

The Unorthodox Theory of Forms in Plato's *Philebus*

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*This paper argues that we can make best sense of four key passages as well as the *Philebus* as a whole by rejecting the “orthodox” view that forms exist separately from particulars as determinate entities in their own right and accepting the “unorthodox” view that forms exist within particulars as their limiting and unifying measures and the ousiai of their geneiseis.*

I. Introduction

The *Philebus* presents a number of interpretive challenges to readers. In this paper I propose to examine a particularly knotty and controversial one: the status of forms within the dialogue. As one facet of the longstanding debate between unitarians and revisionists, scholars disagree about whether Plato holds or continues to hold something like the traditional or orthodox theory of forms in this dialogue.¹ I argue that we can make better sense of the exegetical and metaphysical difficulties of the *Philebus* through what I am calling the “unorthodox theory of forms” (UT) than through the “orthodox” or “transcendent theory of forms” (“TTF”). In the remainder of this introductory section, I will briefly explain what I mean by the orthodox and unorthodox theories, then proceed in the following sections to examine the passages in which the forms are most relevant, in light of these competing theories: (II) Socrates’ treatment of the one and the many, culminating in the questions he poses at 15b; (III) his presentation of the dialectical “way” and the notions of limit and unlimited at 16c ff.; (IV) his analysis of the four kinds, and especially of the limit and the mixture at 23b ff.; and (V) his

¹ Some commentators deny that the forms are even at issue in the *Philebus* (for example, Alfred E. Taylor, *Plato: Philebus and Epinomis*, ed. Raymond Klibansky, et al. [New York: Nelson and Sons, 1956], 45–50). However, Plato uses the terms *eidos* and *idea* frequently in a metaphysical context, following soon after his initial use of the terms *henad* and *monad* (cf. 16d1, 7, 18c2, 19b2, et al.). The main question is not whether Plato is discussing the forms in some sense in the *Philebus*, but whether he is using these terms to refer to forms as conceived by the orthodox theory.

treatment of pleasure as genesis in relation to being and goodness (53c ff.) and the following analysis and selection of kinds of knowledge (55c–62a).

Since Aristotle the TTF has been the dominant interpretation of Plato's forms, taking its cue from key sections of dialogues such as the *Phaedo*, *Republic*, *Symposium*, *Phaedrus*, and *Timaeus*. In brief, the TTF holds the forms to be self-predicating, eternally unchanging beings that exist independently of (*chōris*) the generated particulars that somehow imitate or participate in their natures. *Chōrismos* indicates that forms exist as entities in their own right, separate from the particular beings of which they are the forms; self-predication indicates that forms themselves possess the determinate natures that their particulars in turn imitate or participate in. Different versions of this theory emphasize different aspects of the forms, but since *chōrismos* and self-predication are central to Aristotle's criticism of the Platonic forms, and so to the tradition that follows him, I will take them as central features of the orthodox theory of forms.² Attempts to explain the relation between independently existing determinate forms and particulars are vulnerable to *aporiai* such as those that Aristotle raises—the so-called third man problem, for example. Since Plato himself considers a version of this problem, among others, in the *Parmenides*, he could hardly be unaware of the difficulties with the TTF.³ On the usual

² See Shiner for arguments that Aristotle's frequent use of the term *chōrismos* has sufficient justification from the way Plato discusses the forms in many places (Roger Shiner, *Knowledge and Reality in Plato's Philebus* [Assen: Van-Gorcum, 1974], 23–25). Shiner puts *chōrismos* first on his list of four essential elements of the TTF (22–24). Benitez, following Woodruff, lists the following essential aspects of the forms: “I. One-over-many,” “II. Logical causation,” “III. Self-Predication,” “IV. Being versus becoming,” and “V. Knowledge versus opinion” (Eugenio E. Benitez, *Forms in Plato's Philebus* [Assen, The Netherlands: Van Gorcum, 1989], 3). Oddly, in spite of calling this the “theory of transcendent forms” (TTF), he does not explicitly include transcendence or separation (*chōrismos*) among these characteristics. Benitez acknowledges that Plato often uses language to suggest that forms are present in particulars but insists that transcendence merely requires that forms be “capable of existing independently of them” and lays greater emphasis on the ontological difference (IV) as supporting the theory (106–107, 23). Still, the requirement that forms be “capable of existing independently” of their instances implies that forms are capable of existing as determinate beings in their own right, separate from any and all particulars, which is precisely what the doctrines of *chōrismos* and self-predication claim. Gail Fine argues that independent existence is the most important sense of *chōrismos* in Aristotle's account, and that while some forms in some dialogues do seem to be separate, this is not a doctrine that Plato says much about one way or the other. Fine, “Separation,” in *Plato on Knowledge and Forms* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2003), 254 ff.

³ Vlastos, while acknowledging that Plato saw problems with the TTF, argues that Plato was not fully aware of the logical implications of the theory or of the versions of the third man argument that he presents in the *Parmenides* (“The Third Man Argument in the *Parmenides*,” *The Philosophical Review* 63, no. 3 [July 1954]: 319–49). However, Cherniss presents good reasons to reject Vlastos' interpretation (Harold Cherniss, “The Relation of the *Timaeus* to Plato's Later Dialogues,” *The American Journal of*

developmentalist account, Plato discovered and articulated these objections in the *Parmenides* after having first laid out the TTF in the dialogues mentioned above, after which he largely abandoned the theory of forms in favor of more sophisticated metaphysical theories in the so-called late dialogues, including the *Philebus*. I do not address developmentalism or revisionism *per se*, because in this paper I focus on the *Philebus* itself. Nevertheless, my arguments should lend support to Shiner, who wished to show “that the text of the *Philebus* is *consistent with* the truth of revisionism.”⁴ In any case, keeping in mind Plato’s own recognition of problems faced by the TTF, we must at least take seriously the possibility that he does not hold this theory in the *Philebus*, whatever its status in other dialogues.

In contrast, on what I am calling the unorthodox theory, the forms do not exist as absolute, determinate beings apart from the particular beings that instantiate them. Rather, they exist only in relation to the particulars as the limits and measures that bring determinacy and unity to particular beings. The key concept in the *Philebus* to which these terms “limit,” “measure,” “determinacy,” and “unity” refer is *to peras*, in contrast to *to apeiron*—usually translated as the limit and unlimited, respectively.⁵ While the limit and unlimited are apparent

Philology 78, no. 3 [1957]: 225–266, esp. 257 and following). For a good recent discussion of the problems with the TTF laid out in the *Parmenides* and Plato’s response to them in the *Philebus*, see Andrew Hamilton, “Plato’s Theory of Forms Reconsidered: Radical Purity in *Philebus* 11a-15b?”, *Ancient Philosophy* 25 (2005): 349–363, and compare Samuel Rickless, “How Parmenides Saved the Theory of Forms,” *Philosophical Review* 107 (1998): 501–554.

⁴ *Knowledge and Reality*, 34. On this debate, compare the revisionist Owen and the unitarian Cherniss, as well as Shiner, Fahrnkopf, Mohr, and Dancy. See also Striker and Sayre for revisionist arguments, Hampton and Benitez for arguments supporting orthodoxy. (G. E. L. Owen, “The Place of the *Timaeus* in Plato’s Dialogues,” *Classical Quarterly* 38 [1953]: 79–95; Cherniss, “*Timaeus*”; Shiner, *Knowledge and Reality* and “Knowledge in *Philebus* 55C-62A: A Response to Richard Mohr’s ‘*Philebus* 55C-62A and Revisionism’,” *Canadian Journal of Philosophy* 9 [SUPP 1983]: 171–83; Robert Fahrnkopf, “Forms in the *Philebus*,” *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 15 [1977]: 202–7; Richard Mohr, “*Philebus* 55C-62A and Revisionism,” *Canadian Journal of Philosophy* 9 [SUPP 1983]: 165–70; Russell M. Dancy, “The One, the Many, and the Forms: *Philebus* 15b1-8,” *Ancient Philosophy* 4 [1984]: 160–93; Gisela Striker, *Peras und Apeiron* [Goettingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1970]; Sayre, *Plato’s Late Ontology*; Cynthia Hampton, *Pleasure, Knowledge, and Being* [Albany: SUNY Press, 1990]; Benitez, *Forms*.)

⁵ As this summary suggests, I hold the forms to be more closely associated with the limit than with the other three major metaphysical kinds introduced in the *Philebus*—the unlimited, mixture, and cause. However, because on my account the limit is always in the process of being mixed with the unlimited in the generation of particular beings, the same is true of the forms as the conveyors of limit. The issue of whether or where the forms can be located within one of the four metaphysical kinds has been a frequent topic of debate in the literature. See Davis for a review of the basic positions and their main defenders; P. J. Davis, “The Fourfold Classification in Plato’s *Philebus*,” *Apeiron* 13 (1979): 124–34. See Kenneth Sayre for a more recent discussion of this question in “Do Forms Have a Role in Plato’s *Philebus*,” in

opposites, Socrates joins them in the mixture (through the fourth kind, the cause), in which he subsequently locates the mixed life of pleasure and wisdom, judged to be the good life for human beings. The UT provides a better interpretation of these passages, and so of the dialogue as a whole, than the TTF, because it holds that the forms are always already mixed and being mixed with the particulars in generative processes that bring unity and limit into being within them. With that said, let us now turn to the first of the sections indicated above.

II. *One and Many*

Following Protarchus' acceptance of "many and unlike pleasures"⁶ and "many and different kinds of knowledge," Socrates proposes to examine the "wondrous" issue of the one and the many that had been lurking behind their previous dispute over the unity and diversity of pleasure (14a–c).⁷ With this proposal the dialogue turns overtly to metaphysical issues for the first time. Socrates first rejects the ordinary or "commonplace" (*dedēmeumena*) conception of unity (14d4), according to which a unity is just any particular thing or person, such as Protarchus' example of himself. Such things are generated and destructible, just like the multiple "limbs and parts" (14e1) of which they are supposed to be the unities. In contrast, a proper unity, according to Socrates, neither comes to be nor passes away. As such, these unities (*henades*) possess the essential ontological characteristic attributed to the forms in other dialogues. Socrates cites "human being," "ox," "the beautiful," and "the good" as examples (15a4–5).

Yet how are ungenerated unities, such as "human being," related to the multiple

Plato's Forms: Varieties of Interpretation, ed. William Welton (New York: Lexington Books, 2002), following up on his discussion of ontological questions in the *Philebus* and other late dialogues in *Plato's Late Ontology: A Riddle Resolved* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1983).

⁶ All translations are my own, from *Platonis Opera*, vol. 2, ed. John Burnet (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988).

