Chapter Two  
Interpreting the *Philebus*—1

Some Preliminaries

This and the following chapter exclusively deal with Plato’s dialogue *Philebus*. The principal aim of these chapters is to illuminate the claim that pleasure is something that is embedded in the description of personality. In other words, what is needed is a view of the relationship between pleasure and a certain view of personality. It is hoped that working our way through the *Philebus* could help us address this issue. It is primarily an exegetical exercise. This exercise is to aid our attempts in part two to replenish the idea of pleasure in aesthetic contexts along the lines of its relationship with a corresponding view of personality. The term ‘personality’, sometimes used as equivalents of ‘character’ ‘self’, ‘selfhood’ and ‘identity’, are very broad terms in modern English with a wide range of application.¹ In contrast, the idea of personality is employed here, in this context, as an eponym for a variety of capacities that are presupposed by an individual’s acts of knowing, desiring, remembering, deliberating and being gratified. It is believed that these capacities are essential for self-recognition, giving us a sense of personal identity—relating to oneself—on the one hand and relating to the world around on the other hand. As part of attending to the *Philebus*, we shall discover a certain view of personality that Plato developed in view of how he understood the interrelationships between different aspects of an individual’s conduct. We invoke the category of personality primarily to provide a larger theoretical context for our discussion of pleasure.

What Plato intends to achieve through *Philebus* is not to put forth simply a few doctrines or proposals, and thereby prove the other partners of his conversation wrong, but to examine thoroughly, by means of arguments and disputations, two very different attitudes towards life: hedonism and its opponent anti-hedonism². There are tell-tale signs that the debate
here is staged to change the attitudes and values that accompany these positions, and to win over and convert an interlocutor to one's (Socrates') own attitudes and beliefs. And this is not an easy task. Besides, whether such a change is effected or not, the dialogue seems to document the difficulties involved in such an enterprise. This is where the performativdimension of the dialogue comes to the fore. One cannot afford to ignore this aspect, since it offers important clues about how Plato chose to treat hedonism.

The word attitude strikes an important note here. The idea is not to delineate a neat and well-bounded view of what the good life is. If we let the dominance of Socrates in the dialogue dictate our assessment of it, we would only be led to assess the dialogue in its complete detail from the vantage point of what Socrates was out to achieve by virtue of his position. On the contrary, if we view the dialogue as an arena where different voices are heard, where some could be loud while some subdued, and that what takes place is a conversation which is structurally ill-suited for argument, then what comes into view is not one doctrine or view as such but something of the manner and poise with which different positions get articulated. We should recognise that the strength of one position, seemingly outweighing the other positions, could also be a contrivance of the artist, not necessarily due to the fact that the other position is weak. Plato, as I am led to believe by the dialogue itself, is acutely aware that one of the central purposes of writing this dialogue is to understand the complexity of hedonism, not as a doctrine alone, but as an attitude towards life. The subsequent reading of the dialogue will make this point further clear. The dialogue may have been written to reform the doctrine of hedonism and propound a better one, and that could be Socrates' intention as one of the characters in the dialogue; however, as we read the dialogue, it becomes apparent that there is an attempt to document the issues involved in conning a sympathiser of hedonism to accede to a totally contrary view. This
process runs along with what is generally construed as the philosophical part of the dialogue.

At this juncture, it should be made clear that the view of personality that emerges in the process of our analysis and interpretation is that of Plato, as presented by Socrates. This is despite advocating that the dialogue should be viewed and understood from different vantage points, not just from that of Socrates' standpoint. The problem is not with personality, either Plato's or any other's, but with how prepared are we in admitting that there can be a role for personality in understanding pleasure. And the non-Socratic vantage points are to understand the complexity of certain issues, most notably hedonism.

I shall not—or not often—be concerned to compare and contrast the positions of the *Philebus* against the doctrinal positions taken to be landmarks of Platonism provided by other dialogues, nor to consider its place in Plato's philosophical development. Besides, I shall not be concerned with the many controversies surrounding passages which involve multiple interpretations. What are said to be the doctrines of Plato are not particularly relevant for our purposes. It must be borne in the mind that our interest is not to add or illumine the *Philebus*, in any scholarly way, but only to learn ways of understanding pleasure in view of its relationship with certain claims about personality. And what is singularly important is the debate Plato enacts on pleasure, between Socrates and the other youth, and the issues he explores in the process of it. The idea is to share in the atmosphere of a single dialogue, as any serious reader of literature does while savouring the environment of just one literary work exclusively, a poem or a novel, i.e. to be one among the youth around Socrates witnessing the spectacle of the debate, perhaps feel their warm
breaths and voluptuous odours. More importantly, to transport oneself into the atmosphere of beliefs, attitudes and ideas this dialogue supports.⁶

When a contemporary reader approaches an ancient Platonic dialogue, there are bound to be issues of interpretation and understanding, more so because it is comparable to a work of art in terms of its being and structure than to a philosophical treatise. Besides, the enormous shifts our conceptual scheme has undergone in the last two and a half millennia will further add problems related to parity between different patterns of thinking. Could we then approach the *Philebus* with the same fund of concepts and ideas as we operate with now? In spite of the fact that we are legatees of Plato’s bequeathal, it is quite unlikely that we still fully share in his conceptual scheme.⁷ There will be divergences of a radical kind. The issue of pleasure is one eminent case in point, though this thesis does not make the ethological angle a subject of discussion. At a later point in the thesis, in chapter five, I shall address this issue by way of contrast between ancient and modern views of pleasure. This is one aspect of dealing with the *Philebus*. The other aspect is an attempt to weave issues related to pleasure into our discussion from a broader perspective, and this forms a collateral feature of our understanding. We shall address these concerns in chapter three. The dialogue offers a frame of reference for us to stage a conversation of sorts, among ourselves, broaching issues like pleasure, desire, ethics, aesthetics, beauty, art, *techne* and measurement. In a sense, the dialogue only acts as a pretext, as a pedagogic aid, for us to explore a few issues which cut across philosophy and literature.

**The Problem of the Philebus**

*Philebus* is the last dialogue Plato wrote, at the fag end of his life and career⁸. Even a seasoned reader of Plato is sure to find it quite a demanding reading. There is something
apparently unstructured about the dialogue, purely about how disparate elements—themes, motifs, allusions, proposals, metaphors, images—are found woven into the text. The governing theme—how pleasure is related to the good life—is clearly evident throughout the dialogue and Plato never loses sight of it. In this dialogue, Plato extensively treats issues in metaphysics and methodology. The dialogue can be very broadly divided into two parts. First, the dialectical part, stretching between 1 to 30 stephanus pages, and the second part, from 31 to 67, deals exclusively with the analysis of pleasure. The second part treats the problem of pleasure extensively, and exclusively. The first part is technical and develops many proposals of high philosophical merit; thus, it will be dealt with in as much as its substantive concerns illuminate pleasure. The focus will be on pleasure and how it is understood in the entire dialogue. I shall extensively rely on Dorothea Frede’s recent commentary on this dialogue, on most counts, both for the purposes of exegesis and clarification.

The dialogue opens abruptly. We are not intimated about the background situation like its setting, locale and participants, since, it seems, there are no clear indications about any of these in the dialogue. We do not know where it takes place. We could make a rough guess that it could be a discussion held in the course of partying and revelry, perhaps occasioned at the pleasure of a wealthy Athenian, in the midst of overflowing wines and abundantly supplied food. Some of Plato’s dialogues are rich in setting out the dramatic situation, with a prologue and introduction of characters, like in the Theatetus. However, this is a bare one. Besides, only three characters are shown to be in action in the entire dialogue, Socrates, Philebus and his friend Protarchus, though the opening, and its initial course of movement, leaves enough evidence to infer that there are more people around, and that mostly they are youth. The choice of youth, when the issue to be discussed is pleasure, must invite some
healthy conjecture. The ideal of Greek culture is always celebratory of youth, whether in
sport, art, rhetoric, erotics, letters or politics; and by choosing youth among the principal
dramatis personae and spectators around Socrates, Plato is only making explicit what
perhaps inveterately occurred to him as a natural association. And throughout the dialogue
one cannot fail to notice the homoerotic overtones, echoing in the witty tone of Socrates. In
addition, this association of pleasure with youth is enormously suggestive of the place
pleasure occupies in the complex fabric of Greek culture.

The beginning appears as if it is a continuation from a previous part, which for some odd
reason is now lost. It leaves the impression of beginning *in medias res*. We could
conjecture that before the dialogue had begun, though with no evidence, that Philebus, one
of the principal characters despite remaining silent mostly, had given a lecture of sorts on
the importance of exclusively pursuing pleasure in the life of an individual. Indeed,
obviously, we do not have any details about this lecture, but Socrates labours its central
argument in a few crisp words: "that what is good for all creatures is to enjoy themselves,
to be pleased and delighted, and whatever else goes together with that kind of a thing"
(*Complete* 399). This is, in other words, an expression of unfettered hedonism, as it is
understood in this dialogue.

Philebus is a youth, an attractive one perhaps, and Protarchus is his friend. Socrates is
known among young people as someone who has a very bewitching manner of engaging in
a conversation combining argument, polemic, irony, humour, and wit with substantive
philosophical issues. The details given in the dialogue about Philebus are all too scanty,
and they only correspond to his character and temperament. We know nothing of his, and
also Protarchus', appearance and habits. From a few of his interventions, we could deduce
that he is headstrong and someone who would not like to spare himself to the charms of Socratic conversation. Socrates is used to facing strong opponents in the course of his conversations, like Callicles in the *Gorgias*, and more vigorously Thrasymachus in the *Republic*, but he found ways and means of silencing them, irrespective of whether he could succeed in converting them to his position. In this dialogue Philebus is a reluctant interlocutor. He is someone who would not want a way out through argument and conversation, but wants it by means of doggedly insisting on what he believes to be right. Arguments can be wrong or right, the premises they support could be flawed, the conclusions might appear to have been forged, but, none of these indicate any unwillingness on the part of an arguer to further indulge in the process of dialogue. On the contrary, Philebus comes across as someone who is primarily unprepared, both in terms of competence and temperament, to hold himself in an argument. This is not good news for Socrates. Plato makes a strategic choice in very soon shifting Philebus from the main interlocutor’s position, while still keeping him as a spectator, and letting Protarchus continue the dialogue with Socrates. Now, the entire dialogue, except for a few sporadic interventions here and there from Philebus, is a conversation between Protarchus and Socrates. One noticeable aspect is that Plato makes sure that we, as readers, notice the presence of Philebus by the side of the conversation as it takes place, and that he is following it closely. What does he achieve by this? It only means that, however incorrigible Philebus could be, he should not be grafted out of conversation. Besides, the most ironic of all the facts, the dialogue is named after Philebus.

