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**Goodness and beauty in Plato**

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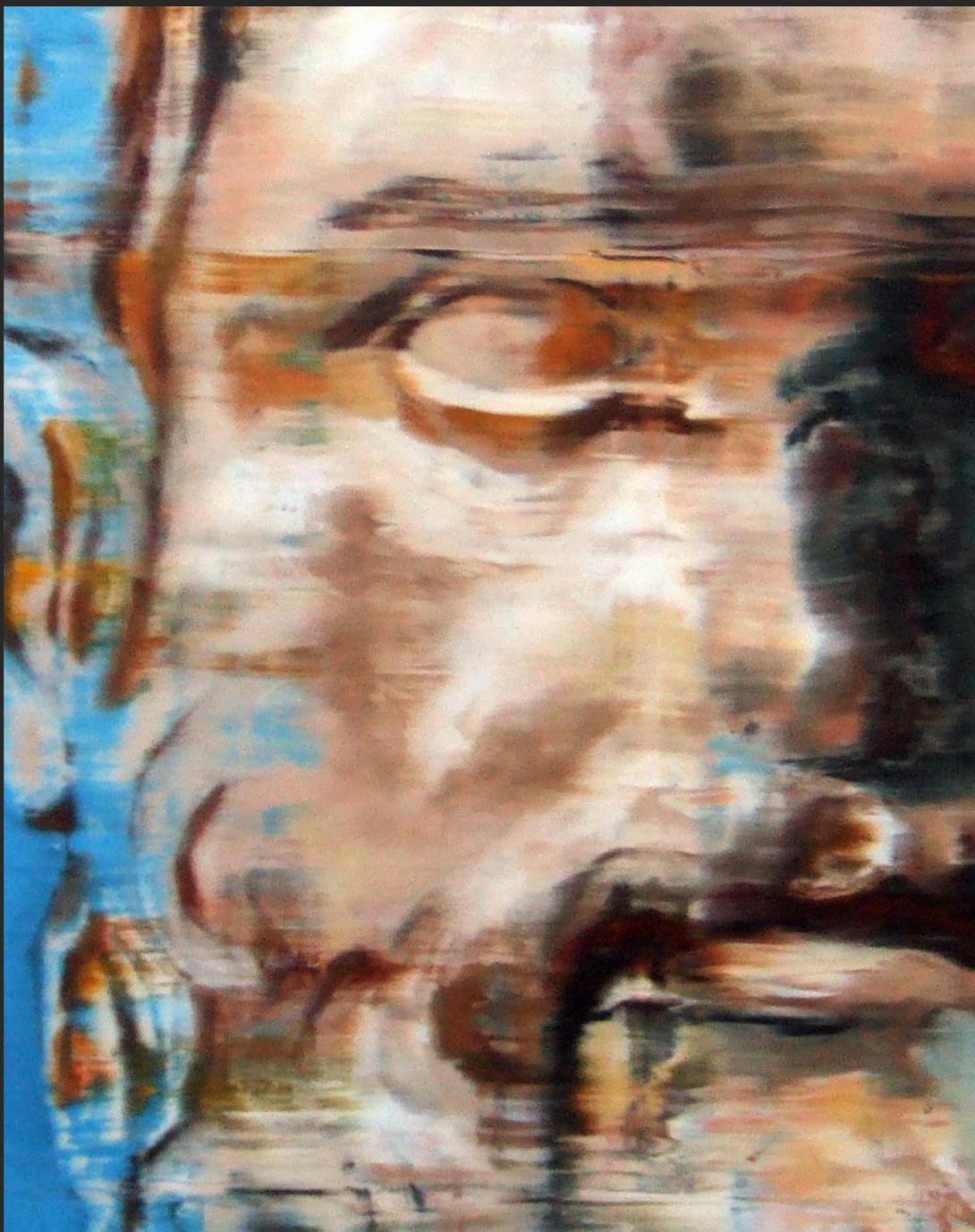
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# GOODNESS AND BEAUTY IN PLATO

Nicholas Riegel\*

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**ABSTRACT:** *In the first part of this paper I argue that beauty and goodness are at least coextensive for Plato. That means that at least with respect to concrete particulars, everything that is good is beautiful and everything that is beautiful is good. Though the good and the beautiful are coextensive, there is evidence that they are not identical. In the second part of the paper I show significance of this relation. In ethics it implies that the good is the right. It also allows one to see how platonists can believe that goodness exists in mathematics. And it explains the usefulness of mathematics in moral education.*

**KEYWORDS:** *Plato, beauty, goodness, coextension, mathematics*

**RESUMO:** *Na primeira parte deste artigo argumento que o belo e o bem são, pelo menos, coextensivos para Platão. Isso significa que, pelo menos no que diz respeito às características concretas, tudo o que é bom é belo, e tudo o que é belo, é bom. Embora o bem e o belo sejam coextensivos, há evidências de que não são idênticos. Na segunda parte do artigo, mostro o significado desta relação. Na ética implica que o bem é o correto. Permite também ver como é possível aos platônicos acreditar que exista bondade nas matemáticas. E isso explica o uso das matemáticas na educação moral.*

**PALAVRAS-CHAVE:** *Platão, beleza, bondade, co-extensividade, matemática*

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## 1. Introduction

In this paper I would like to explore the relation between goodness (*to agathon*) and beauty (*to kalon*) in Plato. In the first place it will be argued that the evidence suggests that at the very least Plato believed there was a biconditional relation between goodness and beauty. That is, everything that is beautiful is good and everything that is good is beautiful. However, the evidence concerning the relation between beauty and goodness almost always has to do with concrete particulars, as opposed to Forms. In other words, it is almost always the case that where Plato speaks about the relation between beauty and goodness he is speaking about concrete particulars, whether these be persons, actions, or other objects of the sensible world. Very little, if anything, is explicitly said about the relation between beauty and goodness in the intellectual realm, the realm of the Forms. There are only a few passages where Plato could be taken to be speaking about beauty and goodness in the intellectual realm, and even in these few passages it has to be argued that he is in fact referring to the Forms. Thus when I say that beauty and goodness are biconditionally related in Plato, this has to be taken as referring to the sensible realm of concrete

particulars. Of course, what we would perhaps most like to know is how beauty and goodness are related at the level of the Forms. In particular we would like to know whether there are two Forms or one, i.e. whether the Form of the Good is the same as the Form of the Beautiful. Unfortunately, Plato says next to nothing about this, and thus the most we can do is speculate about the relation of the Forms. In the final analysis, I will argue that the evidence suggests that there are two Forms, and that the Form of the Good is distinct from the Form of the Beautiful. However, it seems that this was not at all a major concern of Plato and that he was much more concerned to show the closeness, if not virtual identity, between beauty and goodness, than he was to explore the question concerning the identity or difference between their Forms.

But, having shown the biconditional relation between beauty and goodness in Plato, the question becomes, what are we to make of this? What are the consequences of this for Plato's thought? I want to argue that this fact has consequences for two areas of Plato's thought: ethics and mathematics. As it does for Aristotle, *to kalon* for Plato has above all to do with mathematics and mathematical concepts. The consequences of this for Plato's ethics turns out to be that goodness in ethics has to do with the instantiation of mathematical concepts such as measure and proportion. To be ethically good is to instantiate such things as equality, moderation, and due proportion in one's actions. On the other hand, the coextension of beauty and goodness resulted for Plato in the collocation of goodness in mathematics as well. Because beauty exists in mathematics, and everything that is beautiful is good for Plato, it seems he concluded that goodness exists in mathematics as well.