⁷ From the very beginning of this discussion at 12c, Socrates accepts that something (in this case pleasure) can be both one and many, and that its parts can be opposites in some respect (both good and bad pleasures). Since he dismisses one and many problems involving particulars alone, the "wondrous" problem of one and many can be relevant for the examination of pleasure (and wisdom) only if these are assumed to be forms of some sort. Clearly, then, Socrates in the *Philebus* differs from the Socrates of the *Parmenides* in his acceptance of the unity and multiplicity of forms (cf. Hamilton, "Plato's Theory of Forms Reconsidered," p. 356). Nevertheless, the task still remains to show *how* they can be both one and many, particularly in their relation to the innumerable many particulars, as he goes on to emphasize in the 15b questions.

generated particulars that are supposed to be unified by them, such as “Protarchus” or “Socrates”? Socrates points out that the attempt to posit and perform divisions upon such unities will meet with controversy, and he goes on to spell out the controversy in the questions he poses at 15b. I take it that Socrates is asking three,⁸ with the third having two parts: (1) whether there actually are any such unities (*monadas*⁹); (2) how unities of this sort (*tautas*) can be in each case a unity (*mian tautēn*);¹⁰ and (3) how they are related to the generated multiplicities of which they are the unities, whether (a) remaining as unities separate from themselves as related to the multiplicities or (b) being divided and dispersed among the multiplicities. These questions may

⁸ This issue has been hotly debated in the literature. See Muniz and Rudebusch, Meinwald, Mirhady, Hampton, Benitez Dancy, and Hahn for persuasive arguments in favor of the three question position (Fernando Muniz and George Rudebusch, “Plato, “Philebus” 15B: A Problem Solved,” *The Classical Quarterly*, New Series 54.2 (Dec. 2004): 394–405; Constance Meinwald, “One/Many Problems: *Philebus* 14c1-15c3,” *Phronesis* 41, no. 1 [1996]: 95–103; David Mirhady, “The Great Fuss over *Philebus* 15b,” *Apeiron* 25, no. 3 [1992]: 171–77; Hampton, *Pleasure*; Benitez, *Forms*; Dancy, “The One, The Many”; Robert Hahn, “On Plato’s *Philebus*: 15b1-8,” *Phronesis* 23, no. 2 [1978]: 158–72). Hackforth, Striker, and Gosling, among others, argue for two (Reginald Hackforth, *Plato’s Examination of Pleasure* [London: Cambridge Univ. Press], 1972; Striker, *Peras und Apeiron*; Justin Gosling, *Plato: Philebus* [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975]). For recent discussion and bibliographies, see, in addition to Muniz and Rudebusch (*op. cit.*), Carpenter and Delcomminette (Amber Carpenter, “Nevertheless: The Philosophical Significance of the Questions Posed at *Philebus* 15b,” *Logical Analysis and History of Philosophy* 12 [2009]: 103–29; Sylvain Delcomminette, “The One-and-Many Problems at *Philebus* 15B,” *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy* 22 [2002]: 21–42). Since I emphasize the third problem in particular, I do not think my interpretation is significantly affected by whether one posits two or three questions.

⁹ Muniz and Rudebusch (*op. cit.*) offer an interpretation of 15a–b that turns on making a distinction between the *monades* referred to here and the *henades* referred to just above. On their view, the *henades* are generic unities such as “human being” or “pleasure,” while the *monades* are specific unities that have been divided out of these, such as “wise human being” and “foolish human being” or “good pleasure” and “bad pleasure.” I find their reasoning persuasive, and it is certainly compatible with the unorthodox theory I put forward here, though they do not comment on the relation of forms to particulars in this or later passages.

¹⁰ A prominent group of commentators, including Bury, Burnett, and Taylor, holds that the second question concerns the problem of relating being to unity. For discussion of these commentators and their position, see Hahn (“On Plato’s *Philebus*: 15b1-8,” 161–63). Hahn argues that all three questions are concerned with this problem (163 and following). For discussion of the view that the second question most directly concerns the relation of unities (plural) to each other within a more comprehensive unity (singular), see Andrew Barker, “Plato’s *Philebus*: The Numbering of a Unity,” *Apeiron* 29, no. 4 (1996): 161–64; cf. Hampton, *Pleasure*, 16 and following, 91–2; Carpenter, “Nevertheless,” 115–21; Meinwald, “One/Many Problems,” 100. In any case, this question should not be considered in isolation from the third question concerning the relation of ungenerated unities to generated multiplicities, which is the focal and culminating point of the series of questions as well as of the methodology at 16c and following, and which, as we shall see, lies at the heart of the relation of limit and unlimited in mixture as “genesis into being.” Accounts that minimize or reject the place of the form-particular relation in the *Philebus* miss a significant aspect of its metaphysical message, in my view (see especially Julius M. Moravcsik, “Forms, Nature, and the Good in the *Philebus*,” *Phronesis* 24 [1979]: 81–104).

be restated as one question: namely, how can Socrates' ungenerated and indestructible unities, assuming they exist at all, actually *be* unities, and so accomplish their essential task of unifying generated and destructible multiplicities, given the paradoxes that result from attempting to relate them?

While the basic problem with the "commonplace" unities seems to be that they are too much like their multiple "limbs and parts," and so lack the unchanging durability that would allow them to serve as their unities, the basic problem with Socrates' unities seems to be that they are as ungenerated and unchanging too *unlike* the generated and changing multiplicities to be related to them without being either entirely dispersed amongst the indefinitely many particulars or divided as unities from themselves as unifying, which in either case would violate their fundamental nature as unities by making them into multiplicities, and so would result in the contradiction of declaring one and the same thing, namely the unity, to be both one (as a unity) and many (as unifying).

In considering how to make sense of this passage, it is important to note first that Socrates poses these questions without giving any answers himself, and second that he indicates the particular importance of resolving these issues correctly in order to make progress (*euporia*) and avoid impasse (*aporia*) (15b8–c3). So we should be careful not to assume the answers without careful reflection. The first question asks simply, "whether one should assume that there truly *are* unities (*monadas*) of this sort?" (15b1–2).¹¹ We might assume, since Socrates has just argued for accepting formal unities over the "commonplace" ones, that we should answer this in the affirmative, accept their determinate qualities as unified, eternal, and unchanging, and then consider how to reconcile the qualities of such entities with the utterly contrasting qualities of the entities that they are supposed to unify. Of course, then we run into the *aporiai* that result from either attempt at such reconciliation.¹²

¹¹ Hahn argues that the phrasing *alēthōs ousas* evokes and so calls into question the special ontological status of the forms. As he puts it, "The first question, then, asks whether or not the Forms as unities should be ontologically characterized as 'true being.' Since the inquiry is whether or not the Forms are non-phenomenal entities, ontologically independent from those constituting the world of becoming, this first question asks if we are to retain the *chōrismos* and maintain the structure implied by the Divided Line at *Republic* 509D-511E" ("On Plato's *Philebus*: 15b1-8," 164).

¹² As Mirhady notes, "The dispute can only lead to the dilemma in so far as the first two parts of the statement at 15b are affirmed" ("The Great Fuss," 177). But since he thinks that an affirmative answer is demanded by the first question, he is led to the conclusion that the dilemma and absurdity posed by the third question is unavoidable and irresolvable (*ibid.*, 174). While he attempts to defuse the metaphysical

However, if we answer the first question in the negative, an entirely different course of interpretation opens up, one which avoids these *aporiai* altogether. To say that we should *not* assume that such unities actually exist does not mean that we should reject Socrates' unities in favor of the "commonplace" unities or none at all, but rather that we should not accept their existence as determinate entities in their own right. In other words, we should reject an orthodox interpretation of these unities. In that case, though, we need to find some alternative to declaring their existence or nonexistence. The alternative proposed by the UT is to say that they exist as *interdependent* and *determining* aspects of the entities of which they are the unities. Similarly, the qualities of unity, eternality, and changelessness do not characterize the unities on their own but rather are the enduring determinate aspects of the entities of which they are the unities.¹³ To use one of Socrates' examples, humanity is perhaps the most important unifying and defining aspect of Protarchus, one that endures through all the changes in his parts, existing in him so long as he lives and in other human beings so long as they live, fluctuating in the times and places and manner of its instantiations, but never coming into being or passing away or changing in itself *as* the form "human being," any more than it exists independently and determinately *as* this form apart from any and all particulars. Protarchus does not instantiate the form "human being" in exactly the same way that Socrates does, for no two particular human beings are the same, any more than any two oxen, beautiful things, good things or any other particular things are the same. But when multiple particulars instantiate the same unities, those unities set limits on their properties, including what kinds may or may not be possessed, in what amounts, in what proportions, and so on, and therefore limit the extent of their possible divergence from each other. It is in these limits that we see the presence and operation of forms in particulars as their unifying natures.¹⁴

force of the questions by claiming that Plato did not take them as posing a serious threat to the "theory of forms," but only a "great fuss" in the hands of youthful debaters, Plato's treatment of such questions here and elsewhere (especially in the *Parmenides* and *Theaetetus-Sophist-Statesman*) indicates that he does take them seriously. The questions, moreover, do indeed pose a threat to the "theory of forms" as understood in the orthodox fashion, as do their proper answers—but as I see it the threat is intentional on Plato's part, as is the unorthodox outcome.

¹³ Although Frede is not an "unorthodox" interpreter of the *Philebus*, she puts this point perfectly: "Plato's concern in the *Philebus* is with a differentiation in aspect rather than with two rigidly separated worlds, as has often been assumed." (Dorothea Frede, *Philebus* [Indianapolis: Hackett, 1993], lxiii).

¹⁴ In saying that the forms are the unities of particulars, I do not mean to suggest that the forms are themselves responsible for distinguishing one generated being from another as *this* particular being versus

We will consider the manifestation of unity or form as limit in the next section, but from what we have said so far, we can see that the present interpretation of Socrates' unities—accepting the reality of those unities without attributing separate, determinate existence to them—avoids the dilemma of the third question by locating the unities within the multiplicities as dynamic determining features of their nature. So the unities are neither dispersed amongst the multiplicities nor divided from themselves because they are never separate from the multiplicities in the first place. The dilemma assumes an initial standpoint of separation and independent existence, which when rejected fails to generate the dilemma.¹⁵ Of course, we are still very far from explaining the process by which unities govern multiplicities or how they can transcend the transitory existence of the particulars that instantiate them without at the same time being determinate beings in their own right. Moreover, it is probably fair to say that neither Socrates nor any other character fully explains these mysteries either in the *Philebus* or anywhere else in the Platonic corpus.¹⁶ Nevertheless, an interpretation that does not fully explain

that one: for example, the form humanity does not itself distinguish Protarchus from Socrates. It is unclear that the *Philebus* even addresses the “thisness” of particulars (but note that the *Timaeus*, which does address this issue, denies that a generated particular is ever a “this” because it is constantly changing). However, if the *Philebus* does allow a generated being to be a “this,” its thisness would have to derive from the unlimited on the one hand, which allows for the indefinite multiplicity of phenomena, and from the cause on the other, as the agent that brings limit to the unlimited and so acts as the generating force of the particulars in each case. For their part, the forms as conveyers of limit unify by bringing together the multiple, diverse, and always changing aspects of a generated being into orderly determinate relation with each other, and so allow for the preservation of identity in terms of enduring characteristics over time.