Socrates contends that Philebus’ thesis is untenable, that

knowing, understanding, and remembering, and what belongs with them, right opinion and true calculations, are better than pleasure and more agreeable to all who can attain them; those who can attain the most possible from having them, both those now alive and future generations (*Complete 399*).
The contest is clear and self-evident. However, on the face of it, the contest seems artificial. There can be a debate of sorts between viewpoints which allow commensurate ideas and ideals, at least to a certain extent. But the manner in which Socrates views the problem would prima facie rule out any such genuine contest. As it happens, a dialogue is impossible between a Philebus-style hedonist and an anti-hedonist, for, at least as Plato views it, this kind of hedonism shuns any attempt to justify itself to other viewpoints.

There are no two types of lives here, instead two putatively antithetical, but value-laden positions which represent hedonism and its opponent. I suspect that Socrates is deeply aware of this situation; therefore he would later engineer a dream sent by a god to dismiss both sides of the contest, including his own position, and proposes another standpoint which surprisingly includes elements from both the earlier positions. Besides, it is commonplace that any individual who lives a life only of unfettered pursuit of pleasure will lose much that is needed to call that life a worthy and well-lived life. A typical consumerist psychology is a rather blatant example of this phenomenon. Objects are so presented and marketed as to induce desire towards them, baiting pleasure and gratification, but at the expense of discernment and the right understanding of the personal need. Oddly enough, do we need Plato to labour an entire dialogue, with its complex proposals and formulations, to throw light on this issue? I suppose we are mistaken if we take the *Philebus* to have been written, or staged in writing, to find an answer to this question. This question is only a non-starter if we assume that one could stumble on a genuine resolution granting victory to one of the contestants. There is no such resolution and Socrates is quite aware of it. And Plato is not rather casual in keeping Protarchus totally unintimated about this. This is a subtle dramatic choice Plato makes. However, Protarchus honestly proceeds with the assumption that one of these positions could be right.
The sources of this quarrel—between pleasure on the one hand and reason or knowledge or understanding on the other hand—lie deep in the history of ancient Greek culture and thought (Gosling and Taylor). One could detect the precedents of what appear to be its forms within Plato, in the Protagoras, in the Gorgias and in the Republic principally. There must be something about this issue which cannot be either ruled out facetiously calling it artificial or accept it merely for being a part of a certain cultural ethos. What calls for our interest, nearly even after two thousand years, is the manner in which resources of argument, keen observation and analysis, and deep reflection have been brought together to address this issue. If a particular phenomenon remained as a preference of a culture, or was symbolized in a ritual, or found its way into its proverbial wisdom, the interest one could show in it will be qualitatively of a different kind. The interest will be, broadly, however problematic it is, anthropological. On the contrary, what Plato did was to tidy up a certain ground to be brought under the clasp of philosophy, thus making it into something that sustains a full-fledged philosophical interest. For Plato philosophy is the means toward achieving the good life, to rid oneself of the trappings of the life of the body and its senses, and to attain the form of a life that is the well-deserved terminus of a well-lived life, making use of such gifts (16c) as reason and understanding. Any serious reader of Plato quickly grasps that what is genuinely at stake in the contest of pleasure and knowledge is not a mere verbal controversy or finding the right equations (as would be presumed to be found between pleasure and good, pleasure and knowledge, reason and desire, desire and pleasure) but certain basic attitudes toward life itself.

Philebus' position, at least as Socrates captures it, seems to imply that anyone whose ultimate purpose in life is to pursue pleasure would be somebody who is incapable of using such abilities as knowledge, understanding, memory, right beliefs, and right calculations. It
is true if we commend to our mind such examples of those who purely indulge in Sybaritic pleasures, with nothing else in mind but to pursue the gratification of their desires.\textsuperscript{13}

Perception engenders desires and the sole motivation is to satisfy them. Desires, then, are like brute urgings felt within us, only craving to be heard and fulfilled. As soon as they are felt, simultaneously, they fuel human action, as motivational forces, in guiding a person to secure what he/she believes would fulfil them. The connection between desire and action is straight and uninterrupted; such is the life of a Phileban according to Socrates. In contrast, Socrates finds fault with how Philebus' chooses to understand the notion of desire, as it reflects in the idea of pleasure. We shall see more of it in one of the ensuing sections.

It does not require much ingenuity to point out that Socrates is only tendentious in framing Philebus' thesis thus. Of course, we have no other means of getting to see how Philebus himself would have articulated his thesis. In any case, he assents to Socrates formulation. Thus, we need not adapt a sceptical stance towards Socrates, trying to capture in his own words, what Philebus may have held as his own position. It appears tendentious because all the requirements that Socrates wants for a good life—like knowledge, wisdom and understanding—go by a rather rigorous defining criteria to be so called as what they are. Naturally, the criteria which weigh upon the person who wishes to acquire wisdom and act wisely will be of the sort which rule out, without any exception, ignorance and acting foolishly. In any event, both ignorance and lack of wisdom could afflict anyone, not necessarily the one who only pursues pleasure in life.

**Kinds of Pleasure and the Ideal of Knowledge**\textsuperscript{14}

Socrates' commitment to piety is well known. An extant dialogue, *Euthyphro*, exists as a testimony to this. Besides, we are well aware of the critique of poets in book ten of the
Republic, charging them with the offence of fictionalising stories about gods, for Socrates believed that it amounts to blasphemy to attribute to gods the kind of exploits and deceit depicted in the Homeric epics. Socrates believed that one must be wary of talking about gods, for they rule from above, and that their super human character should not be mixed up with the human and the sub-human aspects of behaviour. Continuing the same thrust, Socrates further states in the Philebus that gods are beyond pleasure. There are certain things which are immune from fiddling with, either in art or merely in conversation. These are things related to gods. Philebus, in his arrogant spree of celebrating the kind of hedonism he champions, equates pleasure with the god Aphrodite (12c). Socrates swiftly takes objection to this, for there is no divine sanction to this. He distances himself from any talk of associating gods with pleasure. Socrates' moral conservatism, his attitudes toward gods, and his deeply religious sense of piety are already well known from other Platonic dialogues. Besides, there is evidence for it in non-Platonic writings on Socrates. At any rate, why should Socrates treat pleasure as something that has no truck with gods per se? For him there is a rascal element about pleasure in that it is always associated with inferior forms of living. Thus, it is quite understandable that Socrates chooses to distance pleasure from even a remote association with gods.

Here we get to notice Socrates' sharp sense of separating the human from the divine, thus delegating pleasure only to those realms that remain outside the divine reckoning. The world of gods marks itself out, quite distinctly, as a domain that subsists on its own, outside the reckoning of ordinary mortals. All talk of humanly affection and the discursive regulations of understanding do not apply there. This sharp division, nevertheless, does not preclude Socrates from extending his speculative reaches to charting the relations that connect the human world with the divine one. We shall see this in greater detail in one of
the ensuing sections where we deal with the human and the divine aspects of reason. Furthermore, it should be noted that Socrates cautions Protarchus about calling pleasure by the name of a god when he is as yet not quite sure about the nature of pleasure itself, at least as far as his direct avowals are concerned. What then is pleasure? And what is its nature? This is the central question this entire dialogue is slated to deal with. More importantly, we need to ascertain the reasons why Socrates is so uncharitable towards pleasure.

The sooner Protarchus pledges to further and defend the claims made by his companion Philebus, Socrates, without the loss of even a single moment, extends his proposal as a counter-thesis. It is very unusual of him to set out to do something like this. His usual practice is to arrive at his thesis after thoroughly examining his opponent’s statement(s). Subsequently, he proposes to his interlocutor that a true understanding of pleasure’s nature would mean a differentiation among pleasures, in view of their provenance. He says that a fool’s pleasure is not the same as that of an intelligent person (sophron), nor that of a debauched person is the same as that of a sober-minded one. Quite naturally indeed, Protarchus expresses deep puzzlement over Socrates observations. For him, the basis being commonsense, a pleasure cannot be unlike itself; its essence, whatever it might be, must remain unchanged for it to be called pleasure (12c-e). Here begins a problem which obsessed both commentators and philosophers alike, the problem of the one and many. It is like saying water is water, whether in the sea or in the cloud. Pleasure must be what it is, the one that it is, in that the multitude of its instances, wherever they occur, and however incomparably disparate they may be, should not cease to be termed as pleasure. At this stage, while still in the initial stages of the dialogue itself, Socrates warns of a danger that their entire discussion “would come to an end like that of a fairy tale—with us kept safe
and sound through some absurdity (14a)” (Complete 402). Later, Socrates extends a similar kind of examination toward knowledge, this time to set it up as an analogy for pleasure, claiming that knowledge must allow different branches within it.

After securing Protarchus’ consent that branches of knowledge seem to be a plurality, he comes face to face with a danger that lurks within this acceptance; that if some of these branches turn out to be opposites, then what ensues is chaos, nothing but a ‘fairy tale’. The deeper conviction, for which there is perhaps no empirical certainty, is that different kinds of knowledge must cohere together, rather unfailingly. This in fact harks back to Plato’s earlier dialogues, the so called Socratic dialogues, where the principal methodological innovation was elenchus. The aim of the method of elenchus was to sort out different beliefs, for Socrates moral beliefs in particular, and establish the requisite measure of coherence among them; therefore, the relations among the corpus of beliefs one holds at any one point of time must be fully and rigorously well motivated toward each other.\(^{15}\) This alarm signal is crucial because it can act as a perilous preamble to the possibility of philosophy becoming a fairy tale. And Socrates was acutely aware of it, lest his investigations of pleasure, at the end, end up being a fairy tale. One can very well understand why Socrates insists on keeping to the norms imported through his methods. They save him from lapsing into sophistry and eristics.

Just as we admit different kinds among knowledge, so do we need to admit differences among pleasures. The primary motivation in seeking differences among pleasures is moral in nature, as in the Gorgias.\(^{16}\) Protarchus’ position entails that all pleasant things are good\(^{17}\). Things which are pleasant are indeed pleasant, and this is a tautology. But, could one equate being pleasant with being good, knowing all too well that there are pleasures, like
those of excessive indulgence, which are bad for a person? (13a-b) Having said that, it further puzzles one if this moral distinction among pleasures still needs anything to the effect that a common generic unity binds them into one category, namely pleasure itself. If it is known to be a fact that pleasures can be good and bad, then does it make sense to still cling to an overarching and unifying term like pleasure? There are pleasures, both good and bad, but they must be of two very different kinds. Arriving at different types of knowledge is motivated by the metaphysical distinctions (intelligible principles that underlie reality) we admit into our view of things; while, in contrast, the differences among pleasures is a matter of making moral distinctions which hold impersonally. In spite of belonging in different departments, both knowledge and pleasure share a single conceptual structure, that is, both of them admit genre and species divisions among its kind: the genus of being One and the Many species that belong in them.

