Plato, The Hedonist?

by

Brooks A. Sommerville

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Department of Philosophy
University of Toronto

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Abstract

Most moral philosophers agree that a happy life involves pleasure in some way. Some go so far as to claim that pleasure alone is what makes a life happy or worthwhile. In either case, it seems that any complete account of a desirable life owes us an explanation as to what pleasure is. So, what is pleasure? As the history of moral philosophy attests, answering this question turns out to be surprisingly difficult. Although we all experience pleasures of various kinds, it is by no means clear that a unified account can cover all the things we take to be pleasant. This conceptual question about pleasure has clear implications for the distinct ethical question of pleasure’s value. In short, if we don’t know what pleasure is, then it isn’t at all clear why we should value it.

Plato appreciates this. Pleasure’s place in the good life is one of Plato’s enduring ethical concerns, and so it should come as no surprise that he also undertakes to develop a unified account of pleasure. My aim in this dissertation is to argue that Plato arrives at a definitive answer as to what pleasure is, and that this helps us to understand his considered view as to pleasure’s role in the happy life. Specifically, Plato develops an account of pleasure as a species of intentional attitude, and that this supports a particular answer to the question of pleasure’s
value: while Plato is not a hedonist, he holds rather that pleasure reliably tracks the good, such that the life containing the most pleasure is in fact the happiest life, albeit not because it is the pleasantest life. So while Plato clearly takes the view that certain pleasures lead us astray, he also holds that the wise pursuit of pleasure reliably hits upon the best life.
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Plato The Hedonist?

Introduction

Ethics in the eudaemonist tradition aims above all to provide an account of the happy life. Once the eudaemonist establishes that happiness stands as a unique practical goal, it seems the next task is to ‘fill in’ this goal, as it were – to explain in concrete terms what happiness consists in. One common way to go about this is to begin listing the goods that happiness consists in – genres of things, the presence of which in a life makes that life happy. Examples include security, autonomy, social status, romantic love, and friendship. This project usually takes on a reductive character, as the eudaemonist tries to boil happiness down to its basic ‘elements.’ For example, we may want to subsume social status, romantic love, and friendship under the genre of ‘healthy social relations.’ When we can no longer reduce these elements any further, then we have arrived at our list of ingredients for a happy life.

Call this the ‘compositional approach’ to happiness. It undertakes to fill happiness in with a list of goods which, while distinct, all seem to share the same sort of value. That is, they have both final value and what I will call ‘compositional’ value. A good has final value if it is valuable for its own sake as a goal. For example, I take autonomy to have final value if I take it to be the sort of thing worth aiming at just because of the kind of good it is, whether or not it gives rise to anything else of value. But there seems to be more we can say about autonomy’s value, for it also stands as a part of a larger good, a good which also has final value, namely happiness. In other words, it seems autonomy’s value can be conceptually split into its status as a goal itself, on the one hand, and its status as a part of the distinct goal of happiness, on the other.
To this it may be objected that the claim that a good has final value is inconsistent with the claim that it has compositional value. For if autonomy, say, is valuable for the further end of happiness, then it isn’t really final, is it? On this view only happiness itself turns out to have value on a eudaemonist picture, with everything else having value ultimately for its contribution to happiness. But here I think the defining insight of the compositional approach – that happiness can be analysed into distinct goods as component parts – tells against this objection. If this insight is correct, then to aim at happiness as a goal just is to aim at its component parts, in the way that, say, aiming at a delicious omelette just is aiming at a delicious blend of eggs, cheese, and ham. So it seems a mistake to suppose that if I aim at its component parts then I must take those parts to have non-final value.

For example, suppose I want a dream vacation. In planning my vacation it seems I must analyse it into its component parts: scuba diving on Monday, sightseeing on Tuesday, etc. It would be odd to take the view that I pursue these activities in some non-final way with respect to my vacation as a whole, as though I want them simply for their contribution to the distinct and truly final good of my vacation. When I adopt a dream vacation as a goal I necessarily adopt these activities as its parts, and to the extent that I am committed conceptually to their status as its parts I desire them as I do the whole.

