

A Platonic kind-based account of goodness

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Abstract Robert Adams defends a platonic account of goodness, understood as excellence, claiming that there exists a platonic good that all other good things must resemble, identifying the Good with God. Mark Murphy agrees, but argues that this platonic account is in need of Aristotelian supplementation, as resemblance must take into account a thing's kind-membership. While this article will accept something like Murphy's account of goodness (but without claiming the platonic good is God), it will further develop its details and support. Without relying on theistic premises, I show that the metaphysical status of an individual's goodness consists in resemblance with the platonic good. As for the distinct question of what that goodness holds in virtue of, I conclude it holds in virtue of exactly: the thing's own properties, those properties being such as to satisfy its kind-based standards (K-standards), and those K-standards resembling the platonic good. I then develop an account of how K-standards resemble the platonic good: The K-standards resemble it firstly with respect to requiring activities, as the platonic good will be posited to be active, and must resemble it secondly also at the level of what teleology those activities are directed towards. I also motivate the need for a third respect of resemblance, to be developed in future work. The article ends with a discussion of the nature of the platonic good.

What is it for something to be good, where goodness here is understood as excellence? Call a platonic account one that claims that there exists a platonic good that all other good things must either resemble or instantiate. Robert Adams, in *Finite and Infinite Goods* (2002), defends such an account of goodness, contending that resemblance with the platonic good (which he identifies with God) is what the goodness of other things consists in. Mark Murphy (2011), however, argues that this platonic account is in need of Aristotelian supplementation, as it is plausible this resemblance must occur within the context of a thing's kind-membership.

This article will offer an account of goodness concerning living beings that are members of kinds, and while it will accept Murphy's account of goodness (but without identifying the platonic good with God), it will further develop the details of such a position with respect to: providing the exact determinants that something's goodness is in virtue of, providing an argument (without presupposing theism) that something's goodness consists in resemblance with the platonic good, and detailing an account of what it is for something to resemble while something else does not resemble the platonic good. I will organize this work by making a distinction between the question of what something's goodness obtains in virtue of, and the question of what that goodness in turn consists in (with regards to its metaphysical status).

I will begin with a brief exposition of Adams' account of the platonic good, which will be important background for my discussion. Next, I will tackle the first question above of what something's goodness obtains in virtue of, explaining why an individual's goodness must hold in virtue of both resemblance to the platonic good and also kind-based considerations. I sharpen this claim later, but I first use this coarse-grained claim that an individual's goodness holds in virtue of these two determinants, in order to tackle the second question, which asks what the metaphysical status of that individual's goodness consists in. I respond with an argument that an

individual's goodness consists in its resemblance to the platonic good, rather than consisting in goodness as a member of its kind. Next, I return to provide more precision to the question of what an individual's goodness holds in virtue of, and conclude that it is in virtue of exactly the following determinants: the thing's own properties, those properties being such as to satisfy its kind-based standards (K-standards), and those K-standards resembling the platonic good. I then develop an account of how K-standards resemble the platonic good: The K-standards resemble it firstly with respect to requiring activities, as the platonic good will be posited to be active, and must resemble it secondly also at the level of what teleology those activities are directed towards. I also motivate the need for a third respect of resemblance, to be developed in future work. The article ends with a discussion of the nature of the platonic good, including an argument that the latter is an exemplar rather than a property.

1. Robert Adams' account of the platonic good

Adams' account of the platonic good is important background for this entire discussion. The goodness that interests Adams is not goodness construed as usefulness, or merely instrumental goodness. Neither is his study about well-being — what is ultimately good *for* an individual.¹ Instead, Adams is interested in the goodness “of that which is worthy of love or admiration”. This is the goodness that is *excellence* (Adams 1999: 13). Moral virtues are excellences, but excellence is not exclusively moral. Adams points to beauty as an important example of platonic excellence, alluding to Plato's notion of a transcendent Beauty, found in the *Symposium*, where Beauty “is the standard of all beauty and all other beautiful things are beautiful by ‘participating’ (211B) in it.” (Adams 13) For Adams, this transcendent Good is the monotheistic God, as it was for Augustine and many others (14). Adams points out that he has no interest in defending a theory of universals, but rather a theory of value. In addition, he has no interest in representing the beliefs of the historical Plato *per se*. However, Adams does take a stand regarding two interpretations that are distinguished in Platonic scholarship about the Forms: One in which they are primarily exemplars, the other in which they are properties or universals. As Adams takes the platonic good to be God, and thus not an abstract object “but a concrete (though not a physical) individual” (14), it is no surprise that Adams conceives of the platonic good as an exemplar.

As the transcendent Good, the single platonic form of excellence is held to be capable of accounting for all varieties of goodness, a thesis with which Aristotle famously disagrees. As Adams observes, Aristotle claims “that the diversity of things that are noninstrumentally good is too fundamental for their goodness to be accounted for in terms of a single Platonic Form” (Adams 38). For Aristotle, there are as many sorts of goodness as can be predicated in each Aristotelian category. Further, it seems to me that for Aristotle things are too diverse also because individuals belong to different kinds, and so their goodness cannot be explained by a single transcendent Good. But Adams argues that even if there are varieties of excellence, this does not entail that they are not good in virtue of a relation to some one supreme Good: “All other good things are good by virtue of their relation to one supremely good thing, the central

¹ It is usual to distinguish theories of well-being as either hedonist theories, desire theories, or objective list theories (which can be broadly Aristotelian). Regardless, Adams is not interested in what is good for something, but what is lovely or admirable about it.

relation being a sort of resemblance or imaging.” (40) Thus, for Adams this transcendent good is a kind-independent and ultimate standard that all other things are good in virtue of resembling.

But Adams is clear that not every sharing of a property with the platonic good counts as resemblance. “Judgments of resemblance are more holistic than that. Suppose there is a squirrel that has the same number of hairs on its body that I have on mine. We would not ordinarily say that this rodent ‘resembles’ me in that respect.” (32) Instead, he argues that there must be a certain context within which resemblance holds, and so resemblance is holistic. This context, he eventually argues, is the sharing of properties in a way that gives God a reason for loving the thing. So, “being excellent in the way that a finite thing can be consists in resembling God in a way that could serve God as a reason for loving the thing.” (36)

Now, Adams readily grants that the meaning of the term ‘good’ is not identical to *resembles God* (15). However, he makes use of classic work in the philosophy of language by Hilary Putnam (1975) that distinguishes between questions of nature and questions of meaning, clarifying their relationship, famously utilizing the example of water. As for considerations of meaning, Adams draws from more themes in the *Symposium* and argues that the semantics of ‘good’ will include being the object of our admiration, desire, and recognition (Adams 19-20). Not that we always admire or desire good things, or never admire bad things; after all for Adams the nature of the good is not based upon facts of our desires. Though our pursuit (*Eros*) of the Good can be mistaken, Adams insists that we are not always wrong. “[I]f we do not place some trust in our own recognition of the good, we will lose our grip on the concept of good [...]” (20). For this reason, Adams argues persuasively that traits like being sadistic or loving cowardice are contrary to the semantics of goodness (46). What about the distinct question of the nature (rather than semantics) of goodness? In response, he lays out the following strategy to account for the relationship between semantics and metaphysics:

It is possible, I think, to indicate a general pattern for the relation of natures to meanings where the nature is not given by the meaning. What is given by the meaning, or perhaps more broadly by the use of the words, is a role that the nature is to play. If there is a single candidate that best fills the role, that will be the nature of the thing. (Adams 1999: 16)

As mentioned before, Adams contends that the role picked out by our talk of goodness includes being the object of admiration, desire, and recognition. The best candidate to play the role, argues Adams, is “the divine nature” (28). He rejects, for instance, Richard Boyd’s naturalistic account of the nature of goodness, but a discussion here of Adams’ version of a sort of open-question argument (77-82) would take us too far afield. This article will claim that something’s goodness consists in resemblance with the platonic good, but remain neutral about whether the latter is God. Suffice it for our purposes at this point to know that Adams uses what we could call a conceptual-role semantics of goodness that allows him to connect that semantics to its metaphysics, while at the same time leaving room for a distinct metaphysical account of the nature of the platonic good.

2. Being good: What an individual’s goodness holds in virtue of, Part 1.

Before tackling the question of what something’s goodness holds in virtue of, let me begin by introducing some preliminary terminology. If some fact *x* obtains *solely in virtue of a*

different fact *y*, then the latter is the *determinant* of the former, and if *y* obtains, so does *x*. If fact *a* obtains in virtue of fact *b* and some other fact *c*, then *b* and *c* are both *partial determinants* of *a*, and *a* is *partly in virtue* of *b* (and also partly in virtue of *c*). Thus, if both these partial determinants obtain, so does *a*. I will argue that for any individual *x* belonging to a kind, *x*'s goodness holds in virtue of two partial determinants: a platonic determinant, and a kind-based determinant. In addition, I will contend that its goodness is *necessarily* in virtue of those two partial determinants, and so if *x* is good, both the platonic and kind-based determinants obtain. In other words, it would be a mistake to think that the answer to what something's goodness holds in virtue of, can leave out either of the two determinants.

Before showing that something's goodness must hold partly in virtue of satisfying the platonic good in some way, I will first argue it must hold partly in virtue of satisfying a kind-independent standard. Mark Murphy offers an interesting argument to hold the latter claim by showing that it is a mistake that something being excellent holds solely in virtue of satisfying kind-based standards. He asks us to imagine "a lesser god" who creates a being that is designed to be ignorant, friendless, and unable to appreciate beauty.

A lesser god might fashion a being that ought not to —that is, it would be defective with respect to its design plan if it came to — know things, or to make a friend, or to appreciate something beautiful. But we would resist the view that these things are admirable or lovable just by exhibiting the features *being dead* or *being ignorant* or *being friendless*. (Murphy 2011: 160, italics not added.)

For simplicity, let us focus on the feature of ignorance. Being ignorant is intuitively not a good feature even if possessing it fulfills that being's "design plan" and thus also satisfies its kind-based standard. Murphy's point is that on Aristotelian accounts, on which something's goodness holds solely in virtue of satisfying its kind-based standards, it would follow that the being's ignorance is good. But intuitively, being ignorant is not. Murphy does allow that good can come of ignorance, death, and the like, but argues they are not good for their own sakes, but for the avoidance of something worse or for the sake of something better. Thus, something's being good must also be partly in virtue of its somehow satisfying kind-independent standards.² Elsewhere, I argue for this conclusion using a different counterexample (Chan forthcoming). There, I consider a hypothetical Ebola-like microbe, whose kind-based standard of goodness requires it to destroy other organisms for the sake of destruction.

The Ebola-like microbe is a counterexample to the Aristotelian account because it is bad when it performs its functions. We know by intuition that a functioning Ebola-like microbe is bad --- we know that something is (non-instrumentally) bad which functions to ravage mammals by rapid infection, for the sake of destruction. (Chan forthcoming)

All physical organisms act for the sake of their self-maintenance and reproduction. However, I argue in that paper that it is metaphysically possible for some kinds of organisms to function for the sake of other ends as well, such as for play or aesthetic experience,³ without which members

² Murphy's platonism about goodness is also a theistic one, in that the platonic good is God, as we shall see later.

³ There I point to work by Alasdair MacIntyre (1999) citing research that play, for instance, is a characteristic activity of humans and even other creatures such as dolphins.

of those kinds would be deprived. In other words, an organism can function for additional ends that constitute its own goodness even if those ends are distinct from self-maintenance or reproduction. So, for some possible kind of being, destruction could be one of these ends. Consequently, just as the oak functions for the sake of self-maintenance, which is partly constitutive of its good, the Ebola-like microbe functions for the sake of destruction, the latter being part of its good. So, on the kind-based account of what in virtue of which something is good, that microbe would be good simply because it satisfies its kind-based standard.⁴ However, we plausibly judge that a functioning Ebola-like microbe is bad. Hence, the microbe is another counterexample to the Aristotelian account, and the counterexamples shows us that satisfying a kind-independent criterion is also needed for something's goodness to obtain.

At this point, we might be tempted to just contend that being good holds solely in virtue of meeting a kind-independent standard, without a member's goodness being even partly in virtue of satisfying its kind-based standards. I think there is a good reason to resist this further move. To demonstrate this, I will follow two writers, William Fitzpatrick and Murphy, who each offer arguments quite similar at core that resist the move. Let us begin with Fitzpatrick (2008), who argues that something's being good is in virtue of not only the thing's properties, but also the fact that possessing those properties is such as to satisfy standards of goodness for that kind. He gives the example of a good computer, which is good in virtue of booting up quickly, running at a high speed, etc. Fitzpatrick lets "XYZ" stand for these properties that are reasons that the computer is good, and in so doing we realize XYZ are good-making properties. Following Jonathan Dancy, Fitzpatrick recognizes that something's goodness is a resultant property, and the thing's good-making features are the resultance base.⁵ But, as Fitzpatrick asks, what is the relationship between the former and the latter? While one might initially think that the computer's goodness holds solely in virtue of its base properties obtaining, Fitzpatrick disagrees. We can see that its being good is not only in virtue of its possessing XYZ because many other things can have them without being good:

Does [the fact that the thing is good] consist simply in the fact that it has XYZ? One clear indication that it does not is that any number of things could have XYZ without being good. This is generally true for good-making properties of artifacts: sharpness makes for goodness in a knife, for example, but not in a pair of glasses. [...] In the present case, the point is that the fact that this computer is good consists not only in the fact that it has XYZ, but in this together with the fact that possessing XYZ is such as to satisfy the standards of goodness S for computers. (Fitzpatrick 2008: 186)

Fitzpatrick argues persuasively that an individual thing's being good holds not merely in virtue of XYZ but also partly in virtue of "the fact that possessing XYZ is such as to satisfy standards" for the kind. For brevity, I will also simply refer to this second fact as one about 'the standards for the kind', although this fact is strictly speaking one about a relation holding between XYZ

⁴Further, I argue there (ms) that if an Aristotelian offers an exhaustive account of goodness (goodness is only kind-based), and I show there that neo-Aristotelians like Philippa Foot do, then their account claims that satisfying kind-based standards is the sole determinant of a member's goodness.