In this respect, as in so many others, it is instructive to compare Aristotle's views with those of Plato. At *Metaphysics M*, Aristotle explains his understanding of the relation between beauty and goodness. At 1078a31 he states,

*Now since the good and beautiful are different (for the former is always in action, while the beautiful is found also in motionless things), those who assert that*

*the mathematical sciences say nothing of the beautiful or the good are in error. For these sciences say and prove a very great deal about them; for it is not the case that if they do not name them but prove their results and accounts, that they do not speak about them. The chief forms of beauty are order, proportion, and definiteness, which the mathematical sciences demonstrate most of all. And since these (e.g. order and definiteness) are causes of many things, evidently they mean that such a cause as the beautiful is a cause in a way. But we shall speak more plainly elsewhere about these matters.*<sup>1</sup>

Setting aside many of the intriguing questions about this passage,<sup>2</sup> we can at least see that Aristotle clearly distinguishes the good from the beautiful. Goodness, he says here, always requires a context of action (*πραξις*). His point seems to be that some sort of desire and ability to achieve is implicit in the very concept of goodness. Thus where there is no desire or ability to achieve, it is inappropriate to apply the concept of goodness. In fact this is precisely how he criticizes the Platonic view that goodness exists in mathematics, in his *Eudemian Ethics*. In the context of an argument against the academic application of goodness to mathematics, Aristotle argues that there cannot be goodness in mathematics because mathematical objects cannot desire. At 1218a24-26, he states,

*And it is a bold way to demonstrate that unity is the good per se to say that numbers have desire; for no one says distinctly how they desire.*<sup>3</sup>

In this paper, then, I will argue that Plato and Aristotle had remarkably similar understandings of beauty (*to kalon*), but this passage from Aristotle shows that they differed in their understanding of goodness. For Aristotle goodness, as the final cause, always has to imply some sort of desire, but this seems not to have been true all the time for Plato.

## 2. The Translation of Kalos

Before beginning this investigation however, a word must be said about the vexed question of the correct translation of the Greek word *kalos*. *Kalos* is

1. All translations of Aristotle will be those found in Jonathan Barnes, ed. *The Complete Works of Aristotle: The Revised Oxford Translation* (Princeton: Princeton University, 1984). If a revision is necessary it will be marked 'rev.'

2. For instance, what is meant by the claim that the mathematical sciences "prove their results (*erga*) and accounts (*logoi*)?" And in what sense are order, proportion, and definiteness the "causes" of many things, and how does this make beauty a cause in a way? In what sense can beauty be thought of as a cause?

3. ROT. παράβολος δὲ καὶ ἡ ἀπόδειξις ὅτι τὸ ἐν αὐτὸ τὸ ἀγαθόν, ὅτι οἱ ἀριθμοὶ ἐφίενται· οὔτε γὰρ ὡς ἐφίενται λέγονται φανερώς.

4. See the entry under *κάλλος* in LSJ. The only exception to this I have been able to find is Collingwood, who writes, "... *κάλλος* does not mean beauty," and that "As the Greeks have no word for art, so they have no word for beauty." R. G. Collingwood, "Plato's Philosophy of Art," *Mind* 34(1925): pp. 161-2, cf. pp. 65-6. Unfortunately, Collingwood provides no evidence for his claims here about *κάλλος*.
5. Paul Woodruff, *Plato: Hippias Major* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1982), p. 110. Christopher Janaway writes "Many salient examples of things that are *kalos* are indeed beautiful things, and the word in ordinary Greek when applied to people and physical things has a central meaning to do with visual attractiveness. Nevertheless *kalos* is a term with a much wider use as well, and is more like 'noble,' 'admirable,' or 'fine.' It will pay to remember this, otherwise we run the risk of over-aestheticizing Plato. Inadvertency must not lead us to construe Plato's ultimate aspiration as purely aesthetic; the highest value is located for him in something more all-embracing, which for now we may call 'finesness itself.'" Christopher Janaway, *Images of Excellence: Plato's Critique of the Arts* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1995), p. 59. In support of his claim he cites Terry Irwin, who writes, "There is no reason to believe that the use of '*kalon*' for what we call moral properties indicates that the Greeks have a particularly 'aesthetic' attitude to morality, as the translation 'beautiful' might suggest." Terence Irwin, *Plato: Gorgias* (Oxford: Oxford University, 1979), p. 154. However, Irwin provides no evidence that the Greeks did not have a particularly "aesthetic" attitude to morality, and, on the contrary, the pervasive use of *καλόν* in what we might call moral contexts could very well be taken as at least some indication that the Greeks were more inclined than we are to evaluate moral actions in terms of beauty. Cf. also W. K. C. Guthrie, *A History of Greek Philosophy*, VI vols., vol. III (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1969), p. 170. (However, see also his discussion of *τό καλόν* in volume IV, pp. 177-78.) E. R. Dodds, *Plato: Gorgias. A Revised Text with Introduction and Commentary* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1959), p. 249. J. C. B. Gosling, *Plato: Philebus. Translated with Notes and Commentary* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1975), p. 93. Dorothea Frede, *Plato: Philebus* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1993), p. lxiv.

the adjectival form of the noun *kallos*. Almost no one questions the fact that the noun *kallos* should be translated 'beauty'.<sup>4</sup> Despite this fact, there is a great debate in the literature about whether the adjective *kalos* should be translated 'beautiful'. This is significant because both Plato and Aristotle instantiate the Ancient Greek preference for using nominalized forms of adjectives as substantives rather than the nouns, i.e. the Ancient Greek often prefers to speak about 'the true' rather than about 'truth'. Thus there are far more instances of the use of the substantive *to kalon*, in Plato and Aristotle than there are of *kallos*.

A typical example of statements to the effect that 'beauty' is not the best translation for *kalos* comes to us from Paul Woodruff in his commentary on the *Hippias Major*. He states:

*Like beauty, to kalon is something splendid and exciting; and in women or boys it is the loveliness that excites carnal desire. But the use of kalos for that quality is embraced by its use as a quite general term of commendation in Greek. "Noble," "admirable," and "fine" are better translations, and of these "fine" is best of all in virtue of its great range. Different sorts of things are commended as kala for different sorts of qualities: boys for their sex appeal, horses for their speed, fighting cocks for their spunk, families for their lineage, acts of war for their courage, speeches for their truth, and so on. Our "beautiful" translates kalos in only a few of its many uses, and is wholly inappropriate for the word as Socrates uses it.*<sup>5</sup>

On the other side of the matter, in his commentary on Aristotle's *Ethics*, Joe Sachs writes,

*Aristotle says plainly and repeatedly what it is that moral virtue is for the sake of, but the translators are afraid to give it to you straight. Most of them say it is the noble. One of them says it is the fine. If these answers went past you without even registering, that is probably because they make so little sense. To us, the word "noble" probably connotes some sort of high-minded naiveté, something hopelessly impractical. But Aristotle considers moral virtue the only practical road to effective action. The word "fine" is of the same sort but*

*worse, suggesting some flimsy artistic soul who couldn't endure rough treatment, while Aristotle describes moral virtue as the most stable and durable condition in which we can meet all obstacles. The word the translators are afraid of is to kalon, the beautiful.*<sup>6</sup>

Although Woodruff is speaking about Plato and Sachs about Aristotle, these two scholars illustrate the range of opinion on the question of *to kalon* in the study of both Plato and Aristotle. I will not pretend to resolve this debate here.<sup>7</sup> But I would just like to present a reason for preferring the translation 'beautiful' in Plato. Regardless of their position on the question in general, everyone that I know of agrees that 'beautiful' is the correct translation of *kalos* in the *Symposium*. But in that dialogue Plato explicitly extends the application of *kalos* to those to objects we may find difficult to apply the concept 'beauty'. Woodruff argues that *kalos* should not be translated 'beautiful' because it is applied to objects we would not normally apply the concept of beauty. Yet in the ascent to the Form of the Beautiful in the *Symposium* Diotima does exactly this. At 210b-e, she states,

*After this he must think that the beauty of people's souls is more valuable than the beauty of their bodies, so that if someone is decent in his soul, even though he is scarcely blooming in his body, our lover must be content to love and care for him and to seek to give birth to such ideas as will make young men better. The result is that our lover will be forced to gaze at the beauty of practices and laws and to see that all this is akin to itself, with the result that he will think that the beauty of bodies is a thing of no importance. After practices he must move on to various kinds of knowledge. The result is that he will see the beauty of knowledge and be looking mainly not at beauty in a single example—as a servant would who favored the beauty of a little boy or a man or a single custom (being a slave, of course, he's low and small-minded)—but the lover is turned to the great sea of beauty, and, gazing upon this, he gives birth to many gloriously beautiful ideas and theories, in the unstinting love of wisdom... (rev.)<sup>8</sup>*

In the first place we can note that *kallos* and *kalos* are used interchangeably in this passage. Second, we see that beauty, *kallos*, is to be found in the soul. This in itself might seem like an extension of our concept of beauty insofar as we might think that beauty is only applicable to bodies and other physical, perceptible objects. But the key point for our purposes is the extension of the beautiful, *to kalon*, to “practices and laws” (τὸ ἐν τοῖς ἐπιτηδεύμασι καὶ τοῖς νόμοις καλὸν). We might not normally extend the concept of beauty to practices and laws, and scholars who agree with Woodruff take this as evidence that *kalos* should not be translated ‘beautiful’. But here in the *Symposium* Plato explicitly states that the same concept of beauty that is found in physical beauty is also found in practices and laws.

