

## Plato on Measure and the Good: the Rank-Ordering of the *Philebus*

Plato's *Philebus* does not end as we would expect. Most of the dialogue has been devoted to analyses of reason and pleasure as the two competitors in the *Deutereia*: the competition for 'second prize', after the mixed life, among human goods. And this long-promised comparative judgement is reached at 65a6-66a3, with the decisive victory of reason over pleasure. But this is not the end: it is followed by a much more comprehensive rank-ordering of goods (66a4-d2), in which reason and pleasure turn out to come only third and fifth respectively behind a somewhat mysterious new competitor, 'Measure' [*metron*]. And this broader rank-ordering of goods is not only unexpected but puzzling in a number of ways.

What strikes the reader first here are the anomalies in Socrates' list of prize-winners. That reason and pleasure only rank third and fifth, and the mixed life itself is nowhere mentioned, might be explained by the new perspective afforded by the passage which immediately precedes the judgement at 64c1-5a5. This *threefold proxy* passage gives an account of the Good -- or a substitute for one -- in terms of beauty [*kalon*], proportion [*summetria*] and truth. (I will refer to the *proxy*, *judgement*, *rank-ordering* and final *recap* (66d1-7b12) passages as making up the *endgame* of the *Philebus*.) The proxy passage also prepares us for the invocation of Measure [*metron*] in the rank-ordering, since it figures there as well, apparently as interchangeable with proportion [*summetria*].<sup>1</sup> But this just raises the puzzle of why, in the rank-ordering, Measure comes first and beauty and proportion only second, with no intervening argument or explanation of the distinction. Meanwhile truth, the third member of the threefold proxy, appears nowhere in the rank-ordering. Nor for that matter does moral virtue, though it seems odd for it to be absent from a Platonic inventory of goods, and Socrates not long before emphasised that any account which excludes it is absurd (55b).

Socrates offers no rationale for any of his determinations in the rank-ordering itself. If the rankings are meant to be obvious, it could only be on the basis of the two immediately preceding passages, the threefold proxy and the judgement. But how, exactly? We would expect the threefold proxy for the good to operate as *criteria* for the rank-ordering, as they did for the judgement. But then it looks like a category mistake for proportion and beauty also to appear as competitors: and if their candidacy *is* legitimate, how can they fail to come first?

All these are facets of a general puzzle about the philosophical function of the rank-ordering. On the face of it, Socrates' work is done by the end of the judgement: for his task was simply to determine which of reason or pleasure is better (cf. 11d-e and 22d-e, quoted below). This suggests that the rank-ordering can at most be a kind of corollary or appendix, extending the results of that judgement in some obvious way. That would explain why Protarchus takes the first-place ranking of Measure to follow from the immediately preceding discussion ("That seems at least to be the upshot of our discussion now" (66a9)<sup>ii</sup>). But then we need to explain how it can be that the rank-ordering actually *revises* the results of the earlier argument in the ways that it does.

I cannot hope to address all of these puzzles here,<sup>iii</sup> and I suspect that some have no solution. The argumentation of the *Philebus* has, by Platonic standards, a peculiarly blurry and wobbly quality: it is marked by gaps, failures of fit, and inconsistencies of a kind which can almost always be explained away in Plato's earlier work, but which here really do seem to express a loss of authorial control. Still, I will try to show that the picture is not as murky as it at first seems. Some features of the rank-ordering which seem surprising or unwarranted are, though under-explained, both intelligible and defensible. They are also better prepared for by earlier phases of the argument than is at first apparent. I will begin by disentangling the principal strands of that argument (part I), then turn to a close reading of the rank-ordering itself (part II).

### I. The *Deutereia*: Two Signposts and Three Questions

The rank-ordering is presenting as a 'prize-giving', and this frames it as the final resolution of the *Deutereia*, the contest between reason and pleasure for 'second prize'. The *Deutereia* asks the question: *Given that the best life is a mixture of both reason and pleasure*, which of the two is better? And this is the central, organizing question -- in Neoplatonic terms, the *skopos* -- of the *Philebus*. This point is worth emphasising since on a first reading we might be tempted to assume that the initial question of the dialogue, whether reason or pleasure is *the* human good, must have that role -- it is, after all, the starting-point of the discussion, and presupposed by the *Deutereia* as phrased above. But this opening question seems rather to be a preliminary one, and is disposed of quickly on the basis of the 'choice of lives' argument. Unlike the *Deutereia*, this argument does not

require any inquiry into what the good *is*, but has recourse only to the *ethical hallmarks* (as I shall refer to them) of the good: completeness, sufficiency and choiceworthiness. This preliminary question about the good receives a negative answer by 22c; and its purpose is apparently to put Socrates in a position to pose the *Deutereia*, which far from being an afterthought occupies the bulk of the dialogue and governs its progression of topics. Thus the *Deutereia* is already advertised from the very start, *before* the initial ‘choice of lives’:

“...each of us will be trying to prove some state [*hexin*] or disposition [*diathesin*] of the soul to be the one that can render life happy for all human beings. Isn’t that so?

-- Quite so.

You, that it is pleasure; we that it is knowledge?

-- That is so.

What if it should turn out that there is something else better than either of them? Would the result not be that, if it turns out to be more closely related [*mallon suggenês*] to pleasure, we will both lose out against a life that securely possesses these things,<sup>iv</sup> but the life of pleasure will defeat the life of knowledge?

-- Yes.

And if it is closer to knowledge, then knowledge wins over pleasure, and pleasure loses? Do you accept this as agreed?” (11d-e, trans. Frede with revisions)

Several points are worth noting about this signposting, and the trajectory it indicates. First, there is a heavy-handed suggestion that the winner of the competition will be neither reason nor pleasure but a third thing; second, reason and pleasure will be judged by their ‘kinship’ to this third thing; and finally, this third thing is presumed to be a kind of cause -- a state or disposition of the soul, by the possession of which human life is happy. We might think from the first of these points that the ‘third thing’ in question is the mixed life, and that the passage looks forward only as far as the conclusion that it is best (ie, to 22a, or more fully 59d-64b); but the second and third points show that this cannot be right. For the ‘kinship’ question (about which more later) is only adjudicated in the judgement passage at 65a-6a; and what matters here is kinship *to the good*, as just spelled out in the threefold proxy. This good must therefore be the ‘third thing’ in question -- though the proxy

passage takes a wider perspective, so that the good in question is viewed *both* in relation to human life and to ‘the nature of the whole’ (64c). This makes good sense of Socrates’ phrasing back at 11d-e: the mixed life is the *result* of the soul’s possession of the good, rather than a candidate for that good itself.