¹⁵ In this connection, Letwin's interpretation is quite instructive. He sees an implicit and failed attempt in the *Philebus* to overcome the gaps between forms and particulars, divine and human *nous*, and so on, but the incoherence and failure that he attributes to Plato stems from first attributing to him the kind of dualism that belongs to the orthodox theory of forms (Oliver Letwin, “Interpreting the *Philebus*,” *Phronesis* 26 [1981]: 187–206). As Caspar puts it, “. . . no conception of participation which is tied to the notion of separate forms will help to solve (3) [that is, the third question]. Indeed, it is such a conception that seems to be the cause of the trouble” (Dennis Caspar, “Is There a Third One and Many Problem in Plato?” *Apeiron* 11, no. 2 [1977]: 25).

¹⁶ Benitez argues that Plato does not solve or intend to solve the 15b problem but only mitigates its force through introduction of the dialectical method (*Forms*, 32–4 and following). However, as he sees it, “Plato raises the serious one-many problem as a difficulty for a theory he is interested in maintaining, and not to criticize a theory he no longer holds” (ibid., 30). In contrast, Shiner holds that “14-18 can be taken as showing Plato to raise questions about how ‘separate’ monads can be related to particulars, and not only to not answer them, but also to show his interest lies elsewhere,” which Shiner takes as consistent with Plato's rejection of the TTF (*Knowledge and Reality*, 42). Sayre's explanation, following Aristotle's account of Platonic metaphysics, is that Plato relates forms and sensibles by their possession of a common principle, namely the unlimited, characterized by Aristotle as the “infinite dyad” or “the great and the

fundamental ontological mysteries is still to be preferred to one that generates inescapable contradictions, particularly when it opens the way to a more adequate metaphysical framework in which to consider them. Plato lays out the larger framework that governs this conception of unity in his presentation of the dialectical way and the four kinds. Accordingly, let us turn to that discussion now.

III. *The Dialectical Way*

Socrates introduces the dialectical “way” (*hodos*) of engaging in discourse (16b5, 17a4–5), at Protarchus’ request (16a7–b2), as a means of overcoming the eristical exploitation of unity and multiplicity in discourse by youthful debaters (15d4–16a3). Socrates’ account of this exploitation, in turn, follows his presentation at 15b of the questions that express the “controversy” that attends the attempt to posit eternal and unchanging unities and perform divisions upon them (15a4–7). So it would seem that the dialectical way is meant to provide a way to understand the relation of unity and multiplicity, and specifically the relation of eternal and unchanging unities to the indeterminate multiplicity of generated beings. As I will show, we can best understand how the dialectical way can accomplish this task if we interpret it in accordance with the UT.

Now let’s consider the details of Socrates’ description. In his introduction of the dialectical way, Socrates declares that the ancients passed down as a gift from the gods the doctrine that “the things that are said always¹⁷ to be are from one and many and have limit and

small” (cf. “Forms,” *Plato’s Late Ontology*). In saying this, he rejects the possibility of relating them by having forms present in particulars “in some manner suggestive of Aristotle [sc. the Aristotelian forms]” (“Forms,” 178). While I do not think Plato’s forms are identical to Aristotle’s, my argument in this paper is that, in the context of the *Philebus*, at least, the forms *are* present in particulars, namely by imparting limiting measures on the otherwise unlimited aspects of generated beings.

¹⁷ It is unclear whether *aei* here is meant to modify “said” or “be,” and consequently whether the things in question are the always existing beings (forms) or those that are always *said* to be existing beings, that is, by most people most of the time (particulars). I have translated the passage in a way that doesn’t presume to decide this question, though as I will argue momentarily, we can make the best sense of this passage by interpreting these beings as particulars. For the sake of brevity, I will typically refer to these as “beings” or “existing beings.” Cf. R. M. Dancy with Greg Lynch and Hans-Georg Gadamer (Dancy, “The Limits of Being in the *Philebus*,” *Apeiron* 40, no. 1 [March 2007]: 35–70, esp. 56 and following; Lynch, “Limit and Unlimitedness in the *Philebus*: An Argument for the Gadamerian Reading,” *Apeiron* 46, no. 1 [2013]: 48–62); *Plato’s Dialectical Ethics*, trans. Robert Wallace [New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991]). See also Naomi Reshotko, “Restoring Coherence to the Gods’ Gift to Men: *Philebus* 16c9–18b7 and

unlimitedness in themselves together by nature (*sumphuton*)” (16c9–10). It is “because these things have been ordered in this way” (*toutōn houtō diakekōsmēmenōn*), he says next, that “we ought always on every occasion to posit (*themenous*) one form (*idea*) concerning everything and then seek it—for since it is in there (*enousan*), we will find it” (16c10–d2). Socrates here is clearly linking his proposed way of gaining knowledge of beings to a claim about their nature. Because beings come from unity (“one”), we can understand what a being is most generally by finding the “one form” that exists within it (*enousan*). However, because beings also come from multiplicity, we must go on to look for additional forms within the first form—a process that apparently corresponds to the division (*diaireseōs*) that Socrates mentioned at 15a as following upon the “positing” (*tithesthai*) of ungenerated and unchanging unities. So we must divide the “one form” that we have discovered into a number of additional forms,¹⁸ and each of these in turn,¹⁹ until we see “not just that the original one is one and many and unlimited, but also how many it is” (16d6–7). At that point, having enumerated all the forms²⁰ “between the unlimited and the one,” we should conclude by “releasing each one of them all into the unlimited” (16e1–2).²¹ In short, to understand the nature of a being, we must discern the limited multiplicity of forms that pertain to it within an overarching unity. The multiplicity that yields knowledge must be limited, not unlimited, for as soon as we reach the unlimited aspect of a being, the investigation of its nature ceases.

23e3-27b8) in *Plato's Philebus: Selected Papers from the Eighth Symposium Platonicum*, eds. John Dillon and Luc Brisson (Sankt Augustin: Academic Verlag, 2010).

¹⁸ “. . . after one [form] we must consider if there are somehow two forms, or if not, three or some other number . . .” (16d).

¹⁹ “. . . we must consider each of those again as one in the same manner . . .” (16d).

²⁰ “. . . the entire number of the multitude (*plēthos*). . .” (16d).

²¹ As Socrates goes on to note, it is sometimes necessary to proceed in the opposite direction, from the unlimited many to the one (18a7–b3). In such cases one seeks the unity of an indefinite multiplicity by collecting rather than dividing; and here too it is essential to grasp the intermediate forms between the one and the many. He provides the example of Theuth (18b6–d2), who first collected three classes of spoken sound, divided each of these in turn into the letters, then unified the whole as the field of sound that is comprehended by the art of grammar (*grammatikē*). Since Theuth in this example is both dividing and collecting, it is likely that we are meant to see the importance of performing both activities in a dialectical investigation. In any such investigation, we begin with a pre-theoretical sense of a common nature unifying some phenomena, such as spoken sounds, and we then attempt to discover distinctions within the kind in order to gain greater understanding of the one common nature and the several specific aspects of this nature, which are to be applied back to the unlimited phenomena at the conclusion of the investigation.

Now, in light of Socrates' description of this way, how are we to understand the nature of these forms and their relation to the particulars, the notions of limit and unlimited, and the beings to which the forms and the limit and unlimited are related in this passage? Let's consider these questions in reverse order. While Socrates never specifies what kind of beings he is talking about,²² he does distinguish them implicitly from the one and many because the "things that are said always to be" come from them. Since the notions of one and many are then applied to forms, this suggests that the beings in question are not themselves forms, but rather "are from" forms. Moreover, since as noted above, the way is meant to address the relation of these forms as unities to "unlimited and generated beings" (*gignomenois au kai apeirois*: 15b5), it can only do this if we interpret the "things that are said always to be" as at least including such beings. Finally, as this phrase "unlimited and generated beings" suggests, if the sense of the unlimited in 16c–d is meant to correspond to the sense of it in the 15b passage (and cf. 14e3–4), it must refer to generated beings, not eternal forms.²³

This takes us to the second question. In both the 15b and 16c passages, the term "unlimited" appears to have a primarily quantitative sense. In the earlier passage it was associated with multiplicity in contrast to the unity of the eternal beings, and in the present passage it is contrasted with both the unity and the limited multiplicity of the forms. Correspondingly, the sense of "limit" in the 16c passage is also primarily quantitative, indicating the possibility of enumeration. However, the point is not just to count forms but to understand the nature of beings in their unity and multiplicity. Quantitative determinacy can only lead to knowledge if it accompanies qualitative determinacy, for it is by seeing that a given being has such and such determinate aspects that we come to understand its nature. In fact, we have no way of dividing the sub-forms within a comprehensive form unless we can discern qualitative distinctions among them. In turn, because quantitative as well as qualitative determinacy pertain to the forms in this passage, it would seem that we can only gain knowledge of a particular being by grasping the quantitative and qualitative limits that come to it from its forms. The forms allow

²² Not surprisingly, then, commentators disagree about whether the beings are forms, particulars, or both. See Silverman for a good recent discussion of this issue. A more comprehensive discussion of the alternatives can be found in Gosling. Allan Silverman, "Philebean Metaphysics," in *Plato's Forms* (199–203); Gosling, *Plato* (153–81).

²³ Shiner rejects a parallel between the two passages, but he does so because he thinks the "unlimited many" in the "way" passage are forms, rather than particulars (*Knowledge and Reality*, 40). However, it seems clear from Socrates' emphasis on counting the divided forms that they cannot be unlimitedly many.

us to say not only that beings have certain quantitatively enumerable aspects, but also what those aspects are and how they fit together as a hierarchically organized unity-in-multiplicity. Once we have discerned these forms, all that remains to do, as Socrates puts it, is “apply the form of the unlimited to the multitude,” and, “releasing each one of them all into the unlimited, say farewell” (16d7–e2). The unlimited apparently gives us knowledge only insofar as it serves to distinguish the beings that can be designated as unlimited from the limited unities and so to designate them as particulars rather than forms. At the same time, *as* particulars, and so as dependent on forms for their unity and determinacy, we can further specify the ways in which they *lack* unity and determinacy, permanence and stability, and so describe them in terms of their specific manifestations of the unlimited.²⁴ So considered, the particulars are not only unlimited in number but also, insofar as we consider them apart from the forms that pertain to them, qualitatively indeterminate.²⁵

Turning now to our primary question, concerning the proper interpretation of the forms in relation to the particulars, we can see that the forms as the source of both quantitative and qualitative limits are responsible for the determinate nature of the particulars. The forms can serve this function because they are not just one but many, and as many, they become the limits of the otherwise unlimited particular beings. In their multiplicity the forms serve as “the middle things,” or intermediaries, which as Socrates emphasizes in his conclusion of this passage, make all the difference in whether we are conducting ourselves “dialectically” or “eristically” in our discourse about beings (17a3–5).²⁶ One and many are not incompatible opposites, because they are joined together in this network of forms that gives us specific and detailed knowledge about beings. It is by imparting an identity of enumerable determinate aspects, expressed through its

²⁴ We will address the peculiar sense in which the unlimited has species or forms in the next section.