Let me quickly recap the main points. First, everyone agrees that *kalos* in the *Symposium* should be translated ‘beautiful’. Second, Plato clearly applies the concept of the *kalos* to practices and laws in the ascent to the Form of the Beautiful. It would seem then that it is not valid to argue that since Plato uses the concept of *kalos* in context where we would normally not use the concept of beauty, that therefore ‘beautiful’ is not the correct translation of *kalos*.

But I do not want to suggest that we must dogmatically translate *kalos* ‘beautiful’ in every instance. *To kalon*, for Plato is a quality which supervenes upon the essential rightness of a person, object, or action. This essential rightness can be described variously as ‘fine’, ‘noble’, ‘admirable’, etc. I choose ‘beautiful’ for the reason mentioned above, as well as the feeling that this was its original meaning, and because it allows us to read Plato and Aristotle in what I feel are new and interesting ways. The other translations strike me as bland and vague, and seem to turn *to kalon* into just another term of approbation; whereas, in the original Greek *to kalon* seems to suggest something more specific. But, as I have already said, much of this is subjective. There are many word-concepts in the ancient Greek language with present similar difficulties: *eudaimonia* (usually translated ‘happiness’), *arete* (‘virtue’), *sophrosune* (‘temperance/ moderation’) *ousia* (‘essence/ being’), *logos* (‘word/ account’), to

name just a few. And the best we can do is choose an inadequate translation and warn the reader of the problems.

One final note worth mentioning about *to kalon* is the way in which it differs from *to agathon*, the good. While a review of the literature of fifth and fourth century Greece seems to suggest that *kalos* refers to the essential rightness of a person, thing, or action, *to agathon* seems more closely connected with some kind of benefit or advantage. So at *Meno* 77d Socrates gets Meno to agree that those who desire bad things thinking that they will benefit from them actually do not think those bad things are bad.<sup>9</sup> In other words they are mistaken about those objects. They think that they are good and thus beneficial; they are just mistaken. Here Socrates assumes that what is good is beneficial and what is bad is harmful. And at *Gorgias* 477a Socrates argues that if someone has good things being done to him he is being benefited.

*Socrates: Hence, the one paying what is due has good things being done to him? Polus: Evidently. Socrates: Hence he is being benefited? Polus: Yes.*<sup>10</sup>

In addition, goodness often has a directional quality about it. So, as Rachel Barney points out, goodness in Greek often takes the dative of interest: things are commonly said to be good for this or that person or object; whereas beauty rarely does so: what is beautiful is simply beautiful.<sup>11</sup>

### 3. Coextension

In this section we will try to show that Plato believes a biconditional relation holds between beauty and goodness at least at the level of concrete objects, or what are sometimes called sensible particulars. In the following section we will present reasons for believing that despite their coextension at the level of concrete objects, the balance of the evidence supports the view that Plato still thought there were separate Forms of beauty and goodness. We will begin by looking at passages which suggest that what is good is beautiful. Then we will look at passages which suggest that what is beautiful is

6. Joe Sachs, “Aristotle: Ethics,” <http://www.iep.utm.edu/aris-eth/>.

7. For an attempt to defend this thesis see Nicholas Riegel, “Beauty, To Kalon, and Its Relation to the Good in the Works of Plato” (Dissertation, University of Toronto, 2011).

8. μετὰ δὲ ταῦτα τὸ ἐν ταῖς ψυχαῖς κάλλος τιμιώτερον ἠγήσασθαι τοῦ ἐν τῷ σώματι, ὥστε καὶ ἐὰν ἐπιεικῆς ᾖν τὴν ψυχὴν τις κἂν μικρὸν ἄνθος ἔχη, ἐξαρκεῖν αὐτῷ καὶ ἐρᾶν καὶ κηδεσθαι καὶ τίττειν λόγους τοιοῦτους καὶ ζητεῖν, οἵτινες ποιήσουσι βελτίους τοὺς νέους, ἵνα ἀναγκασθῆ ἀυθεάσασθαι τὸ ἐν τοῖς ἐπιτηδεύμασι καὶ τοῖς νόμοις καλὸν καὶ τοῦτ’ ἰδεῖν ὅτι πᾶν αὐτὸ αὐτῷ συγγενές ἐστιν, ἵνα τὸ περὶ τὸ σῶμα καλὸν μικρὸν τι ἠγήσῃται εἶναι· μετὰ δὲ τὰ ἐπιτηδεύματα ἐπὶ τὰς ἐπιστήμας ἀγαγεῖν, ἵνα ἴδῃ αὐτὸ ἐπιστημῶν κάλλος, καὶ βλέπων πρὸς πολὺ ἤδη τὸ καλὸν μηκέτι τὸ παρ’ ἐνὶ, ὥσπερ οἰκέτης, ἀγαπῶν παιδαρίου κάλλος ἢ ἀνθρώπου τινὸς ἢ ἐπιτηδεύματος ἑνός, δουλεύων φαῦλος ἢ καὶ μικρολόγος, ἀλλ’ ἐπὶ τὸ πολὺ πέλαγος τετραμμένος τοῦ καλοῦ καὶ θεαρῶν πολλοὺς καὶ καλοὺς λόγους καὶ μεγαλοπρεπεῖς τίκτη καὶ διανοήματα ἐν φιλοσοφίᾳ ἀφθόνω... All translations of Plato will be those of John M. Cooper, ed. *Plato: Complete Works* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1997). If a revision is necessary it will be marked ‘rev.’

9. ΣΩ. Τί ἐπιθυμεῖν λέγεις; ἢ γενέσθαι αὐτῷ; ΜΕΝ. Γενέσθαι· τί γὰρ ἄλλο; ΣΩ. Πότερον ἠγούμενος τὰ κακὰ ὠφελεῖν ἐκείνων ᾧ ἂν γένηται, ἢ γινώσκων τὰ κακὰ ὅτι βλάπτει ᾧ ἂν παρῆ; ΜΕΝ. Εἰοῖ μὲν οἱ ἠγούμενοι τὰ κακὰ ὠφελεῖν, εἰσὶν δὲ καὶ οἱ γινώσκοντες ὅτι βλάπτει. ΣΩ. Ἦ καὶ δοκοῦσί σοι γινώσκειν τὰ κακὰ ὅτι κακὰ ἐστὶν οἱ ἠγούμενοι τὰ κακὰ ὠφελεῖν; ΜΕΝ. Οὐ πάντω μοι δοκεῖ τοῦτό γε. [Socrates: Do you think, Meno, that anyone, knowing that bad things are bad, nevertheless desires them? Meno: I certainly do. Socrates: What do you mean by desiring? Is it to secure for oneself? Meno: What else? Socrates: Does he think that the bad things benefit him who possesses them, or does he know they harm him? Meno: There are

good, followed by evidence which directly supports a biconditional relation.

But first a word about these terms biconditional and coextensive. For the purposes of this essay I take these terms to imply the same thing. In other words, to say that there is a biconditional relation between beauty and goodness is to say both A. If something is good then it is beautiful, and B. If something is beautiful then it is good. This is the same as to say that beauty and goodness are coextensive. That is, everything which falls under the extension of goodness falls under the extension of beauty and vice versa. Notice that neither of these imply that goodness and beauty are identical. If two objects are essentially identical, then they must have the same extension. But it is not the case that if two objects are coextensive, they are essentially or “intensionally” identical—intensional identity being taken as the linguistic correlate of essential identity. To borrow an example from Quine, whatever has a heart has a kidney, but it is not the case that having a heart is essentially the same as having a kidney.

### 3.1. That Whatever is Good is Beautiful: *Symposium* 201c, *Timaeus* 87c, *Lysis* 216d, and *Republic* 457b.

Several texts indicate Plato thinks everything good is also beautiful. The first is at *Symposium* 200a-201b where Socrates tries to prove to Agathon that Love is neither beautiful nor good. In order to prove that Love is not good, Socrates asks Agathon, “Don’t good things also seem beautiful to you (τὰγαθὰ οὐ καὶ καλὰ δοκεῖ σοι εἶναι; 201c)?” Agathon agrees, and Socrates goes on to argue that if Love needs and desires beautiful things and good things are beautiful, then Love will need and desire good things, and therefore Love cannot be good either (201c). If we can take Socrates’ question here as evidence of his own belief then this would support the view that Plato believes that what is good must also be beautiful.