⁵ See Dancy (1993: 73-7) and Dancy (2004: 232)

and the kind-based standards.⁶ The relation holds just in case possessing XYZ is required by the kind-based standards (hereafter ‘K-standards’).

Similar to Fitzpatrick’s argument is Murphy’s “chicken fried steak” argument: Suppose that I come down with a rare disease. Interestingly, the symptoms of this disease include my muscles taking on the taste and consistency of a piece of deep-fried tenderized round steak, my epidermis becoming crisp, like buttermilk-and-egg-saturated flour dipped into hot oil, and my pores oozing a whitish substance that is peppery and creamy. I begin to share the properties that make a properly-prepared chicken fried steak good. But this does not make me better, not in the least, or in any way. (Murphy 2011: 155)

The properties which make for a good chicken fried steak are just *not* the ones that make for a good human. What solves this “chicken fried steak problem” is recognizing that the kind to which an individual belongs determines whether certain properties can be good-making ones. Humans are just not the kind of thing which are good by having crispy and tasty skin oozing with a peppery and creamy substance, “though it surely is what makes a chicken-fried steak good”. He continues, “[m]y view is that whenever a being belongs to some kind, then the standards for excellence for that thing are fixed in part by its kind.” (Murphy 159)

These examples by Fitzpatrick and Murphy both support the conclusion that an individual’s being good holds partly in virtue of kind-based considerations. Call their line of reasoning the kind-dependence argument. This argument has used examples featuring artifacts, but the scope of my inquiry is actually meant to focus on living things belonging to kinds, and the above examples of artifacts were meant to shed light by analogy upon the evaluation of living things. A similar argument can be offered to show that an individual living thing’s goodness is partly in virtue of satisfying kind-based standards. In fact, Philippa Foot’s neo-Aristotelian account of “natural goodness”, which we will examine more closely later, gives (for physical living kinds) just such an argument in a backhanded manner. She points out that cooperative hunting is required for the wolf, and swiftness for the deer (2001: 34). It seems to me that one could then go on to argue that activities good-making for the wolf (e.g. cooperative hunting) are not so for the deer. So, satisfying kind-based standards does figure into the wolf’s or deer’s being good. Further, this result reasonably holds for other kinds of living beings — the conclusion about the wolf and deer held not due to peculiarities of their particular kind. Instead it is more plausible that the result obtained because the relevant things are members of some kind, and are held to the relevant kind-based standard. So, it is reasonable to generalize, and conclude that for any individual *x* that is a member of kind *K*, *x*’s being good is partly in virtue of satisfying standards for *K*.

Of course, as argued earlier, an individual *x*’s being good also holds in virtue of a kind-independent determinant, in addition to being in virtue of *x*’s base properties and *K*-standards. I claim, then, the following thesis **F**:

F: The goodness of any individual *x* (belonging to kind *K*) holds in virtue of both kind-based and kind-independent determinants.

⁶ Fitzpatrick also sometimes calls this fact simply about “standards”. See, also for example: “It consists rather in that fact [about the individual possessing XYZ] together with the facts that there are appropriate standards of goodness *S* for human behavior and that actions that exhibit the features in the resultance base in question [...] violate those standards” (Fitzpatrick 2008: 187-8).

Adding the kind-independent determinant affords us theoretical resources to explain the goodness (or badness) of not only individuals belonging to actual kinds, but also individuals belonging to hypothetical yet metaphysically possible kinds, such as the ignorant being or Ebola-like microbe.⁷ Though the microbe bears properties satisfying its K-standards, the kind-independent determinant would not obtain with respect to the microbe, because its activity is destructive for its own sake and thus does not satisfy that determinant (as I will elaborate upon later). But because of the kind-based determinant, we are also able to explain why a human that begins to share the properties that make a tasty chicken fried steak good is nonetheless not good; this is because that human does not possess base properties that satisfy its K-standards. Thus, the explanatory power of our account, being able to explain the goodness or badness of ordinary as well as hypothetical things, constitutes a good reason to accept it.

Additionally, it seems to me that the kind-independent determinant should be understood along platonic lines. Being an account of the excellence of individuals, the account's posit of a kind-independent determinant here should not be consequentialist. After all, on contemporary consequentialist theories the primary bearers of goodness are states of affairs, since whether actions (or rules, motives, even individuals) are good derives from the goodness of their consequences, which are states of affairs. As Adams points out, however, states of affairs (unlike individuals) are not the sort of things that can bear the property of excellence, as they lack the required unity to bear it (17). So, the excellence of individuals cannot be derived from states of affairs as the latter cannot possess excellence. Platonic and consequentialist theories are the most plausible accounts of kind-independent value, but I have just rejected a consequentialist account. Thus, it is reasonable to accept a platonic account of the kind-independent determinant of the excellence of individual things. That is, for this kind-independent determinant to obtain is for the individual to somehow resemble a platonic entity. More precision about this determinant will be developed in a later section, but for this we must first discuss what x's being good consists in, before returning later to continue our discussion of what it obtains in virtue of.

3. Being good: What an individual's goodness consists in

Having discussed what being good is in virtue of, I now turn to the distinct question of what being good consists in. This question concerns the metaphysical status of something's being good. In this section, I will argue that being good is to be good platonically.

For an individual's goodness to be good platonically is for its goodness to consist in its resemblance of the platonic good. Call this the *good platonically thesis*. In contrast, for an individual's goodness to be good in a kind is for its goodness to consist in being good as a member of its kind. Call this the *good in a kind thesis*. It may be possible that x's goodness consists in both platonic goodness *and* goodness in a kind. But then goodness would be less unified and this third thesis strikes me as implausibly complicated, thus I will not consider it any further. Given that in an earlier section I argued for **F** that something's goodness is in virtue of both kind-based and kind-independent considerations, let me ask the preliminary question of whether **F** is even compatible with goodness consisting in being good platonically. Is someone who endorses the latter claim able to concede a side condition that x's goodness (which is

⁷ In Section 4.1 we will even see that an *actual* kind of living thing (bottlenose dolphin) cannot be correctly evaluated without this kind-independent determinant.

claimed to be platonic) obtains also in virtue of the obtaining of a kind-based determinant (as claimed in F)? Conversely, consider the view that x's being good consists in its being good in a kind. Could someone endorse this claim while maintaining F, that x's goodness (which is as a member of its kind) obtains also in virtue of a platonic determinant?