²⁵ There is another sense in which particulars are quantitatively unlimited, namely in their possession of countlessly many “limbs and parts,” as Socrates put it at 14e. That is, they (unlike the forms) can be divided into infinitely many parts; this is one reason they are not capable of constituting their own unity, but instead depend on ungenerated and imperishable forms. But since Socrates dismissed the characterization of the one-many problem that he was considering there, and doesn’t appear to invoke that sense of the unlimited in his accounts of the way and the four kinds, we need not consider it further here.

²⁶ This alternative likely corresponds to the alternative presented at the end of the 15b passage, where Socrates says that either *aporia* or *euporia* will follow from the questions he has just presented, depending on how one addresses them: they are “the cause of all perplexities and helplessness when they are not well agreed upon, and again of all progress and success if they are” (15c1). For them to be “well agreed upon,” then, they must be addressed “dialectically.”

subordinate specific forms, that the “one form” is related to the innumerable particulars. Particular beings are indeterminately many but never simply indeterminate, because they also manifest the one and determinate many, without which they would possess no distinct nature and specific attributes that would serve to unify the inconstant diversity of their parts and connect them to other beings with the same form or forms. Without the indeterminate many, on the other hand, the one and many, limit and unlimited, would never come to be in relation to each other. As Socrates emphasizes, the limit and unlimited, one and many, are “together by nature” *in* “the beings that are said always to be.” For this reason, limit and unlimited cannot exist or be adequately conceived apart from each other in the beings that manifest and instantiate the mixture of the two. The same, then, applies to the forms that are expressed in and as the limits within existing beings.

Socrates’ subsequent examples provide further confirmation of the essential intersection of forms and particulars, limit and unlimited, unity and multiplicity. Spoken sound (*phonē*) is “one thing,” Socrates says, and at the same time it is “unlimited in amount, for each and every one of us” (17b3–4). As this latter phrase suggests, the unlimited here refers to the indefinitely many particular instances of the “one thing,” which is the unity or form of *phonē*. This unity does not itself come to be or pass away, while the particular sounds uttered by “each and every one of us” constantly do. But as Socrates notes, what makes us “literate” (*grammatikon*), i.e., knowledgeable or educated about spoken sound or language, is the ability to discern specific types of sound—“how many there are and of what sort”—between the one and the unlimited many (17b7–9). As he goes on to emphasize in the music example, to be genuinely “wise in music,” one must be as precise as possible, distinguishing not just high, low, and intermediate pitches, but the various scales, notes, and harmonious combinations (17c7–d3). Now, these are clearly distinctions among forms, not particulars, because even at the lowest level of division, the letters or notes, one is considering quantitatively enumerable, qualitatively distinct, and eternal aspects of sounds that can be instantiated in an unlimited number of perishable particular cases, each of which also instantiates higher unities—as the letter “a” instantiates “vowel”—as well as the highest unity that encompasses them all: vocal or musical sound. At the same time, however, we cannot make these distinctions without considering the particulars, for without having heard a range of particular sounds we would have no way to perceive their distinctive natures. We distinguish the forms within these particulars as the defining limits or measures of the audible

phenomena. Only in their relation to the unlimited particular sounds can the forms be distinguished in their number and nature, as limits of the unlimited.²⁷ For this reason, the dialectical way is a viable path to knowledge only on the UT, according to which the forms are mixed as limits with the unlimited in the generated particulars, and thus constitute their unity and determinacy. Keeping this point in mind will help us to make sense of Socrates' subsequent analysis of the four kinds.

IV. *The Four Kinds*

Socrates introduces the four kinds (*genē*)—the unlimited, limit, mixture, and cause—as a “device” (23b7) to help determine whether pleasure or wisdom holds second place within the best life, which he and Protarchus have just agreed to be the mixed life composed of both (22a–c). As he notes, while this device is different from what came before, some elements of it may well be the same (23b8–9), which apparently is an allusion to the dialectical way, since we find reference to the limit and unlimited in both sections. In addition, the very notion of the mixed life implies the mixture, as Socrates makes clear when he goes on to link the mixed life to the mixed *genos* (27d4–10). Furthermore, since the dialectical way is supposed to relate unities and multiplicities, and since the investigation of the four kinds also involves the relation of unities and multiplicities, we should expect the dialectical way to play a role in this examination. So while there are certainly differences between the two sections, we should not lose sight of what remains “the same,” both in the larger purpose and in the parallel concepts found in both.²⁸ Since, then, we were able to make the best sense of the dialectical way by interpreting it in unorthodox fashion, the same interpretation should help us make sense of the four kinds passage and, in particular, of Socrates' convoluted analysis of the limit in relation to the mixture.

²⁷ Sayre argues that the distinctions are intelligible, not audible, noting that the musical intervals discovered and then handed down by our Pythagorean forebears “are defined in terms of mathematical ratios which are accessible by intellect but not by hearing” (“Do the Forms Have a Role in Plato's *Philebus*,” 180). Of course, he is right to say that the mathematical ratios themselves are not audible—we cannot hear numbers—but we can only discern which ratios are defining of specific notes, and even more, which combinations of notes are harmonious, on the basis of the audible sounds. Even where we go on to make mathematical distinctions between intervals so small that they cannot be detected by the ear, we can only do this on the basis of having first discovered the intervals that are audible.

²⁸ As Gosling notes, one requirement of a successful interpretation of both passages is to find compatible technical meanings of the terms limit and unlimited in both (*Plato*, 186).

As we see from its very beginning, Socrates explicitly conducts his investigation of the four kinds in accordance with the dialectical way. Socrates introduces the four kinds by “dividing” (*dialabōmen*) “everything that exists now in the universe”: first, he divides out “the unlimited of the things that are, as well as the limit,” then, “as the third, something mixed together out of both of these,” and fourth, “the cause of the mixing together of these with each other” (23c4–d8). Next, as he prepares to undertake his investigation of each in turn, he again divides, taking “three from the four,” and then announces the need to collect the members of “two of these,” namely the unlimited and limit: “since we see each having been split and scattered into many, let’s attempt, by bringing each of the two back together into one, to conceive in whatever way each of them is one and many” (23e3–24a3). Socrates proceeds, accordingly, to describe some of the “many” that comprise the “one” unlimited kind, emphasizing throughout his brief investigation their distinctive characteristics as members of the unlimited kind, and concludes with a summary that “stamp[s] . . . a sign of some one nature” on this group of diverse but related members (25a4). Socrates thus seems to be following the dialectical way in reverse order, by moving from many to one rather than one to many (cf. 18a–b ff.).²⁹ While he acknowledges implicitly the incompleteness of this investigation, since he does not “prolong matters” by going through all the members of the unlimited kind (24e5), he does succeed in accomplishing the task he put before them, to collect the “split and scattered” members of this kind, by describing the nature of the unlimited that unifies them.

As Socrates’ dialectical procedure implies, and as his terminology confirms, the four

²⁹ As he says there, one should move in this direction when one is “forced to take the unlimited first” (18b1), by which he seems to mean the unlimited number of particulars, such as the unlimited sounds that he mentions in his following example. In this case, while he does indeed “take the unlimited first” (though it isn’t clear that he is being “forced” to do so), he takes it as a form in its own right, and does not appear to begin with any unlimited instances at all, but rather certain specific forms such as “hotter and colder.” Moreover, he refers at the very beginning and almost simultaneously to two different levels of the unlimited, the “more and less” and the “hotter and colder,” and in doing so he describes the nature of the unlimited in general in its opposition to the limit. So in effect, he is making reference to the unity of the unlimited from the very beginning. But if we keep in mind that his main goal is to reveal the nature of these forms to Protarchus rather than discover them for himself, his way of proceeding here will not seem so strange. Put another way, while he does not exactly follow the letter of the way, he does follow its spirit, in his attention to laying out the “middle things” between the one and the unlimited many, with the goal of revealing the nature of the whole. We may take this as an indication that the “way” is more of a general guideline emphasizing the discovery of a limited multiplicity of forms within a common unity than a rigid method that one must follow precisely by dividing or collecting in a certain order.

kinds, and by implication the kinds that they contain, are forms.³⁰ But to return to our key questions from the previous section, how should we understand the nature of these forms, the sense of limit and unlimited here, and the beings to which these are all related? First, since Socrates is investigating forms *of* the limit and unlimited, we must acknowledge that these are unusual forms, to say the least. Yet they perform the same function as the forms that Socrates discussed previously: namely, they express unity and determinacy in the beings of which they are the forms. So Socrates says that “the power of the unlimited,” expressed in terms of “the more and less” and “strongly and gently,” “dwells within” such species of the unlimited as the “hotter and colder,” and therein acts to resist limit, end, quantity, and measure (cf. 24a7–d2). The unlimited unifies all its subordinate forms through this power, giving them a common nature over against the limit. Of course, this is highly paradoxical, since the unlimited as a “form” or “power” is apparently expressing limits through its subordinate forms that collectively serve to distinguish them all from the limit—as the limit, in turn, is distinguished from the unlimited as including all its “opposites” (25a6). However, Socrates may simply be using paradoxical language to express a fairly straightforward point, namely, that there are many ways in which the limit and unlimited are manifest in the beings that contain them, ways which themselves refer to various specifications of other, more typical forms (such as “heat” or “temperature”). For example, “hotter and colder” can be described as a form of the “more and less,” which in turn is a form of the unlimited; but looked at from the standpoint of the form of heat or temperature, “hotter and colder” indicates rather the relative *absence* of form, an indeterminacy with respect to temperature. While Socrates has separated the limit and unlimited for the purpose of dialectical analysis, when we keep in mind that they are always contained “together by nature” (16c10) in existing beings, we can more easily see why Socrates’ language is paradoxical. The unlimited form “hotter and colder” cannot be instantiated as such, because in itself it indicates merely an indeterminate temperature range, pointing to the possibility of instantiation along this range. This instantiation requires the presence of the limit, as the power of quantity and measure, in order to fix the range at a specific degree (say, 32 degrees Fahrenheit). In turn, it is only as a degree of temperature that the number provided by the limit in this case can be instantiated and act as a measure, for “32” cannot exist as a particular being in its own right—only as 32 units *of* something, in this case degrees of heat.

³⁰ Socrates refers to them as *ideai*, *eidē*, and *genē* (cf. 16d7, 23c12, 23d2, 25b6).