As parts of the whole they are not distinct from it in the way that, say, certain instrumental goods are. Let an instrumental good be a good with instrumental value, such that its value resides in its contribution to some distinct goal. One way of illustrating the difference between compositional value and instrumental value is that for any instrumental good connected to my dream vacation, I cease to desire it if it fails to result in my dream vacation. But since
scuba diving and sightseeing are parts of my dream vacation, their value operates differently. Suppose you ask me, ‘What if your scuba diving does not result in a dream vacation? Would you still desire it?’ I am likely to find this question a bit puzzling. I might reply that insofar as I am scuba diving, I am having a dream vacation: scuba diving is part of what it is to have a dream vacation. I want to scuba dive because I want a dream vacation, and similarly I want a dream vacation *in part* because I want to scuba dive. The relationship between the two goods is not identity, since I think my dream vacation consists of other parts as well. Of course, since scuba diving is only a part of a dream vacation I also want the rest of the whole. I might even decide that scuba diving on its own confers such a small and partial share of a dream vacation that if it is unaccompanied by the other parts in the right way, then what I have should not be counted as a dream vacation. Nonetheless, it would be wrong to conclude it has no value for me in this case. It continues to have final value as a goal in its own right – it is the sort of thing I take to be worth pursuing for its own sake. Contrast this with a instrumental good. If, for example, my long and turbulent airplane ride fails to result in a dream vacation, then it has no value whatever.

So the compositional approach assumes that happiness admits of an analysis into component parts, where these parts have both final and compositional value. This approach must sooner or later confront the question of pleasure’s relationship to happiness. Is pleasure to be counted as a part of happiness? One way of answering this question is to consider whether we take it to have both sorts of value just outlined, i.e. final and compositional value. Perhaps pleasure’s inclusion among the goods in a happy life seems obvious – after all, thoughts of pleasure seem to arise fairly naturally when we think about what it would mean for our lives to go as well as possible. But a more sophisticated reason for supposing that the happy life will contain some pleasure is that ordinarily pleasure not only appears to us to be valuable, but it
seems to have roughly the same sort of value that happiness itself has; namely, as something valuable both as a goal in itself and as a part of a greater goal.

Within the compositional approach, there seem to be four basic positions concerning pleasure's status as a component part of happiness. I call the first two positions 'exclusive' since they both deny that pleasure is a part of happiness. The first is what I will call the 'Antisthenean' view, in that it denies that pleasure is among the goods that constitute happiness on the ground that pleasure is bad or 'an evil'; something that actually makes our life go worse.¹ The second 'exclusive' position is the 'anti-component' view, which also denies that pleasure is a part of happiness, but it does not go so far as to claim that pleasure is bad. Rather, the 'anti-component' position holds that pleasure simply fails to have the sort of value required for genuine parts of happiness; in short, it denies either that pleasure has final value, or compositional value, or both.² On the other side of the aisle, so to speak, we have the 'inclusive' positions, both of which count pleasure as component parts of happiness. The first of these is 'pluralism,' the view that pleasure is one of the parts of happiness, but not the only one.³ The second 'inclusive' position is

¹ Antisthenes is perhaps the most famous proponent of this view; cf. Diogenes Laertius vi.3.

² For example, Stoics who claim that pleasure is ‘indifferent’ would appear to take this view.

'hedonism,' which holds that pleasure is the *only* part of happiness. Including hedonism under the compositional approach may seem to be a bit of a stretch. After all, on a hedonist picture it seems we are not really dealing with any sort of *compound* at all. To claim that pleasure has only one part is in effect to claim that it has none: if happiness is identical with pleasure, then its relationship to pleasure is not really one of whole to part. However, sophisticated forms of hedonism distinguish between kinds of pleasure, such that they too end up describing happiness as a kind of blend of distinct pleasures. And in any case, setting this worry aside, hedonists are indeed part of the dialectic with which Plato is concerned. Plato’s hedonists are generally concerned to defend pleasure's status as a final good (indeed, as the *only* final good), which sets them against the 'exclusive' views.

My sense is that these ‘exclusive’ views are widely thought to lack intuitive appeal, for pleasure does indeed seem to have some final value. One way of establishing pleasure's status as a goal is to show that it plays roughly the same role as happiness in explanations of action. That happiness has final value means that it stands in some sense at the end of explanations of what we do: ‘Because it makes me happy’, if true, will count as a satisfying stopping-point for an explanation as to why an agent took some course of action. The question, ‘And why do you want to be happy?’ is not a sensible question, from the eudaemonist’s point of view in any case. But pleasure seems to count as a similar stopping-point for practical explanations. Similarly, if I tell you that the reason I play volleyball is that it gives me great pleasure, then your follow-up question, ‘And why do you want pleasure?’ seems odd or out of place. Perhaps not as much as the corresponding question about happiness – one can, it seems, say *something* in response to

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4 Ethical hedonism has a long pedigree in the history of philosophy, stretching from ancient hedonists such as Eudoxus and Epicurus to moderns in the utilitarian tradition and beyond. Fred Feldman is perhaps the leading contemporary hedonist.
this question, along the lines of, ‘Because it is part of a happy life.’ This is truly the end of the line in an explanation of a particular course of action. If this is along the right lines, then pleasure seems to have both final and compositional value in precisely the way a good should if it is to be counted among the parts of happiness.