The next text is from the *Timaeus*. When Timaeus turns to the care of body and mind, he states, “Now all that is good is beautiful, and what is beautiful is not ill-proportioned (πᾶν δὴ

τὸ ἀγαθὸν καλόν, τὸ δὲ καλὸν οὐκ ἄμετρον: 87c).” Given the context, what Timaeus must mean is that good things are beautiful. His argument is that since good things are beautiful, and beautiful things are proportionate (σύμμετρον, 87c), if persons want to be good or healthy, they must be proportionate, in particular their bodies have to be in proportion to their souls (87c ff.). Since Timaeus is speaking about bodies and souls, he is speaking about things, plural, which are to be good. Thus if we can take Timaeus’ statements to represent Plato’s beliefs, it would seem *Timaeus* 87c can be taken to confirm the view that Plato thinks if something is good then it is also *kalon*, or beautiful.

In the *Lysis* too we have confirmation of the conditional relationship between goodness and beauty. Socrates states, “Now I maintain that the good is beautiful. What do you think? (λέγω γὰρ τὰγαθὸν καλὸν εἶναι· σὺ δ’ οὐκ οἶε: *Ly.* 216d).” The Greek grammar does not allow us to discern whether *kalon* is a predicate adjective or a predicate substantive, nor does the context allow us to disambiguate. This sentence may mean that the good is the beautiful, or that the good is beautiful. Stanley Lombardo, W. R. M. Lamb, and Penner and Rowe all have “the good is beautiful.”<sup>12</sup> If they are correct, this would support the thesis that Plato thinks if good then beautiful.

Finally, we may also refer to *Republic* 457b, where Socrates states, “... for it is and always will be the finest saying that the beneficial is beautiful, while the harmful is ugly (κάλλιστα γὰρ δὴ τοῦτο καὶ λέγεται καὶ λελέξεται, ὅτι τὸ μὲν ὠφέλιμον καλόν, τὸ δὲ βλαβερόν αἰσχροτόν).” Like the other passages, these translations would support the thesis that whatever is good is beautiful, except that here the beneficial (τὸ ὠφέλιμον) is said to be beautiful. But, as we have already seen, Plato’s usual conception of the good is very closely linked to the beneficial. Thus (ignoring the *Hippias Major* for the moment) if Plato thinks of goodness as beneficence then *Republic* 457b supports the thesis that whatever is good is beautiful.

In conclusion, even if we do not accept *Republic* 457b, Plato’s belief that if something is good then it is also beautiful is well supported.

some who believe that the bad things benefit them, others who know that the bad things harm them. *Socrates*: And do you think that those who believe that bad thing benefit them know that they are bad? *Meno*: No, that I cannot altogether believe (*Meno* 77c-d.)

10. ΣΩ. Ἀγαθὰ ἄρα πάσχει ὁ δίκην διδούς; ΠΩΛ. Ἔουκεν. ΣΩ. Ὀφελείται ἄρα; ΠΩΛ. Ναί.

11. “But there is one striking contrast between the two. This is that while it is common to speak of what is *agathon* for someone, using the dative of interest, the same construction is awkward and rare if not impossible with *kalon*.

Moving from grammar to ideas, what is good is often presumed to be so by being good for somebody or other; but what is fine, generally speaking, is just plain fine.” Rachel Barney, “The Fine and the Good,” (Forthcoming). And Dominic Scott

writes, “In Plato’s works, the concept of the *agathon* is very closely connected with whatever is beneficial or useful – *prima facie* a different sense from that of *kalon*.” Dominic Scott, *Plato’s Meno* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 2006), p. 46.

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

Plato seems to believe that this thesis needs no argument. He seems less certain, however, about the converse, the thesis that whatever is beautiful is good. Or, perhaps it would be more accurate to say he seems less certain that this thesis would be immediately accepted. For anyone who knew the Iliad or Theogony could easily think there are beautiful things which are not good.

### 3.2. That Whatever is Beautiful is Good: Alcibiades 113d-116d; Protagoras 349a-362a; Charmides 160e-61a; Laches 192c-d; Meno 77b.

While the thesis that whatever is good is beautiful is fairly certain, the converse may seem more questionable. But there is evidence for the thesis that whatever is beautiful is good in the Alcibiades, Protagoras, Charmides, Laches, and Meno. Let us turn directly to these arguments to evaluate the evidence.

In the Alcibiades Socrates uses the premise that all beautiful things are good during an argument to prove to Alcibiades that all just things are beneficial. In support of this premise he makes two arguments. The first, from 115c-16a attempts to show that insofar as courage and helping one's friends in battle is beautiful it is also good. We need not enter into the details of the argument. It is enough for our purposes merely to show the conclusion. At 116a Socrates states,

*Isn't it also beautiful insofar as it's good, and ugly insofar as it's bad (rev.)?*<sup>13</sup>

The second argument in support of the premise that all beautiful things are good runs from 116b-c, and Socrates concludes as follows:

*Soc: So the same thing appears for us again both beautiful and good. Alc: Apparently. Soc: So if we find that something is beautiful, we'll also find that it's good – according to this argument, at least (rev.).*<sup>14</sup>

Both of the arguments Socrates uses here are very complex and problematic, but it is clear

what he is trying to prove. He is trying to prove that everything that is beautiful insofar as it is beautiful is also good.

The second passage supporting the view that whatever is beautiful is good comes from the *Protagoras*. After the discussion of Simonides' poem, Socrates argues against Protagoras' revised thesis that, while the rest of the virtues are similar and can be described as kinds of knowledge or wisdom, courage is different. In the course of arguing that, like the other virtues, courage is some sort of knowledge and wisdom, Socrates takes advantage of his Protagoras' assent to the view that whatever is beautiful is good.

*Then, if it is beautiful, we agreed earlier that it is also good, for we agreed that all beautiful actions are good. You speak truly, and it always seems so to me (rev.).*<sup>15</sup>

And again a few lines later he states,

*So, generally, when the courageous fear, their fear is not ugly; nor when they are confident is their confidence ugly. True. If not ugly, is it beautiful? He agreed. If beautiful, then also good? Yes (rev.).*<sup>16</sup>

It is true that Socrates does not present an argument for these claims, but we are beginning to see that he likes to take it as a premise that whatever is beautiful is also good.

The next passage is from the *Charmides*. At 160e Socrates argues from the fact that temperance, or moderation, is beautiful to the fact that it is good:

*But, I said, didn't we agree just now that temperance was a beautiful thing? Yes, we did, he said. And it would follow that temperate men are good? Yes. And could a thing be good that does not produce good men? Of course not. Then not only is temperance beautiful, but it is good. I agree (rev.).*<sup>17</sup>

The argument here, if there is one, is not straightforward. But in order to be successful it must rely on the hidden premise that whatever is beautiful is good.

13. Ἀρ' οὖν καὶ ἡ ἀγαθόν, καλόν· ἢ δὲ κακόν, αἰσχρὸν (116a);

14. ΣΩ. Ταῦτ' ἄρα ἐφάνη ἡμῖν πάλιν αὐτὸ καλὸν τε καὶ ἀγαθόν. ΑΛ. Φαίνεται. ΣΩ. Ὅτι ἂν ἄρα εὐρωμεν καλόν, καὶ ἀγαθὸν εὐρήσομεν ἕκ γε τούτου τοῦ λόγου (116b-c).

15. Οὐκοῦν εἴπερ καλόν, καὶ ἀγαθὸν ὠμολογήσαμεν ἐν τοῖς ἐμπροσθεν· τὰς γὰρ καλὰς πράξεις ἀπάσας ἀγαθὰς ὠμολογήσαμεν. Αληθῆ λέγεις, καὶ αἰεὶ ἔμοιγε δοκεῖ οὕτως (359e). This premise is apparently based on the previous agreement made at 358b: Τί δὲ δῆ, ὦ ἄνδρες, ἔφην ἐγὼ, τὸ τοιόνδε; αἰ ἐπὶ τούτου πράξεις ἀπάσαι, ἐπὶ τοῦ ἀλύπτως ζῆν καὶ ἡδέως, ἀρ' οὐ καλαί [καὶ ὠφέλιμοι]; καὶ τὸ καλὸν ἔργον ἀγαθὸν τε καὶ ὠφέλιμον; Συνεδόκει (358b). [Well then, men, I said,

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

13. Ἀρ' οὖν καὶ ἡ ἀγαθόν, καλόν· ἢ δὲ κακόν, αἰσχρὸν (116a);

14. ΣΩ. Ταῦτ' ἄρα ἐφάνη ἡμῖν πάλιν αὐτὸ καλὸν τε καὶ ἀγαθόν. ΑΛ. Φαίνεται. ΣΩ. Ὅτι ἂν ἄρα εὐρωμεν καλόν, καὶ ἀγαθὸν εὐρήσομεν ἕκ γε τούτου τοῦ λόγου (116b-c).