As these considerations suggest, the beings to which the forms of limit and unlimited are applied are particulars. Socrates describes them here as including “everything that exists now”³¹ in the universe,” from which he then divides what “the god revealed” in the “arguments just now”: namely, “the unlimited of the things that are (*ontōn*), as well as the limit” (23c4–10). Since Socrates is clearly referring to his account of the god-given dialectical way here, it is likely that “everything that exists now” and “the things that are” in the present passage are equivalent to “the things that are said always to be” in the previous passage. Since we were able to make better sense of that passage by interpreting those beings as particulars rather than forms, we have good reason to think that the beings referred to here are particulars as well. The phrase “the unlimited of the things that are” is especially revealing, because, as we saw in the dialectic passage, the unlimited applies only at the conclusion of the analysis of forms, and so does not pertain to the forms considered in their own right. By implication, the same holds of the limit “of the things that are,” since limit and unlimited are being derived from the same set of beings here.³² Admittedly, it is rather odd to talk of the division of forms out of the indefinite multiplicity of particular beings, since on Socrates’ account of dialectic we divide a limited multiplicity of forms out of one comprehensive form or collect such multiplicities into a unity. But this anomaly is suggestive of precisely the unorthodox interpretation that we have been considering. Since the forms on this interpretation take on determinate existence within the particulars, and since they are in the particulars *through* the imposition of specific limits on the

³¹ One riddle here is what to make of the “now” (*nun*). In keeping with the interpretation of these beings as particulars rather than forms, I suggest that the *nun* indicates temporal existence as such, for the forms as neither generated nor destroyed are not themselves subject to time. Whatever happens to exist does so in the present; properly speaking, nothing exists either in the past or the future (it *did* exist or *will* exist, but only actually exists in each present moment). The specification of these beings as existing now “in the universe” (*en tōi panti*) suggests further, if we take into account later references to the “cosmos” or “whole” of things, that these beings are part of the generated world-order that is subject to the limiting power of the forms, under the direction of the cause, and so are not forms themselves (cf. 28d–e ff., 59a–b). Finally, if the account of the generated cosmos in the *Timaeus* is at all applicable to the present case, we can see that any being said to be part of the universe must be generated, as the universe itself is, rather than an eternal form.

³² It is true that we can (and should) distinguish forms qualitatively and quantitatively when we are following the dialectical way, but as we saw in the previous section, what we are distinguishing qualitatively and enumerating quantitatively are the forms *in* the particular beings, and so the countable and determinate aspects *of* these beings, not independently existing and self-determining forms. The same, then, applies to the forms of the limit and unlimited themselves: they exist in their quantitatively and qualitatively determinate forms only within the particular beings that instantiate them—which in the case of *these* forms, requires that they be instantiated together in the mixture.

ranges of the unlimited, any form, and especially any form *of* the limit or unlimited, must first be derived or abstracted from the particular beings in which they reside in order to be subjected to dialectical division and collection.³³

Nevertheless, we still ought on dialectical grounds to find the “one form” that contains both limit and unlimited. Two related possibilities suggest themselves. First, since we are dealing here with essential constitutive aspects of existing things, the form in question might be something like being itself³⁴—or, given the ethical context, being conceived under the aspect of goodness (cf. 54c). Second, since limit and unlimited come together in the mixture, and mixture is described successively as genesis-into-being (*ousia*) (26d7–9), as the *genos* that encompasses the good life for human beings (27d7–10), and as the *genos* that, in its expression of measure and symmetry, reflects one of the essential aspects of the idea of the good (64d9–65a5, 66a4–8), it seems that both being and goodness are closely associated with the mixture. Mixture itself, then, may be the “one form” from which limit and unlimited, with their forms, are taken in turn. This would appear to yield the puzzling situation of a specific form being divided from itself as a generic form, since mixture is itself listed as the third *genos* out of four. But if we understand Socrates’ initial presentation of the four kinds in the way indicated above, namely as the derivation of forms from particulars that must precede any dialectical division, it need not imply that mixture is being divided from itself, only that mixture is an essential constitutive aspect of “everything that exists now in the universe.” Only after this, when we consider the mixture as “one form” containing a limited multiplicity, do we divide the limit and the unlimited from it as two forms that contain limited multiplicities of their own. The forms of limit and unlimited, then, do not exist apart from each other any more than they exist apart from the limited and unlimited beings that instantiate them, for they are not only unities of multiplicities but multiplicities of a unity, namely the mixture.³⁵ So we shall have to examine the nature of the mixture in order to

³³ This way of understanding the derivation of limit and unlimited in the present passage also has the virtue of avoiding the tension that arises from interpreting the present passage as a categorization of beings into four types and the former passage as an analysis of their composition (cf. Dancy, “Limits of Being,” 37–40). I am in basic agreement with Sayre and Gadamer on this point. Sayre argues, against Ross, Guthrie, and Benitez, that the fourfold division should not be understood as a categorization: “Forms,” 183–4. As Gadamer puts it, limit and unlimited should be understood as “existential moments” (*Seinsmomente*) in every being (*Plato’s Dialectical Ethics*, 137).

³⁴ Taking our cue here from the *megista genē* of the *Sophist* (254c ff).

³⁵ Socrates does not indicate whether there are any species of the mixture that are not also species

make sense of the limit and unlimited. And since Socrates' analysis of the mixture is bound up provocatively with his account of the limit, we will focus especially on the relation of these two kinds. As we shall see, the relation of limit and mixture in generative processes provides the key to understanding how forms and particulars come together in the mixed *genos*.

Socrates introduces the limit in just the way he concludes his analysis of the unlimited, with the unification of a multiplicity. Socrates unifies as members of the unlimited the “more and less,” “the strongly and gently,” and “the extreme” (24e7–8); he then immediately declares that the limit includes “all the opposites of these things—first of all the equal and equality, and after the equal the double and everything whatever that is number in relation to number or measure in relation to measure” (25a6–b1). These forms of the limit, in other words, include precisely those quantitative measures—ratios and proportions of numbers—that are necessary to introduce determinacy into the indeterminate (“more and less”) ranges of the unlimited and so “put a stop” (*epausato*) to their fluctuations (24d4–5). Socrates also discussed another level of forms in the case of the unlimited—such as the “hotter and colder” and “wetter and drier”—in which, he says, the “more and less” of the unlimited “always are” or “dwell within,” and in so doing express the power of the unlimited to prevent a limit and end from coming to be (24b4–5, a9). However, Socrates mentions no species of the limit that correspond to the lower-order species of the unlimited such as “hotter and colder.” Instead, he moves on from the limit to the mixture immediately after his “stamping” of the limit, thus apparently confining his account of the limit to the single statement quoted above. Yet Socrates acknowledges the deficiency of this analysis as soon as it becomes apparent. He tells Protarchus to add together the “offspring³⁶ of the unlimited” with the “offspring of the limit,” then in response to Protarchus' puzzlement concerning the latter, immediately describes it as “that which even just now we should have brought together but did not, the offspring of the limited form, just as we brought together the

(“offspring”) of the limit or unlimited, but since mixtures are by definition composed of limit and unlimited elements (cf. 26d8, 27d8–9), it would seem that there are none. The mixed life is itself clearly a species of the mixture, but we might equally well regard it as a species or “offspring” of the limit, like the “lawful and orderly” pleasures that are in turn part of the mixed life of pleasure and wisdom (cf. 26b9–10, 52c1–d1, 63e3–7), for these are ideal states of being—*ousiai*—that as such serve as limits and measures in relation to which particular lives and pleasures come to be and may be judged better or worse.

³⁶ The term here is *gennan*, which could also be translated “family” or “race,” but “offspring” more precisely captures the hierarchical distinction between the two levels as well as the generative operation of the four kinds; and as we shall see, “offspring” is especially appropriate since Socrates goes on to link the *gennan* of the limit to “certain generations” (25e) that also constitute the mixed *genos*.

offspring of the unlimited into one” (25d2–7). As he clarifies a few lines later, by the “offspring of the limit” he means “the offspring of the equal and double and whatever stops the opposites from holding divergent relations with one another, and by putting in number produces symmetry and concord” (25d11–e2). In other words, these offspring are the specific manifestations of the limit in which number and measure inhere or “dwell,” as “more and less” dwell in the “hotter and colder,” “wetter and drier,” and so on (cf. 24a7–b1).³⁷

What exactly these offspring might be is far from clear, but Socrates proposes a way by which they might be discovered. He says, “possibly even now bringing together both of these will do the same thing and that one will become apparent” (25d7–9). By “that one” he appears to mean the as-yet unapparent offspring of the limit, since that is what he is trying to discover; and by “both of these” he appears to mean the lower-order “offspring” of the unlimited and the higher-order forms of the limit mentioned in his initial summary of the limit, for the latter are all we have of the limit and the former are what correspond to the missing offspring of the limit—although, as we have seen, the lower-level forms include the higher-level forms that “dwell within” them.³⁸ As frustratingly vague as Socrates’ terminology is, we can make some sense of his proposal here. The basic point seems to be that we need the lower-order offspring of the unlimited like “hotter and colder” to attain greater specificity in the limits applied to it. To take our previous example again, it is by introducing the number 32, a higher-order manifestation of the limit, into the lower-order unlimited range of “hotter and colder,” with each unit designating a certain quantity of heat, that we measure a specific temperature that can be instantiated and experienced, and in relation to which hotter and colder become defined in their relation to each

³⁷ A number of prominent commentators are in general agreement that Socrates distinguishes and provides examples of three levels of the unlimited but of only two levels of the limit. They disagree, however, about the significance of this omission. Compare, for example, R. G. Bury, *The Philebus of Plato* [Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1897], 167–8; Charles Badham, *Platonis Philebus* [London: John Parker and Son, 1855], 25; Hackforth, *Pleasure*, 47, n. 1.

³⁸ This passage has been the subject of emendation and transposition, but such efforts prove to be unnecessary if one interprets the references as I have done here. Hahn notes that commentators typically identify “that one” either with the mixture or with the limit in some respect (“*Sunagōgē* and the Problem of *To Peras* in *Philebus* 25c8–e5,” *Philosophy Research Archives* 5 [1979]: 627). Gosling, in fact, seems in rather confusing fashion to take it as referring to both (*Plato*, 92–3, n. *ad loc.*). This situation of disagreement and confusion is itself revealing of the interpretation of this passage that I go on to spell out: namely, that the offspring of the limit are also mixtures, and as such are present within the generated particulars as the *ousia* of their *genesis*. As Hahn notes, “The limit of an entity, then, can only be comprehended within the mixture” (“*Sunagōgē*,” 628).

other.³⁹ The temperature of 32 degrees, then, is a lower-level species of the limit. In this way, presumably, we reach the offspring of the limit and so accomplish the same objective or “do the same thing,” though in a different way, that Socrates did by simply presenting examples of the offspring of the unlimited.

But even if such an approach is effective, why proceed in this roundabout and confusing way? I suggest that the main reason for discussing the problematic species of the limit after introducing the task of analyzing the mixture is to prompt us to think of the two in conjunction.⁴⁰ Protarchus’ response to Socrates’ proposal at 25d to “do the same thing” by “bringing together both of these” is quite revealing on this point. He declares that he understands Socrates to mean that “certain generations (*geneseis tinas*) result from these things being mixed⁴¹ with each other” (25e3–4). That is to say, the imposing of limits—numbers, ratios, and so on—on specific unlimited domains such as the “hotter and colder” is generative, and these “generations” include

³⁹ Gadamer makes a more precise distinction between numbers and measures, but his overall interpretation is complementary: “The number of something is the manifold—defined by a number—of entities of a kind, and the measure indicates the definite magnitude of something extended. Thus number and measure are really a limit only as the number of, or the definite magnitude of, an entity; but this means that the limit, that which defines, is present only *in* the limited thing—that is, in what has the existential status of a mixed thing” (*Plato’s Dialectical Ethics*, 134–5). Cf. Lynch (“Limit and Unlimitedness”).