We may add to this what is, so to speak, a negative version of the same argument in reductio form. Suppose with the 'anti-component’ view that no pleasure is good. Now suppose an agent has an opportunity to experience some harmless pleasure – that is, a pleasure that frustrates no other goals of the agent. On this view, the agent ought to be utterly indifferent as to whether she in fact enjoys the pleasure in question. But this just seems absurd; perhaps, as we just saw, because pleasure just seems to have obvious value in itself. This value can of course be overridden by other considerations, but in this case all other considerations have been ruled out. Since the verdict that the agent ought to be utterly indifferent toward the pleasure is absurd, and since the view that no pleasure is good seems to be committed to this verdict, then the view that no pleasure is good is false. And since it is false that no pleasure is good, it must be true that some pleasure is good; in which case we must reject the ‘anti-component’ view, and with it the more extreme ‘Antisthenean’ position.

So far we have explained why the 'exclusive' camp may be thought to lack intuitive appeal. The two views left standing appear to be hedonism and pluralism. Now narrowed down to these two, many ethical theorists may hold that hedonism has as little appeal as the 'exclusive' camp. That is, while pleasure seems to have final (and compositional) value, it is quite a leap to the view that it alone has final value. Indeed, one can run essentially the same argument as our first on behalf of the view that the distinct, non-hedonic good of the noble also contributes to
happiness: the noble serves as a satisfying end of an explanation for action, just as pleasure does. Similarly, one can run a counterpart of our second argument, contending that all else being equal, indifference toward opportunities to promote harmless instances of the noble is just as absurd as indifference with respect to harmless pleasures. In any case, the bar for defeating hedonism seems to be remarkably low. Within the approach we have been examining, all one must do is find a good with final and compositional value that is not reducible to pleasure. For these reasons, many ethical theorists begin by rejecting the 'exclusive' camp as a whole, then proceed to reject hedonism, and wind up as pluralists by default.

This, I think, captures some common reasoning toward a pluralist position, though of course moral philosophers defend pluralism in a variety of ways. Most of us, it seems, are pluralists of one stripe or another. But what about Plato? As an ethical theorist working in the eudaemonist tradition, Plato confronts the issues we have outlined so far. On Plato’s view, is pleasure one part of happiness, as pluralists maintain? Or does he agree with hedonists that pleasure is the only good? Or does he side with one of the ‘exclusive’ positions’?

Many leading commentators seem to take Plato to be a pluralist, and indeed a pluralist of a particular bent. That is, Plato takes pleasure to be among the things that contribute to happiness, and so it is indeed a good; a least in some cases. But as we are all too aware, pleasure exerts a certain sway over us, such that it commands our attention under certain circumstances

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5 In fact, many pluralists appear to adopt this position in response to problems in connection with issues of moral conflict and incommensurability. For some discussion of this trend, see R. Chang, ed., Incommensurability, Incomparability, and Practical Reason, (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1997).

and thereby distracts us from other elements of the good life. In response to this phenomenon, much of Plato’s project in filling in the happy life is to stress this destructive side of pleasure – that while it is a good, it can often ‘behave’ as an evil, in that its very appeal operates such that we all too often overestimate its contribution to our happiness at the expense of everything else. In other words, many commentators take Plato to be a pluralist whose very pluralism leads him to take a somewhat hostile stance toward pleasure: part of his project is to subdue pleasure’s tendency to crowd out other goods.

Some evidence seems to support the view that Plato either takes one of the ‘exclusive’ positions, or pluralism. These are places where Plato has Socrates square off against a hedonist of one kind or another. For example, in Socrates’ debate with the hedonist Callicles in the Gorgias, Plato certainly seems to air some grave reservations about pleasure’s value.7 Similarly, in the Philebus – Plato’s most sophisticated and sustained discussion of pleasure’s role in the happy life – that Plato decides once again to pit Socrates against a hedonist opponent (this time Protarchus) only seems to reinforce the view that Plato is more concerned to highlight pleasure’s harms than to sing its praises. One can either take these apparent condemnations in either a very strong way – as confirmations that Plato holds that pleasure is either not good at all or downright evil. But many commentators take a somewhat softer view that Plato challenges hedonism in defence of pluralism; the occasional harsh word for pleasure is merely meant to highlight its status as an unruly, albeit legitimate, component of happiness.

But as is often the case with Plato, the picture we get of his considered view is often determined by the decision to look in one direction rather than another. For in other dialogues

7 See esp. 495e1-499b10.
and (perhaps) other moods, we get a much more favourable account of pleasure’s contribution to happiness. On the face of it, this may seem to raise no serious problem to the ‘pluralist’ picture. If Plato is indeed a pluralist with grave concerns about pleasure, then it makes perfect sense that he sets aside certain dialogues to highlight pleasure’s destructive influence, and then in other dialectical settings adopts the very different but consistent aim of highlighting pleasure’s redeeming qualities. There is no grave disharmony in play, just a certain distribution of accents across different dialogues.