15. Οὐκοῦν εἴπερ καλόν, καὶ ἀγαθὸν ὠμολογήσαμεν ἐν τοῖς ἐμπροσθεν· τὰς γὰρ καλὰς πράξεις ἀπάσας ἀγαθὰς ὠμολογήσαμεν. Αληθῆ λέγεις, καὶ αἰεὶ ἔμοιγε δοκεῖ οὕτως (359e). This premise is apparently based on the previous agreement made at 358b: Τί δὲ δῆ, ὦ ἄνδρες,

ἔφην ἐγὼ, τὸ τοιόνδε; αἰ ἐπὶ τούτου πράξεις ἀπάσαι, ἐπὶ τοῦ ἀλύπτως ζῆν καὶ ἡδέως, ἀρ' οὐ καλαί [καὶ ὠφέλιμοι]; καὶ τὸ καλὸν ἔργον ἀγαθὸν τε καὶ ὠφέλιμον; Συνεδόκει (358b). [Well then, men, I said, what about this? All actions leading to this, namely to living painlessly and pleasantly, are they not beautiful [and beneficial]? And isn't beautiful activity both good and beneficial? They agreed (tr. Cooper, ed., rev.)]

16. Οὐκοῦν ὅλωσ' οἱ ἀνδρεῖοι οὐκ αἰσχροῦς φόβους φοβοῦνται, ὅταν φοβῶνται, οὐδὲ αἰσχροῦ θάρρη θαρροῦσιν; Αληθῆ, ἔφη. Εἰ δὲ μὴ αἰσχροῦ, ἀρ' οὐ καλά; Ὀμολόγει. Εἰ δὲ καλά, καὶ ἀγαθὰ; Ναί (360a-b).

17. Εἶεν, ἦν δ' ἐγώ, οὐ καλὸν ἀρτί ὠμολόγεις τὴν σαφροσύνην εἶναι; Πάνυ γ', ἔφη. Οὐκοῦν καὶ ἀγαθοὶ ἄνδρες οἱ σώφρονες; Ναί. Ἀρ' οὖν ἂν εἴη ἀγαθὸν ὃ μὴ ἀγαθοῦς ἀπεργάζεται; Οὐ δῆτα. Οὐ μόνον οὖν ἀρα καλόν, ἀλλὰ καὶ ἀγαθὸν ἔστιν. Ἐμοιγε δοκεῖ (*Chm.* 160e-61a).

18. τοῦτο τοῖνυν ἐμοιγε φαίνεται· οὐτὶ πᾶσά γε, ὡς ἐγώμηναι, καρτερία ἀνδρεία σοὶ φαίνεται. τεκμαίρομαι δὲ ἐνθένδε· σχεδὸν γὰρ τι οἶδα, ὡς Λάχης, ὅτι τῶν πάντων καλῶν πραγμάτων ἡγήσῃ οὐ ἀνδρεία εἶναι. Εὐ μὲν οὖν ἴσθι ὅτι τῶν καλλίστων. Οὐκοῦν ἢ μὲν μετὰ φρονήσεως καρτερία καλὴ κάγαθῆ; Πάνυ γε. Τί δ' ἢ μετ' ἀφροσύνης; οὐ τοῦναντίον ταύτῃ βλαβερὰ καὶ κακοῦργος; Ναί. Καλὸν οὖν τι φήσεις σὺ εἶναι τὸ τοιοῦτον, ὃν κακοῦργόν τε καὶ βλαβερὸν; Οὐκοῦν δίκαιόν γε, ὡς Σώκράτης. Οὐκ ἀρα τὴν γε τοιαύτην καρτερίαν ἀνδρείαν ὁμολογήσεις εἶναι, ἐπειδήπερ οὐ καλὴ ἔστιν, ἢ δὲ ἀνδρεία καλὸν ἔστιν. Ἀληθῆ λέγεις. Ἡ φρόνιμος ἀρα καρτερία κατὰ τὸν σὸν λόγον ἀνδρεία ἂν εἴη. Ἔοικεν.

19. καὶ ἐγὼ τοῦτο λέγω ἀρετὴν, ἐπιθυμοῦντα τῶν καλῶν δυνατὸν εἶναι πορίζεσθαι (*Men.* 77b).

20. Ἀρα λέγεις τὸν τῶν καλῶν ἐπιθυμοῦντα ἀγαθῶν ἐπιθυμητὴν εἶναι; Μάλιστα γὰρ (*Men.* 77b).

21. The only passage which I think could pose a difficulty for the view that everything beautiful if good is *Gorgias* 474c-477a, where Socrates analyzes the beautiful as what is good/beneficial or pleasant. This would make it possible for something to be beautiful without being good on the condition that it was pleasant. But, as Vlastos points out, Socrates' argument here relies crucially on changing the perspective from which an act or object is perceived as pleasant.

I have argued elsewhere that this passage does not in fact contradict the view that what is beautiful is good in Plato. See Gregory Vlastos, "Was Polus Refuted," in *Studies in Greek Philosophy: Socrates, Plato, and Their Tradition*, ed. Daniel Graham (Princeton: Princeton University, 1995); Riegel, "Beauty, To Kalon, and Its Relation to the Good in the Works of Plato," Chapter 2.

An argument similar to that above, occurs in the *Laches*. At 192c-d, Socrates argues,

*Now this is what appears to me: I think that you don't regard every kind of endurance as courage. The reason I think so is this: I am fairly sure, Laches, that you regard courage as a very beautiful thing. –One of the most beautiful, you may be sure. –And you would say that endurance accompanied by wisdom is a beautiful and good thing? –Very much so. –Suppose it is accompanied by folly? Isn't it just the opposite, harmful and injurious? –Yes. –And you are going to call a thing beautiful which is of the injurious and harmful sort? –No, that wouldn't be right, Socrates. –Then you won't allow this kind of endurance to be courage, since it is not beautiful, whereas courage is beautiful. You are right (rev.).*<sup>18</sup>

Here Socrates uses the hidden assumption that whatever is beautiful cannot be harmful. The implication is that whatever is beautiful is beneficial and therefore, given our aforementioned connection between benefit and goodness, whatever is beautiful is also good.

Finally, the *Meno* also supports the view that what is beautiful is good. At 77b pressed to come up with something more like a proper definition of virtue, *Meno* says:

*So I say that virtue is to desire beautiful things and have the power to acquire them.*<sup>19</sup>

To which Socrates replies:

*Do you mean that the man who desires beautiful things desires good things? Most certainly.*<sup>20</sup>

Here Socrates seems at least to be saying that if someone desires beautiful things then that person desires good things, which supports the thesis that whatever is beautiful is good.

Thus we have a good deal of evidence from the *Alcibiades*, *Protagoras*, *Charmides*, *Laches* and *Meno*, that Plato holds the view that whatever is beautiful is good.<sup>21</sup> But this is not all the evidence we have. We also have direct evidence of a bicon-

ditional relation between goodness and beauty in the *Hippias Major*.

### 3.3. Evidence for a Biconditional Relationship between Goodness and Beauty: *Hippias Major* 297b-c.

In the *Hippias Major*, during the refutation of the beneficial as a possible answer to the question "What is beauty?" Socrates presents strong evidence of a biconditional relation between goodness and beauty. The argument is that if the beautiful is the beneficial then the beautiful is not good and the good is not beautiful. It is taken as obviously absurd to say that the good is not beautiful and the beautiful is not good, and therefore the beautiful cannot be the beneficial. But if it is obviously absurd to say that the good is not beautiful and the beautiful is not good then the correct belief must be that what is good is beautiful and what is beautiful is good.