⁴⁰ On this score Socrates’ peculiar phrase *to peras echon* is instructive (and compare Protarchus’ *to peras en tois ousi* at 26b6). Socrates uses this phrase twice at 24a2–4 (and cf. 26b2, b10) to designate what corresponds to *to apeiron*, indicating the two kinds that he has separated from “the three” (presumably the unlimited, limit, and mixture), as these in turn were taken from “the four” that he has just enumerated. The context seems to require that *to peras echon* indicate simply *to peras*, but the phrase itself, literally interpreted, would seem to indicate the mixture, for mixed things are what *have* limits, being composed out of them together with the unlimited (cf. *echontōn*, 16c10). With this confusion in view, Badham simply bracketed the phrase. However, on the present interpretation the phrase not only should not be ignored or rejected, but actively attended to as a sign that the limit is indeed “split and scattered” and thus “many,” just like the unlimited, and specifically through its “offspring,” which at the same time are also mixtures, including such “right associations” of limited and unlimited elements as the health, musical harmony, and so on that Socrates describes at 25d7 and following.

⁴¹ Here we encounter a shift from collection (*sunagōgē*) to mixing, which has perplexed and provoked numerous scholars (see Hahn, *Sunagōgē*, for a thorough review). These notions are, after all, not identical in meaning. As a result, some have accepted Jackson’s emendation replacing *sunagomenōn* at 25d8 with *summisgomenōn*. However, the dialectical act of collection, that is, bringing together a multiplicity into a unity in accordance with the dialectical method outlined at 16c and following, is only possible on the basis of the connatural presence of limit and unlimited within beings and their derivation from both one and many, as Socrates stated at the outset of the methodology (16c9–d2). In other words, collection implies admixture, so the shift from collection to mixing is really just a shift from an epistemological perspective to an ontological perspective regarding the same set of phenomena: the interrelation of multiple levels of limited and unlimited aspects of generated beings.

the lower-level “offspring” of the limit.⁴² Socrates confirms the generative aspect of this admixture when he refers to “the multitude of the generations of the third kind” (26c8) and then goes on to define this third kind, the mixture, as follows: “Say then that what I am calling third, setting down this one as the entire progeny of these [sc. limit and unlimited], is genesis into being (*genesin eis ousian*) from the measures produced with the limit” (26d7–9).⁴³

Now, in the examples that Socrates goes on to give of such generations, he is referring to stable and ideal states of being, such as health, musical harmony, moderate temperature, and “in souls in turn a vast multitude of different things, supremely beautiful” (26b6–7), no doubt including the virtues above all, and even those pleasures that involve “law and order,” and so are deemed “saved” (25b7–c1). All of these are clearly forms, not particulars, even though forms (“unities”) were previously defined as ungenerated in contrast to the indefinitely many generated beings (cf. 15a). And they are clearly mixtures, involving numerically determinate relations between opposing ends of a scale, such as higher and lower pitch, hotter and colder temperature, which taken on their own are among the lower-order species or “offspring” of the unlimited. At the same time, however, these mixtures are precisely the offspring of the limit that Socrates has proposed to discover by bringing together higher-order species of the limit with lower-order

⁴² When numbers are not so imposed, (that is, when limit is considered apart from the unlimited and the cause that mixes them together), they are neither generative nor existing beings in their own right. Yet considered apart, they are the basis of the mathematical arts, particularly the philosophical versions of those arts, that Socrates later distinguishes as superior in their purity, precision, stability, and truth (cf. 55d–57e). Benardete is right to point to a deep tension between the units of pure philosophical mathematics that are indistinguishable insofar as they are units and the forms that in their irreducible uniqueness are the subject of dialectical-eidetic analysis, a tension in other words between unity and being, which he sees as lying at the heart of the second question at 15b (Seth Benardete, *The Tragedy and Comedy of Life* (trans. and commentary) [Chicago: The Univ. of Chicago Press, 1993], 221–22; cf. Moon-Heum Yang, “Arithmetical Numbers and Ideal Numbers in Plato’s *Philebus*,” in *Plato’s Philebus*, eds. Dillon and Brisson [Sankt Augustin, Germany: Academia Verlag, 2010], 355–59). However, this tension is not so irresolvable as he supposes, since the positing of indistinguishable units is not the ultimate goal of philosophic inquiry but only a moment that is superseded by the dialectical apprehension of unifying forms and their application to the countable multiplicities of sub-forms and the uncountably many particulars that they contain.

⁴³ Mixtures include, in Mitch Miller’s words, “the whole range of items in place and time that come into being according to a normative order” (“A More Exact Grasp of the Soul? Tripartition in the *Republic* and Dialectic in the *Philebus*” in *Truth: Studies of a Robust Presence*, ed. Kurt Pritzl [Catholic University Press, Washington, DC, 2010], 74). Taylor points out that mixture involves both the process of generation and the measured state of being in relation to which generation takes place (*Plato*, 39). Sayre notes, against Gosling and Striker (and cf. Frede), that “the clear message here is that things which become—that is, sensible things—are produced by the interaction of Limit and Unlimited” (*Plato’s Later Ontology*, 157).

species of the unlimited. So it would seem that they are limits as well as mixtures.

How then should we understand these generations that are also forms, these mixtures that are also limits? And how should we understand the relation of the forms to particulars in light of the definition of mixture as *genesis-eis-ousian*? As this definition indicates, the *genos* of mixture must be understood in terms of both genesis and being. The “genesis” part of the definition includes all those beings that come to be and pass away—the particulars—and the “being” part includes the specific ungenerated and imperishable forms, the “offspring of the limit,” in relation to which the particulars come to be. The phrase itself, “genesis into being,” indicates a process (generation) towards an end (being).⁴⁴ The “eis” is the crucial term here, conveying both distinctness and togetherness as well as the dynamic and asymmetrical nature of the relation. Not only does it bring into direct relation two ontological concepts, being and becoming, that on the TTF are regarded as separate, along with the forms and particulars associated with each concept, but it also draws together the two apparent opposites, limit and unlimited, that through their dynamic interrelation constitute the mixed *genos* and all the mixtures that it contains.⁴⁵ As Socrates goes on immediately to remind us, this interrelation and generative activity depend ultimately on a causal power, the fourth *genos*, so all four kinds are bound together with each

⁴⁴ Sayre claims that the sense of *genesis* here is “not one of temporal becoming” but of “being constituted out of more basic principles” (182). He cites the mixing of pleasure with wisdom that Socrates proposes at 59d and the mixture of the “idea of the Good” out of beauty, proportion, and truth as examples. So far as the forms are concerned, he is certainly correct, but when we are considering those specific forms that constitute the “offspring of the limit,” we should see not only their composite character (i.e., higher-order limits with lower-order unlimited ranges) but also their coming into being *as* the end, the defining limits of a generated being, *in* that being, *through* the process by which that being is generated.

⁴⁵ As Shiner notes, a proper understanding of the implications of *genesis-eis-ousian* requires us to reject the *chōrismos* between forms and particulars (*Knowledge and Reality*, 43; cf. Owen, 1953, 322; Sayre, *Plato's Later Ontology*, 1983, 177, 298n64, cited in Benitez, *Forms*, 92). Hampton disagrees, and says that this phrase “is likely to be only metaphorical” (Hampton, *Pleasure*, 45). Benitez argues that the “eis” should be understood with reference to passages in the *Symposium* and *Sophist* indicating productive activity, so that Plato is merely emphasizing the existence and “temporal persistence” of beings that did not previously exist, without attaching any technical significance to the term “ousia” (99–101). Although I do not deny that “ousia” can have this ordinary significance, Benitez’s own emphasis on the context in which this language occurs should show that “ousia” here has just the special ontological resonance that he wishes to deny, in that generated beings, *as* mixtures of limit and unlimited, hold within them the measures of the limit that reflect the enduring marks of the being of their defining forms, their perpetually determining natures and ends as the kinds of beings that they are. Carpenter points to metaphysical or normative dependence as the best way to interpret the relation of genesis to being both in this section and in the 53–55 section that we will consider momentarily (“Pleasure as Genesis in Plato’s *Philebus*, *Ancient Philosophy* 31 [2011]: 73–94, esp. 82–5).

other as well as with the particulars that they generate in the activity of genesis-into-being. Particular beings come into being through the imposition of (higher-order) limits on (lower-order) unlimited ranges through causal power, so the mixing of limit and unlimited simultaneously brings the specific forms into being in the particular generated beings as their normative ends and limiting measures and brings the particulars into being in relation to and towards (*eis*) those ends. The end, the state of *ousia*, is expressed by the forms that mark the proper nature of the particulars in some respect, that in relation to which they may be judged better or worse (as the body is better or worse in terms of its health), and without which they would be nothing at all. Being, *ousia*, thus becomes manifest as goodness, and specifically the goodness that pertains to the generated being by virtue of the type of being that it is.⁴⁶ A proper mixture (cf. 64e), in which the good takes up “residence” (cf. 61b), is the state of *ousia* towards which a generated being is generated and which constitutes its defining nature and end—even though it never will fully express this state, since generated beings are inherently imperfect, unstable, changeable, and doomed to destruction. Accordingly, while there is such a thing as a (relatively) bad mixture when one considers particular beings qua mixed, there are no bad mixtures among the states of being that the forms constitute as the limiting natures of the particulars. Considered as ideal states of being or natures, the forms are neither generated nor destroyed; they are *ousiai* rather than *geneseis*; but since *ousia* is linked essentially to *genesis*, these *ousiai* are the defining natures or ends of the *geneseis*, the generated particulars, and not independently existing entities that possess these ends as their own natures. Even when conceived in their aspect as limits, they are always the limits of the unlimited in the generated particular beings. Moreover, when considered as the offspring of higher-order limits with the offspring of the unlimited they show themselves as mixtures and thus “*geneseis tinas*,” generations of a certain sort.⁴⁷ In fact, it is only as *geneseis* of this sort that they can enter into

⁴⁶ Gadamer comments on the significance of manifest goodness: “It is still true that the good must be separated out of everything that appears good and seen in distinction from it. But it is in everything and is seen in distinction from everything only because it is in everything and shines forth from it” (*The Idea of the Good*, 116). For a rather different take on the issue of good vs. bad mixtures, and more generally the relation of forms, limits, and mixtures, compare Silverman, “Philebean Metaphysics,” esp. 207–12.

⁴⁷ As Gadamer puts it, “Coming-into-being, becoming, is, after all, becoming being. It is being that has come to be” (*The Idea of the Good in Platonic-Aristotelian Philosophy*, trans. P. Christopher Smith [New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986], 114; cf. *Plato’s Dialectical Ethics*, 138). Cf. Hahn: “‘Appearance’ and ‘becoming’ cannot be used to describe the Forms as unities; they characterize the world as *gignomenon* and not as *on*. And yet, ‘appearance’ is of *that* which appears, and ‘becoming’ is the coming-

relation with the generated particulars, for the relation of *genesis-eis-ousian* is manifested through the mixing of limit with unlimited *in* the particular generated beings—those beings that possess both limit and unlimited “together by nature.” The forms are thus, considered from different perspectives, *geneseis* as well as *ousiai*, mixtures as well as limits.