A second important signpost passage comes with the official launching of the *Deutereia*, following the ‘choice of lives’ argument:

“We have rather to look and make up our minds about the second prize [*deutereia*], how to dispose of it. One of us may want to give credit for the combined life to reason, *making it responsible* [*aition*], the other to pleasure. Thus neither of the two would be the good, but one might suppose *that one or the other of them is its cause* [*aition*]. But I would be even more ready to contend against Philebus that, whatever it is that the mixed life becomes choiceworthy and good by possessing, reason is more closely related to [*suggenesteron*] that thing and more like [*homoioteron*] it than pleasure; and if this can be upheld, neither first nor second prize [*deutereia*] could ever really be claimed for pleasure. She will in fact not even get as much as third prize, if we can put some trust in my insight for now.” (22c-e, my emphasis)

This passage reads almost like a doublet of 11d-e, and the same crucial points emerge. Again, we are to expect that the *Deutereia* will be awarded to a third thing, by the possession of which the happy life (now identified as the mixed life) becomes so; and reason and pleasure are to be judged by their kinship to that third thing. Socrates is at this point prepared to predict that reason will be the victor. He is also much more explicit about the question at hand being one of causality: the *Deutereia* is to be awarded to the third thing as the *aition*, the cause of the goodness of the happy life.

Once the question of the *Deutereia* has been properly posed, the central *massif* of the *Philebus* is occupied by the analyses of the two competitors, reason [*nous*] and pleasure. The notorious metaphysical ‘fourfold division’ serves to classify both candidates (23c-31b); it is followed first, by a much fuller analysis of what pleasure is and what pleasures there are (31b-55c); and second, by a fuller analysis of what valuable cognitive states there are and how they work -- in other words, by an analysis of reason as part of the broader genus to which it belongs (55c-9e).

These analyses are of course very unequal in their length and interest, and it is clear that the project of explaining pleasure takes on something of a life of its own. But structurally, they serve the same function: they establish the character of the two competitors, the better to eventually judge and rank them. And Plato keeps the overarching project of the *Deutereia* in view throughout this complex trajectory. He reminds us of it with little markers at transitional moments, repeatedly alluding to the ‘judgement’ [*krisis*] by which second prize will be awarded (27c9, 33a4, 44d5, 50e2, 52e3-4, 55c8, 59d7, 64d1).

In view throughout, and coming into the foreground once these analyses are complete, are a complex of questions Plato will ultimately use to resolve the *Deutereia*. I will refer to these as the questions of *Identity*, *Causality*, and *Kinship*. The *Identity* Question is, simply: *What is the good?* This question can be posed on three levels, which are distinguished in a programmatic remark leading up to the proxy and judgement passages:

“This is true particularly if he wants to discover in this mixture what the good is *in man* and *in the universe* [*to pan*] and to get some vision of *the nature* [*idea*] of *the good itself*” (64a1-3, my emphases).

Up to this point, the argument has focussed primarily on the human good, taken to consist in the sought-after ‘third thing’. However, the good at the cosmic level was central to the fourfold division; and we are repeatedly reminded of it from here on, as the rank-ordering approaches (*en tōi panti*, 64c10, *sumpasês meixeôs* 64d3, *pantachou* 64e7, *en anthrōpois te kai theois* 65b2). It is hard to detect points at which ‘the idea of the good itself’ is singled out for discussion earlier on, but it too comes into focus with the accession to the ‘threshold’ of the good at 64c, and is presumably the object of the threefold proxy (note the *miai ideai* at 64e12).<sup>v</sup> Perhaps we should be reminded of Socrates’ method in the *Republic*: we start by identifying the good on the large scale (the cosmic level of the fourfold division, analogous to the justice of the city in the *Republic*), then turn to identify the same form on the smaller scale (the level of the individual human life, in both dialogues); and it is by ‘rubbing the two together’ that we can glimpse the form as such (*Republic* 368c-9a, 434d-5a, 444a).<sup>vi</sup>

The second strand making up the *Deutereia* is the *Causality* question. That is: *What is the cause [aitia, aition] of the goodness of a human life?* -- or of the goodness of the cosmos, or of anything else? As I noted earlier, this perspective is already implicit in the first ‘signpost’ passage, and emphasised in the second. Later, in keeping with the triple perspective, it is framed more broadly, so that Socrates says in summation of the proxy:

“Well, then, if we cannot capture the good in *one* form [*idea*], we will have to take hold of it in a conjunction of three: beauty, proportion, and truth. Let us affirm that these should by right be treated as a unity and *be treated as cause [aitiasaimeth’]*, of the things that are in the mixture, and that *because of it* being good the mixture itself has become a good one.” (65a1-5, my emphases; cf. also 64c5-7, quoted below)<sup>vii</sup>

Now Plato’s treatment of the Causality question is oblique and somewhat confusing; this perhaps more than any other factor has obscured the dialectic of the *Philebus* as a whole. That Causality is closely related to the question of Identity is strongly suggested by passages in which Socrates seems to treat the two as interchangeable, or at any rate proceeding in lockstep. The early signpost passages seemed to assume that for the third thing to ‘win’ the *Deutereia* just is for it to be responsible for the goodness of a human life. And at 64c5-7 what is sought is what is “at once most valuable [*timiôtaton*] in the mixture [*en têi summeixei*] and above all else the cause [*aition*] of such an arrangement [*diathesis*] having become attractive to us all”. This suggests that the *Philebus* shares a general metaphysical presumption which shapes Plato’s treatment of Forms as *aitiai* in earlier dialogues: whatever is the cause of a property (here, goodness) to other things (here, the mixed life) must have that property in a higher degree itself -- with the cause *par excellence*, the Form, being somehow identical with the property it supplies.\* Given this presumption, an answer to either of Causality or Identity implies the corresponding answer to the other.

But since Socrates does little to explain or expand upon the Causality question, the question of what *kind* of cause he has in mind is left underdetermined. The *Philebus* seems to explore a shifting rota of candidates. In the fourfold analysis at 30b-d, the genus *Aitia* picks out what Aristotle will term the efficient cause, which combines Limit and the Unlimited into a mixture; and Reason [*nous*] is the canonical member of that genus. But this can hardly be intended as the answer to the

Causality question, which is still treated as open at 65a4. If anything, Socrates' reference there to "the things in the mixture" suggests a presumption that the *Aitia* of goodness will be an ingredient such as reason or pleasure, construed as something more like an Aristotelian material cause. Then again, this expectation too seems to fail. For the Causality question seems to be answered, at least provisionally, with the threefold proxy for the good: and these are a set of immanent structural features (truth, beauty, proportion) which more resemble a *formal* cause. In the end (as I will argue in section II), the rank-ordering presents a final twist: for the highest good, *metron*, 'Measure', is to be understood as an independently subsisting cause of those proxy-features in other things -- again a formal cause, but more like a separate Platonic Form than an immanent Aristotelian one. This evolution suggests that it is initially an open question what kind of cause counts as *the* cause of a good life. We can thus see the *Deutereia* as pursuing two distinct but intertwined questions about causality: what above all causes the goodness of a human life? And, by being *what kind* of cause does it do so?