The argument against this is as follows: The beneficial is the maker (τὸ ποιούων) of the good (296e). As such, it is the cause (αἴτιον) of the good. But the effect of a cause insofar as it is an effect, is an effect, not a cause. Therefore, since the beneficial is the maker and cause of the good, it must differ from the good. And this conclusion is unacceptable to both interlocutors. The conclusion of the argument is:

*Soc: The cause is not a thing that comes to be, and the thing that comes to be is not a cause. Hip: That's true. Soc: Good god! Then the beautiful is not good, nor the good beautiful. Or do you think they could be, from what we've said? Hip: Good god, no. It doesn't appear so to me. Soc: So are we happy with that? Would you like to say that the beautiful is not good, nor the good beautiful? Hip: Good god, no. I'm not at all happy with it (rev.).*<sup>22</sup>

Socrates says that of all the accounts they have given so far, this is the least satisfactory to him, and that it is more ridiculous than the other accounts. But if it is wrong to say that the beautiful is not good and the good is not beautiful, it must be right to say that the beautiful is

good and the good is beautiful. And this is the biconditional thesis.

#### 4. Evidence for a Difference between the Goodness and Beauty in Plato

It was said at the beginning that while a good deal of evidence seems to support the view that Plato thinks goodness and beauty are coextensive (at least at the level of concrete objects), it is probably unsafe to infer from this that therefore Plato thinks they are identical. In the first place, he never in fact says they are identical, though he had plenty of opportunity to do so, and in many places such an assertion would have helped his argument, for example, in the passage in the *Hippias Major* we have already reviewed (297b-c), as well as *Symposium* 204e ff. where Diotima famously substitutes goodness for beauty. Though there is not to my knowledge of instance where he unambiguously says beauty and goodness are identical, there are many places where he says that the same thing is both beautiful and good, as we have seen in the previous section.

In the second place, Plato clearly says that there is a Form of each, beauty and goodness. Perhaps the most obvious example of the Form of Beauty comes from the apex of the ascent to the Form of the Beautiful during Diotima's speech at *Symposium* 211d ff., while the most obvious instance of the Form of the Good is at *Republic* 509b. And each of these Forms is said to have distinct qualities. The Form of the Good at *Republic* 509b is famously said to be "beyond essence in power and seniority (ἐπέκεινα τῆς οὐσίας πρεσβεία καὶ δυνάμει ὑπερέχοντος)," while in the *Phaedrus* the Form of Beauty is said to be the only Form of a positive quality which we can somehow see with our eyes (*Phdr.* 250b-e).<sup>23</sup> Now, it does not follow from the fact that the Form of Beauty is said to have one particular quality in one place and that the Form of the Good is said to have other qualities in another place that the two are not identical. One could still argue that 'beauty' and 'goodness' refer to the same thing in the realm of the Forms. But, nevertheless, the fact that they are said to have these distinct qualities is significant.

A clearer distinction may seem to come from *Republic* 505d where Socrates states,

*In the case of the just and beautiful things, many people would choose what are believed to be so, and even if they aren't really so, they act, acquire, and form their own beliefs on that basis. But nobody is satisfied to acquire things that are merely believed to be good, but everyone wants the things that really are good and disdains mere beliefs (rev.).*<sup>24</sup>

This would seem to separate the good from the beautiful. While many people are satisfied with what only appears just and beautiful, no one is satisfied with mere appearance or popular belief concerning what is good. But, in the first place, note that it does not follow from this that we have to abandon our thesis concerning the coextension of beauty and goodness. While some people may be satisfied with what merely appears beautiful it may still be the case that whatever is truly beautiful is good and vice versa. And, indeed, as Lloyd Gerson has pointed out to me, Socrates here is talking about what the many think (*hoi polloi*). It does not follow that philosophers believe the same thing. It may well be that philosophers are not satisfied with what merely seems just and beautiful, because they know that real beauty and justice constitute their goodness and happiness. Nevertheless this may point to an important distinction between goodness on the one hand, and many other things on the other.

The most definite distinction between beauty and goodness, however, comes from the end of the *Philebus*. At 65a Socrates states,

*Therefore if we are not able to capture the good in one form, taking it with three, beauty, proportion, and truth, let us say that of the things in the mixture we would most correctly say that this, as one, is the cause, and that it is on account of this, since it is good, that it [the mixture] has become thus [i.e. good] (rev.).*<sup>25</sup>

This is the only place in the Platonic corpus where Plato seems to be speaking explicitly about the Forms of beauty and goodness and their relation. A difference is implied between the Form of the

22. ΣΩ. Οὐδὲ γὰρ τὸ αἴτιον γιγνόμενον ἔστιν, οὐδὲ τὸ γιγνόμενον αὐτὸ αἴτιον. ΠΙ. Ἀληθῆ λέγεις. ΣΩ. Μὰ Δία, ὦ ἄριστε, οὐδὲ ἄρα τὸ καλὸν ἀγαθὸν ἔστιν, οὐδὲ τὸ ἀγαθὸν καλόν· ἢ δοκεῖ σοι οἷόν τε εἶναι ἐκ τῶν προειρημένων; ΠΙ. Οὐ μὰ τὸν Δία, οὐ μοι φαίνεται ΣΩ. Ἀρέσκει οὖν ἡμῖν καὶ ἐθέλομεν ἂν λέγειν ὡς τὸ καλὸν οὐκ ἀγαθὸν οὐδὲ τὸ ἀγαθὸν καλόν; ΠΙ. Οὐ μὰ τὸν Δία, οὐ πάνυ μοι ἀρέσκει (297c).

23. περὶ δὲ κάλλους, ὥσπερ εἶπομεν, μετ' ἐκείνων τε ἔλαμπεν ὄν, δευρὸ τ' ἔλθοντες κατελήφμεν αὐτὸ διὰ τῆς ἑναργεστάτης αἰσθήσεως τῶν ἡμετέρων στίλβον ἑναργέστατα. ὄψις γὰρ ἡμῖν ὀξυτάτη τῶν διὰ τοῦ σώματος ἔρχεται αἰσθήσεων, ἢ φρόνησις οὐχ ὁράται— δεινὸς γὰρ ἂν παρείχεν ἔρωτας, εἴ τι τοιοῦτον ἑαυτῆς ἑναργὲς εἰδῶλον παρείχεται εἰς ὄψιν ἰόν—καὶ τάλλα ὅσα ἔραστά· νῦν δὲ κάλλος μόνον ταύτην ἔσχε μοίραν, ὥστ' ἐκφανέστατον εἶναι καὶ ἔρασμώτατον (*Phdr.* 250c-e). [Now beauty, as I said, was radiant when it was among the other objects; and now that we have come here we grasp it sparkling through the clearest of our senses. For vision is the sharpest of our bodily senses, although it does not see wisdom. It would present a terribly powerful love if an image of wisdom came through our sight as clearly as beauty does, and the same goes for the other objects of love. But now beauty alone has this privilege, to be the most clearly visible and the most loved (rev.).]

24. τόδε οὐ φανερόν, ὡς δίκαια μὲν καὶ καλὰ πολλοὶ ἂν ἔλοιτο τὰ δοκούντα, κἂν <εἰ> μὴ εἴη, ὁμῶς ταῦτα πράττειν καὶ κερτῆσθαι καὶ δοκεῖν, ἀγαθὰ δὲ οὐδενὶ ἔτι ἄρκει τὰ δοκούντα κτᾶσθαι, ἀλλὰ τὰ ὄντα ζητοῦσιν, τὴν δὲ δόξαν ἐνταῦθα ἤρῃ πᾶς ἀτιμάζει;

25. Οὐκοῦν εἰ μὴ μᾶ δυνάμεθα ἰδέα τὸ ἀγαθὸν ἠθευῖσαι, σὺν τρισὶ λαβόντες, κάλλει καὶ συμμετρίας καὶ ἀληθείας, λέγωμεν ὡς τοῦτο οἷον ἐν ὀρθότητ' ἂν αἰτιασάμεθ' ἂν τῶν ἐν τῇ συμμείξει, καὶ διὰ τοῦτο ὡς ἀγαθὸν ὄν τοιαύτην αὐτὴν γεγενῆναι.

Good and the Form of beauty, because, first, we are told that we cannot capture the good in one Form, whereas he does not say this about the Forms of beauty, proportion, or truth. Secondly beauty seems to be one of the three Forms with which the Good seems to be identified. Thus this passage would seem to indicate a clear distinction between the Forms of Beauty and Goodness. But notice that it is still entirely possible that beauty and goodness are coextensive.