It is interesting to note that, when Socrates alerts Protarchus of the danger of their conversation ending up as a fairy tale (14a), the latter swiftly, without further ado, braces up for what the former advocates. It is to “let it be agreed that there can be many and unlike kinds of pleasures, but also many and different kinds of knowledge” (Complete 402). It seems Protarchus is more wary of uttering nonsense than upholding arguments, and what they rightfully deliver. And he takes Socrates for granted as the guarantor of truth. Soon, Socrates corrects Protarchus admonishing that without properly ascertaining the quantum of good each one of their positions contains, and without assessing their value, one should not act hasty in arriving at quick conclusions. In other words, Socrates is urging Protarchus, and simultaneously the readers of Plato’s dialogues, that no position must be taken for granted until demonstrated to be true using the right procedure. And the idea of an inquiry is to find out ways of demonstrating our theses. Here Socrates makes a dramatic statement,
though not unusual of him, that they are “not contending here out of love of victory”; instead, they “ought to act together as allies in support” of what ever emerges as truth (402). This statement, generous and sincere as it is, still does not evoke enough confidence in us if it is meant with no sense of irony in it. For, it must be remembered that, in Plato’s dialogues, vast asymmetries of knowledge, competence and maturity separate Socrates from his interlocutors (Vlastos Socrates). Furthermore, though the ones taking part in the conversation are treated as allies, the nature and the dynamics of this alliance remain quite unclear. Whenever Socrates had obedient partners, they were part of the dialogue in as much as Socrates led them. On the contrary, whenever Socrates faced recalcitrant partners like Callicles and Thrasyymachus in the Republic, the dialogue failed. It is because the others would not concede to the power of Socratic argument, that is, they remain unaffected by its soundness and penetration and it is largely due to their defective attitudes toward the value of argument.

Now, the question is, what kind of an alliance binds Socrates and Protarchus? There are plenty of indications to suggest that Protarchus is intelligent enough to stand his ground; and also that he is not recalcitrant, nor is he merely a peg for Socrates to prove his points. But, the dominance of Socrates is still unchallenged, since he is the one who is expected to lead the discussion right from the beginning. The issue is not simple, and in the absence of a defining relationship between interlocutors, it is difficult to say what kind of an exchange they were going to enter. More importantly, there is a danger that the exchange might end up being a failure, and the reasons are not due to any defect on Protarchus’ part. We shall deal with this aspect further in the section “A Lapse”. Thus, there are different kinds of pleasure as many as different kinds of knowledge. The impetus to seek divergent kinds among pleasures is moral in nature. And pleasure and knowledge have one thing in
common: as categories of genus, they accommodate many species within them. Now, it needs to be examined whether pleasure stands at any benefit by describing it in terms of genus and species. That will be the focus of the next section.

The One and the Many: The Promise of the Divine Method

Socrates proposes that in the course of establishing the plurality of pleasure and knowledge, as already discussed, one stumbles on a puzzle far too acute to unsettle even a very sharp mind: that is the problem of the one and many. There are, as argued by Socrates, divergent kinds of pleasure, too far apart from each other. Nonetheless, they are all called ‘pleasure’, just as ‘many’ species are classed under ‘one’ genus. We need not go into the details of this puzzle except for stating, rather briefly, that whatever exists can be one and also many at the same time. A person can be dismembered into different parts—limbs and other—being ‘many’, while still being ‘one’, as a person. Genus, being one, admits many instances under its general rubric. For instance, the genus colour includes different species of colours; likewise the genus of shape includes a motley odd variety of shapes, geometrical or otherwise. Paul Friedlander points out there is a polemic implicit here against the sophist, the arch-enemy of Socrates (315); for, anyone raising the same objection as Protarchus does could well assert that “two things that are most unlike are most alike because they belong to the genus of the unlike” (13d) (Complete 401). This is the kind of logic that Socrates is most wary of. This is nothing short of mere word jugglery for him, playing on words, spinning words to twist the logic of mundane perception and understanding, eristics technically. Socrates’ description of this situation, between 15d-16a, is worth quoting in its entirety:

Soc: By making the point that it is through discourse that the same thing flits around, becoming one and many in all sorts of ways, in whatever it may be that is said at any time, both long ago and now. And this will never come to an end, nor has it just begun, but it seems to me there is an “immortal and ageless” condition that comes to us with discourse. Whoever gets a taste of it is as pleased as if he had found a treasure of wisdom.
He is quite beside himself with pleasure and revels in moving every statement, now turning it to one side and rolling it all up into one, then again unrolling it and dividing it up. He thereby involves first and foremost himself in confusion, but then also whatever others happen to be nearby, be they younger or older or of the same age, sparing neither his father nor his mother nor anyone else who might listen to him. He would almost try it on other creatures, not only on human beings, since he would certainly not spare any foreigner if only he could find an interpreter somewhere. (Complete 403-404)

Rolling, dividing, unwinding, and moving statements are, Socrates maintains, obviously acts indicative of ‘confusion’. One must remember that even a dialectician does indulge oneself in some of these activities for the sake of truth, as an end valuable in itself. So ‘dialectic’ does not exclude one from performing any of these activities related to the discourse. Nonetheless, as Socrates soon confesses, dialectic is some sort of a ‘way’, which is ‘not very difficult to describe but extremely difficult to use (404)’.

Thought is the linguistically mediated repository of descriptive categories and terms meant to capture both particulars and universals. Its nature is such that its categories can be doubled and redoubled, ad infinitum. What are here difficult to present in a summary fashion, are Plato’s charges against eristic and antilogic, the pseudo-methods of argument marshalled by ‘sophists’ characterized by verbal ambiguities and fallacies of any kind. This is the ‘pleasure’ of a sophist, playing on words to obfuscate the truth.

But, what exactly is the dialectic, the method bequeathed by the gods? It is that, “for everything in any field of art that has ever been discovered has come to light because of this” (Complete 404). Socrates evocatively says that it is a gift from the gods, a divine method, like the fire brought to the earth by some Prometheus (16c-d). The identity of this Prometheus is a matter of conjecture. Besides, how does one suppress the hidden allusion to Aeschylus’ celebration of Prometheus here? And, Socrates says, a tale has been passed down to us by old and wise forefathers which tells us that ‘whatever is said to be consists
of one and many, having in its nature limited and unlimitedness.' This is the structure of how things obtain in the world. This is hard philosophy, but bequeathed as a *tale*, reports Socrates.\(^{20}\) The stakes of scholarly matters are far too many here. But, the idea, in its simplest form could be stated thus: the conceptual forms we employ to understand the nature of reality spans over positing categories between the One and the Many ranging over many other intermediary categories\(^{21}\). The dialectic is then an instrument that could help one arrive at this understanding. The puzzle is conceptual and its provenance can be traced to the ideas of Parmenides. In the *Philebus*, the context of this puzzle is the manner in which knowledge exemplifies the problem of the one and the many. The only way by means of which one can steer clear of the confusions and difficulties of this sort is to domesticate a method of thought that could effectively deal with these issues. And such a method is none other than dialectic.\(^{22}\) There are problems and there are ways of solving them. Of course there is nothing novel about this.

But what exactly is the structure of this method?\(^{23}\) Is it like an arithmetic formula, that if one masters it one could resolve the mysteries of the cosmos? I do not think Plato meant it this way at all. To recall from an earlier passage, I have quoted from Plato that it is easier describing what this method is than making use of it. We are familiar from the *Sophist* and *The Statesman* and the *Phaedrus* that Plato meant to find slicker ways of dividing up collective entities, whatever exists in this world—collections he calls them—into individual units; and the sources of his method lay very much there, in the manner in which 'collections' obtain in the world to be divided and further divided, until the minimal indivisible unit is discovered.\(^{24}\) To say the least, this is a distant cousin of our 20th century offspring—conceptual analysis. The idea is to divide, but the one who undertakes this dialectical activity is not told as to how such a division could be arrived at. One can do it in
multiple ways. This is precisely where Plato shows an extraordinary imaginative power, executed with almost an unprecedented rigor and acuity. In the *Philebus* Plato takes the example of sounds in music—with its relative pitches, and that of the art of writing, devised by the Egyptian god Theuth, to demonstrate the utility of his dialectical method. He does all this with the hope that he could throw some light on pleasure and knowledge using this method. However, without proceeding further along these lines, he swiftly assumes the pose of someone who is to relinquish, rather calmly and with no sense of regret, what is achieved so far. This follows the complaint Philebus and Protarchus make in unison about the relevance of this entire exercise to the understanding of pleasure. We shall deal with it in the next section. Soon he revisits the same issue, of pleasure and knowledge, but this time he comes up with another proposal: the four fold division (23 c-d). This is where Plato, the metaphysician, is at the heights of his boldness of thought coupled with imagination. And there is no talk of any method or dialectic here, though one can visibly notice the traces of the dialectical method he followed earlier. This will be dealt with in the next section.

Theuth, the Egyptian deity, is attributed the credit for discovering the *art* of literacy. The *Phaedrus* deals with this aspect more elaborately, arguing for the primacy of speech, as opposed to literacy. Socrates reports that the pre-alphabetic stage of language, of which we still have many samples all over the world, does not make distinctions that go with devising a script, like the taxonomic division of linguistic sounds (18b-c). Any project of evolving a script for language has to understand the nature of sounds and its structure, to be able to devise a system of letters. This is implicit in all forms of writing. The division of sounds into not voiced, voiced, mute and their intermediaries, all together combine to give some shape to scripts. Whether this taxonomy represents, as Plato seems to argue, the
problem of the One and Many is debatable, and a scholarly matter indeed. In any case, there is an interesting observation that Socrates makes in this context; that is, "none of us could gain any knowledge of a single one (the alphabet) of them, taken by itself without understanding them all"; that it is possible to think of "the one link that somehow unifies them all and called it the art of literacy" (Complete 405). He calls literacy an art, and not episteme, i.e. science. Art requires techne, that is the skill and competence on the part of the user of this art. And any good user of this art, apart from possessing the skill, should also be knowledgeable of the principles that govern its functioning. Dialectic, being an art that it is, is also a way of uncovering the principles that underlie a phenomenon.

The dialectic is also a form of art, as we saw in the earlier part. Then, it belongs in the domain of art as much as it belongs in the domain of the sciences, something that is to do with the handiwork of skill, competence and imagination, rather than that of only fixed truths and unchanging knowledge. To be more accurate, dialectic is an art, a sort techne, an instrument, in the hands of inquirers. It could enable an inquirer to discover the true principles that underlie the making of an individual into a true sophist or someone else into a true politician. The dialectic, as Socrates and Plato seem to think, could help one unearth fixed truths or eternal knowledge, or enable one to ascertain the mutability of beliefs. What needs emphasis is the fact that it is called an art, rather than a form of science or mathematics, though its ways are not in commensurable terms with forms of art we are otherwise familiar with, whether sculpture, painting, theatre, or poetry. Even these arts require skill, but that is not dialectic (Janaway). As we shall see in the subsequent sections and the following chapter, the dialectic, as a method in the hands of Socrates, plays an important role in the analysis of pleasure, though it is nowhere mentioned explicitly after this stretch of the dialogue, exclusively devoted to it.
It is two and a half millennia since these reflections are in vogue, being studied, interpreted, and applied for various purposes. These are reflections on the nature and the function of methods one needs in order to understand the world we share, whether it is the world of immediate perception or of representation. Here, I would like to advert to the reader’s attention a couple of extracts from what a recent philosopher had to say about the method of ‘criticism’ in the context of literary understanding and criticism. The following is from Arthur Danto’s article, “The Beautiful Science of Criticism”.