As noted above, in the *Deutereia* the Identity and Causality Questions are intertwined with a third question, *Kinship*: which is *more like* the Good, reason or pleasure? Socrates uses a family of terms to frame this question: *suggenesteron* (22d8, 65b1, c3; likewise *mallon suggenes*, 11e1, 65b7, 66c2), *oikoioteron* and *prospheueteron* (64c9, 67a11), and *homoioteron* (22d8). He typically throws in two of these terms at a time -- as if to indicate that none is entirely or precisely right, and that his meaning is just something in the general vicinity. As I noted earlier, this phrasing is in any case mysterious, since it is unclear what Plato means to pack into the idea of kinship. Is this question the same as asking, simply, which is *better*? If so, why the indirection? But if not, what is the difference? (Note that this phrasing persists in the judgement and rank-ordering [*suggenesteron*, 65b1, c3, cf. *mallon suggenes* 65b6-7; *geneâs*, 66b2, *suggenê* c2].)<sup>viii</sup>

Now several clues suggest that the Kinship question must indeed be very close in meaning to the question, which is better? One clue is Socrates' casual transition to the language of what is 'better' [*beltion*, *ameinon*] once the *Deutereia* is over (66e4): the argument, which was all along framed in terms of kinship, is in the end taken to entail that reason is better than pleasure. Clues can also be found in Plato's usage elsewhere in the dialogue. At 31a, reason is said at once to be akin [*suggenes*] to Cause [*aitia*] and to belong to that genus. And at 65b1-3, if *nous* is not the same as the truth, it is most like it [*homoiotaton*] and truest [*alêthestaton*]. Evidently if something is 'akin'

to a property such as goodness or truth, that property can be predicated of it, and if something is akin to a genus such as cause, it can be said to belong to that genus. We might generalize to say, roughly, that ‘kinship’ is a way of talking about class-membership; as elsewhere in Plato, the names applicable to things correlate with their ‘family relations’ (cf. *Cratylus* 388b-95a).

A parallel passage in the *Phaedo* can help to illuminate this. Socrates argues that the dissolution of the soul is not to be feared, since soul, in contrast to the body, is “most like [*homoiotaton*] the divine, deathless, intelligible, uniform, indissoluble, always the same as itself” (80b1-3). Socrates begins by noting that the body is “more like and more akin” [*homoioteron... kai suggestesteron*, 79e1] to the visible, and soul to the invisible (78d-9e). As we would expect from the *Philebus* usage, this is treated as amounting to the claim that they *are* visible and invisible respectively. But the point of the language of kinship seems to be to insinuate that they also share the *other* properties taken to go with membership in these classes: in the case of invisible things, durability, unchangingness, uniformity, purity, divinity, etc. -- above all, for Plato’s purposes here, indissolubility. Thus ‘kinship’ language is used to impute not just a single property, even an essential one, but a broad family of qualitative similarities. It is also a way of moving inferentially from one property to another while talking about class membership as a matter of *degree*, rather than the usual yes or no: the soul is *most* like the invisible (whether it is fully divine and on a par with the Forms is another question), and therefore is *most* indissoluble; in the *Philebus*, reason is *more* akin to truth, beauty and proportion, and therefore *better*.<sup>ix</sup> This explains why ‘kinship’ talk is deployed so markedly in the *Deutereia*, where the whole question at hand is a comparative one.

To spell out how exactly the Identity, Causality, and Kinship questions are related to each other would require a full reading of the *Philebus*. But the questions do seem to naturally sort themselves into a kind of regress<sup>x</sup>ive analysis, from the dialectically posterior to prior. The *Deutereia* asks: which of reason and pleasure is better? To answer, Socrates must determine which of the two competitors is more closely *related* to the good [Kinship]; to determine *this*, we need first to say what the good *is* [Identity]; and we will be able to say *that* if we can say what *causes* the goodness of good things [Causality]. This regressive structure seems to me to be characteristically Platonic, and must have some relation to procedures of analysis in Greek geometry.<sup>xi</sup>

So we should expect Socrates to undertake to answer these questions in the dialectically appropriate order, first addressing Causality, using this result to establish Identity, then Kinship and

with it the *Deutereia* proper. But again, nothing in the *Philebus* quite corresponds to expectations. Instead, consider the ‘house of the Good’ passage which prefaces Socrates’ account of the threefold proxy:

“Would there be some justification to our claim that we are by now standing on the very threshold of the good and of the house of every member of its family?

-- It would seem so, to me at least.

What then would seem to be at once most valuable in the mixture [*en tēi summeixei*] and above all else the cause [*aition*] of such an arrangement [*diathesis*]<sup>xii</sup> having become attractive to us all? Once we have seen this, we will investigate further whether it is by nature closer and more akin to pleasure or to reason, in nature as a whole.” (64c5-9, trans. Frede w. many revisions)

Note the framing in terms of the ‘house’ of the good, which places the threefold proxy passage within the ambit of the Kinship question -- we are about to meet the whole ‘family’ of the good, so as to see whether reason and pleasure belong to it. But as we would expect, this question of Kinship is to be addressed afterwards (‘once we have seen this’), once we have settled Identity and Causality -- which here seem to be blurred together. For the question of Identity, i.e., what is ‘most valuable’, is yoked together with -- perhaps glossed in terms of? -- Causality (in the form of the strangely circumlocutory ‘cause of such an arrangement having become attractive’). Presumably the presumption is, as I suggested earlier, that the answer to the Causality question *will be* the answer to the Identity question and vice versa: the best thing must be the thing that ultimately in some sense causes the goodness of everything else.<sup>xiii</sup>

Even as regards Kinship there is a puzzle, namely whether the forward reference here is a signpost to the judgement passage or the rank-ordering. Socrates’ verdict on comparative kinship clearly comes in the judgement passage; but the judgement itself seems to have only human life in view,<sup>xiv</sup> so that the reference to ‘in nature as a whole’ seems to look further to the rank-ordering (which does not reach items restricted to ‘soul itself’ until fourth place (66b8)).<sup>xv</sup> The solution is, I suppose, to bear in mind that for Plato the endgame forms a single continuous argument, without the division into passages which I have adopted for the sake of clarity. So the judgement passage is not really freestanding; the rank-ordering completes and corrects it, not least by this shifting of

perspective to nature as a whole. And the proxy passage was only giving a provisional answer to the question ‘what makes the mixed life good?’ -- one to be corrected when Measure is singled out as best of all.

## II. Measure and the Rank-Ordering.<sup>xvi</sup>

I now want to extend this reading by working through some of the puzzles raised by the rank-ordering itself. I will focus on three questions: (1) What is this ‘Measure’ which shows up to take first place? In particular, how is it different from the second-prize winners (proportion et al.) and why is it better? (2) Can we discern an *overall* pattern or strategy to the rankings, a unitary set of criteria which lies behind their progression? And (3) in light of (1) and (2), what is the role and function of the rank-ordering in the dialectic of the *Philebus* as a whole? My answers on each point will necessarily be somewhat speculative, since the whole problem is the extremely compressed, cryptic quality of Plato’s presentation. This forces us to turn for answers back to the preceding passages which I have discussed above, and my answers will follow lines suggested there.