Let us begin with the “preliminary question” posed above. Here I think that x's being good platonically is indeed compatible with x's goodness being partly in virtue of x's satisfying K-standards, because what it is for x to resemble the platonic good could depend on kind-membership in some way, such as in determining the context for resemblance. Now, first, as we have seen, Adams contends that a thing (besides God) being excellent consists in being good platonically. He identifies the platonic good with God, and claims a Godlikeness thesis that “other things are excellent insofar as they resemble or imitate God.” (28) Murphy consciously follows Adams here, agreeing that “the goodness of creaturely goods consists in their resemblance to God” (Murphy 150), and thus Murphy also holds what I have called the good platonically thesis, as well as Adams’ view that the platonic good is God. Further, Murphy accepts Adams’ point that not every shared property counts as resemblance, but the *context* of property sharing does matter. But Murphy criticizes Adams’ explanation of this holism, that it consists in resembling God such that it “could serve God as a reason for loving the thing” (Adams 36). Murphy thinks that this sort of condition for resemblance is “explanatorily pretty useless”, not specifying *what* would give God reason to love something. Instead, he believes that the solution is to fix what it is to resemble God as what the thing “ought to become” qua member of its kind. “It is the kind that fixes the context for determining what counts as a relevant resemblance or failure to resemble, God. Every good, then is a divine likeness, but those that make a thing good are those divine likenesses such that members of the kind ought to exhibit them.” (Murphy 160) Thus, although he disagrees with Adams’ explanation of what context of resemblance is relevant, Murphy does agree that being good is to be good platonically, where God is the Good.

I follow Murphy (and Adams before him) in thinking that goodness consists in being good platonically, and also follow them in understanding x’s being good platonically as x’s resemblance of the platonic good (without claiming the latter is God). Also, as both Adams (32) and Murphy (150) recognize, resemblance is holistic. It seems to me, however, that for the reasons above Murphy is correct that kind-membership is what plausibly and substantively supplies the proper context for an individual’s resemblance to the platonic good. I contend, then, that the good platonically thesis is compatible with x’s goodness being also partly in virtue of satisfying its K-standards. Furthermore, so far the good platonically thesis appears to be a plausible one to hold.

However, the question now arises why we should not think that being good consists in being good in a kind instead, while allowing for a side-condition that something’s being good holds partly in virtue of a kind-independent determinant. Perhaps Murphy and Adams claim that x’s goodness consists in being good platonically because they endorse a theistic platonism about goodness. As Murphy writes, “God is at the center of the normative world, not just one object of love among others, but both object of, and standard for, admiration.” (Murphy 2011: 160). But any sort of theistic argument to embrace x’s goodness as consisting in being good platonically is unavailable to my account. So, I offer a different motivation, that accepting the good in a kind

thesis leads to a significant implausibility. The thesis claims that goodness consists in goodness as a kind. Something bad would be bad as a kind. So, the implausibility is that something bad, like an Ebola-like microbe that satisfies its kind-based standards, would not even be good in a kind. Let us unpack this. Suppose that the good in a kind thesis is true. In order to be consistent with **F**, a defender of the goodness in a kind thesis would also hold that what it is for an individual *x* to satisfy kind-standards will partly depend on *x*'s somehow resembling the platonic good. (After all, recall that in order to be consistent with **F**, a defender of the good platonically thesis would also hold that what it is to resemble the platonic good will partly depend on satisfying kind-standards.) So, some *x* that does not resemble the platonic good is not good even if it were to satisfy its kind-based standards. This is simply the lesson of the Ebola-like microbe example. However, the result is that contending that goodness is goodness in a kind would have the implausible implication that this microbe fails to even be good in a kind. But it is reasonable to think that being good in a kind is to satisfy kind-standards (just as being good platonically is to resemble the platonic good). Thus, the good in a kind thesis is implausible. Now, something's kind-standards could resemble the platonic good (as I will defend later), and so something could be good if (and only if) it satisfies its kind-standards that do resemble the platonic good. However, for things like the microbe, their kind-standards would not resemble the platonic good. Thus, the implausibility remains for things like the microbe, that on the good in a kind thesis, a member meeting its kind-based standards would not even be deemed good in a kind.

The good platonically thesis does not share this sort of problem. This thesis claims that *x*'s goodness consists in its resemblance to the platonic good. However, in order to be consistent with **F**, *x*'s resemblance with the platonic good will hold partly in virtue of *x*'s satisfying kind-based standards. Does an implausibility ensue? Could something resembling the platonic good turn out to be bad, and on the platonically good thesis be deemed (implausibly) not to even resemble the platonic good? Recall Murphy's chicken-fried steak example, where the human shares properties with the steak that would make the steak resemble the platonic good. But such a human is intuitively not good, and so one might think it is an example of something resembling the platonic good (as it shares the properties making the steak good), yet on the good platonically thesis, be deemed not to even resemble it. However, such an implausibility does not arise, as the human would not resemble the platonic good to begin with. This human would not resemble it because we argued earlier that it is plausible that kind-membership sets the context within which any *x* resembles the platonic good. So, this sort of implausibility does not follow from the good platonically thesis. Now consider the Ebola-like microbe example. Though it satisfies the standards laid down by kind-membership, the kind-independent determinant does not obtain, and so such a microbe is not good. On the good platonically thesis, it would follow that such a microbe does not resemble the platonic good. This too is plausible. Upon quick reflection, one can see that the good platonically thesis also does not result in implausibilities when analyzing members of run-of-the-mill kinds such as the oak and the squirrel. Thus, because the good in a kind thesis runs into the implausibility explained earlier, it is more plausible to hold the good platonically thesis. Now, of course more detail needs to be provided to explain what exactly it is in virtue of which something resembles the platonic good. We need to explain, for instance, why an oak resembles the platonic good but a microbe does not, though they might each satisfy their respective kind-standards. I will take up this question now.

4. Being good: What an individual's goodness holds in virtue of, Part 2

Having developed what being good consists in, we are now in a better position to answer with greater precision the question of what x's being good is in virtue of. I submit that an individual's being good obtains in virtue of three determinants as expressed by the following:

- G** Individual x, member of kind K, is good in virtue of exactly the following partial determinants: x's base properties B, B being such as to satisfy kind-based standards (K-standards), and the K-standards resembling the platonic good.

G should be understood as the claim that x's goodness holds *necessarily* in virtue of those three determinants. As such, not only is it the case that if all three determinants obtain, so does x's goodness, but also that it must be that if x is good, all three determinants obtain.

The final determinant listed in **G** is the fact that the *K-standards* resemble the platonic good. It is tempting to have claimed instead that this final determinant should be the fact that the individual x itself resembles the platonic good, given that I argued that x's goodness consists in being good platonically. Granted, given the good platonically thesis, x's goodness consists in its resembling the platonic good, and so resembling it is the sole (not merely partial) determinant of x's goodness obtaining. However, it is also definitional, and provides no further explanation of what x's resemblance of the platonic good holds in virtue of. So, in a way, this section (including 4.1 and 4.2) will tackle that question. Now, if one were to answer that it holds solely in virtue of x satisfying its K-standards, we saw earlier that this is not tenable for all kinds K since the standards for certain K such as the Ebola-like microbe do not satisfy the kind-independent standard (and thus fail to resemble the platonic good). Well, what if we also require that the K-standards resemble the platonic good? In that case then, and below I will discuss how a standard could resemble the platonic good, we would claim that x's being good is partly in virtue of its satisfying K-standards and partly in virtue of those standards resembling the platonic good. Notice, then, that this is plausible and is in fact what G claims.