In light of this analysis, we may summarize the metaphysical situation as follows. The four *genē* are the fundamental constitutive aspects of “everything that exists now in the universe”—all the generated particulars. They exist only in relation to each other and to the particulars in the process of *genesis-eis-ousian* that brings the particulars into being as the sorts of beings that they are. As beings of certain “sorts,” the particulars exist only in relation to their defining forms, which thus serve as their governing natures and ends, and as such the standards of their goodness, bringing the measures of the limit to bear on the various unlimited aspects of their existence. The forms, in turn, exist only in relation to the particulars *as* their measuring limits, ends, and natures, and so always also in relation to the unlimited in the particulars. The four kinds can themselves be regarded as forms of a peculiar sort, as Socrates’ terminology and dialectical treatment of them confirms, but only ever in relation to each other as mixed; hence, the mixture is the fundamental unity that is expressed in the multiplicity of limit and unlimited and in the multiplicity of their species in turn, while the cause and its species are the agents of the ongoing mixing of these forms. Only as mixed do the forms of the fourfold become instantiated in generated beings; mixture is thus defined as the *genos* of generation. But in this mixture, it is the forms or “offspring” of the limit that are the source of determinacy, and that as such are capable of dialectical discernment and enumeration, while the forms of the unlimited indicate rather the ways in which the particulars fail to manifest fully or adequately the forms of the limit. The forms, in short, are the limits of the unlimited, mixed together with the unlimited in the generated beings, and as such taking on existence themselves only within those beings as the *ousiai* of their *geneseis*.

In conclusion, when we interpret Socrates’ schema of the four kinds according to the UT, we are in a position to make sense of his confusing analysis of “the offspring of the limit,” to understand more generally how the four kinds are related both to each other and to the generated beings that they collectively constitute, and above all, to explain how—or more to the point, *where*—the forms are related to the particulars: namely in and through the mixture, which thus into-being of what *is*” (On Plato’s *Philebus*: 15b1–8, 169).

constitutes the fundamental ontological reality, the unity-in-multiplicity of being, the dynamic interrelation of genesis and being, and the intersection of being and goodness. While forms and particulars, unity and multiplicity, limit and unlimited, being and genesis are distinct, not the same, they are also always in relation, never separate, and the medium of their conjunction and interaction is mixture, defined as *genesis-eis-ousian*.

V. *Pleasure, Knowledge, and Being*

In this fifth and final section, I will offer some concluding remarks on Socrates' account of pleasure as genesis in relation to being and goodness at 53c–55a and his analysis and selection of kinds of knowledge at 55c–62a. Although space considerations preclude a fuller analysis, we can at least note some important implications of our preceding discussion for the interpretation of these later passages. In the first section, Socrates argues for the rejection of pleasure *qua* generated from the “domain (*moira*) of the good” (54d1–2) on the basis of a sharp distinction between the genesis that is always “in need of” and “for the sake of” being, and the “exalted” being that exists “itself by itself” (*auto kath' hauto*) (cf. 53d3–7, 53e5). In the second section he distinguishes between opinion and knowledge, and between higher and lower forms of knowledge, on the basis of a corresponding distinction between their objects, emphasizing in particular the difference between pure and unchanging being (“what is, what really is, and what is always in every way the same by nature”: 58a2–3) and the changeable and generated beings of “this world-order” (59a3). In both passages, then, Socrates argues in a way that seems to imply the separate and independent existence of forms, and so the correctness of the TTF.⁴⁸

To see why we should resist such a conclusion, we must first consider the contexts in which these arguments occur. The first passage, attributed to certain unnamed “clever sophisticates” (*kompsoi*), culminates in Socrates' remark that those clever fellows will “laugh” at those hedonists who seek their “fulfillment in generations,” rather than the life of “purest possible thinking,” for these generative processes imply opposing, destructive processes (cf. 53c5–7, 54d4–e2, 55a2–8). These remarks, in turn, lead to a final polemical broadside against

⁴⁸ As Shiner notes, 55c–62a in particular “is often thought to be fatal to any suggestion that Plato did not continue to accept the TTF” (*Knowledge and Reality*, 53, 69n8). See in particular Hampton's discussion of this passage and her arguments against Shiner's revisionism (*Pleasure*, 78–9, citing Shiner, *Knowledge and Reality*, 55–7, 61–6).

those hedonists, who, like Philebus, declare that only pleasure is good. Not only does this polemical context make it less likely that Plato intends the argument to be interpreted as an indication of his own unqualified rejection of pleasure's goodness, but also Socrates' careful distinction between true and false, pure and impure pleasures in the just preceding analysis (see esp. 50e5–53c3), as well as his subsequent inclusion of pure pleasure within the ranks of the good life, suggests that we are meant to accept a more nuanced position on the goodness and badness of pleasure (cf. 62e3–5, 63e3–7, 66c4–6).⁴⁹

In the second passage, the stated goal is to identify the purest, clearest, truest, and most certain kind of knowledge.⁵⁰ The point of this account, in other words, is to isolate the most essential kind of knowledge, which Socrates does by isolating the most essential kind of being. Socrates has separated them in analysis, just as he did the unlimited and the limit in his analysis of the four kinds, but this is a very different matter from asserting their isolation in reality. Once he has distinguished more from less pure kinds of knowledge, he recombines them with dialectic at the head, for once we understand which comes “first” and why it does, we may include all the others (cf. 62d1–3). Including every kind of knowledge is not only permissible, however, but both necessary and desirable for a lover of knowledge, i.e., a philosopher: necessary, because grasping only the form of something is agreed to be “insufficient as knowledge (*epistēmēs*)” (62a7–8); and desirable, because as Socrates puts it, they have proceeded out of their “love (*agapan*) of every kind of knowledge” (62d9–10).⁵²

Putting these passages in context, then, shows the need for an interpretation of them that can accommodate the essential conjunction of genesis and being, impure and pure knowledge, and pleasure and wisdom in the good, mixed life. The UT provides just such an interpretation. In the case of pleasure, the key lies in the distinction between pleasure as unlimited and pleasure as

⁴⁹ Note that in a less polemical context, when Socrates has turned explicitly to the task of mixing pleasure and wisdom, he says not that pleasure is absolutely outside the domain of the good, but that “wisdom shares more in the domain of the good than does pleasure” (60b3–4).

⁵⁰ Cf. 55c5–9, d5–8, 56a6–7, b6, c5–6, 8–9, 57b1–2, 6–7, c1, 7, d1–2, e3, 58a4, c3, c8–d1, d6, e2, 59a11–b1, 4–5, c2–3.

⁵¹ See Shiner for a good discussion of the significance of this more expansive treatment of *epistēmē* in contrast to the *Republic* account (cf. *Knowledge and Reality*, chs. 9–10 and “Must *Philebus* 59a–c Refer to Transcendent Forms?”, *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 17, no. 1 [1979]: 71–7). For opposing argumentation, see Benitez, *Forms*, 125–6.

⁵² Here we might compare the characterization of the philosopher in the *Republic* as the lover of all sorts of learning (474c ff.).

mixed. When pleasure is mixed, it must be understood in terms of the definition of mixture as *genesis-eis-ousian*. Accordingly, as mixed, pleasure takes on the measures of the limit supplied by the intellectual faculties, here manifesting the power of the causal *genos*.⁵³ And since pleasure, as Socrates defines it, comes to be in a sentient being⁵⁴ as the experience (or anticipation of the experience) of the growth and harmonization of its nature in some respect (cf. 31d, 32b-c), its genesis in us at the same time our genesis (at least, so long as the pleasure in question is “true” and “pure”). This genesis is the coming-to-be of ourselves in some respect, of the being that we are by nature, the defining form and forms that mark the complete, sufficient, and desirable state of human existence—the being that is our good, in short (cf. 20d1–10). Such an experience *feels* good because, to the extent that it is true and pure, it *is* good. The goodness of pleasure as mixed cannot be separated from the goodness to which it refers, because it is the sensual manifestation of that goodness in and as ourselves.⁵⁵ At the same time, pleasure is not good when taken *in itself*, as the hedonists wish to take it, because by its very nature it refers beyond itself to the being whose becoming it is manifesting.⁵⁶ Hence, the dismissal of pleasure

⁵³ In the earlier passage where pleasure was identified as one of the good mixtures, the function of bringing the “law and order” of the limit to pleasure was assigned to an unnamed “goddess,” perhaps an allusion to Aphrodite, whom Philebus renamed “Pleasure,” re-appropriated by Socrates to stand in for Zeus as the symbol of rational causality (cf. 12b, 26b–c, 30d).

⁵⁴ Literally a sentient being is an “ensouled form that has come to be naturally out of the unlimited and limit” (32a9–b1). As this language indicates, there is a direct connection between our nature as beings that are mixtures of the limit and unlimited and the nature of the pleasures and pains that we experience as ensouled or sentient beings.

⁵⁵ Here we should distinguish between calling pleasure alone good and calling pleasure as mixed good. When pleasure is mixed with wisdom, pleasure and wisdom make distinctive contributions to the goodness of the mixture without either one being good on its own or constituting the sole source of the goodness of the mixture. See McGinley for a complementary line of analysis (John McGinley, “The Doctrine of the Good in *Philebus*,” *Apeiron* 11 [1977]: 27–57, esp. 41). So Taylor is not *entirely* right to say that “the reason why [pleasures] are good must lie outside themselves” (*Plato*, 41). For various readings that locate the good of pleasure outside of pleasure, typically in intellect or virtue, see Eric Butler, (“Pleasure's Pyrrhic Victory: An Intellectualist Reading of the *Philebus*,” in *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy*, ed. David Sedley, Vol. 33 [Winter 2007], 95); Daniel Russell (*Plato on Pleasure and the Good Life* [Oxford, Clarendon Press, 2005], 168–71); Gosling (*Plato*), 181–5; Christopher Bobonich (Plato's Theory of Goods in *Laws* and *Philebus*,” *Proceedings of the Boston Area Colloquium in Ancient Philosophy* 11 [1995]: 101–136; Gabriel Richardson Lear (*Happy Lives and the Highest Good* [Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005], 53–9).

⁵⁶ Francisco Bravo argues that pleasure as *genesis* is not merely in process or flux but also manifests the state of fulfillment towards which the process of filling tends (“Pleasure in Plato's *Philebus*,” in *Inner Life and Soul: Psychē in Plato*, eds. M. Migliori, L.M. Napolitano Valditara, A. Fermani [Sankt Augustin: Academia Verlag, 2012], 60–1). He rightly notes that the term *plērōsis* indicates both the process and the

from the “domain of the good,” in the context of a concluding polemic against Phileban-style hedonists, is meant to remind us that pleasure’s goodness depends on its inclusion in the mixture, in which the *ousia* that constitutes our defining nature and ideal form is the proper end (i.e., “that for the sake of which”) of our knowledge, desire, and striving, rather than the feeling of pleasure itself. To say that pleasure as genesis falls outside the domain of the good, then, cannot mean that genesis has nothing to do with the good or is not in any way good. It is to say that genesis, or a generated being, can only be good, can only properly be what it is *as* generated, through its subordination to being in the relation of *genesis-eis-ousian*.