### 5. Significance of beauty in Ethics: The Good is the Right.

Let us now try to see the significance of the biconditional thesis in ethical contexts, and in the next section we will look at its significance in mathematical contexts. In order to see how the biconditional thesis plays out in the ethical context we must return to our earlier stated claim that *to kalon* refers to a sort of essential rightness. We may, perhaps, see this most clearly in the claims of the earlier poets to see death in battle as somehow paradigmatically beautiful. So, in the *Iliad*, Priam states,

26. ... νέφ' δέ τε πάντ' ἐπέοικεν | ἄρηϊ κταμένω  
δεδαϊγμένω ὀξεί χαλκῶ |  
κείσθαι· πάντα δὲ καλὰ  
θανόντι περὶ φανήη: |  
ἀλλ' ὅτε δὴ πολίον τε κάρη  
πολίον τε γένειον | αἰδῶ τ'  
αἰσχύνωσι κύνες κταμένοιο  
γέροντος, (75) | τοῦτο δὴ  
οἰκτιστον πέλεται δειλοῖσι  
βροτοῖσιν (Il. 22.71-6).

27. αἰσχρὸν γὰρ δὴ τοῦτο,  
μετὰ προμάχοισι πεσόντα |  
κείσθαι πρόσθε νέων ἄνδρα  
παλαιότερον, | ἦδη λευκὸν  
ἔχοντα κάρη πολίον τε  
γένειον, | θυμὸν ἀποπνεύοντ'  
ἄλκιμον ἐν κονίη, |  
αἱματόεντ' αἰδοῖα φίλαις  
ἐν χερσίν ἔχοντα— (25) |  
αἰσχροῖα τὰ γ' ὀφθαλμοῖς καὶ  
νεμεσητὸν ἰδεῖν, | καὶ χροῖα  
γυμνωθέντα· νέοισι δὲ πάντ'  
ἐπέοικεν, | ὄφρ' ἐρατῆς ἦβης  
ἀγλαὸν ἄνθος ἔχη, | ἀνδράσι  
μὲν θηητὸς ἰδεῖν, ἐρατὸς δὲ  
γυναιξί | ζῶος ἐὼν, καλὸς δ'  
ἐν προμάχοισι πεσῶν (Fr. 10,  
ll. 21-30).

28. τεθνάμεναι γὰρ καλὸν  
ἐνὶ προμάχοισι πεσόντα |  
ἄνδρ' ἀγαθὸν περὶ ἧ πατρίδι  
μαρναμένον... (Tyr. Fr. 10,  
ll. 1-2).

29. Ετεοκλέα μὲν τόνδ'  
ἐπ' εὐνοίαι χθονὸς |  
θάπτειν ἔδοξε γῆς φίλαις  
κατασκαφαῖς· | στέγων γὰρ  
ἔχθρους θάνατον εἴλετ' ἐν  
πόλει, | ἱερῶν πατρῶϊων δ'  
δοῖος ὦν μομφῆς ἄτερ (1010)  
| τέθνηκεν οὐπερ τοῖς νέοις  
θνήσκειν καλόν (Th. 1007-11).

*when he has fallen among the front ranks, he is fair*  
(tr. Gerber).<sup>27</sup>

In these two examples the beauty of young men is compared to the ugliness of the old when they die in battle. But the following excerpt from Tyrtaeus provides evidence of the absolute beauty of death in battle.

*It is a beautiful thing for a good man to die when he has fallen among the front ranks while fighting for his homeland... (tr. Gerber, rev.).*<sup>28</sup>

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

*Eteocles, who lieth here, seeing that he hath shown loyalty to his country, it is decreed to bury with kindly interment in its soil; for that, hating the foe, he courted death in the city, and pure of offence towards the shrines of his fathers he hath fallen, free of reproach, where it is beautiful for the young to fall (tr. Smyth, rev.).*<sup>29</sup>

It may be difficult for us today to imagine how seeing a person die in battle could be beautiful. But I think what the Greeks were trying to get at here was a sense of goodness which is separated from benefit at least to the agent. Surely it is not beneficial to the person who dies to die in battle. Nor is it particularly beneficial for the city to have their soldiers die in battle; surely it would be much more beneficial to the city for their soldiers to live and defeat the enemy than it is for them to die in battle. The reason, I think, this activity of dying in battle is so paradigmatically beautiful for the Greeks is that it represents the ultimate overcoming of all self-interest. It represents the ultimate overcoming of all considerations of benefit to the agent. But, on the other hand, it is not merely sufficient to die or sacrifice oneself. It is important here that the death be a death in battle, presumably in defense of one's city. And it is no doubt beneficial to the city to have young men willing to defend it with their lives. But it is still significant, I think, that the actual death itself is not particularly to be praised because of its benefit to anyone in particular; rather is transcends

all considerations of benefit and therefore we need some word other than 'good' or 'beneficial' with which to describe it. Perhaps *to kalon*, the beautiful was the closest thing the Greeks had to describe it.

This same separation between beauty and goodness or benefit is also seen in Plato, and it was precisely this same separation which I think Plato wanted to repair. Many of the prooftexts for the separation of goodness and beauty are, naturally, ones we have already spoken about. So to return to Alcibiades 115a-b, Socrates says,

*Socrates: Now what about beautiful things? Are they all good, or are some good and others not good? Alcibiades: What I think, Socrates, is that some beautiful things are bad (Tr. Hutchinson, rev.).*<sup>30</sup>

And we see much the same distinction in the Gorgias, where Socrates argues with Polus:

*Socrates: What then? Which do you think is uglier, doing what's unjust or suffering it? Tell me. Polus: Doing it. Socrates: Now if doing it is in fact uglier, isn't it also worse? Polus: No, not in the least. Socrates: I see. Evidently you don't believe that the same thing is both beautiful and good, or that the same thing is both bad and ugly. Polus: No, I certainly don't (Gorgias 474c-d, rev.).*<sup>31</sup>

What we see here is how in the Greek mind the beautiful was so easily separated from any sense of benefit, and yet it was still held to be laudatory in some sense. It was Plato's project then to argue that this beauty, which marked essential rightness, was in fact the most beneficial thing for the agent.

## 6. Significance of Beauty in Mathematics: Goodness in Mathematics

The second effect or result of the biconditional thesis may be that it could help explain Aristotle's surprising claim that Plato or the Platonists found goodness in mathematics. It should be fairly clear that Plato found beauty in mathematics. In fact it seems Plato found be-

auty in mathematics most of all. So, at *Timaeus* 54a-b?, Timaeus states,

*Of the [right-angled] triangles, the isosceles has but one nature, while the scalene has infinitely many. Now we have to select the most beautiful one from among the infinitely many, if we are to get a proper start. So if anyone can say that he has picked out another one that is more beautiful for the construction of these bodies, his victory will be that of a friend, not an enemy. Of the many [scalene right-angled] triangles, then, we posit as the one most beautiful, surpassing the others, that one from [a pair of] which the equilateral triangle is constructed as a third figure (rev.).*<sup>32</sup>

And at *Philebus* 51b-c? Socrates states,

*What I am saying may not be entirely clear straightaway, but I'll try to clarify it. By the beauty of shape, I do not mean what the many might presuppose, namely that of a living being or of a picture. What I mean, what the argument demands, is rather something straight or round and what is constructed out of these with a compass, rule, and square, such as plane figures and solids. Those things I take it are not beautiful in a relative sense, as others are, but are by their very nature forever beautiful by themselves. They provide their own specific pleasures that are not at all comparable to those of rubbing! And colors are beautiful in an analogous way and import their own kinds of pleasures.*<sup>33</sup>

With these passages, also see *Timaeus* 53d-e and 55c, and *Philebus* 65a. So, clearly Plato finds beauty in mathematics. What may come as a surprise is that, at least according to Aristotle, Plato found goodness in mathematics as well. At *Eudemian Ethics*, 1.8 (1218a16-26) he states,

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

30. ΣΩ. Τί δ' αὐτὰ καλὰ; πότερον πάντα ἀγαθὰ, ἢ τὰ μὲν, τὰ δ' οὐ; ΑΛ. Οἴομαι ἔγωγε, ὡς Σώκρατες, ἐνία τῶν καλῶν κακὰ εἶναι.

