29).

The universality of ἄρετη is thoroughly un-Platonic. In the very same dialogue where the Sophistical position is developed (Protagoras’ myth and λόγος), Socrates replies denying it, through an elaborate interpretation of a Simonidean poem (Simonides 37 = 542 Page = 5 Bergk = 4 Diehl). The upshot of the long analysis (the final, decisive, part in Protagoras, 342a-347a) is that, according to Simonides, for a man to become good is difficult (ανδρὶ ἀγαθὸν μὲν ἀλαθέως γενέσθαι χαλεπῶν), but to be good stably and permanently, is impossible (344b-c).

What is (and cannot be otherwise) far from universal as actual possession, should be, on the other hand, universal as an object of striving after, of cultivation and education. The reason for this universality of endeavour is the “universality” of (moral) virtue in another sense. The difference between the excellence in which (moral) virtue consists and other excellencies lies in that the former is pervasive, i.e. relevant more or less and directly or indirectly to all relations, concerns and junctures of life; whereas the excellencies of other skills regard special interests and applications. This “universality” of (moral) virtues is an objective universality of usefulness. Thus, for example, political wisdom differs from the wisdom of any other craft in that it has as object not some particular part, function or activity and work in the state, but the entire state itself, in all its internal and external dispositions and relationships, with a view to their optimization: Republic, Δ, 428b-d, esp. 428c11-d2: ἐστὶ τις ἐπιστήμη (in the best state) ἢ οὐ ὑπὲρ τῶν ἐν τῇ πόλει τινὸς βουλεύεται, ἀλλ’ ὑπὲρ αὑτῆς ὀλίγης, ὀντινα τρόπον αὐτὴ τε πρὸς αὐτὴν καὶ πρὸς τὰς ἄλλας πόλεις ἀρωτα ὁμιλεῖ. But the pervasiveness precisely of operation of these virtue-excellences, as it is founded on the perfection of basic soul-parts and faculties (and their co-implication), minimizes the number of those fit to reach them. So the universality of usefulness entails minimality of participation. And this is expressly noticed by Plato, 428d11-429a3, esp. e7 sqq.: τὸ συμπρόκτα ὀρα ἔθνει καὶ μερεὶ ἐαυτῆς καὶ τῇ ἐν τούτῳ ἐπιστήμῃ, τῷ προεστοσὶ καὶ ἀρχοντι, ὑπὸ σοφὴ ἐν εἰς κατὰ φόρον αἰκρηβεσία πόλει· καὶ τούτῳ, ὡς ἐστὶ, φύσει ἀληθιον γίνεται γένος, ᾧ προσήκει ταύτης τῆς ἐπιστήμης μεταλαχάγαιεν, ἦν μόνον δεὶ τῶν ἄλλων ἐπιστημών σοφίαν καλείσθαι.

On the other hand the very fundamentality and pervasiveness of (moral) excellences makes them more powerful factors of human well-being. As it was well brought out by Heather Reid in the discussion, achievement in a particular techne is not enough for fulfillment. However, not even (moral) virtues as such (unillumined by the direct vision of Goodness and the supreme knowledge of the Principles of Being) are enough for complete well-being; thus a moral character is not sufficient either. A moral character is one skilled to perform appropriately in all situations of life, esp. in situations a) calling for strong insight (φρονητικοί), b) of danger (ἀνδρεῖα), c) of rendering everyone’s own to him (δικαιοσύνη), and d) of correct placement and disposition regarding ruling and being ruled (σωφροσύνη).