Similar considerations apply to the following analysis of knowing and being. Socrates contrasts the opinions or impure kinds of knowledge that pertain to the generated and inconstant beings of “this world-order” (59a3) with the purest kind of knowledge, dialectic, grasped through “intellect and wisdom,” which is concerned with “those things that are always the same and most unmixed” (59c2–d5). But here we should recall Socrates’ earlier treatment of the proper way to gain knowledge of ungenerated and indestructible unities or forms, also called dialectical.⁵⁷ On that account, we gain knowledge not by ignoring the world of generated and perishable beings and contemplating some separate world of pure and eternal forms, but by applying the network of forms contained within a comprehensive unity to the indeterminate manifold of generated beings; in this way we discern the measures of the limit that come to be within them as the manifestation of their governing forms, the *ousiai* of their *geneseis*. Because forms are not separate from particulars but exist within them as their defining measures, we can only grasp them as limits of the unlimited within the particulars, and so as mixed.

state of fulfillment. Thinking of *plērōsis* as an expression of *genesis-eis-ousian*, we may the *genesis* of pure pleasure as the process in and through which a generated being progressively takes on the *ousia* of its defining limits. Simply put, becoming is the progressive manifestation of being as filling is the progressive manifestation of fulfillment.

⁵⁷ See Frede for a helpful discussion of the two treatments of dialectic. As she argues, we can reconcile the later emphasis on the objects of dialectic as pure and unchanging beings with the earlier emphasis on the comprehensive scope of dialectic in this way: “That entities in the physical world can be harmonious mixtures with definite being (albeit mixtures that come and go) suggests that there need be no strict separation between the eternal and the temporal. It would seem that all sciences practice dialectic in the proper fashion if they treat their objects under the aspect of what they *are* rather than how they *come to be* or *perish*” (*Philebus*, lxii–iii). As Harvey notes, “by instructing the dialectician to make use of that insight [sc. “into true reality”] to obtain knowledge foundational to the *technai*, the method assumes the very relation to the truth revealed in the examination [that is, the analysis of kinds of knowledge]” (George Harvey, “The Supremacy of Dialectic in Plato’s *Philebus*, *Ancient Philosophy* 32, no. 2 [2012]: 279n2).

How, then, can we make sense of Socrates' emphatic distinction in the later account of dialectic between eternally unchanging beings and changeable generated particulars—and in particular, his description of the beings that are the object of dialectical knowing as “most unmixed” (59c3)? Such language is clearly reminiscent of the TTF.⁵⁸ To this question we should respond first by recalling the points noted above, concerning the purpose of this analysis and the larger context in which it occurs. In this context, we can understand Socrates to be urging us not to remain caught up within the changeable and indeterminate aspects of the phenomena but to attend to their unchanging determinate aspects, those grasped by the mind rather than the senses, *as* those bear on their indeterminate aspects. In the same way, we saw that his rejection of pleasure from the “domain of the good” signaled not the denial of pleasure's goodness altogether but rather the dependence of that goodness on the subordination of pleasure as genesis to the being of the sentient being that experiences it.

To this, we may add that “most unmixed” need not imply the doctrines of *chōrismos* and self-predication, and indeed it cannot if we are to reconcile the present passage with the previous accounts of dialectical knowing and the four kinds. Rather, we should understand “most unmixed” as indicating the kind of purity that also belongs to the pleasures deemed most suitable for inclusion in the mixed life, those that Socrates represented with the example of pure white.⁵⁹ Note that Socrates says that pure white has “no share of any other *color*” (53a7, my emphasis), not that it has no share of anything else. Indeed, since whiteness here is meant to exemplify the nature of pure pleasures, and pure pleasures by definition are mixed with the intellectual faculties and the limits they bring (cf. 51b–52b, 63b–e, 66c), purity of the right sort clearly goes hand in hand with mixture of the right sort—namely, the kind of mixture that is required for the full realization of the proper nature or being of something, in this case pleasure. So just as pure white cannot possess any colors that would taint or temper its whiteness, and pure pleasure cannot be

⁵⁸ Linguistic echoes do not themselves imply doctrinal agreement, of course, as Shiner emphasizes repeatedly (*Knowledge and Reality*). Harvey points out that Socrates never actually mentions the forms here, which suggests, as he sees it, “that his primary concern is to pay special attention to the attributes distinctive of these objects, and then to the question of how they give rise to the truest type of knowledge (“Dialectic,” 283).

⁵⁹ The relevance of the white example to the interpretation of dialectic and its objects can be seen in Socrates' reference to it again at 58c, when he is distinguishing dialectic from rhetoric. See Harvey, “Dialectic,” for an illuminating discussion of the white example in its bearing on the superiority of dialectic as a form of knowledge.

tainted by opposing pain, the “most unmixed” objects of dialectical knowing cannot possess any qualities that would compromise their purity (cf. 53a–c, 58c–d). To take Socrates’ later example of such an object (62a2–3), justice itself cannot be unjust,⁶⁰ but to say that justice cannot be unjust does not imply that justice itself must exist independently of all instances of justice, that justice itself must be just (i.e., possess justice as a predicate), or that one can have knowledge only of justice itself but not of any of its instances.⁶¹ Indeed, as we noted above, Socrates goes on to point out the insufficiency of knowing the forms on their own (62a7–8).

The main reason for that insufficiency lies in the nature of knowledge and reality as revealed in the previous accounts of the dialectical way and mixture as “genesis-into-being.” The philosopher or dialectician, as the one who “love[s] every kind of knowledge” (62d9–10) and “truth” (58d5), and who thus seeks “in seeing the most beautiful and least factious mixture and blend, to try to learn therein whatever in man and the universe is by nature good and what form one should divine it at any time to be” (63e9–64a3), will not be able to attain the object of his love, to the extent that this is possible, without grasping the forms (and above all the “form of the good”) *within* the mixture. But as these passages also suggest, a second important reason for the insufficiency of grasping the forms on their own lies in our nature as human beings, and more specifically in the nature of our good. When he turns to the task of mixing, Socrates asks Protarchus if “the truest parts” in each case “would be sufficient in being blended together productively to furnish for us the most beloved (*agapētōtaton*) life?” (61e6–8). This language invokes the criteria of goodness that served to eliminate the life of pleasure alone and the life of wisdom alone from the competition for first place, and particularly the criteria of sufficiency and

⁶⁰ Cf. *Republic* 475e–476a.

⁶¹ Harvey interprets the unmixed nature of justice as follows: “What this requires is that Justice itself contain nothing that would render it in any way unjust. Justice itself meets this requirement by being Justice *itself*. It is not a just thing, such that its nature resides in something else; rather it just *is* that nature” (“Dialectic,” 296). Here I would emphasize the crucial difference between *being* a nature and *having* a nature; a form does not *have* the nature that it *is*; this is the doctrine of self-predication (cf. Cherniss, “*Timaeus*,” 225–66, esp. 258–60). Nor, however, does a form exist *as* the nature that it *is* separately from the beings that *have* that nature (contra Cherniss, who both denies self-predication and affirms *chōrismos*: *ibid.*, 261). So a form—not as distinct from its nature in the way of a particular, but *as* the nature that it is—does indeed reside in something else, for Socrates uses precisely such language of indwelling to describe the relation of generic and specific forms and of forms to particulars in this dialogue: of both the limit and unlimited and the forms to “the beings that are ever said to be” (16c–d), of “the more and less” as the generic sign of the unlimited in specific forms such as “the hotter and colder” (24a–b), and of the relation of the good to mixtures (61a–b, 64c).

desirability (20d4–10). The answer, of course, will be no, that some impure parts will also be needed, and the reasons for this stem from our needs and desires as human beings, or in other words, what is good for us. Protarchus responds to Socrates' question about whether a person would have sufficient knowledge if he knew only forms such as "justice itself" and "the circle and divine sphere itself" by declaring that such a person would have "a ridiculous disposition" if he did not also know the "human" equivalents of such divine beings, particularly when it comes to the mathematical objects useful in "house-building" and the like (62a7–b4). In addition, we must admit the imprecise and impure arts like music "if indeed our life is to be any kind of life whatsoever" (62c1–4). The sense of these remarks is that a human being should not, and cannot entirely, eschew forms of knowledge and practice that involve embodied, sensual existence. A complete, sufficient, and desirable human life will not lack any of the goods that pertain to us as human beings.

Not only, then, will it "do no harm" to acquire "all the other kinds of knowledge once one has the first" (62d1–3), but it will do a great deal of good, both in satisfying the philosopher's unstinting love of truth and in meeting the other needs and desires of human life. The lower forms of knowledge are problematic when they are taken as adequate in their own right, without the guidance of the "first" and purest form of knowledge. But when they are understood as complementing and completing a comprehensive dialectical understanding of reality, the world, and human life, they are redeemed and fulfilled in their proper role as forms of knowledge and components of the good life.⁶² From first to last, the forms of knowledge laid out in the *Philebus* are, on the one hand, unequal in their purity, precision, and truth, and on the other hand all part of a complete human life necessary for the sufficiency and desirability of that life, each finding its proper place and usefulness within the systematic whole of knowledge unified under the highest and purest kind that grasps the highest beings, and above all the being of the good itself. The life that properly mixes this good and all its aspects and subordinate forms in and as itself will itself become the living manifestation and "residence" of the good (61b).

⁶² The final ranking of goods confirms both the essential place and the inferiority of the lower forms of knowledge by allocating third place to the "intellect and wisdom" to which Socrates assigns dialectical knowing and fourth place to the various arts, sciences, and true opinions (66b).

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As we have seen, then, if we interpret the unities or forms according to the TTF, as existing beings in their own right, eternally and unchangingly possessing the determinate characteristics that they at the same time furnish to the generated, destructible, changeable, and particular beings that somehow imitate or participate in their nature, we will be unable to explain the relation of forms and particulars, and so to answer the questions and resolve the paradoxes outlined at 15b. Likewise, if we deny the essential admixture of the forms as limits with the unlimited in generated beings, we will fail to make sense both of dialectic as providing a way to reconcile unities and multiplicities and of the analysis of the four kinds as providing the metaphysical schema on the basis of which dialectic will yield knowledge. In turn, if we reject the “unorthodox” interpretation of mixture as *genesis-eis-ousian* within that schema, we will misinterpret the nature of the human good insofar as it is a mixture of pleasure and knowledge, and consequently the nature and status of both pleasure and knowledge within the mixture. In sum, these sections are best understood both in their own right and in relation to the dialogue as a whole by addressing the problems that they present with the unorthodox solution that I have proposed.

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