To begin with, then: what is this Measure which takes first place? Unfortunately the text is problematic just where it matters most, in the announcement of the ‘first prize’ result at 66a6-8. Hackforth offers the following as a translation of the received text:<sup>xvii</sup>

“Pleasure is not the first of all possessions, nor yet the second; rather, the first has been secured for everlasting tenure somewhere in the region of measure -- of what is measured or appropriate, or whatever term may be deemed to denote the quality in question.”

Many cures have been proposed for the puzzling and perhaps corrupt final words *tên aidion hêirêsthai*.<sup>xviii</sup> Hackforth’s reading turns on postulating an internal accusative *hairêsin* which the otherwise baffling *tên aidion* qualifies, hence his “has been secured for everlasting tenure”. This seems a possible sense, but not a particularly likely one; and Hackforth can offer no close parallels for the construction. Frede, omitting as corrupt these final words, offers:

“...that pleasure is not a property of the first rank, nor again of the second, but that first comes what is somehow connected with measure, the measured and the timely,<sup>xix</sup> and whatever else is to be considered similar”.

Here too the sense seems acceptable; but obelizing the end of the sentence is obviously a desperate measure. Many emendations have of course been suggested, none wholly satisfactory; I would like to offer, very tentatively, a minimalist addition to their number. This is to read *tên aitian*, ‘the cause’, for *tên aidion*.<sup>xx</sup> The sentence then reads:

“Then you will say in every way, Protarchus, sending out messengers and announcing to those present, that pleasure is not the first possession nor again the second; but in first place, what is somehow to do with measure and what is measured and appropriate, and everything that ought to be deemed of this sort, has been chosen as being the cause.”<sup>xxi</sup>

On this construal, the award of first place points us back explicitly to the Causality question; and offers a new resolution to it, superseding the murky treatment I noted in the proxy passage. ‘Measure’ is now to hold first place as good, on the basis of its causal priority even relative to the threefold proxy. With or without this emendation, the *general* sense of 66a6-8 seems clear enough: first prize is here awarded to ‘Measure’ and its kin.<sup>xxii</sup> The question is what this refers to, and why it is chosen. Now Socrates gives us a clue, I think, in his pointed use of the odd-sounding term *ktêma*, ‘possession’, in awarding first place at 66a5 (cf 65d6): the rank-ordering, apparently, is determining what is best when ‘possessed’ by something else. This seems to be a way of reminding us of the dependence of Identity on Causality: first place among goods will go to what by being ‘possessed’ *other* things good (cf. *kektêtai*, 65d6 and *anthrôpinôn ktêmatôn ariston*, 19c6, cf. *ktasthai* d5; cf. also 22d, *ho labôn ho bios houtos gegonen hairetos*).

Seeing that the rank-ordering is meant to recall these earlier passages already begins to unlock some puzzles. First, it confirms that the ‘something else’ mooted at 11d-e, that third thing by the presence of which a human life is happy, must be in the end identified with Measure. (And not with the mixed life: that presumably just *is* the happy human life, more informatively described.) This means that it is only in the rank-ordering that Plato gives us his final resolution of the

*Deutereia*. And in that case it is no surprise that it revises the judgement and proxy passages, as a mere appendix or corollary could not do.

But what *is* this Measure -- or more precisely, “what is somehow to do with measure and what is measured and appropriate, and everything that ought to be deemed of this sort”? I will begin indirectly by discussing the second-place prizewinners, so that we may then pose the more precise question of how Measure is distinct from them.

Socrates gives an extended list of features to define the occupant of second place: “the well-proportioned [*summetron*] and beautiful [*kalon*], the perfect [*teleon*], the sufficient [*hikanon*], and everything else that belongs to that family” (66b1-3, Frede trans. revised). Here the reiterated *to*+neuter adjective construction has been often, and plausibly enough, taken by scholars to pick out the whole class of entities which possess the properties in question - as Frede calls them, the *Besitzer* (cf. “die Klasse von Dingen”, Frede, *Philebos*, 365 n. 12). At the same time, one might equally well take the *to*+neuter adjective construction to pick out the properties themselves, or to be deliberately ambiguous between the two. Either way, there must be an echo here of the equally underdetermined Presocratic ‘character-powers’ or ‘quality-things’ -- ‘the hot’ [*to thermon*], ‘the cold’ [*to psuchron*], etc. -- which are standardly picked out in this way.

Now it is striking that the features listed here include the ethical hallmarks of the human good which were earlier deployed in the ‘choice of lives’ argument, grouped grammatically as a single thing: what is perfect and sufficient [*to teleon kai hikanon*] (20d-2b). That means that we can name the most important of the *Besitzer* at the human level: the mixed life of pleasure and reason. Thus Socrates’ answer to the preliminary question of the dialogue is silently, retroactively, corrected: the mixed life turns out to be strictly speaking not the best thing, but at most an instance (on the *Besitzer* reading) or a possessor of the second best. We might be tempted to suppose that this revision is entailed by the full adoption in the rank-ordering of the triple perspective, including the cosmic good and the Good itself, noted earlier. After all, from that perspective, it is no surprise that the human good turns out to be second-rate -- as Aristotle will bluntly point out, human beings are not the best things there are (*NE* VI.7, 1141a21-2). However, it also seems clear that the human perspective is not here given up (later on, the ranking will include goods *restricted* to souls): the Measure which occupies first place must be in some sense the cause of goodness to a human life, as well to the cosmos as a whole.<sup>xxiii</sup> In that case the contrast here, and the explanation for the

‘demotion’ of the mixed life, must have to do with a distinction between kinds of goodness, not between the human and the cosmic.

So let us now turn back to the first-prize winner. Plato characterizes it as follows: “what is somehow to do with measure and what is measured and appropriate, and everything that ought to be deemed of this sort” (66a6-8). The great puzzle here, as I noted earlier, is that in the preceding proxy and judgement passages Socrates seemed to treat measure as interchangeable with proportion -- and no argument has intervened which would warrant any change in view. In what looks like an official specification of the proxy at 65a2, it is stated as “beauty and proportion and truth”. This at least explains the later treatment of proportion and beauty on a par. On the other hand, when the proxy is brought to bear in the judgement passage, we get “beauty and truth and measuredness [*metriotês*]” (65b8), with no comment on the substitution (likewise at 65d4, *metriotêta*, cf. *ametrôteron*, *emmetrôteron*, 65d9-10]. And this is unsurprising since Socrates had earlier collocated “measure and the nature of proportion” (*metrou kai tês summetrou phuseôs*, 64d9), and “measure... and proportion” (*metriotês... kai summetria*, 64e6). These look like instances of hendiadys -- that is, it seems the two seem intended to add up to a single concept. So when the rank-ordering turns out to place a higher value on measure than on beauty and proportion, it can only come as a surprise.