I want to characterize criticism as the theory of texts, and to consider the future of criticism as the future of that. Here is the thought I want to advance: if the Folk psychological premises of Beautiful Science cannot be thought away; if the propositional objects entailed by the truth of Folk psychology themselves imply that we are structured propositionally; if the propositional attitudes true of us if we are propositionally structured imply that we are structured as texts, then criticism is pre-emptive psychology and even now the strategies evolved for addressing literary texts have application to us: they apply to us if the deep premises of beautiful sciences themselves apply. (381-382)

If Beautiful Science is an extension and refinement of fundamental practices covered by folk psychology, texts, as literary artefacts, are projections and extensions of the unifying structures of self or of life. The principles, whatever they are, that enable us to tell and follow stories, to construct and read poetry, are the principles that bind lives into unities, that give us the sense of chapters ending and of new ones beginning. The future of criticism lies in making these principles explicit. (384)

The dialectic belongs in that league of innovations, which were devised by Plato to address the needs of understanding in general. It is a method definitely, though there is no provision for experiments, confirmations and predictions in it. However, it is an enterprise that is to uncover ‘principles’ which underlie phenomena, whether they are people like sophists and statesmen or texts of poetry, or moral lives and the unities that they form and exhibit. Plato was not after any Beautiful Science, nor was he intent on looking for a pre-emptive psychology beneath the sutures of dialectic. Nonetheless, Danto’s ‘criticism’ is a 20th century cousin of Plato’s dialectic.
A Lapse

What has all this talk about dialectic got to do with pleasure, the primary object of Socrates' investigation? Philebus raises this question (19d), quite impatiently. He says he understands each one of Socrates' proposals, but, says, he cannot quite see "how it all hangs together" (406). This circuitous journey, dealing with many things while pursuing one single problem, does exasperate not just Philebus, but even a very patient reader of this work. It is obvious that unless Socrates makes his connections clear, neither a reader nor Philebus could see how these dialectical investigations bear upon the understanding of the concept of pleasure. Arguably, withholding the details of these connections is part of Plato's dramatic strategy.

The argument part of the drama has a certain progression, which Socrates, known for his impeccable farsightedness, could perhaps foresee its entire logical progress. But, in any case, there is a dramatic progression that is not in tune, nor is it bound to be, with the advance of the argument. It is clear from the passages between 18d and 20a that both Philebus and Protarchus do not quite see the direction in which Socrates is leading them. They do not see themselves treading along with Socrates, which amounts to a serious lapse in a genre like dialogue. It is because, the idea behind writing a Platonic dialogue, as opposed to writing a treatise or a poem, is to let the reader go along Socrates' interlocutors. It is applicable only to those dialogues where Socrates is practicing elenchus. If the gap remains unbridged, the dialogue could become a failure. If this kind of a lapse is taken as indicative of the gap, of a cognitive kind, that separates Socrates from his interlocutors, then the task of an interpreter, at his best, would be to so present Socrates as to reduce this gap. The task will then be to make Socrates' ideas clear in terms of their broader implications for the problem of pleasure. It should be borne in mind that the lag that is
keeping Philebus and Protarchus away from Socrates does affect even a studious reader of the *Philebus*, who is structurally not part of the drama itself. And, to say the least, Plato is not unaware of this.

The Socrates part is well taken care of. Socrates is not presented as though he is not in full control of the argument he is conducting. Wherever explanations are needed, he is only too ready to provide them. Nor is it the case that his interlocutors are dullards. This gap, a kind of dissonance right in the middle of the drama, forming a structural feature of its progression, reflects the plurivocal, in Bakhtinian terms, the polyphonic aspect of this genre of writing. That is to say, as a genre dialogue comes into being as a collaboration of characters and their voices—the metonymic extensions of their personalities. Interpreting and understanding the dialogue is not so much a matter of arguments and their elaborations as it is the manner in which dissonances are strategically inserted to sculpt a shapely dramatic work that is centred around a problem. For the problem of pleasure, despite Socrates’ ambition to work out a theoretical picture in that the services of incisive thinking are put to their maximum use, there is another angle to it which that resists an effort of this kind. Philebus represents this angle, much more robustly, than Protarchus. That is perhaps the reason why Socrates is not made to directly engage him in conversation. The experiential part of pleasure, its affective dimension, is what poses serious challenges, in spite of Socrates’ dominant presence underplaying sceptical interventions from his partners in conversation. If we examine Protarchus lamentably complaining that Socrates had plunged them into some kind of a circle, a situation where they find themselves empty of answers to Socrates’ questions, it becomes clear that they are forced into confronting a question for which they are least prepared. The question here is whether it could be ascertained if there are different kinds of pleasures and similarly, kinds of knowledge (19b,
20a). Socrates still does not descend from his high horse, and he continues in his own tenor, talking about unities and similarities.

The scenario, as it seems, is a kind of face off situation between the advocates of pleasure whose competence to understand it in the larger contexts of metaphysical concerns is bare and minimal, and someone who calls into his service highly imaginative and logical resources to clarify pleasure and its relationship with knowledge. Nonetheless, the advocates of pleasure are not devoid of an understanding of pleasure, right in their own manner. It is then a scenario where Socrates’ advances are coming into a sharp collision with the strong intuitions of his interlocutors. This is not so much a matter of a discord specific to this exchange, among Socrates and his company, but a break that characterizes any debate involving pleasure.

While it is true that Socrates is at an advantageous position over the others, by virtue of his power of argument and formidable intellect, it is not too clear to us if this advantage is leading him in the direction of truth. It is a different matter altogether that Socrates may have reasons to believe that he is on the right path. Very soon, after the dream episode (20 b-c), he calls off the question altogether, stating that the further course of conversation will only make it clear whether pleasure admits many kinds or not. This is a kind of play, the spiel that Gadamer refers to, that characterizes Plato’s work whose effect on a reader far exceeds the ambitions of argument and method. 28

Three Kinds of Life

After a prolonged discussion of the one and the many, whose usefulness was questioned by Philebus—who is in any case a silent spectator rather than the active participant, Socrates
engineers a dream episode to further propose that both of their arguments are wrong and that a mixed life combining reason, intelligence and knowledge with pleasure, in the right proportion, would be the best option. The dream device, the *deus ex machina*, invented by Socrates is an excellent contrivance to bring to a halt the conversation that is heading towards exhaustion. We are not told about the contents of the dream, nor its narrative. It is simply mentioned that a god revealed to Socrates that neither of the positions—the hedonist and anti-hedonist—that they are debating are ‘good’, but that “there is some third thing which is different from and superior to both of them” (408). Socrates never relinquishes his strong moral bias, especially when his arguments reach the crux of the point. The dream episode comes at a juncture when both Protarchus and Philebus are wearied of the vexatious tour consisting of his reflections on the One and the Many. Socrates then develops this new proposal in the following manner.

Socrates says that three kinds of life are conceivable (20c-22a). The first one is the life purely devoted to pleasure. Philebus, unflinchingly, argues for this position. As has already been objected to by Socrates, this kind of a life seems hardly conceivable, let alone possible. It is difficult on anyone’s part to think of life, or living a life, however thoroughly it could be devoted to pleasure, without even a modicum of what we associate with the life of intelligence, memory, judgement, reasoning, knowledge and understanding. The option of such a life closely resembles that of an oyster in just being content with the snug, immobile life it is used to, with no obvious need to venture its curiosity in any manner at all (21c). The second kind of life is that of intelligence, and whatever goes with it, but no pleasure at all. This in short is opting for a life that is devoid of anything that is to do with affect, either pleasure or pain or any other emotion. Though Socrates summarily dismisses it, without examining the contents of this view, I think it is not without its uses to subject this
view also to some analysis. Sherlock Holmes would perhaps be the right person to want to have a life of perfect intelligence, but with no emotions. What makes such a life not worth living? If one chooses to shun affect altogether, and is content to lead a life where intelligence is at its best, reasoning perfectly, knowing impeccably, understanding thoroughly, and memory unvarnished and accurate, then what is wrong with such a life? It is another matter altogether that such a person could be least human like. Besides, in certain traditions of religious practice and thought such a life is exalted to be the best form of living achievable. Here the dismissal by Socrates, apparently, amounts to claiming that such a life is not a candidate for being called a good life. And I do not think that Socrates is in any evident manner concerned with its partial lack of human character. In fact, at a later stage, Socrates likens this kind of life to that of gods. We have already referred to this and we shall have more on this in the next section. It must be remembered that in Plato’s work, as we are familiar from the *Phaedo* and the *Republic*, one of the consistent themes is to attain the life of a philosopher; and such a life is in principle possible only after transcending the limitations of human life. 29

Then why should Socrates be dismissive of the second kind of life? One can answer this in a twofold manner, at two different levels: firstly, for obvious reasons, by the time Plato wrote *Philebus*, the idea of living the life of philosophy could have been eminently considered part of Platonic/Socratic lore. Socrates charged the atmosphere of philosophy with a commitment toward finding wisdom and acting wisely in life, as opposed to dealing with the mysteries of the cosmos and nature 30. This has in effect veered off what is known as philosophical inquiry away from its earlier interests in speculative matters concerning the nature and structure of the cosmos. And subsequently philosophy has been reoriented to focus and analyse what we today recognise as the practical aspect of being a well-
functioning agent in any particular society. Naturally, one cannot do proper justice to understanding such an issue by bifurcating human agency into a cognitive dimension, which corresponds to the reason, knowledge and memory, and a motivational one, which stands for desire and pleasure. Here the division is in terms of two autonomous parts of one single unit, namely personality: one for knowledge and the other for motivation. The idea is to understand the nature of persons, analyse the structure of their action, in view of how an understanding of such a sort depends on accounting for the role of these two supposedly autonomous parts—of desire as a motivating factor, along with reason—in leading a successful life. But for Plato the primary issue lies in explaining how the character of motivation touches off human action, in that we need a clear view of how it works combining reason and pleasure in its circuit. Reason for the Plato of the Republic, as Charles Kahn argues in his article “Plato’s Theory of Desire”, “as a faculty of cognition and judgment is at the same time equipped with, if not simply identical to, its own autonomous source of motivation” (102). In short, reason stands for that complex form of motivation that includes desire as an essential ingredient. This, in other words, is to say that desires share in reason, even if the metaphor is wrong, the idea is clear in that desires are not blind and brute. To extend the point further, there are no two sources, of cognition and motivation, but one single source which shares both of them. Pleasure in fact is of a very different kind. Pleasure is not desire, or any other emotion, but is something that is closely associated with motivation, understood as we have, as something that is being aspired for. It is not out of contempt that Socrates appears not to have been properly disposed towards pleasure, but only to understand its function in relation the real sources of motivation—reason. The rational part of the soul has its own desires and pleasures. Since the second kind of life does not concede the importance of pleasure in relation to these motivational sources in its conception of the good life, it stands dismissed.
Philebus does not either mention or refer to any three part soul, given the idea of the soul it develops, it is feasible to conjecture that this account does apply in this case too. We shall address this in greater detail in the next chapter.