Plato, in the above quoted crucial passage, exempts phronesis from his description of the other virtues called ones of soul (αἱ ἄλλαι ἄρεται καλοῦμεναι ψυχῆς) which makes them akin to bodily dexterities cultivated by drill and exercises. Phronesis belongs to the divinest part of soul, the thinking faculty (λογιστικῶν). The crux of the problem lies in the fact that, the perfection of the mental part of the soul cannot be separated from its possession of the supreme science of reality. The excellence of thought consists precisely in the perfect knowledge of
being, of the causal concatenation of reality and, in the end, of the ultimate grounds and
principles of existence. Without such perfect knowledge there cannot be perfection of mind.
Without such perfection, phronesis can at best be a skill by the side of the others. Just as
there is no real, deep, understanding of this world without knowledge of the World of Ideas
and of their Principles, but only (at most true) belief. Virtues as high-skill conditions of the
parts of soul correspond to such a system of (nonstably) true beliefs.

Plato’s further point in the initial passage is that thought being essentially divine, mind (τὸ
λογιστικὸν), even bereft of the ultimate knowledge of reality, can display a certain proper
“perfection” of its own: then there is a sort of crooked wisdom (τῶν λεγαμένων πονηρῶν
μὲν, σοφῶν δὲ), with an acute (ὁξεῖος διορίξει) and penetrating (δριμὺ βλέπει) vision of
reality, since vision itself is not impaired: it cannot, as mind is in essence divine.

What is missing in such a state is not any “moral character”, but supreme knowledge, or at least
the fundamental turning round (περιαγωγή) which sets effectively the soul into and along
the road towards supreme knowledge. Habitual skills (moral virtues) cannot prevent a powerful
mind from working havoc for lack of direction. The power of νοῦς thrives as useful and beneficial
if its vision is fixed on the first Principle of Being. The realization of the crucial περιαγωγή is
the real business of higher education. The way is through the supreme science, Dialectical
Mathematics, for Plato. When the ανυπόθετον has been reached and perfect knowledge of
reality established, the complete excellence of the mind has been achieved, and full-blown
wisdom is operating. Since Goodness is the ultimate, first Principle of Reality, understanding
it entails the power of rendering the function of all psychic excellences (thinking well, being
spirited well, feeling well, being well disposed, acting well) useful and beneficial. Republic,
ΣΤ, 505a: ἐπεὶ ὅτι γε ἡ τοῦ ἄγαθοῦ ἴδεα μέγιστον μάθημα, πολλάκις αἰκήσεις, ἡ δὲ καὶ
dίκαια καὶ τάλα προσχρησάμενα χρήσιμα καὶ ὠφελίμα γίγνεται. There is no profit in
knowing or possessing anything without the good, which for man is knowing the Idea of
Goodness, first Principle of Reality; 505a5 sqq. εἴ δὲ μὴ ἴσην (sc. the idea of Goodness), ἄνευ
δὲ ταύτης εἰ ὁ μάλιστα τάλα ἐπισταμένη, οἰοῦ ὅτι οὐδὲν ἡμῖν ὀφέλος, ὡσπερ οὐδὲ εἶ
κεκτήμεθα τι ἄνευ τοῦ ἄγαθοῦ. As is made clear from what follows, the reason for this power
of goodness is not moral, but purely metaphysical. It is the fact that the Idea of Goodness is cause
of the existence and being of all reality and of the knowledge in the knowing mind as well as
of the knowledgenability of, and in, the object known. 508e1 sqq.: τοῦτο τοινῦν τὸ τὴν
ἀλήθειαν παρέχον τοῖς γιγνωσκόμενοις καὶ τῷ γιγνώσκοντι τὴν δύναμιν ἀποδοθὴν τὴν
tοῦ ἄγαθοῦ ἴδεαν φαθί εἶναι ἐὰν ἐκτὸς πρὸς τὸν άγαθοῦ ἴδεαν, πολλάκις αἰκήσεως, ἡ δὲ καὶ
tό εἶναι τὰ καὶ τὴν οὕσια ὑπ’ ἐκείνων αὐτῶν προσείναι, οὐκ οὕσια ὑπὸς τοῦ ἄγαθοῦ, ἀλλ’ ἐὰν ἐπεκέναι τῆς οὕσιας
προσεία καὶ δύναμις ὑπὲρέχοντος. In fact there is a deeper analysis than this (suggested in
the central section of the Republic), which depends on the doctrine that Goodness is really
Oneness, which doctrine also the dynamism of being is grounded on.