The closest thing to an earlier basis for that differentiation in rank is the claim at 64e6-7 that measure and proportion [*metriotês kai summetria*] ‘turn out to become’ [*sumbainei gignesthai*] beauty and excellence [*kallos kai aretê*]. This language suggests that the former two are prior to but less evident than the latter; and it seems calculatedly ambiguous as to whether the two sets of properties are really different (as by being genuinely distinct causes and effects respectively, perhaps), or whether the difference is somehow just one of emphasis and perspective. Now it does seem that often in Plato, the *kalon* just *is* the good understood or presented in a certain way: that is, as manifest, vividly perceived and therefore attractive.<sup>xxiv</sup> This perhaps explains the ordering of properties *within* second place: *kalon* would be listed second as a sort of bridge between the abstraction of ‘proportion’ and the more familiar but causally dependent ethical hallmarks. Thus the second-place listing exhibits an *internal* progression from prior to posterior but (as Aristotle would say) more familiar to us (and it seems plausible that the first-place listing does as well, in the transition from *Metron* to what possesses it). This progression is confirmed by an important discussion of the relation of beauty to proportion in living creatures at *Timaeus* 87c-e. What is good

is beautiful, and what is beautiful must be well-proportioned. “We can perceive the less important proportions [*summetria*] and do some figuring about them, but the more important proportions, which are of the greatest consequence, we are unable to figure out.... no proportion or lack of it is more important than that between soul and body... when the two are combined in the opposite way, the living thing as a whole lacks beauty, *because* it is lacking in the most important of proportions” (87c6-d7, trans. Zeyl, my emphasis).

This sorting into prior and posterior also seems to me the best explanation of the different status given to measure on the one hand and the *kalon* on the other. Admittedly, in the earlier passage *summetria* is grouped together with *metriotês* as *prior* to the fine and good; so we might wonder why it here shifts to join the *kalon*, on the other side of the gap. The answer might be, at least in part, that measure has the kind of priority to proportion that proportion does to beauty: it might be difficult to make this idea precise, but it seems natural to say that some mixture is beautiful because it is well-proportioned (and not vice versa), and well-proportioned because of its measurements (and not vice versa). Moreover, it seems natural to put *to metrion* together with *metron*, alone of these properties, in first place. For measure as a property [*to metrion, metriotês*] is the first and tautological effect, as it were, of the imposition of Measure as a separate causal power, which I take to be picked out by *Metron*, the first occupant of first place.<sup>xxv</sup> Granted, *to metrion kai kairion kai...* at 66a7 looks to be grammatically parallel to *to summetron* et al. in second place, and so too is naturally taken to pick out both a property and the class of its possessors. However, the initial *metron* which kicks off the list is different. This seems to be the noun form, “that by which anything is measured” (cf. LSJ *sv*); presumably it lacks an article, rather awkwardly, precisely to distinguish it from these other, adjectival formulations. Actually, *to metrion* too is also commonly used by Plato for a standard of due measurement, and not just what meets that standard (cf. *Crat.* 414e2, *Prot.* 338b1 with *mêkos*, and importantly at *Pol.* 283e-4a, cf. 4e6 with *to prepon kai to kairon*, etc.). So it is presumably underdetermined here in the manner of a ‘thing-quality’, embracing both the power of the *metron* and its *Besitzer*, and thus forming a natural bridge from the one to the other.

Thus the winner of first place differs from the runner-up in two ways, presented through an almost continuous progression from prior to posterior. In objects which instantiate the good-making properties identified in the proxy, the property of measure has a certain primacy, *underlying*

proportion and beauty; and it is by the imposition of Measure, understood as a separate Form-like causal power or *Aitia*, that objects come to instantiate this whole set of related properties.

So read, first place gives Plato's final answer to the Identity Question by giving his answer to the Causality question: the Good is Measure, which is the cause of goodness to everything that instantiates it.<sup>xxvi</sup> (This is of course explicit if we emend 66a6-8 as I have suggested; and it is in any case what we should expect given the centrality of the Causality question.) That the best thing [*ariston*], Measure, is asserted to be best on the basis of its being an independently subsisting formal cause of the good properties of other good things shows Plato's profound ongoing commitment to paradigmaticism. Despite the absence from the *Philebus* of many of the familiar features of Plato's earlier metaphysics, his view of causality here seems to be very much that of the *Phaedo*.<sup>xxvii</sup> Objects which are contingently *p* (be it a cosmos which is fine and proportionate, or a well-mixed human life) are *p* by the agency of an *aitia* which must be *P* in a stronger and prior way (Measure itself). The top of the rank-ordering is thus deliberately uninformative, even tautological, in a way reminiscent of the 'safe' answer in the *Phaedo*:

*What makes things good?*

-- *Being well-proportioned (and thus) beautiful, (and thus) complete and sufficient.*

*And what does make things like that?*

-- *Oh, some sort of measure.*

We could have guessed that from 'well-proportioned' already: Plato is in effect *refusing* to say anything general about what has these causal powers. Perhaps this is because the 'fourfold division' has already said it all; but perhaps it is because measure takes so many different forms (spatial, temporal, qualitative, quantitative...) that not much can be said at this level of generality.

Indeed, so read, the rank-ordering raises any number of questions which Plato apparently has no intention of answering, in the *Philebus* at any rate.<sup>xxviii</sup> The causal priority of Measure to the second-place properties or their *Besitzer* is of course highly reminiscent of the relation of Forms to the particulars which instantiate them in other Platonic dialogues. But should we think of Measure as a Form, or as a kind of Form of Forms, or as the notorious One of the 'unwritten doctrines'? Can it be identified with the Limit of the earlier fourfold division? The identification may seem obvious,

and might help to explain Plato's casual and allusive phrasing, noted above. But Plato does nothing to make the identity explicit (though there are some casual allusions to measure in the earlier passage, 24c7, 25b1).<sup>xxix</sup>

Now for a speculative suggestion. The rank-ordering prompts the question: What *is* this Measure on the human scale? To put it more precisely: it is by the imposition or application of *what* that proportion and beauty are acquired in the human sphere? We might here want to distinguish more sharply than Socrates does between the features of a human life and those of the soul which leads it. Measure in the happy *life* is presumably just that correct mixture of knowledge and pleasure spelled out in the judgement passage: the recipe or formula by which reason puts together the correct selection of knowledge (and other cognitive goods) with pleasures of the right kinds, in the right proportions, at the right time, in the right combinations, and so forth. (At the cosmic level, it is presumably Limit or something close to it: the 'recipe' which must be observed to produce a stable and harmonious cosmos.) But this Measure is presumably applied by a soul which is itself correctly measured (recall that the 'third thing' sought throughout the *Deutereia* is a possession of the *soul* (11d)).<sup>xxx</sup> And what *is* the correct Measure to be imposed on a human soul? So put, the question seems to have an obvious answer: virtue.<sup>xxxi</sup> Moral virtue is nowhere else to be found in the rank-ordering; this absence has not received much discussion, so it is worth emphasising just how odd and striking it is. For Socrates has argued not long before that it would be ridiculous to exclude virtue from the good:

"How is this not absurd: that there should be nothing good or noble in bodies or anywhere else except in the soul, but in the soul pleasure should be the only good thing, so that courage and moderation or reason [*nous*] or any of the other goods belonging to the soul would be neither good nor noble?" (55b)

It requires a very pessimistic view of the composition of the *Philebus* to suppose that Plato has simply forgotten this emphatically made point within ten Stephanus pages. So we should ask whether virtue might be reasonably identified with any of the prizewinners. And the answer that immediately suggests itself is that virtue should come in *first* place, not only because of Plato's habitual emphasis on its supremacy, but because it is plausibly identical with Measure itself in the

ethical domain. This is clear from dialogues, both early and late, where Plato discusses virtue (in both the soul and the cosmos) as a kind of ordered structure, perhaps most strikingly *Gorgias* 503e-508a. Here, all things are said to acquire the appropriate virtue through the imposition of order and the right arrangement -- the terms used are *taxis* and *kosmos*, but these surely can be identified as a certain sort of *metriotês* (503e-8a).<sup>xxxii</sup> The *Timaeus* seems to offer a more sophisticated version of the same general idea, presenting the process of becoming virtuous as a matter of imposing rational order on the *movements* of the soul (42a-d, 43a-c, 47b-e, 88b-90d; cf. 87e-90a on the importance of measure and proportion in human motions). It is worth noting that both the *Gorgias* and *Timaeus* contexts are ones in which human virtue is being located in a broader, cosmic framework; this is the perspective of the *Philebus* as well (note the use of *aretê* at 64e7, where there is no evident restriction to *human* virtue), so it should come as no surprise if virtue is seen in the same terms here.

I now turn to the second and third questions I raised at the outset of this section; these should be straightforward to answer, at least in a rough and preliminary way, given what we have already seen. The second question was whether there is a unified set of criteria governing the rank-ordering. If I am right about the centrality of the Causality question, and Socrates' treatment of it as virtually interchangeable with Identity, the answer is clear: this is an inventory of goods in descending order of *both* goodness and causal power. It thus amounts to a kind of priamel (cf. Pindar *Ol.* 1, Sappho fr. 16, Diogenes Laertius 1.35) -- an exercise in pure axiology, telling us what is best of all the things there are (cf. Delcomminette, *Philèbe*, on 'agathology'). The residual puzzle is how Socrates assesses this goodness, especially given how different the competitors are in ontological kind. I would here return to my earlier suggestion that part of the puzzle of the *Deutereia* is which of the different possible *ways* of being a cause deserves the name *Aitia* in the strongest sense.<sup>xxxiii</sup> The rank-ordering can be read as an answer to that question, with the implicit argument behind it roughly as follows: the good-making formal features identified by the threefold proxy are what Nous (the efficient cause) must *aim* at in producing a mixture, and it is on the basis of this aim that Nous selects its ingredients (the material causes). Thus the formal cause is prior to and in a sense determines the efficient and material ones: and that plausibly makes it more of an *aitia* than they are. To this picture, already dimly visible in the judgement and proxy passages, the rank-ordering adds Measure as a kind of paradigmatic cause (as the Neoplatonists would say): a Form-like power prior to and independent of its instantiations. Putting the pieces together gives us

the whole of the rank-ordering: we descend from Measure via its canonical property, measuredness, to proportion, beauty, and immanent good-making features collectively; from there to *nous* and *phronesis*, as the canonical efficient cause of such goodness in ‘mixtures’; and finally to knowledge, lesser cognitive states and pleasures, ordered as better and worse material causes or ingredients of those mixtures. So read, the whole of the rank-ordering is a final and comprehensive answer to the Causality question, inflected by the same sort of proto-Aristotelian disentangling of causes we find in the *Timaeus*. At a very high level of abstraction, we might even say that the *Deutereia* -- and with it the *Philebus* as a whole -- is a kind of complement and counterpart to the *Timaeus*. The *Timaeus* identifies and analyses the different kinds of causal factors whose interactions shape the cosmos (the ‘living being’, Demiurge, matrix, etc.), with derivative reflections on human life; the *Philebus* starts from the narrower question of what causal forces make a human life good, and extends its framework to the cosmos as necessary.<sup>xxxiv</sup>

I now turn briefly to my third question, about the function of the rank-ordering in the overall economy of the *Philebus*. As noted already, the rank-ordering corrects the proxy and judgement in two complementary ways -- or perhaps we should instead speak of a finer-grained or higher-resolution. It hives off measure as prior to the other properties which make up the proxy for the good; and it specifies that Measure is causally prior to them all. It is thus the full and final conclusion to the *Deutereia*; but this shows that the *Deutereia* has been a kind of stalking-horse for much bigger questions about goodness and causality. This larger agenda can be seen if we look at what has and has not changed between the official posing of the *Deutereia* at 22d and the conclusion of the dialogue. The only two good *ingredients* of a human life are still those in view all along: pleasure and knowledge. For all the elaboration of his argument, and despite his reservations about both candidates, Socrates never seems to contemplate expanding this minimal inventory of experiential goods. What his argument has added is both subtler and more profound. For it has shown that the correct answer to the question, ‘What makes a human life good?’ is *not* one which gives the inventory, ‘Knowledge and pleasure’, or even the more exact ‘Maximal knowledge and certain kinds of pleasure’. It is rather: ‘*The right kind of mixture* of knowledge and pleasure’.<sup>xxxv</sup> And to the question ‘What kind of mixture is the right one?’, the answer is: ‘A well-proportioned, beautiful, true one’. And to the ultimate question, ‘And what makes a mixture like *that*?’, the answer is simply: ‘Measure’. The argument for these last two answers is only gestured at. But the

gesture is in the direction of a broader than human perspective -- indeed the last two questions are not specifically about human life at all. As in the *Republic* and *Timaeus*, so too in the *Philebus*, the human good is only intelligible in the context of an axiology which embraces the cosmos.

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<sup>i</sup> Socrates groups together “measure and the nature of proportion” in elaborating the threefold proxy at 64d9, and treats them as together the origin of the *kalon* (64e7). Measure is then absent from what looks like the canonical formulation of the proxy at 65a1-2, but pops back up when it is applied to reason and pleasure in the judgement, at b11 and d5 (and cf. d10), apparently taking the place of *summetria*.

<sup>ii</sup> Translations of Plato are by the various hands in J. Cooper (ed.), *Plato: Complete Works* Indianapolis 1997, sometimes with revisions; for the *Philebus*, this = D. Frede (trans., intro.), *Plato: Philebus*, Indianapolis 1993.

<sup>iii</sup> In particular, I will have nothing to say about the mysterious evanescence of truth from the rank-ordering; on the *Philebus* on truth, see V. Harte, *Quel Prix pour la vérité? (Philèbe 64a7-66d3)*, in: M. Dixsaut (ed.), *La fêlure du plaisir: études sur le Philèbe de Platon*, vol. 1, Paris, pp. 385-401 at 395ff..