31. ΣΩ. Τί δὲ δῆ; αἰσχίον πότερον τὸ ἀδικεῖν ἢ τὸ ἀδικεῖσθαι; ἀποκρίνεται. ΠΩΛ. Τὸ ἀδικεῖν. ΣΩ. Οὐκοῦν καὶ κάκιον, εἴπερ αἰσχίον. ΠΩΛ. Ἥκιστα γε. ΣΩ. Μανθάνω οὐ ταῦτόν ἤγησ' ὡς ἔουκας, καλόν τε καὶ ἀγαθόν καὶ κακόν καὶ αἰσχρόν. ΠΩΛ. Οὐ δῆτα.

32. τοῖν δὴ δυοῖν τριγώνων τὸ μὲν ἰσοσκελὲς μίαν εἰληχεν φύσιν, τὸ δὲ πρόμηκες ἀπεράντους· προαιρετέον οὖν αὐτῶν ἀπειρώτων τὸ κάλλιον, εἰ μέλλομεν ἀρξασθαι κατὰ τρόπον. ἂν οὖν τις ἐξη κάλλιον ἐκλεξάμενος εἰπεῖν εἰς τὴν τοῦτων σύστασιν, ἐκεῖνος οὐκ ἐχθρός ὢν ἀλλὰ φίλος κρατεῖ· τιθέμεθα δ' οὖν τῶν πολλῶν τριγώνων κάλλιον ἓν, ὕπερβάντες τὰλλα, ἐξ οὗ τὸ ἰσόπλευρον τρίγωνον ἐκ τρίτου συνέστηκεν.

trate that unity is the good per se to say that numbers have desire; for no one says distinctly how they desire.<sup>34</sup>

It is indeed difficult to see how there could be goodness in mathematics. Aristotle's claim at *Metaphysics*, M 3 (1078a31-b6), that while beauty exists in mathematics, goodness does not, I suspect, seems much more reasonable. But now that we know or think we know that Plato believed everything beautiful was also good, we can perhaps, see how he could locate goodness in mathematics as well. He may have reasoned that since mathematics is beautiful it must be good as well.

And this might point to a fundamental difference between Plato and Aristotle on the question of goodness. Both Plato and Aristotle are remarkably similar in their understandings of beauty. Both associate it above all with proportion, *to symmetron*. Compare *Philebus* 65a, with Aristotle's *Metaphysics* M 3 (1078a31-b6). And for both, beauty plays a central role in ethics. We have already seen ample evidence of this, but it will also be recalled that beauty, *to kalon*, is repeatedly said to be the only proper goal of moral virtue in Aristotle's ethics. If there is any validity to Aristotle's claim that Plato located goodness in mathematics then, it would appear Plato and Aristotle differed not on the beautiful but on the good. For Aristotle, I think, goodness is analytically bound up with desire, such that if there is no desiring then there is no goodness. But perhaps, by assimilating the good to the beautiful Plato thought of goodness in a way that was possibly separate from desire, such that goodness could exist even in a context like mathematics where desire plays no role.

## 7. Mathematics in Ethics

Finally I would like to talk about a passage that brings together the themes of mathematics in ethics. At *Gorgias* 508a, Socrates states,

*Yes, Callicles, wise men claim that partnership and friendship, orderliness, self-control, and justice hold together heaven and earth, and gods and men, and that is why they call this universe a world order, my friend,*

*and not an undisciplined world-disorder. I believe that you don't pay attention to these facts even though you're a wise man in these matters. You've failed to notice that proportionate equality has great power among both gods and men, and you suppose that you ought to practice getting the greater share. That's because you neglect geometry.<sup>35</sup>*

This is surely one of the most remarkable passages in the Platonic corpus. Here Socrates attributes Callicles' amorality to his lack of appreciation for the study of geometry. But what is it about the study of geometry that Socrates thinks makes Callicles amoral? He claims that "friendship, orderliness, self-control and justice" hold the world together, and that "proportionate equality has great power among both gods and men", but even if this were so and Callicles recognized it to be so, why should that make him give up his amorality? Why should the study of geometry make him give up his view that the proper goal of life is the "get the greater share"? Socrates does not expand on his view here and so we must be left to speculate.

But knowing what we now know about the relation between goodness, beauty, and mathematics in Plato's thought, we may now suggest an answer. Socrates may be thinking that if Callicles, or anyone else studied geometry and mathematics, they could not help seeing the beauty in it. And this sort of beauty is real beauty for Plato, this is the true food and nourishment of the mind. Once Callicles saw this real beauty, he would make the pursuit of truth his real goal and no longer be interested in getting the greater share of material goods. In addition to this, Callicles might wish to imitate the beauty he saw in mathematics, and instantiate that beauty into his actions. Plato's thought might be that to instantiate this beauty into one's soul and actions is to become truly good and happy.

## 8. Conclusion

In this paper I have argued, first, that 'beautiful' is at least as good as any other translation of *kalos*. Secondly, I have argued that this beauty seems to supervene, for Plato, on a notion of es-

34. ἀνάπαλιν δὲ καὶ δευτέρον ἢ ὡς νῦν δεικνύουσι τὸ ἀγαθὸν αὐτό. νῦν μὲν γὰρ ἐκ τῶν ἀνομολογουμένων ἔχειν τὸ ἀγαθόν, ἐξ ἐκείνων τὰ ὀμολογούμενα εἶναι ἀγαθὰ δεικνύουσι, ἐξ ἀριθμῶν, ὅτι ἡ δικαιοσύνη καὶ ἡ ὑγίεια ἀγαθόν· τάξεις γὰρ καὶ ἀριθμοί, ὡς τοῖς ἀριθμοῖς καὶ ταῖς μονάσιν ἀγαθὸν ὑπάρχον διὰ τὸ εἶναι τὸ ἐν αὐτὸ ἀγαθόν... παρὰ βολος δὲ καὶ ἡ ἀπόδειξις ὅτι τὸ ἐν αὐτὸ τὸ ἀγαθόν, ὅτι οἱ ἀριθμοὶ ἐφίενται· οὔτε γὰρ ὡς ἐφίενται λέγονται φανερώς, ἀλλὰ λιαν ἀπλῶς τοῦτο φασί, καὶ ὄρεσιν εἶναι πᾶς ἀν τις ὑπολάβοι ἐν οἷς ζωῆ μὴ ὑπάρχει;

35. φασὶ δ' οἱ σοφοί, ὧ Καλλίκλεις, καὶ οὐρανὸν καὶ γῆν καὶ θεοὺς καὶ ἀνθρώπους τὴν κοινωνίαν συνέχειν καὶ φιλίαν καὶ κοσμιότητα καὶ σωφροσύνην καὶ δικαιοσύνην, καὶ τὸ ὅλον τοῦτο διὰ ταῦτα κόσμον καλοῦσιν, ὧ ἑταῖρε, οὐκ ἀκοσμίαν οὐδὲ ἀκολασίαν. σὺ δὲ μοι δοκεῖς οὐ προσέχειν τὸν νοῦν τούτοις, καὶ ταῦτα σοφός ὢν, ἀλλὰ λέληθέν σε ὅτι ἡ ἰσότης ἢ γεωμετρικὴ καὶ ἐν θεοῖς καὶ ἐν ἀνθρώποις μέγα δύναται, σὺ δὲ πλεονεξίαν οἶει δεῖν ἀσκεῖν· γεωμετρίας γὰρ ἀμελεῖς.

sential rightness, whereas his sense of goodness has more to do with benefit. We then moved on to try to show that while there is evidence that the Forms of beauty and goodness were distinct, still it seemed that there was a great deal of evidence that beauty and goodness were coextensive, at least at the level of sensible particulars. The consequences of this thesis in Plato's ethics is that he seems to assimilate goodness to beauty, more than the other way around, that is, he seems to start with the accepted understanding of beauty and argue that that is what constitutes human goodness. In mathematics, this thesis showed the way in which Plato or platonists could have thought that goodness exists in mathematics. Since beauty and goodness are coextensive, and since beauty clearly exists in mathematics most of all, it would follow that goodness must exist in mathematics as well. Finally, we argued, that this may shed some light on Socrates' puzzling claim that if Callicles only studied geometry he would see the value of fairness and morality, and give up trying to get the greater share. It may have been Plato's view that no one could fail to see the beauty of mathematics. And that in seeing this beauty humans would see the pursuit of truth as their ultimate goal and the instantiation of beauty in their soul and actions as their true happiness. Whether Plato was right about that is another question.

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