In the absolute knowledge established by the Theory of Reality and of its ultimate Principles
finds its justification the constant Socratic preoccupation (shared and finally illuminated and
secured by Plato), that virtue is fundamentally knowledge.

E.g. in Euthydemus, the goodness of all goods is argued to reside in phronesis and wisdom
(278e-282a). Thus 281b4-6: ἂρ’ σὺν ὧ πρὸς Διὸς, ἢν δ’ ἐγὼ, ὅψεσίς τι τῶν ἄλλων
κτημάτων ἄνευ προσήκεισις καὶ σοφίας; (Negative answer). In fact only wisdom is good in
itself, the other common goods are really neutral (δ6-e5). The purpose in life is to become as
wiser as possible (282a5-6). It was part of the classical experience, shared by the Sophistical
movement as well as by Plato, that knowledge is the most powerful human attainment, wisdom
or science being unconquerable and sufficient by itself to direct and help man in all
vicissitudes of life. Protagoras, 352b-c, esp. d1: αἰσχρὸν ἔστι καὶ ἐμοὶ (Protagoras is speaking)
The roots of ancient Greek Intellectualism were deep: they were reaching the rich earth of ancient Greek objectivism. Everything depends on how things are. Things human are part of this nexus of reality. To understand reality is to somehow identify with it.

The de-moralization and intellectualization of ethical virtues proceeded in two stages for Plato. We may observe the process in the case of valour. There is an animal and servile observance of what is the right course in situations of danger (regarding things fearsome and not), observance inculcated without education and culture, without regard to customs and traditions; this is not worthy of the name of ἀνδρεία, even if it involves the correct opinion as to the nature of the occasion and the right course of action to be adopted. The power to stably uphold and sustain the correct and lawful (i.e. consonant to the general norm of society in this respect given the cultural and civilizational milieu) opinion in such matters is valour. *Republic*, Δ, 430b2 sqq.: τὴν δὴ τουσίτην δύναμιν καὶ σωτηρίαν διὰ παντὸς δόξης ὀρθῆς τε καὶ νομίμου δεινόν τε πειρὶ καὶ μὴ ἀνδρείαν ἔγνω καλῶ καὶ τίθεμαι, ... - ... δικεῖς γὰρ μοι τὴν ὀρθὴν δόξαν περὶ τῶν αὐτῶν τοῦτων ἄνευ παιδείας γεγονούσιν, τὴν τε θηριώδη καὶ ἀνδραποδώδη, οὔτε πάνυ μόνιμον (so with Stobaeus, instead of mss. νόμιμον, as Adam adopted ad loc.) ἤγείσθαι, ἀλλὰ τέ ἢ ἀνδρείαις καλεῖν.

This is the first stage. And it already consists in the power to uphold the relevant right and “educated” belief.

In the same passage there Plato announces a second level (430c4 sqq.). The first state corresponds to a skill. Apprenthiens of the Idea of Goodness and all the science that this involves (or at least the περαγωγὴ which sets the mind on the right trek for their attainment), – as indicated in the locus classicus quoted at the beginning of this note – raises the skill to a different order, since now perfect wisdom has been established in the λογιστικόν and this absolutizes everything. *Now the intellectualization is complete.*