<sup>iv</sup> See R.G. Bury (ed., notes, intro.), *The Philebus of Plato*, Cambridge 1897, *ad loc.* on the substitution of the plural *tauta* for the earlier singular *allê tis* here.

<sup>v</sup> My thanks to Stepan Spinka for not letting me evade this point.

<sup>vi</sup> In support of this, note the back-reference to the *Republic* at 20b-c, in a passage anticipating the results of the ‘choice of lives’ argument: “In addition, some memory has come to my mind that one of the gods seems to have sent me to help us.... It is a doctrine that once upon a time I heard in a dream -- or perhaps I was awake -- that I remember now, concerning pleasure and knowledge, that neither of the two is the good, but that there is some third thing which is different from and superior

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to both of them” (20b-c). This is a clear allusion to *Republic* VI (505aff.), where the Form is introduced precisely because neither pleasure nor knowledge can be accepted as *the* Good -- very much the dialectical situation reached at this point in the *Philebus*. This intertextual allusion is intended, I think, to shape our expectations for the Good here in the *Philebus*. As the *Republic* passage brings out, the ‘the idea of the good itself’ must transcend the merely human good. But this transcendent Good still has a direct causal bearing on the lives of the Guardians: it is through study of and communion with the Good itself that the Guardians attain the good for themselves and their city. So too in the *Philebus*, the inquiry does not proceed along parallel tracks, but through a complex interweaving: we should expect the human good, the cosmic good, and the Good itself to be causally related.

<sup>vii</sup> A brief note on how I read and translate this passage: I here take the genitive of *tôn en tê summeixei* as partitive, *contra* Frede (“held responsible for what is in the mixture”) and Hackforth (“be held to determine the qualities of the mixture”): for the threefold proxy can hardly be held responsible for *all* the things in the mixture across the board. The language of 65a3-5 is clearly meant to recall 64c5-7 just before (quoted below), with *en têi summeixei*, *ait -*, *toiautên* and *gegonenai* all repeated in a brief span. And the earlier construction is unambiguous: what is being sought is a cause *among the things within (en) the mixture*.

<sup>viii</sup> The language of kinship is also marked at the outset in the framing of the *Deutereia* (*genous*, 11b5, *suggenê* b8) and in the mixing of the best life (63b-4a), where Socrates proceeds by asking the ‘families’ of reason and pleasure about their compatibility. It is because the true and pure pleasures are ‘practically akin’ [*schedon oikeias*, 63e4] to reason and knowledge -- presumably *because* they are true and pure -- that they are admitted by consent of the latter into the good life.

<sup>ix</sup> Kinship-talk also has the advantage of leaving open which of the correlated properties or class-memberships are essential, or prior to the others. So the *Phaedo* argument does not concern itself with the question of whether invisibility is prior to indissolubility or vice versa, or whether both are symptoms of some third more basic feature. In the *Philebus*, it is notoriously uncertain whether we are to take proportion, beauty and truth as the essence of goodness or merely as reliable markers of an essence left undefined. Amusingly, Plato seems to have anticipated Wittgenstein’s ostensibly

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anti-Platonic use of the concept of ‘family resemblance’, as a way of talking about class membership that allows for gradations and need not invoke essences.

<sup>x</sup> Cf. R. Barney, *Ring-Composition in Plato: the Case of Republic X*, in: M. McPherran (ed.), *Cambridge Critical Guide to Plato’s Republic*. Cambridge 2010, 32-51.

<sup>xi</sup> Cf. S. Menn, *Plato and the Method of Analysis*, in: *Phronesis* 47, 2002, 3, 193-223.

<sup>xii</sup> I take the use of *diathesis* here to recall that at 11d5, but confusingly as it must refer to something different (a slippage uncharacteristic of Plato outside the *Philebus*). At 11d5, the *diathesis* in question was the state of the soul the possession of which caused the happy life -- the ‘third thing’ sought, in other words. Here it is the effect rather than the cause -- the mixed life itself.

<sup>xiii</sup> Cf. Aristotle, *NE* 1102a23-4, *EE* 1217b5, with S. Broadie, *On the Idea of the Summum Bonum*, in her *Essays on Metaphysics and Ethics*, Cambridge 2007, 135-52.

<sup>xiv</sup> Though note references to the gods at 65b2 and c7.

<sup>xv</sup> I take it that *nous* and *phronesis* are deliberately exempted from the localization to souls applied to the next rank down at 66b8, to remind us -- in keeping with the cosmic perspective -- that there may also be a transcendent *nous* and *phronesis* which need not be ensouled (contra G. Van Riel, *Zeus’ Royal Intellect*, in this volume \*). Thus I take 30c to apply only to a *nous* which has ‘come into being’.

<sup>xvi</sup> Cf. with this section the thorough and helpful notes of Bury, *Philebus*, both *ad loc.* and in Appendix B. Bury is notable for recognising the importance of both the cosmic perspective (cf. Introduction, pp. lx-lxii) and the Causality question, but seems to me to misconstrue their implications for the rank-ordering (esp. on pp. 173-5).

<sup>xvii</sup> For a defense of this reading, see R. Hackforth, *On Some Passages of Plato’s Philebus*, in: *Classical Quarterly* 33, 1939, pp. 23-29.

<sup>xviii</sup> However, Damascius *ad loc.* already reads *aidion* (See L.G. Westerink (ed. trans.), *Damascius: Lectures on the Philebus*, revised 3<sup>rd</sup> edn. Dilton Marsh 2010). Disquietingly, Damascius also seems to read *peri to mikton* in place of *peri metron* earlier in the sentence; I would not want to emend along those lines, but *men pêi peri metron* does seem odd. Bury sees a reference to this passage in Aristotle’s snarky objection to eternity as a feature of the Form of the Good at *NE* I.4 1096a34ff.

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(*Philebus*, pp. lxiii); this would presumably preclude any emendation of the sentence -- or at least of *aidion*, the least-construable term.

<sup>xix</sup> I take the point of the *kairion* to be to bring out the immense, indeed total scope of the claim being made for Measure, by indicating that the primacy of Measure applies equally to *temporal* goods, a large thought left unexplored. *Kairios* can also be used for non-temporal kinds of appropriateness (and is particularly central in Hippocratic contexts); but in that direction it seems to add little or nothing to *metrion*.

<sup>xx</sup> Anticipated, equally tentatively, by A.E. Taylor, *Plato*, London 1926, p. 433 n. 1.

<sup>xxi</sup> Some notes in support of this proposal: First, the sense is exactly what we would expect if Plato here has the Causality question on his mind, as the basis for answering Identity, as I have argued he does. Moreover, it is grammatically perfectly possible: (1) *hairesthai* with double accusative is standard (cf. H.W. Smyth, *Greek Grammar*, rev. ed. Cambridge Mass. 1956, p. 362, s. 1613); and (2) the second *protôn* must be taken as adverbial rather than with an understood repetition of *ktêma*, but this too is grammatically unproblematic, if unexpected. Finally, the corruption is easy enough to explain, requiring only that *aitian* was at some point corrupted on the basis of phonetic similarity to *aidion* -- or perhaps to *aition*, with the change to *aidion* then being a scribe's over-clever attempt to restore agreement with the *tên*.