4.1 K-standards resembling the platonic good

What is it for the K-standards to resemble the platonic good? I will argue that the K-standards resemble it firstly with respect to requiring activities, as the platonic good will be posited to be active, and must resemble it secondly also at the level of what teleology those activities are directed towards.

Later on, I will argue for each of these claims in turn. But first, let us take a closer look at K-standards, in order to better understand the activities required by them and the teleology of those activities. For material beings (as opposed to immaterial beings), I think a plausible account of the K-standards can be found in the Aristotelian naturalism offered by Michael Thompson (1995) and Philippa Foot (2001). It is perhaps not necessary to embrace their account rather than some other kind-based theory about what goodness is in virtue of, but I will use their plausible account to make more concrete our discussion of what I have called the K-standards, and a kind-based account more broadly. At the core of the account is what Thompson calls "the representation of life". For any creature that we could represent as living, there is a corresponding "interpretation or understanding of the life-form shared by the members of that

class” (Thompson 1995: 288). All of a particular creature’s activities, for instance hunting, eating, or reproducing, are to be recognized as such only by using an understanding of a lifeform, and representing that individual creature as a bearer of that form.

Such an interpretation and understanding of the species are articulated as Aristotelian categoricals, propositions which express the characteristic activities and features of this species. Stock examples of Aristotelian categoricals are *the oak has broad roots*, *the tiger has four legs*, *the squirrel gathers acorns*, and so on, depending on the kind. However, Aristotelian categoricals are also teleological, in the sense that they do not articulate generalizations about members of a kind merely having certain features or doing certain activities, but pick out those features and activities that relate to the proper ends of that kind. Thus, Foot writes:

[W]hat distinguishes an Aristotelian categorical from a mere statistical proposition [...] is the fact that it relates to the teleology of the species. [...] This is why the noise made by the rustling of leaves is irrelevant in this context while the development of roots is not. And this is why Aristotelian categoricals are able to describe norms rather than statistical normalities. (Foot 2001: 33)

Foot identifies species-teleology as species-characteristic ways of seeking: self-maintenance and reproduction (2001: 31), and in the case of humans, reason-following (2004: 11-12). As the categoricals pick out features and activities that relate to the proper ends of the relevant kind, the categoricals can form the basis for kind-specific norms of goodness, and thus provide the basis for evaluation (2001: 34). Also, it strikes me as plausible that these kind-specific norms are what K-standards are. As there are many norms per kind of lifeform, the K-standards can be understood as a set of numerous norms corresponding to that kind’s numerous Aristotelian categoricals (e.g. *the squirrel gathers acorns*, *the squirrel moves on four legs*, etc.).

As for immaterial beings (e.g. angels) that belong to a kind, some other account would have to be given for the content of their K-standards. However, it is nevertheless plausible that for immaterial beings, there are propositions similar to Aristotelian categoricals that express the (immaterial) activities relating to the proper ends of that kind. These ends may likely not include reproduction, but could plausibly include self-maintenance in an analogous sense, and may even include other ends. But whatever ends they pursue, it is plausible that immaterial beings belonging to a kind can have kind-specific norms based upon their characteristic activities and their proper ends. These norms can likewise form the basis of evaluation.

How can an Aristotelian categorical resemble the platonic good? The categoricals are propositions that express lifeform-related features or activities (and there is a case for understanding them primarily as expressing *activities*).⁸ I take propositions to be representations. A proposition such as *the squirrel gathers acorns* is a representation of the squirrel (its lifeform conception) and also of its activity. More precisely, that proposition is a representation of one aspect of the squirrel’s lifeform conception, that aspect pertaining to gathering acorns. A

⁸ Following Aryeh Kosman (2013: 122), I argue that what something is, that is what is included in a lifeform’s representation of life, is a positive work (ergon). Thus, the categoricals should express activities, and features (e.g. the squirrel’s four-leggedness) should be understood as categoricals in adverbial form, e.g. *the squirrel gathers acorns four-leggedly* (Chan forthcoming).

representation can resemble something else.⁹ So, it is plausible that the proposition *the squirrel gathers acorns*, being a representation of the squirrel and its activity of gathering acorns, is the sort of thing that can resemble (or fail to resemble) the platonic good. As a K-standard is made up of many Aristotelian categoricals, the former perhaps being a long conjunction of the latter, it is also reasonable that the K-standard is the sort of thing that can resemble (or fail to resemble) the platonic good.

Now, on the basis of what does an Aristotelian categorical resemble the platonic good? We might think that the proposition *the squirrel gathers acorns* resembles it with respect to the representation of the particular activity of gathering acorns. In Murphy's theistic platonism, he introduces Aristotelianism and argues that good features are "divine likenesses" that members of the kind ought to possess (Murphy 160). But how exactly does (the representation of something's) gathering acorns count as an activity that is a platonic likeness, given that the platonic good does not gather acorns? Murphy does not have space to answer this sort of question. I will argue that yes, the squirrel's K-standard can resemble the platonic good. But it is not as simple as resembling it with respect to the particular activity of gathering acorns, because, again, it is implausible that the platonic good gathers acorns, or has four legs. Rather, it seems that the K-standard can resemble the platonic good with respect to something more general about the activities required by the K-standard. After all, if that K-standard resembled it with respect to gathering acorns itself, keep in mind that the squirrel's other categoricals include moving with four legs and a bushy tail, seeing with eyes of certain sort, climbing tree trunks using a certain claw and foot technique, travelling on branches using a certain technique, and so forth. Now if the squirrel's K-standard resembled the platonic good with respect to these specific activities themselves, the platonic good would appear to be more and more like a squirrel.¹⁰

Instead, it is more reasonable that K-standards can resemble the platonic good with respect to something more general about the activities required by the K-standard, and that is their simply being an activity. So, this is why earlier I signaled that I would argue that the K-standards resemble the platonic good with respect to requiring activities. Now, this would imply that the nature of the platonic good is active, among other traits perhaps. If a particular candidate nature of the platonic good would allow the latter to play the role given by our concept

⁹ For instance, a stylized sculpture of some Hollywood actor is a representation of that actor, and it is plausible that the sculpture can resemble some other object, such as one of the actor's own parents. It is stylized and thus does not provide all the details beyond the simplest ones, but enough to constitute a representation of that actor. The view of a sculpture being a kind of representation is what Peter van Inwagen (1986) calls pictorial abstractionism, in his discussion of abstractionist possible worlds (van Inwagen 1986: 201). I agree with Van Inwagen that pictorial abstractionism will not adequately represent a maximal (possible) world, as it will leave out details of the way that world is. However, a representation of a lifeform conception will be simpler than that of a member of the kind, much less a world. After all, a lifeform conception expresses the *types* of activities characteristic to it, not particular tokens of it. So, the proposition *the squirrel gathers acorns* will be a representation that is not as precise as any token acorn-gatherings done by any individual squirrel. In addition, the lifeform conception expresses only the *most basic* types of activities of the K.