Secondly, purely owing to reasons pertaining to preserving the dramatic elements, Socrates is furthering three kinds of life. Since he is obliged to put the third option that he claimed was revealed to him in his dream in a better perspective, as part of his dramatic ploy, he was forced to dismiss the two earlier kinds of life. It is then purely a choice that was engineered by the compulsions of the dramatic structure in order to deal with the problem of pleasure. This illustrates one of the aims of writing a philosophical dialogue, as opposed to a treatise, that is to weave it in the form of a multi-voiced structure. The third kind of life is one where, as already hinted, the ingredients of both the earlier two kinds of lives are combined, a life that is a mixture of pleasure and knowledge. It is often termed a mixed life, the truest candidate for the first prize, if ever it is to be awarded among the three kinds of life. Both Socrates and Protarchus readily assent to it as the most deserving of the lives they reckoned with so far. So, one cannot possibly assign the status of being good exclusively to either the life of pleasure or to that of intelligence, but it must be assigned to a life that is a judicious mixture of both.

The Divine Reason and the Human Reason

In the same sequence of the dialogue, following it up, Socrates faces a terse and stiff objection from Philebus that his reason, essentially being a human attribute, is not good either (22c). There is an echo of this charge again in Philebus’ intervention at 28b. This question, strategically placed at this juncture, bears an echo of what we have discussed a moment ago. Socrates readily agrees that his reason may not be good, meaning that being
human, not having yet achieved the philosophical character, it is prone to the infirmities of
the earth and the flesh. He may fall short of being called good because he may well go
wrong. But, he adds that this particular charge of Philebus does not apply to the divine
reason. The reason of gods, not simply a theological matter, but is something that is to do
with the way whatever exists is guided by an intelligence of cosmic proportions. In the
absence of such a reason, working at such proportions, what would result is chaos. Besides, he also claims that the human reason is a miniature form of the divine reason. So
there are chances that we, the so called infirm intelligences, prone to the debilitations of
conjecture and circumstances, can actually attempt to calibrate to the splendour and the
glory of the divine reason. For Socrates it cannot be doubted that the ways of god are
perfect, but they cannot be completely brought under the purview of our immediate
comprehension. In any event, nothing stops us from exemplifying the kind of reason,
anthropic though it is, that is comparable to that of the divine. It could well be that our
reason is short of certain attributes, since we are small and so proportionately are our
abilities. In spite of this, we are not out of character with what we construe, at a much
higher level of speculation, to be the divine reason. This is the perfect vindication on
Socrates' part of his unreserved rationalism. This is of course not to turn a blind eye to the
fact that there are important discontinuities between the divine reason and its human
counterpart. That need not occupy us at this juncture.

After Socrates proposes that a mixed life, of reason and pleasure, is the worthiest of all, as
we saw in the previous section, he soon turns, in a sense gratuitously, to the cause of that
life. Here the contest is between those who attribute this cause to pleasure and those who
attribute it to reason (22d-e). In any case, the talk of the cause seems, on the face of it, not
in sync with the drift of the conversation till that moment. It seems the discussion is
conducted at the level of purely looking at different forms of life, as they are obtained in this world, never for a moment sparing Socrates' attention on how such forms of life come into existence. The object of the discussion has been to arrive at the right model of life, and examining what qualifies it to be one such life, by way of comparing and contrasting the merits of different models. Introducing a 'cause' for such a life, some sort of an agency which is capable of allowing one to live a life that fits the best of the models, will naturally amount to bringing in an ingredient that has not been accounted for so far. It seems that Plato is urging on us to accommodate a category for which we have thought out no conceptual space, namely self or some such thing, or whatever that is expected to fill the notional gap between an action (or a series of them) and its cause. It might indeed seem a little abrupt and uncalled for; but Plato has an agenda of his own here. Among the ingredients of the soul he is examining, he wants to establish more defensibly as to which one has a more decisive role to play in the life of an individual, to be called the good life. At this juncture, one could glean a glimpse of the larger motivations at work here, which Plato nurtured over a life time of philosophy. The objective is to understand the idea of pleasure from the point of view of what makes an individual exhibit a sense of personality. For Plato, the larger question is always about persons and their personalities; and any other question, involving various aspects related to persons, must be subservient to the ulterior purposes of defending a view of personality, either in the name of reason, or parts of soul. For instance, it will emerge in due course that any treatment of pleasure, by keeping a corresponding talk about personality in abeyance, will amount to providing only a grossly partial account of pleasure. In fact, the Philebus can be construed as having been written to settle matters which arise especially in a context like this.
Let us forget for a moment that we are working with concepts like knowledge, pleasure, and reason. We shall, not quite swerving from what strikes as commonsense, assume that there is something about us which has the nature and the ability to confer on us a certain sense of owning ourselves. We are what we are because we know how we feel, know, reject, and respond as opposed to somebody else doing it. I am not invoking Descartes or Kant, and their ideas about selves. In our actions, and moods sometimes, as we perceive and peruse them, there is something peripheral while there is something that is central. Our sense of doing depends on what we construe, after a bout of reflection perhaps, to be central to how we understand ourselves as actors or agents. Then, there must be something about us which enables us to act as we do. One feels jealousy because of an intense love toward somebody, bordering on strong feelings of possessiveness; and this compels that person to act in a fashion that is damaging to himself and to others, whoever is involved right then. Apart from identifying the complex of emotions and thought, which constitute something like feeling jealousy, we trace this entire sequence of activity to a person in the sense in which we take him to be owning it, under the assumption that he is in charge of himself. Now, taking fully into our view the idea of being in charge of oneself, could we specify a concept among the ones we have worked with so far, that stands closest to our idea of self-ownership? If we were to ask Socrates, pat comes the reply: reason. I am not too sure as to how far we could go with our mighty Socrates, but one thing must be made clear, even before anything else. Among the constituents of the soul Socrates makes a sharp division between pleasure and what it is not, like reason, memory, knowledge and appearances (phantasia).

A multitude feature among what Socrates includes under non-pleasure constituents of the soul, as we have already seen, and they are related to one another as siblings do, or at least
as being close cousins. Pleasure bears an antithetical relationship with this group consisting of non-pleasure aspects. The contrast here—between pleasure and non-pleasure features of the soul—may seem a plausible one, apparently. At this point, we need to ask earnestly whether Plato is as certain about the nature of pleasure as he is about reason or knowledge. It is because, lest we forget, he forces Protarchus into acceding that reason has the place of priority, as opposed to pleasure, in directing or guiding a person’s action. This is under the assumption that reason, as something that is associated with the idea of a self-owned person, is indicative of the fact that a string of other related abilities (understanding, memory, knowledge, right calculation and true opinion) also go with him. Plato’s interest, as comprehensive as it is, is in articulating the notion of a person who is at the same time a master of these abilities and functions. Clearly, for Plato, pleasure does not stand a chance among the kin of reason, so it has to be something that is far from the centre of a self-owned person. It is because pleasure is not a capacity at the behest of the personality. Hence, the third kind of life we have discussed in the previous section must have ‘reason’ as one of its essential ingredients, while pleasure could be a variable. Socrates indeed argues that if we could award prizes among the concepts we are working with—pleasure, reason and intelligence—none of them stand the chance of securing the first prize, while pleasure does not even stand the chance of the second and the third prize (23 c-e). The first prize will be reserved to the perfect life of unmixed and pure intelligence. This is another way of saying that such a life can only be a divine life. At any rate, Socrates says, reason is “close to whatever the ingredient in the mixed life may be that makes it choice-worthy and good” (410). This is actually being very harsh towards pleasure and very positively inclined towards reason. The echo of the same idea can be found in the discussions centred on the fourfold ontological division Socrates works out to capture the basic structure of reality. We shall discuss this aspect in the next section. This takes us back to the discussion
on Plato’s larger commitments towards developing a defensible conception of personality. The idea of granting precedence to reason, in contrast with other constituents of the soul, is only in the interests of developing a view of personality.\textsuperscript{37} We shall deal with this in greater detail in the next chapter.

Protarchus, struck by Socrates’ argumentation, and demoralized, concedes that pleasure has been dealt a death blow. Pleasure is personified, its fall is lamented and there is no irony here. Irony is the preserve of only Socrates, at least as Plato presents him. Protarchus even says, invoking amorous and erotic imagery, that if pleasure were to lose even the second prize, “she would then be somewhat \textit{dishonoured} in the eyes of her own lovers, nor would she seem as fair to them as before” (410). If pleasure is likened to a beautiful lady, no doubt, one would not have any problem understanding its charms. What Socrates then effectively did was to ‘show’ his interlocutors that pleasure is no fair lady and that its charms are not genuine. An enlightenment indeed, that it is by showing reason its right place in the structure of the soul, we would be able to place pleasure in the right perspective. There are indications that Socrates’ demonstrations are well taken, that is to disabuse the love and the fondness invested in pleasure by Philebus and company. However, to what extent it amounts to relinquishing their gut convictions is not clear yet. Protarchus definitely cooperates with Socrates, and shows commendable amounts of intelligence and acumen in following even tricky aspects of the discussion, but there are no indications to suggest that he has \textit{reformed} his view of hedonism accordingly. This again reflects the disjunction inherent in any effort of using arguments and logic to affect beliefs and attitudes. Arguably, Plato has to make this evident in the dramatic choices he makes. As yet, there is no confirmation that either Protarchus or Philebus have expressed any
willingness to change their beliefs and attitudes about pleasure, even after patiently putting up with Socrates’ heavy intellectual fulminations.

Socrates, being a very canny speaker, senses this in his interlocutors and ironically quips after hearing Protarchus’ talk of dishonouring pleasure: “Had we not better leave her (pleasure) alone now, rather than subject her to the most exacting test and giver her pain by such an examination?” (410) This could seem as an attempt to stop the conversation on Socrates’ part. However, Protarchus and company threaten not to leave him until the discussion is carried to its proper end. Then what exactly is pleasure? To continue the discussion further, Socrates calls forth a very different ‘armament’ altogether, that has not been used so far. Here we need to examine the metaphysical picture Plato contrives, a fourfold division of whatever is said to exist, to assign suitable conceptual roles to pleasure and knowledge. This will be dealt with in the next section. One can clearly notice the role of dialectic, the Divine method, is executing this metaphysical picture.