<sup>xxii</sup> Note that Socrates' thinking here is still in terms of family membership: the *hoposa... toiauta* (66a7) picks out the whole class of things 'of this sort', ie sharing the crucial class membership; this is more explicit in the corresponding locution for the second-prize winner, *panth' hoposa tês geneâs au tautês*, 'everything of this lineage' (b2).

<sup>xxiii</sup> It is unclear to me why Frede, *Philebus*, p. lxvi, takes the ranking to apply *only* to human goods.

<sup>xxiv</sup> Cf. G.R. Lear, *Plato on Learning to Love Beauty*, in: *The Blackwell Guide to Plato's "Republic"*, ed. G. Santas, Malden, MA 2006, pp. 104-24. For the specially manifest quality of beauty cf. *Phaedrus*250b-e.

<sup>xxv</sup> Cf. Frede, *Philebus*, pp. 363-4; contra Delcomminette, *Philèbe* p. 622. In reading the emphatic but very abstract discussions of measure in late Plato (including not only the *Philebus* but *Statesman* 283-4) it is worth keeping in view his refutation in the *Theaetetus* of the Protagorean thesis that 'Man is the measure [*metron*] of all things'. Whatever else the rank-ordering of the

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*Philebus* is doing, it is again vehemently rejecting that perspective. Measure is an objective and normative reality; *measure* is the measure, including the measure of man.

<sup>xxvi</sup> This is not a new idea: Cf. Frede, *Philebos*, pp. 363-5 (perhaps adumbrated by Gosling, *Philebus*, p. 224). Harte, *Verité*, p. 397 presents her reading as continuous with that of Hackforth (*Philebus*, p. 138), which -- with uncharacteristic obscurity -- seems to take the distinction between first and second place as correlated with one between the parts and whole of the good life; but in developing this view Harte also seems to end up with a cause-effect distinction rather along the same lines as Frede's and my own. Katja Vogt offers the ingenious suggestion that the final rank-ordering is not best understood as a ranking of *goods* at all, but only of causes: *Why Pleasure Gains Fifth Rank: Against the Anti-Hedonist Interpretation of the Philebus* in: *Plato's Philebus*, ed. John Dillon and Luc Brisson, St. Augustin 2010, pp. 250-255 at 254.

<sup>xxvii</sup> That is, in the specific respects I here note. This is not to deny that in the *Philebus* and other late dialogues such as the *Timaeus*, Plato is increasingly concerned to integrate efficient causality, as exemplified by the Demiurge, into the causal story. (He is also obviously more concerned in his late works to give an analysis of causal relations *within* the realm of eternal, non-sensible beings.) My claim is only that his paradigmatic seems to be retained as compatible with this innovation.

<sup>xxviii</sup> Cf. Frede, *Philebus*, p. lxvii: "In our dialogue, the notion of measure or limit remains a postulate".

<sup>xxix</sup> Inasmuch as Limit was that by the imposition of which a mixture is created (where 'mixture' is limited to the good mixtures which are also in view later on, such as the best human life), it seems that Measure and Limit *must* be the same thing. It might be objected that Limit in the fourfold division requires Reason as *aitia* to join it to the unlimited, while nothing similar is said about Measure. But there is nothing in the rank-ordering to *exclude* the requirement for an efficient cause either; and Plato's silence is easily explained by the particular agenda of the passage, which is not directly to do with change. Indeed it may be qua efficient cause of goodness, as outlined in the 'fourfold division', that *nous* and *phronesis* earn their ranking as goods: I briefly explore this suggestion below.

<sup>xxx</sup> Objection: the efficient cause of correct mixture has been explicitly been identified as *Nous* in the fourfold analysis, and the same should hold at the human level. This is indisputable as far as it

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goes, but also wrong in another way (adding up to one of those ‘failures of fit’ I complained of at the outset). For most recently, in the judgement passage, *nous* and other cognitive goods are treated as *objects* for selection and inclusion in a human life -- in effect, as material, not efficient causes. And there is an obvious circularity problem with saying that, in the case of any given human soul or life, the cause of our choosing to pursue *nous* is *nous*. By contrast, a soul which has been correctly ordered by the moral virtues will grasp the superiority of reason and the cognitive pleasures, and select them.

<sup>xxxix</sup> Objection: it is specified at 66b9 that only with fourth place do we get to “the things of [ie, belonging to] the soul itself”, viz, kinds of knowledge, crafts and correct opinions. But this specification must be taken to mean ‘the things which are found *only* in the soul’, since the third-place winners, *nous* and *phronesis*, clearly *can* be found there. What the specification indicates is that we should presume the preceding prizewinners, from first to third, to be found *both* at the level of the cosmos *and* the human soul. (This is confirmed by the presence of the ‘ethical hallmarks’ as an aspect of second place.) So there must be some avatar of Measure in the human soul, and that this is the best thing available to us: on my reading this is, tacitly but unsurprisingly, virtue.

<sup>xxxix</sup> It might be objected that at 65e7, *aretê* is, together with beauty, a *result* of measure and proportion: but this is understandable if we suppose that Plato is here focussing particularly on the mixed *life* as bearer of properties, and that an excellent life is the result of an excellent soul. I am not convinced that we need to suppose that Plato is at any point conflating the attributes of souls and of lives (contra Hackforth, *Philebus*, 13 n. 2, ad 11d); but neither is he careful about distinguishing them.

<sup>xxxix</sup> What follows is thus a starting-point for an answer to Gosling’s rhetorical question: “But it is not clear why pleasure’s contribution to the goodness of the good life is inferior to the others. Its contribution must be different (a further sense of ‘making it good’ would be needed), but why inferior? It is not clear how one would *grade* a cook, a recipe, and the ingredients in their contribution to making a good cake” (J. Gosling (trans., commentary), *Plato: Philebus*, Oxford 1975, p. 224).

<sup>xxxix</sup> Cf. Delcomminette, *Philèbe*, p. 621; and the argument of P.M. Lang, *The Ranking of the Goods at Philebus 66a-67b*, in: *Phronesis*, 55, 2010, pp. 153-169, that each level of the rank-ordering

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specifies ‘necessary conditions’ for the next. My view here clearly has some affinities with this, but I doubt that necessary conditions provide the right framework here -- to the extent that Plato uses the concept at all, ‘necessary conditions’ are presumably mere *sunaitia* (*Tim.* 46c-e).

<sup>xxxv</sup> The whole dialectic of the *Deutereia* is thus a blurry version of a dialectical move (the ‘anti-inventory’ move, we might call it) found in various forms throughout Plato’s dialogues -- for instance in Socratic objections to definitions which just list types or species of the definiendum (e.g. *Euthyphro* 6c-d, *Meno* 72a-4a, *Theaetetus* 146c-d).