¹⁰ Even apart from this absurdity, even though it should be recognized that such a "platonic good" would at least do the theoretical work needed to assess the goodness or badness of individual squirrels, it would nonetheless fail to work for individuals of other lifeforms, unless there were a multitude of platonic goods. But it is more plausible that the platonic good is a unity because if the platonic good were a multitude of platonic goods, this would really be to posit merely kind-based standards instead of a single kind-independent standard, which is also required by F.

of good, and play it better than any other nature, then that is the nature of the platonic good. Recall, of course, that this is what Adams' conceptual role semantics asserts, and I think it is a plausible theory connecting the semantics to metaphysics. The platonic good being active would explain why the K-standards of the oak, squirrel, and many other kinds resemble the platonic good. In this way, the platonic good's nature as active plays the role given by our concept of good. In addition to positing that the platonic good's nature is active, we shall make a second move in order to posit a nature that can play that role, and indeed play it better than any other candidate.

The first posit, as we have seen, is a metaphysical assertion that the platonic good is active, by being a concrete (but not physical) individual that is active. The second move I will make and develop later on below, will be to claim what I will call a level-of-teleology thesis that K-standards also resemble the platonic good at the level of what their required activities are directed towards ("species-teleology"). Let us begin with the first posit that the platonic good is active. This posit allows us to form the working hypothesis that the squirrel's K-standard resembles the platonic good with respect to the activity qua activity that is required by those standards. This hypothesis would also easily explain how the K-standards of the oak or the beaver would resemble the platonic good, as the K-standards of all lifeforms do express activities. This posit would also provide a basis from which to explain in what sense the K-standards of the cockroach, which eats garbage and sewage waste, resembles the platonic good. The explanation is that the resemblance is not with respect to the cockroach's eating of those disgusting things, but in its eating them qua *activity*.

However, more must be said. Indeed, at this point it must be recognized that with respect to its activities qua activity, even the destruction-aimed activities contained in the K-standard of the Ebola-like microbe would resemble the platonic good, as the microbe surely destroys via activity. Nonetheless, one can continue the trajectory of our method and identify further general features of the K-standards activities, with respect to which they resemble the platonic good. One of these features emerges when we reflect upon an important way that the K-standard of the microbe differs from the K-standards for the oak or squirrel. The microbe's K-standard, besides requiring that a member engages in activities with the teleology to self-maintain and reproduce, they also require some activities that have the teleology to destroy neighbouring organisms. On the other hand, I have postulated that the platonic good is active.

Let me explain how the platonic good's active nature rules out the microbe's destruction-aimed activities. The squirrel's K-standard requires activities directed at self-maintenance and reproduction, and these ends can reasonably be understood more broadly as the ends of continued activity. It is plausible to posit that the platonic good is not only active but continually active. Now, the squirrel teleology's state of continued activity will be of a different nature than the continuing activity of the transcendent platonic good. Consider for example that the squirrel's continuing activity is not eternal. Nevertheless it is reasonable that the squirrel's teleology of "creaturely" continuing activity resembles the platonic good's continuing activity, as the former *is* a state of activity and indeed continued activity. Thus, the K-standard of

the squirrel resembles the platonic good, at the level of the teleology of activities required by that K-standard.¹¹

When it comes to the Ebola-like microbe, however, rather than having activities aimed at continued activity, it has activities directed also towards destruction as an end—the cessation of activity of the microbe’s victims as an end. But the platonic good is active. Thus, the microbe’s K-standard, requiring activities directed at destruction as an end, does not resemble the platonic good at the level of what those activities are directed towards. So, the second move I have made is to claim the level-of-teleology thesis alluded to earlier, that a K-standard must resemble the platonic good also at the level of what teleology the activities (required by that standard) are directed towards. By claiming this thesis we are able to account for why the microbe’s K-standard does not resemble the platonic good while that of the oak or squirrel does.¹²

Now, the K-standard of a plant eater such as the rabbit will require activities that also destroy plant lifeforms. However, the rabbit’s activity here is directed toward its species teleology of nutrition and not destruction. In other words, the rabbit “destroys” its food for the sake of its nutrition and self-maintenance. By contrast, the microbe’s K-standard includes activities aimed at destruction as an end, in addition to whatever ends it has pertaining to self-maintenance and reproduction. Granted, the K-standard of the microbe does have some resemblance to the platonic good at the level of its activities’ teleologies of self-maintenance and reproduction. But the directedness of its destructive activity is simply contrary to the nature of the platonic good, the cessation of activity (as an end) being contrary to its active nature. Thus, the resemblance of the microbe’s K-standards to the platonic good is negligible, and I argue that such a microbe satisfying its K-standards would be bad.

Now, it might be asked why the platonic good’s nature is not destructive in aim. Setting aside metaphysical questions about whether it even makes sense for the platonic good to have this nature,¹³ one could offer a semantic argument that the successful candidate for the platonic

¹¹Metaphysically, how can a standard, requiring activities directed at ends, resemble the platonic good? My answer: The K-standard has teleological attributes, and on that basis the K-standards can resemble the platonic good. How can it bear attributes? A K-standard is a conjunction of propositions (Aristotelian categoricals). Every true Aristotelian categorical must be directed towards at least one species-telos (end, such as self-maintenance, etc.), and so teleology is indeed an attribute of each categorical, and in this way, of the K-standard. How exactly? A proposition such as *the rabbit eats dandelions* could bear the following property: represents an activity directed at self-maintenance.

¹²An objector might complain that the microbe’s activities do not undermine its *own* continued activity, but others’. Thus, so the objection goes, the end (*telos*) of the microbe’s activities is not inconsistent with anything in the platonic good’s nature, as the latter’s activities are self-continuing. It could be responded, however, that it is the telos (e.g. continued activity, cessation of activity, etc.) and whether that corresponding state resembles the platonic good that is relevant, rather than *whose* state is concerned (e.g. the microbe, its victims, or etc.) After all, it is plausible that a Good-resembling K-standard has activity directed towards a telos like continued activity, regardless of whether the corresponding state concerns the same individual (in the case of self-maintenance), another member of the kind (e.g. in the case of reproduction), or hypothetically that of some other kind. By the same token, if the K-standard of some K has activity directed towards the cessation of activity for its own sake, it is plausible the standard would not resemble the platonic good whether this destruction is directed towards the cessation of activity of self, other members of the kind, or of other kinds.

¹³ Nothing I have posited so far about the platonic good’s nature, that it is an active, concrete exemplar, indicates (nor precludes) that it could destroy something else for destruction’s sake. Supposing it could, then it would not destroy for the sake of self-preservation. But then the question arises as to why its nature should not also be applied

good cannot. As Adams argues, “a property that belonged mainly to things that almost all of us have always thought were bad would surely not be filling the role picked out by our talk of ‘goodness.’” (20) Surely, being sadistic or loving cowardice (Adams 46) are properties belonging mainly to things almost universally deemed always bad, and something bearing those traits could not play the role picked out by our talk of goodness. It seems to me that one should say the same about something that is destructive in aim. So, something whose nature was destructive in this way would not be a successful candidate to fill the role picked out by our semantics of ‘good’. Thus, whatever the platonic good is will not have that nature.