The Fourfold Division and Pleasure

This section pertains to a fourfold division Socrates proposes (23c-31b) to describe the basic structure of whatever is said to exist. It is a feat par excellence in philosophical imagination. And this has implications for how Plato understand the nature of the good in the Philebus. Thus, the proposals need to be understood and judged in a philosophical vein alone. Since our task is to understand pleasure, as Plato deals with it, we shall try to deal with this fourfold ontological division only in so far as it enables us to view pleasure in a better light. Apart from presenting a brief summary, and commenting on its imaginative character, and, above all, presenting it as another innovative sojourn in this Socratic search
for the genuine value of pleasure, there will not be any attempt to evaluate it from an explicit scholarly point of view.

The cosmos, or whatever is said to exist, can be divided up into four kinds. To be conceptually more exact, the being of whatever exists can be understood in terms of its fourfold character: the limited (peras), the unlimited (apeiron), the mixture of these two (meikton) and finally its cause (aitia). Thus, anything that exists, being part of the cosmos, must be either limited or unlimited or be a combination of both. Apart from this, there must a cause, bringing it into existence. Anything that does not admit a limit and could be measured only in terms of relative values, like ‘hotter’ or ‘colder’ is by nature indeterminate. At no particular point it admits a clear and absolute value (Cooper, “Pleasure”). This belongs in the category of the unlimited for Plato, or apeiron. In sharp contrast, among the things that we know and work with, some admit clear cut measurement or determination, like the exact frequency of a note or the temperature at any particular time of the day. The values are sharp and unequivocal. There is no ambiguity of any sort. This is the domain of the limited—peras. In short, our languages of description assign different values to same phenomena, conterminously sometimes, in view of their relative resourcefulness. Cooper argues that, for Plato, the good shares the character of the limited.

Now there will be objects, of a third kind, which admit being characterized both as limited and unlimited, simultaneously. In the dialogue Socrates tells Protarchus to arrive at this third category by mixing a little of each one of the earlier categories (25d), to be blended together. The metaphorical suggestion, of mixture here, of a seemingly impossible combination of categories, and in fact Plato is adept at making such suggestions, is only to camouflage the real activity of the philosopher. Philosophical activity involves noticing the
manner in which concepts tie up with each other to provide the best account possible of whatever is said to exist. There are things of a limited kind and there are things of an unlimited kind; once they are both brought together, in the fashion in which what is unlimited suddenly takes on the character of being limited, the conflict or the opposition between them resolves into something agreeable. The crucial idea here is that there must be some principle at work, beneath the matrix of objects and processes that constitutes this cosmos, in that it seems the limited is always in conflict with what is unlimited. The principle should be the one that explains how this conflict resolves itself into some kind of a harmony. For things to show up, as what they are, existing objects that they are, they need to manifest their character as a compromise between what is determined and what is not. Cold or hot, wet or dry, any of these features can be detrimental to the health of nature if they reign unchecked; a proper measure among its attributes is very much needed for it to come into a peaceful coexistence. Some sort of a harmony must prevail; else forces in conflict can disrupt the order of existence. This idea indeed resurfaces in Aristotle as the crucial maxim of the mean between excess and deficit of the Nichomachean Ethics, in book six. Socrates, eventually, elicits from Protarchus the idea that whatever we perceive and subject our judgement to, must be of such a state of the object where the conflict is resolved into harmony. In fact, this is the larger thematic that informs Plato’s views on the relationship between personality and pleasure; that is to say, pleasure must feature as one element in that harmonious state of the soul where different conflicting elements—desire and reason—could come into a harmony.

Fourthly, there must be a cause for anything that ‘comes to be’. The notion of the cause of mixed life, discussed in the previous section, bears a distinct echo here. One peculiar feature of this dialogue is that ideas recur in different forms and guises. Things cannot be of
a gratuitous provenance, ever; in such a case, nothing would yield to be explained by a rational principle. Interestingly, Socrates here makes a telling suggestion, that what we take to be a cause here is not different for what makes. A maker is a sort of a cause after all. We are long familiar, at least for four centuries now, with an idea of causation that is quite close a kin of how causes explain phenomena for a scientist. But this idea is quite an alien one to the lore of Plato. A poet, in the ancient world, is a kind of maker, as much as a draughtsman is. Nonetheless, sometimes it is suggested that poets are special kinds of makers because they do not depend on skill, techne, as draughtsmen and sculptors do, but draw on some extra-human agency, namely inspiration, to accomplish their acts of making, or creation. For our purposes, it is extremely useful to note that the idea of the cause of something is being assimilated to that of making (poieisis). Thus, we need not feel restricted to construe the notion of cause as applicable only in the world constituted by mechanical relations.

This fourfold division seems simple and uncluttered, as it is indeed. In any case, that does not leave it free of problems. As some have already indicated, the categories—limited and unlimited—are not as clear as our commonsense perhaps suggests them to be. At any particular state, it is difficult to assume that an object could be deprived of strict measurement. To say that a metal object is hotter or colder than something else is not say that the rod’s temperature cannot be measured; it only indicates that we choose a different language, a conceptual scheme of sorts, to talk about the physical state of that metal object. What one could say is that Plato is solemnising distinctions which are of commonsensical origin to assist him for different purposes.
It should be noted here that Plato's style of working his way through a problem is of a very unusual kind and imaginatively rich in suggestion and resourcefulness. He combines methodological issues with logical ones; uses distinctions of a purely metaphysical kind to illuminate the structure of a problem which we broadly construe to be ethical in nature. We are used to, more of a temperamental issue indeed, a greater sense of parsimony and are very wary of such seemingly global projects. But, truly speaking, there is nothing illegitimate in pursuing an inquiry which presupposes that ethics must be continuous, somewhere along the line, with metaphysics, or further down with epistemology. On the face of it, there is nothing objectionable in this enterprise. Of course, it could well happen that the task of tracing these lines may not be an easy one. And Plato is never set to turn his heels because the task is a difficult one, indeed. Let me further clarify what I intend to convey by means of these claims.

It is clear indeed that Plato proposed this fourfold ontology to settle the relationship pleasure shares with knowledge and the good. However, as many commentators have pointed out, this division must be understood within the context of Plato's avowed metaphysical doctrines, and more particularly, the ontological speculation that is at work in this dialogue, the *Philebus*. That is indeed a much larger question to be addressed, with huge scholarly investments at stake, which is quite beyond the scope of our discussion. At any rate, whatever Plato may have meant by his ontological speculations in this dialogue, as referring to the Forms earlier (15a-e) or setting 'sensibles' apart from the Forms or working out a Divine method (dialectic) to unravel the true structure of reality or lately setting up a fourfold ontological vision of a comprehensive sort (this is also part of his dialectical investigation), should be construed as purely instrumental in character. They are helping us understand certain challenges which are ethical in nature; besides, as Paul
Friedlander rightly observes, here "the main theme is the connection between pleasure and the ultimate questions of ontology", and not with a psychology of affects (313). Even the detailed observation of pleasure and pain, to be dealt with in the next chapter, are only part of his larger approach to ontological issues. In a way, it is to understand the nature and the structure of ontology entailed in ethical issues. And here pleasure hosts the discussions pertaining to ethics, as hedonism and its opponent intellectualism. In fact, despite Plato's ambitious attempt, it may ultimately prove quite difficult to put Plato's questions in the right perspective. As we shall see in a while, pleasure gave Plato an occasion to address concerns which do not otherwise appear to be linked to pleasure.

Now it is time to assign the categories Plato worked out to the constituents of this world. Pleasure, since it is only something that is like 'hotter' and 'colder', in failing to fall under a strict measure, corresponds to the Unlimited. Socrates is quite aware, right from the beginning of this dialogue, contrary to what he believed in the Protagoras, that pleasure cannot be quantified. Failing to find an appropriate measure for pleasure does not mean that it should be banished from this world of ours; instead, we should find a category which houses it, for our conceptual order is elastic enough to accommodate even things which are indeterminate in character. Knowledge, on the other hand, falls under the Limited, and so does the good. Knowledge and its cognates, like reason, calculation and understanding, work with measures and proportions, and thus broadly fit into the class of those which are limited by nature. Hence, the knowledge of whatever 'comes to be' must also be the knowledge of how it is 'limited'. And a life that allows for a judicious admixture of pleasure and knowledge—the combination of the limited and the unlimited therefore—is the third category. Socrates awards first prize to this mixed life (27 c). As already discussed, when we talk about leading a good life, we do not mean to suggest that a life lived purely pursuing pleasure is a good one; nor that a life lived intelligently, but devoid of pleasure, is
a good one. Soon, Socrates questions: “We were wondering whether second prize should be awarded to pleasure or to knowledge?” (415) He follows it up suggesting that the fourfold distinction he has worked out could help him distribute the prizes, judiciously.

Pleasure and pain, according to some have a Manichean structure, though Ryle would not quite agree to this. The diminishing of pleasure in an experience could turn into pain and likewise an increase of pain would lessen the pleasure of an experience. Plato, at certain moments, works with this Manichean structure. Thus, if pleasure and pain alternate with each other, and have an inversely complementing relation, then pleasure can be called good only if it admits more and more of it, in an unrestrained manner (27e). Going by the same logic, pain cannot be bad unless it admits more of it. Then, what is unlimited—either pain or pleasure—cannot be the source of its good. There must be something else, on the part of pleasure, if it is to be called good. Since pleasure is already assigned to the category boundless and indeterminate, and if we are to rethink our decision of having assigned the status of unlimited to it, it will only amount to including pleasure among those which are limited, and therefore measurable, according to our fourfold division (28a). This is a ‘blasphemy’ because it forces us to get the ontology of pleasure wrong, a gross violation of our painstaking job indeed, that of propounding the fourfold ontology. So we cannot possibly give the second prize to pleasure, but it must be reserved, then, for knowledge and its cognates. For, Socrates claims, “all the wise are agreed, in true self-exaltation, that reason is our king, both over heaven and earth (28d)” (416). One can notice the echo of this claim in our earlier discussions about the relations between divine reason and human reason.