[49] The indissoluble association between virtue and goodness on the one hand and utility and profitability on the other (cf. *supra*, nn. 14, 19, 27) is nowhere perhaps more strikingly felt than in the Thrasymachean position that, in so far as perfectly thorough injustice is advantageous, it must be virtuous, wise and good; *Republic* A, 348b8-349a2; cf. 348c5 sqq.: Ὅσον τὴν μὲν δικαίουσιν ἀρέτην, τὴν δὲ ἀδίκιαν κακίαν; - Εἰκὸς γ’, ἐφι, ὡ ἠδετε, ἐπειδὴ γε καὶ λέγω ἀδίκιαν μὲν λαυτελεῖν, δικαίουσιν δ’ οὖ. - Αλλὰ τι μή; - Τουναντιὼν, ἢ δ’ ὀς. - Ἡ τὴν δικαίουσιν κακίαν; - ὅσο, ἀλλὰ πάνυ γενναιάν εὐθείαις. - Τὴν ἀδίκιαν ὅσα κακοκήθησαν καλεῖς; ὅσο, ἀλλὰ εὐφοιλιᾶν, ἐφι. And e2: ἐν ἀρετῆς καὶ σοφίας τίθεις μέτερε τὴν ἀδίκιαν, τὴν δὲ δικαίουσιν ἐν τοῖς ἐναντίοις.

Plato accepts the validity of the Thrasymachean inferential presupposition: he has to show that justice is more powerful and effective than injustice. This is the grand project of the *Republic*, pref igured in the argumentation that follows the above mentioned passage. The conceptual articulation of the underlying presupposition is given at the end of Book A, 352d7 sqq. For every thing (horse, eye, ear, tools, i.e. animals, organic parts, artifacts) there is a work which can be done either by this thing alone, or done best by it. 353a10: τοῦτο ἐκάστου εὐθεία ἂν ἔργον ἢ τί ἡ κάλλιστα τῶν ἄλλων ἀπεργάζηται (cf. 352e2-3). For every work done by a thing, there is an excellence (ἀρετή) also belonging to the thing. 353b2: οὐκόν καὶ
ἀρετὴ δοκεῖ σοι εἶναι ἕκαστῷ ὑπὲρ καὶ ἔργον τι προτέτακτα; The thing performs well its proper work when it possesses its proper excellence. 353c6: τῇ οίκείᾳ μὲν ἀρετῇ τὸ αὐτὸν ἔργον εῦ ἐργάσεται τὰ ἐργαζόμενα, κακία δὲ κακῶς. There is a thing, soul, and a work proper to it (like taking care, ruling, pondering judgements and decisions etc.) 353d3-7. All these functions and operations constitute the life of the soul; d9: τῷ δ’ αὐτῷ ζήν; ὦ ψυχῆς φήσομεν ἔργον εἶναι; There is also an ἀρετὴ of the soul (d11). Without its proper excellence, soul cannot perform well its proper functions (e1-2). But well-living is the well being of the soul, its blessedness and happiness; 354a1-2: ἀλλὰ μὴν ὅ γε ἐν ἔσον μακάριος τε καὶ εὐδαιμῶν, ὃ δὲ μὴ τάναντια. Hence the virtuous is the happy; a4: ὁ μὲν δίκαιος ἀρα εὐδαιμῶν, ὃ δ’ ἄδικος ἀθλιος. But it does not profit to be wretched (a6). Therefore in no way is injustice more advantageous than justice; a8: οὐδέποτε ἄρα, ὃ μακάριε Θρασύμαχε, λυστελεστέρον ἄδικα δικαιοσύνης. Q.E.D. The main body of the Republic puts real substance to this bare pattern of the master argument.

Excellence is always relative to use (functionality of excellence). Thus the best judge of the beauty of a thing is the thing’s user, not even the thing’s maker. Republic, I, 601d sqq.; esp. e7-602a1: τοῦ αὐτοῦ ἄρα σκέψους ὃ μὲν ποιητὴς πιστὶν ὄρθην ἔξει περὶ κάλλους τε καὶ ποιησίας, συνὸν τῷ εἰδώλι καὶ ἀναγκαζόμενος ἀκούειν παρὰ τοῦ εἰδότος, ὃ δὲ χρωμένος ἐπιστήμην.