Let us now pause to think about some other possible general features of K-standards. Earlier I argued that the *particular* activities required by the different K-standards (e.g. gathering acorns) are not the respects to which those standards resemble the platonic good, but rather more general features of those activities. We started by picking out activity qua activity (first move), and proceeded to also picking out certain teleological ends of the activities (second move). Should we include other general features? One notices that the activities required by K-standards of the oak, beaver, squirrel, human, and many other kinds are *physical* activities. Could being physical be one general feature of activities that, being found also in the platonic good, partly explains how K-standards resemble it? I don’t think so, as this proposal would imply that immaterial beings would be worse than material beings, all other things being equal. This is implausible.¹⁴ Thus, by implying that the K-standard activities of immaterial beings resemble the platonic good less, accounting for resemblance based on this posited feature of the platonic good would prevent the latter from properly playing its conceptual role.

One sees, then, that there is a *limited range* of general features based upon which K-standards can resemble the platonic good. I have made two moves above, identifying two such general features, that offer an account of how K-standards can resemble it. Before moving on to section 4.2, I should say that a complete account of how K-standards resemble the platonic good will likely need to make a third move. This third move would posit a further general feature based upon which K-standards resemble the platonic good, so as to place a limit on the sorts of activities themselves that can resemble the platonic good, regardless of teleological end. In this way, an activity’s seeking certain teleological ends would not simply justify the means, as it were. The following example will provide motivation for the need for this third move. The mating practices of the bottlenose dolphin, practices perhaps similar to sexual assault, may be disturbing to the reader. Shane Glackin (2008) points out that male bottlenoses form alliances with other males, usually relatives, to coerce a female into sexual intercourse, on pain of death or serious injury. This practice is required by the bottlenose K-standard, and it is reasonable that the practice’s teleological end is reproduction. So, if we do not make a third move, we would not be able to account for our plausible intuition that the K-standard of the bottlenose dolphin is not

to itself, and so destroy itself for destruction’s sake. Such an account of the platonic good would be a non-starter. Perhaps, however (strangely), it possessed the causal powers to destroy others but not itself. Or, it could harm itself without ever completely destroying itself, though always tending to it without achieving it.

¹⁴ Or at least we don’t know whether being material or immaterial is better. After all, one might have first considered the K-standards of immaterial beings and saw they were all non-physical activities, concluding that being immaterial (or spirit-like) should be the general feature to resemble the platonic good. So, we have no argument to prefer material or immaterial beings, and so have no grounds to list either being physical or being spirit-like as the basis of resemblance with the platonic good.

good — but we plausibly judge that the bottlenose’s K-standard would not resemble the platonic good as much as a hypothetical species that is the same in all respects except for this terrible mating practice.¹⁵ I do prefer a particular way to make this third move,¹⁶ but I will leave it for future work to develop it because specifying its details may be more tricky than it might seem.

I have argued that the nature of the platonic good posited in this section is the best candidate to play the role given by our concept of goodness. My strategy has been to show that there is a limited range of general features shared by K-standards that could underwrite resemblance with the platonic good. Some general features, I argued, are not plausible for different reasons, and so we have whittled down the general features to the ones picked out above. In doing so, I have made an abductive sort of case that such a posited nature for the platonic good is the best candidate to play the role given by our concept of goodness. Is it really the best candidate to play the role? Adams had argued that the best candidate is the divine nature. However, as discussed earlier, Murphy rightly argued that it is explanatorily lacking for Adams to claim that things resemble God in ways that serve as a reason for God to love it. In other words, Adams’ account struggles to substantively explain how things resemble the platonic good. What I have done is to provide an account of the nature of the platonic good that follows Murphy in contending that an individual’s kind-membership sets the context for resemblance with it. Further, I have offered an account that explains how kind-membership does this, as an individual must resemble that platonic good by satisfying K-standards. Accordingly, a human becoming like a well-seasoned chicken fried steak would not be good. Nevertheless, the account is platonic, and requires K-standards to resemble the platonic good—The K-standard must require activities, the end of the activities must be something found in the platonic good. So, I have made posits about the platonic good’s nature that allow for a substantive and plausible account of something’s resemblance with the platonic good, thus substantively explaining how that nature can play the role given by the concept of good. Is what I have posited the best candidate? Strictly speaking, my account here is not inconsistent with God being the platonic

¹⁵ To avoid having to make the “third move”, one could a) deny that the bottlenose K-standard really requires coercive copulation, or b) deny that the practice is bad. (Incidentally, an Aristotelian would face precisely this dilemma [Chan forthcoming], but accepting my platonic kind-based account provides a way out — the bottlenose’s K-standard fails to resemble the platonic good.) Even accepting (a), without making a “third move” we could not explain why a hypothetical, closely related kind of dolphin whose K-standard required coercive copulation fails to resemble the platonic good. Accepting (b) would come with the heavy cost of rejecting a plausible intuition. Also, implications for the nature of the platonic good may prevent it from playing the role given by the concept of good.

¹⁶My preference is to posit that the K-standards resembling the platonic good must also require activities that are voluntary, or in accord with the individual’s desire or disposition (so as to include lower animals and plants). Now, human parents may need to coerce their child to eat their vegetables, and a K-standard requiring it could plausibly resemble the platonic good. Thus, we should further qualify that in order for K-standards to resemble the platonic good, their activities must be in accord with the individual’s dispositions *with regard to those activities that establish relationships*. The human parent making their child eat vegetables would go against the will of the child, but is not an activity that establishes a relationship, while the coercive copulation of bottlenoses are activities clearly establishing a relationship (contrary to the will of the female). Accordingly, we make the companion posit about the platonic good that any of its activity having to do with establishing relationships is voluntary. More would need to be said to develop my preferred “third move”, such as to specify what counts as a relationship and so explain why the following candidates would/wouldn’t count: host - parasite, predator - prey, human - service animal, human - pet, symbiant organisms, etc.

good, so long as the divine nature could be consistent with the posits I have made about it. What I have argued is that the best candidate for the platonic good will have such a nature, whether or not the platonic good is God.

4.2 Can different K-standards that resemble the platonic good resemble it to varying degrees?

We have seen that the K-standard of something like the Ebola-like microbe or bottlenose dolphin does not resemble the platonic good (or only negligibly resembles it). In contrast, the K-standards of other lifeforms such as the oak or squirrel do resemble the platonic good. Of these lifeforms whose K-standards do resemble the platonic good, do some resemble the platonic good more than others do? I will argue that the K-standards of different kinds can be ranked further with respect to greater resemblance with the platonic good. Along what lines? I think this question (call this the ranking question) can be answered in different ways that are compatible with the basic account offered so far.

I will now suggest one answer, which I call the teleological-diversity response. This response argues that some K-standards compared to others require activities directed at *more different ends*. Thus, these more “teleologically diverse” K-standards bear a greater resemblance to the platonic good. The motivation for this response is as follows. It is reasonable that the K-standard for the human is more teleologically diverse than the K-standard for the squirrel — the human’s K-standard requires activities directed towards the same ends as those required by the squirrel’s, but in addition also requires mental activities directed towards the end of rationality. Let us also posit that the platonic good engages in rational activity. Thus, the human K-standard resembles the platonic good more than the squirrel’s K-standard resembles the platonic good. It may be obvious that humans have the additional end of rationality, but it is instructive to examine Foot’s argument because it seems to me that her argument can be more widely applied to fill out the answer to the ranking question.