A few questions prominently emerge here. What does Plato mean by reason? And, as discussed in the earlier section, what are the motivations behind setting up reason as an
important feature of personality? Again Plato shows an extraordinary feat of imagination. Socrates is a traditionalist and his deep rooted respect for the wisdom of the tradition is unmistakable. Accordingly, he borrows from the tradition a certain view of the emergence and the functioning of the “whole world order”, i.e. the cosmic structure. Socrates, as a pious and conservative traditionalist, and so is Protarchus, endorses the widely held view that the cosmos is governed by reason and intelligence. Likewise, the absence of a divine intelligence and a well-ordered world would leave us with no means to explain the phenomenon called cosmos, as to how it functions. This serves as an analogy for Socrates. Thus, there must be some miniature form of order and intelligence, analogous to the divine one, within the soul of a person to be able to exhibit the most essential features of possessing what we call a sense of personality. Reason here corresponds to this order and intelligence within the soul, modelled on an analogy of the workings of cosmic order. This naturally enables us to further propose that reason must be the cause of the mixed life, the fourth category of the fourfold division.

Cleaving pleasure to one side of the argument to confront knowledge and reason as its opponents is itself indicative of the stand Socrates would take subsequently, that he would not be very easy on pleasure. In this chapter, we examined the first part of the Philebus, with an exclusive focus on how its varied arguments and their unanticipated turns illuminate the idea of pleasure. The fruits of this investigation can be summarily stated as follows: The reading is attentive to certain literary aspects of the dialogue, principally certain aspects of its dramatic structure which help us understand the nature of pleasure. This reading, apart from examining the doctrinal contents as they bear upon our interest in pleasure, helped us uncover a performative dimension of the dialogue: that the character and appeal of hedonism far exceeds the logic of argumentation. Plato demonstrated this performatively. As assessment of the efficacy of the dialectic to address pleasure is made,
and its nature and standing are calibrated with that of literary criticism. The distinctions among the pleasure urged by Plato, in the beginning of the dialogue, are primarily ethical in kind, making it further clear that an inalienable moral angle is attached to these investigations on pleasure. The talk of pleasure necessarily involves a corresponding talk of personality. Thus, Plato’s interest in pleasure should not be stripped of its deeper implications for his search for a defensible view of personality. Of the fourfold ontological division proposed, pleasure belongs in the category of the Unlimited. As a result, pleasure receives a lot of bad press. Plato’s preponderant interests in the idea of personality, motivated by an urge to find a theoretical anchor for it, overshadow the analysis of pleasure.

For a modern reader this kind of a discussion on pleasure will no doubt be meanderingly long, apart from striking redundant. Why, after all, one must make these distinctions, ontological and ethical, to deal with pleasure? As it was discussed on an earlier occasion, talking about pleasure is a way of seeking a context to debate the nature of persons and their personalities. Pleasure is actually a misnomer. In short, Plato is using this discussion on pleasure to shed light on the shape and structure of personality vis-à-vis its relations with a more primordial pleasure seeking character. More importantly, in the dialogue Socrates is presented as someone who is not very favourable toward pleasure, on the whole. He allows pleasures, but only so long as they have the sanction of reason and intelligence. Socrates is seeking an understanding of pleasure, by means of a soul-search, and a therapeutic unlayering of the pleats and folds of certain aspects of personality so that ‘we’ get to arrive at the true knowledge of ourselves—the Freudian analogy is not very irrelevant here. This indeed corresponds to Foucault’s advocation that we should be after a personal idea of ethics. There are no proscriptions here, nor any regimes of moral injunctions. There is only a seemingly simpleminded advice, that is to look into oneself,
and come to know oneself, using the Promethean method—the dialectic. But, in any case, Plato also knows that this simpleminded advice, however powerfully and persuasively it comes in the form of arguments and exhortations, could still prove to be quite ineffectual in wooing a person into taking it seriously in the face of an almost seductive kind of appeal exercised by the Philebus-style hedonism. This aspect will come to light only if we attend to its dramatic structure. In the next chapter, we shall try to understand the claim that seeking pleasure is not a simple activity, but instead something that calls for deliberation, efficient cognitive functioning, and understanding the nature and the need of one’s desire. As we steer our way to a defence of this claim, we shall work our way along with the dialogue, attending to its detail, as they bear upon our investigation of pleasure.

END NOTES

1 Oxford English Dictionary defines personality as “that quality or assemblage of qualities which makes a person what he is, as distinct from other persons: distinctive personal or individual character, esp. when of a marked or notable kind”. Christopher Gill, in the introduction of his book Personality in Greek Epic, Tragedy and Philosophy: The Self in Dialogue, attempts at a comprehensive picture of different views and concerns, both descriptive and normative, of personality by way of a comparative approach involving ancient and modern views of self. Our concern is not with any full-fledged theoretical picture of what an idea of personality would be, in terms of its implications for a philosophy of mind and ethics, but only with certain assumptions about what form the most essential functions of what we recognise as a personality.

2 Hedonism is a very unusual doctrine, for its central claim, as simple as it is, is that the highest good anyone can pursue is pleasure. As a doctrine it proceeds on the basis of a limited purview of the relations between pursuing pleasure and the actions one needs to undertake in such a pursuit. Seeking pleasure as a good, as Dorothea Frede notes in her commentary on the Philebus, is not as innocuous a claim as it appears to be; that one can at least point out two different interpretations. It can be a factual claim that all creatures go after pleasure as their ultimate aim, or it can be a normative claim that all creatures ought to make the search for pleasure as their ultimate aim. The basis for these claims is that no one willingly wants to pursue a course of action, for no intelligible reason, which would only bring pain and displeasure. In case we stumble on a reason that is unintelligible in terms of its connectedness with the rest of a pleasure seeker’s beliefs and desires, the tie of rationality snaps. In a sense, hedonism, despite being very unusual, is still proposed on the basis of a very sound understanding of human rationality, as the case of Socratic hedonism proves in the Protagoras (Gosling and Taylor) (Nussbaum, Fragility). In a sense, the normativity claim is in some broad sense related to certain factual aspects of human behaviour. In any case, one of the striking features of hedonism is that it hastens rationality, rather rigorously, into every corner of our beliefs required to fulfill our desires. This is how one would make sense of it as a doctrine. There is a hedonism of a different kind as well, the one which applies, perhaps with a sense of rigor so much more minimal than what we saw in the earlier kind, to people who are known as hedonists and aesthetes, mostly consisting of artists and dilettantes. The doctrine here is loose in that the idea is not to have a sophisticated theory, but to be the exemplar of a life lived as a pure hedonist. One can here see a clear divergence between the ways of the doctrine and the ways of life. Mostly people who call themselves hedonists use this particular appellation as a term of art to capture the sense of life—its purposes, justifications and so on—that is familiar to them. This is a reactionary response to the manner in which certain forces attempt to colonise deeply personal aspects of human life in the name of politics, social involvement and obligation. However, my use of the term hedonism in the thesis will be purely restricted to how Socrates circumscribes its definition in the dialogue. This is because the idea of hedonism, both in ancient and modern accounts, is quite extensively popular, with varying emphases.
3 This has been attempted by Dorothea Frede in her article “The Hedonist’s Conversion: The Role of Socrates in the Philebus”. In this article she sheds light on how the doctrinal considerations fuse with the overall dramatic, i.e. literary, structure of the entire dialogue. I view my attempt only as modest continuation of what she insightfully achieved in one single article, though my focus will be exclusively to understand how the progress and structuring of the dialogue come into the service of clarifying the idea of pleasure.

4 For a recent work on how Philebus’ hedonism compels us to raise the question about self-knowledge in terms of its connection with the precise nature of “the good”, one may consult Bartlett (2008).

5 There are a great number of controversies about the interpretation of certain passages, especially those where Plato seems to be referring to Forms. Whatever their larger value for understanding Plato’s philosophy, our approach does not depend on how we interpret them. Our singular focus is on pleasure and to come to terms, to the extent we could, with the manner in which Plato worked his way around this problem using a myriad number of resources.

6 In this regard I drew inspiration from G. R. F. Ferrari’s stimulating and sophisticated ‘literary’ treatment of the Phaedrus he attempted with extraordinary wit and verve in his Listening to the Cicadas: A Study of Plato’s Phaedrus. Being a student of literature, this is one book on Plato, apart from Paul Friedlander’s volumes, which strengthened my belief that with Plato literary competence can indeed be a worthwhile investment in itself.

7 The kind of divergence that concerns me here is not anthropological or ethological. In any case, since the ‘text’ we are dealing with is an ancient text, belonging to very different cultural assumptions, such issues are clearly relevant. For a view of that kind, one could consult Bruno Snell’s The Discovery of the Mind, and for a recent intervention one may consult Bernard Williams’ immensely valuable Shame and Necessity. They will not be relevant here, which is not to say that such questions cannot be posed on behalf of pleasure, for our sense of the problem inheres in conceptual exploration rather than examining conceptual parity across cultures. So, we take it as a preliminary that some viable kind of parity exists between ancient and modern reflections, at least as far as the explorative context that problematises pleasure is concerned. Our concern is with the divergence between the ancient and modern views definitely, but it will be of varying emphases and values rather than of cultures and modes of understanding.

8 Though scholarly opinion varies, there is by and large a consensus that Philebus is the last dialogue Plato wrote. This is now the standard opinion. However, questions still remain about is relative status in the entire complex of Plato’s writings. Robin Waterfield’s “The Place of the Philebus in Plato’s Dialogues” and Charles Kahn’s “On Platonic Chronology” are two relevant studies.

9 Typically, in the Socratic dialogues questions and issues related to human functioning are treated in isolation from the usual metaphysical overtures of Plato. But this dialogue combines both them, sometimes making the text difficult to master. In these two chapters, this and the following, I have tried to interpret certain ideas and departures broached in the dialogue in the light of our interest in pleasure, and establish connections between them, but it is difficult to explain why the dialogue develops as it does and how all this is supposed to work. This in other words means that we still do not have the required framework to explain why questions of human conduct must fall in line with metaphysical investigations. In the Introduction, I laboured the point that this is one of the attractions of Greek philosophy, not necessarily because we know how to deal with this aspect, but because it sets us on a mode of investigation that is not driven by our habits thought or by our philosophical training.

10 This dialogue is not artistically of a superior quality, like for example the Symposium. However, as part of reading any of Plato’s dialogues, one must take into account the role certain elements, conventionally treated as formal literary elements, play in understanding its overall literary structure enabling it to present a problem at the maximal level of its complexity. They are images, figures of speech, suggestive metaphors and allusions, analogies, characterisation and portrayals, wit, irony, humour, dramatic reversals, recognitions, descriptions, and dramatic interventions most notably. These features give a distinct dramatic flavour to the dialogue.

11 It is quite probable that Philebus is a fictional character. Debra Nialls, in her enormously informative prosopography of ancient Greek personalities has the following to say about Philebus: “The name is not known in Greece in ancient times except for a fictional instance in the 4th c. c.e. in the epistolographer
Alciphro (3.50),” Though we are equally ignorant about Protarchus, we have reasons to believe, as Debra Nialls suggests, that he was a historical figure (257).

12 Given the emphases on notions like reason, and understanding which are pitted against the appeal of the senses and the body, these ideas appear quite out of tune in the current climate. It should be borne in mind that these are Plato’s ideas, and not mine. Whether one shares Plato’s antipathy towards the body and the senses, it is important to know how Plato understands the role of such notions as reason and understanding in the constitution of a personality. We shall deal with it in one of the subsequent sections.

13 The idea of pleasure that is defined by the consumerist culture of post-industrialist societies and the entertainment industry it supports is a good example of the pleasures which Plato calls Sybaritic.

14 Beginning with the famous Socratic disavowal of knowledge, there are many instances in the Platonic corpus that deal with knowledge in particular with different methods, like *Meno* and *Phaedo* (Recollection), *Republic* (system building), *Theatetus* (perception and analysis), to name a few. However, it may be summed up that the general aim of an epistemological inquiry is to attain systematic understanding of the intelligible principles of reality, though it constantly varied for Plato, across his work. Though knowledge is not one of the central concerns in the *Philebus*, there is no doubt that Plato presupposes systematicity as a virtue on its behalf. Besides, it is also believed that our understanding of reality must underlie certain intelligible principles. Later, in the course of analysing the dialogue, we shall address these ideas more comprehensively.

15 Gregory Vlastos did much to bring this aspect of Socrates’ work, personality, and philosophy into a clear focus. His book on Socrates is an exemplar of scholarship combined with sound insights.

16 In the *Gorgias* there is no talk of knowledge at all, instead pleasures are distinguished in terms of their differences, being ‘noble’ and ‘vulgar’, ‘good’ and ‘bad’ (Gosling and Taylor). Besides, an attempt is made, which appears more robustly in the *Philebus*, to describe and analyse the experience of pleasure (a rudimentary variant of its phenomenology) in the contexts within which pleasure arises. What strike us to be radical changes in Plato’s position, despite being true, should not force us to overlook certain important continuities. The *Gorgias’* attempt to distinguish pleasures appears in a more developed fashion in the *Philebus*. Some even have suggested that the *Philebus* is the fruit of the decades of engagement with pleasure which remained for Plato so elusive through and through, at least until the time of his last dialogue.

17 This is the position Socrates defended while debating with the older and venerated sophist Protagoras in the eponymous dialogue bearing his name. A brief note on it will put things in the right perspective. The issue being debated was whether one could call pleasure good. Broadly there is an agreement among the philosophers of ancient Greece, even prior to Plato, that pleasure is a state of the soul; and that its relationship with the body is of a complex kind. So if the aim of arriving at such a state of the soul is a good thing, then there must be some way by means of which one arrives at such a state of the soul. This way is nothing but practical deliberation. Certain decisions of practical nature call for an extended deliberation in calculating their costs and benefits. The idea is to act on a decision which promises the best outcome, considering all relevant factors; and such outcomes are possible only when deliberation takes place methodically, in accordance with right procedures; procedures cannot be effective until the data we are working with is measurable accurately. This implies that there should be some agreement over the scale or units of measure to be adapted. *Protagoras* propounds a model roughly like this, according to which one should choose to do an action only if it turns out to be the one that scientifically, on the basis of exact calculations, promises the highest pleasure. Therefore, it is noted that *Protagoras* proposes something like a hedonic calculus. John Stuart Mill, I suppose not without proper justification, traces the sources of his utilitarianism to the *Protagoras* in chapter one of his *Utilitarianism*. One can evidently see why Plato’s interest in mathematics was working its way into ethics. In this dialogue, Socrates goes so far as to conclude that pleasure—or what is pleasant—can be identified with good. Martha Nussbaum (1986) has a very insightful exploration of the issues in the *Protagoras* from the standpoint of a critique of practical reason.

18 This issue, that of the One and many, has been subject a subject of great controversy. It is often interpreted in the light of Plato’s hallmark metaphysical doctrine of Forms, i.e. whether One refers to Forms or not. These are considerations extraneous to our project, which is to exclusively concentrate on Plato’s attempts to come to terms with the problem of pleasure. Cynthia Hampton’s *Pleasure, Knowledge and Being: An Analysis of Plato’s Philebus* is one of the few recent attempts to deal with this issue in the context of *Philebus’* other central concerns.
G. B. Kerferd extensively deals with these issues in his *The Sophistic Movement* in chapter six titled 'Dialectic, antilogic and eristic'. Besides, Nehamas short piece titled "Eristic, Antilogic, Sophistic Dialectic" also addresses the same issues.

The suggestion here to associate philosophy, at the moment of its inception, with narrative modes is quite pertinent.

It is not clear what these intermediaries would be.

The problem of the One and the Many has a linguistic dimension. It can also be seen as a mischief engineered by the very structure of discourse—language. But this is to find too quick a solution, that is hardly informative. Cynthia Hampton suggests that we must consider the broader context of Plato's theory of meaning to determine the exact modes of application both the categories of one and many can be subject to.

One may consult Hugh Benson's "Plato's method of Dialectic" to get an overview of the basic issues involved.

Jakob Klein's exposition of the *Sophist* and the *Statesman* in his *Plato's Trilogy* brings out this aspect quite tellingly. Cynthia Hampton also suggests, in chapter one of her *Pleasure, Knowledge and Being: An Analysis of Plato's Philebus*, that what Socrates says of the Divine Method in the *Philebus* is strikingly similar to what he says of the Collection-Division method in the *Phaedrus, Sophist and Statesman*.

Derrida's "Plato's Pharmacy" in *Dissemination* makes this the centrepiece for his philosophy of language.

Geroge Harvey recently studied the relation between *techne*, whose instrument is dialectic, and the conception of the good in the *Philebus* in his lucid and clear "Techne and Good in Plato's Statesman and Philebus". The salience of this article lies in relating the idea of *techne* to the classifications that Plato makes—the One and the Many (the Promethean method) and the fourfold division—with ideas of due measure (to *metrion*) and proportion (*summetria*), which come to be discussed later in the dialogue, in so far as they shed light on what good amounts to in the context of this dialogue.

The relationship between *techne* (skill) and *episteme* (science) is never too sharp and it is a complex issue. What counts in our favour is the Socrates attributes to the dialectic the quality of being an art, implying that it is on par with other skills we command as our resources. The larger implication is that one could use dialectic for many kinds of inquiries and purposes, including self-exploration, as we shall see in the ensuing chapter.

Gadamer elaborates on this aspect of Plato's work in any essay called "Plato and the Poets" published in *Dialogue and Dialectic*.

Richard Patterson's "Plato on Philosophic Character" quite competently develops this theme with reference to the tripartite division of the soul in the *Republic*.

In *Apology* Socrates sets the manifesto of philosophy as pursuing an examined life.

One of the primary reasons why Plato proposed his tripartite soul theory in the *Republic* is to explain the nature of human motivation (Cooper, "Plato's"). The three parts correspond to the reason, the spirited part and the appetite and they act in a quasi-independent manner. And one of the most influential treatments of human action, that of Donald Davidson, construes reasons one *has* to perform a particular action in terms of belief-desire pairs. Thus, motivation according to this picture is a desire combined with the proper belief. Desire here is not very different from how one would understand it from the standpoint of commonsense, that is a 'want' or a projection towards an object with the intention of owning it. Plato also quite extensively deploys the notion of desire, as a theory of motivation. But this notion is not a simple derivative of an everyday sense of using it, but embodies a sophisticated theory (Kahn). This theory, in short, is not about desire or reason, but about motivation; that is, about a sequence of actions, causally linked to each other, but judged in terms of the end that they are out to achieve. In simple terms, a desire is always a desire for a good or a bad outcome. So, the part in Plato's psychology that corresponds to reason, is not a just faculty that enables an individual to achieve some amount of cognitive grasp over different aspects of the world, but is something that has its own desires and pleasures. A desire, as a desire for good, is already included in the constitution of the rational part of the soul. As Myles Burnyeat captures it, "what distinguishes reason from
the other motivational parts it is concern for the over all, long term good in one's life" ("Culture" 228). Thus, desire does not work as an independent source of motivation, as Hume viewed it (as fundamentally non-rational), but works in the form of reason. This is very different from saying that desire and reason are antithetical to each other, as Hume does. Apart from Charles Kahn's attempt to compare Plato's theory of motivation with the modern ones, of Freud in particular, Julia Annas' Introduction to Plato's Republic (125-31) is a very good introduction to this issue.

32 John M. Cooper also developed a similar view in his "Plato's Theory of Motivation". These ideas will be subsequently incorporated into the concerns of this thesis in the next chapter also.

33 There is an ambiguity here. It is because Socrates uses the same account, as he uses to detail the second kind of life, to describe the life of the gods. Does it amount to any sacrilege on his part? This is where we need the second answer.

34 Cornford gives a good summary view of the intellectual currents that served as backgrounds for these rationalist ideas.

35 One could refer to Oliver Letwin's interpretation which attempts to throw light on the discontinuities between divine reason and human reason.

36 This aspect will be further elaborated in the next section "The Fourfold Division".

37 One could sense a distinct Kantian flavour in these ideas, if only one is too quick and careless to ignore the historical differences between Kant's idea of reason and that of Socrates. In ancient philosophy reason was never the deracinated and procedural reason we are largely familiar with, as inheritors of European Enlightenment and a scientific worldview. In contrast, reason was always understood as one of the features of the human soul whose composite structure includes desires, emotions and appetites. It is like saying that reason is of the kind that could 'share' in desire. Michael Frede's introduction to the work he edited, Rationality in Greek Thought, is a clear and succinct account of the idea of reason in ancient philosophy.

38 Neil Cooper's "Pleasure and Goodness in Plato's Philebus" interprets the "fourfold division" in relation to the larger questions of the nature and definition of good in the Philebus, much like George Harvey connecting the nature of good and the techne.

39 Plato's Ion exclusively addresses this issue. Christopher Janaway has a detailed discussion of this dialogue.

40 Cynthia Hampton also makes some very suggestive remarks on this, especially on connecting this system of the fourfold division with the pleasure and knowledge.

41 Dorothea Frede's commentary on the Philebus is very informative about these debates.

42 We shall examine Ryle's views in the next section.

43 F. M. Cornford's From Religion to Philosophy, though an old work, is quite informative about the cosmological speculations rife in ancient Greece.

44 Donald Davidson puts it more insightfully in his article "Plato's Philebus", in terms of a dual function that reason performs here. He writes, "mind plays a dual role; its functions and objects are admirable and desirable in themselves, and mind, being akin to the cosmic cause which accounts for all that is good in the universe, is itself the cause of the measured life" (17). What we termed as reason is mind for him, for the composite character of its internal order and intelligence far exceeds the functional characterization as reason. This reason corresponds to the "human reason" referred to in one of the earlier sections and also to the reason that is identified as the source of motivation.

45 It should be noted that there is context in which reason is understood in a particular manner. I refer to the reader to footnote 31.

46 It will be dealt in the next chapter.