Foot argues that the teleology of the human, the human good, can be articulated by reflecting on the things without which the human would be deprived. Humans need “the mental capacity for learning language; they also need powers of imagination that allow them to understand stories, to join in songs and dances -- and to laugh at jokes. Without such things human beings may survive and reproduce themselves, but they are deprived.” (2001: 43) Foot is correct that humans have an additional end that, if they lacked, they would be significantly deprived, even if for the sake of argument they could self-maintain and reproduce without rationality. So, due to what we might call the deprivation principle, the species-teleology of the human should be broadened to include the end of rational activity.

With the door thus widened, and using the same deprivation principle, we might also see that animals such as the squirrel (and the human) would be deprived by a lack of perceptual activity, even if they may maintain and reproduce themselves. So, due to the deprivation principle, we can claim this: in addition to self-maintenance and reproduction, the species-teleology of perceptual animals should be broadened to include the end of perceptual activity.¹⁷ In addition, let us posit that the platonic good is not only active and continually so, but

¹⁷ Here I am speaking for myself and not Foot.

also engages in something like perceptual activity: e.g. thinking thoughts with representational content. Recall the earlier posit that it engages in rational activity. I will elaborate briefly on these posits in the final section. Making these posits allows us to answer the ranking question in a plausible manner. For instance, because the K-standard of the squirrel represents activities directed towards the same ends as the K-standards of the oak (self-maintenance) but also perception, the K-standard of the former is more teleologically diverse than the latter. Thus, at the level of teleology, the K-standard of the squirrel resembles the platonic good more than the oak's K-standard resembles the latter. And as we saw earlier, the human K-standard represents activities with the additional end of rationality. Thus, it is more teleologically diverse than the squirrel's K-standard, and is a greater platonic resemblance.

Clearly, this classification of activities is influenced by the Aristotelian schema of the different capacities of the soul: nutritive, perceptive, mind, etc. In addition, in assessing a given K-standards' resemblance to the platonic good, let me be clear that it is *not* that activities directed towards rationality are given more weight than those aimed at perception, which are in turn weighted more heavily than those directed towards self-maintenance and reproduction. Rather, the claim is that the more teleologically diverse K-standard will resemble the platonic good more, everything else being equal. Finally, keep in mind that this is but one sort of answer to the ranking question, and my basic account of how K-standards resemble the platonic good could be compatible with many different answers.

5. The Platonic Good

On my platonic kind-based account of goodness, what more can we say about the nature of the platonic good? In other words, what more is true about this platonic good that the account posits?

I have claimed that the platonic good is something active. Indeed my preference throughout has been that it is a concrete (though not physical) individual, rather than a property. I will now give some motivation to think this. The two options parallel what Adams alluded to as two distinct strands in Plato's thought about the Forms: one in which they are primarily exemplars, the other in which they are properties or universals (14). Applied to the Form of the Good, the first understands it as a non-abstract exemplar of goodness, the second as the property of goodness. Call these claims about the platonic good the exemplar thesis and property thesis, respectively. These options are each compatible with the semantics of 'good', as the question of which option to accept pertains to the metaphysics (nature) of goodness. With respect to the platonic good being active, which is a further claim about its nature, the exemplar thesis can easily accommodate this further claim by understanding the Good as an individual that is active.

If instead one accepted the property thesis, K-standards could instantiate the good rather than resemble it. K-standards could instantiate the good in virtue of requiring activities (activities directed towards certain species-ends, etc.) that instantiate the good. K-standards are propositions, and propositions are representations. A representation such as *the squirrel gathers acorns* is a representation of the squirrel, and also of its activity. Its activity could instantiate properties, and so could instantiate the property *being good*. However, on this property thesis, it is not straightforward what the metaphysical relationship would be between the platonic good and the property of being activity; on the exemplar thesis, a K-standard and its activities

resemble the platonic good because the latter is active. But on the property thesis, it is not clear why K-standard activities instantiate goodness and why activities directed toward certain species-ends would instantiate it while others would not. If the explanation was that the property *being good* and *being activity* were identical, this would be metaphysically problematic or complicated at best — perhaps the property of goodness reduces to (or is partly composed of) the property of being activity, or vice versa. Holding the exemplar thesis instead would be less troublesome metaphysically.

Alternatively, what if someone maintaining the property thesis does not claim that being good and being activity are identical, but being good is a higher-order property, and so being activity can itself instantiate goodness. So, for instance, the K-standard of the oak requires activities that are directed toward continued activity. And the thought is that its K-standard activities instantiate *being activity*, which instantiates *being good*. Thus one might think that the K-standard activities instantiate goodness. However, from the K-standard activities instantiating *being activity*, it does not follow that the activities would instantiate *being good* — something that instantiates a property does not necessarily instantiate the higher-order property that the first property instantiates.¹⁸ Now, it would seem that for any property, be it *being activity*, *being voluntary*, or any other property that might be thought to help explain why a K-standard and its activities instantiate goodness, the same problem of explaining the metaphysical relationship between it and goodness would arise. So, one might think that no other property should be proposed to explain why a K-standard and its activities instantiates goodness, but instead a K-standard like the microbe's just does not instantiate it while something like the oak's does. However, then the relation between K-standards and the platonic good would be brute. Holding the exemplar thesis, in contrast, would allow for an explanation for the relation, as given in the pages above. In addition, the exemplar thesis allows for a relationship between activity and the platonic good that is not metaphysically problematic: the platonic good is a concrete thing that is active. So, accepting the exemplar thesis is preferable.

In the previous section, I raised the “ranking question” of whether the different K-standards that do resemble the platonic good can resemble it to varying degrees. My account had already claimed that K-standards' activities directed at the end of self-maintenance or reproduction should be understood more broadly as activities directed at continued activity. At the level of this teleology, I argued that the K-standards resemble the platonic good, which I posited to be continually and eternally active. My teleological-diversity response had included a peripheral claim that K-standard activities directed at the end of perception should be understood more broadly as involving thoughts containing representational content. K-standards requiring activities directed at perception could then in a similar way resemble the platonic good if the latter's activities also involve representational content, or even imagination. Such a position about the platonic good would most naturally fit with a view that it is an exemplar, and a mind. Similarly, the platonic good being a mind would bolster the claim made before that K-standards requiring activities directed at rationality would resemble the platonic good. In other words, the platonic good is rational, and this accords well with its being a mind. Further work to make the “third move” in response to the case of the bottlenose dolphin could have further implications for

¹⁸ For instance, a cherry instantiates *redness*. This latter property instantiates the higher-order property *being a colour*. However, the cherry does not instantiate *being a colour*.

the nature of the platonic good. But if my arguments have been sound, one thing they show at least is that being an active mind is true of the best candidate to play the role given by the concept of goodness.

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