Unfortunately, the interpretive puzzle is more serious than this appreciates. For in the episodes I have in mind, Plato does not simply air some counter-balancing views in favour of pleasure. He goes much further, and actually seems to endorse hedonism. He does so in two dialogues. The first is the Protagoras, at 351a-358d. Here Plato has Socrates run an argument, among the premises of which appears to be that pleasure and goodness are the same. This seems to go much further than the pluralist claim that pleasure is part of what makes a happy life happy. If pleasure and the good are really just two names for the same thing, as Socrates seems to argue, and if the amount of goodness in a life determines its happiness, as Plato seems to suppose always, then it follows that happiness is determined by pleasure. That is, pleasure alone makes a life happy. This is hedonism, and as we have seen, it is incompatible with any version of pluralism.

In the same dialogue Socrates endorses an art of measuring pleasures and pains (the measuring art) as our salvation in life. If we could only accurately measure the correct sizes of pleasures and pains, Socrates insists, then we would never err in practical life and so we would be happy (357a6-7). This endorsement of the measuring art at the conclusion of the dialogue’s
so-called ‘akrasia argument,’ which seems to take pleasure (and pain) as the *sole* determinants of happiness, seems to suppose the correctness of hedonism. It is certainly difficult to square with any version of pluralism, which takes happiness to be a blend of different elements rather than a maximization of any single element. And it is even harder to square with the view that pleasure is either neutral or bad, as the ‘exclusive’ positions maintain.

The second dialogue that raises problems for the picture of Plato as a (mildly anti-pleasure) pluralist is *Republic* IX. There Socrates undertakes to show in three separate arguments that the just, philosophical life is supremely happy, and that the opposite life of extreme injustice is supremely wretched.⁸ For the first argument we get a vivid image of the tyrant’s personal hell, with the conclusion that the tyrannical life – the life of extreme injustice – is most wretched. So far so good: Socrates could perhaps take more care to spell out the corresponding proof that the just life is supremely happy, but he is more or less on target. Then in the second and third arguments, without warning, there is a curious shift. The explicit conclusion of both these arguments is that the just life is *pleasantest*, and not that it is *happiest*. What could license this shift from happiness to pleasure? On the most natural reading, Socrates argues in this way because he holds that the pleasantest life is necessarily happiest. But what could license *that* inference, if not the hedonism that seemed to be on display in the *Protagoras*? To put this another way, if Plato is indeed a pluralist, then he ought never to have Socrates argue as though the abundance of *one element* in a life could guarantee that life’s happiness. And yet in *Republic* IX Socrates appears to do precisely that. And it is even harder to see how Plato could take one of the ‘exclusive’ positions if he holds that pleasure *alone* determines happiness.

⁸Book IX’s first argument for the supreme happiness of the just life runs from 571a1-580c9; the second from 580c10-583a11; the third from 583a1-587b6.
Commentators seeking to acquit Plato of hedonism are not without resources, of course. The dominant strategy has been to bracket in one way or another the evidence for Socratic hedonism in the *Protagoras* and *Republic* IX. In the case of the *Protagoras*, this often involves dismissing the argument as dialectical or ad hominem. That the dramatic setting for the dialogue is a den of sophistry certainly lends support to such a reading, as does the odd way that Socrates canvases the views of ‘The Many’ in the argument itself. Why not suppose that Plato has Socrates ‘endorse’ hedonism as a view that his sophistical adversaries (and the public to whom they pander) will readily accept? As I will explain in the first chapter, I find this general line of interpretation to be unsatisfying. But there is certainly a *prima facie* case to be made for it.

In the case of *Republic* IX the interpretive strategies open to defenders of Plato’s pluralism are more numerous and complex, owing to the complexity of the dialogue as a whole. But one leading interpretation has argued that the second and third arguments of IX – the so-called ‘pleasure arguments,’ since their conclusions mention pleasure rather than happiness – ought to be sequestered on the ground that they fall outside the dialogue’s proper argumentative scope. In short, on this line of interpretation pleasure plays no part in the ‘fundamental challenge’ of Book II, to which most of the rest of the dialogue is a response. That is to say, Socrates’ task in the *Republic* is *not* to show that the just life is pleasantest, nor to comment at all on how the just man will fare in terms of pleasure. For this reason, this line of interpretation argues that the official case for the just life must end at the close of IX’s first argument. The remaining two arguments, it maintains, serve as a kind of appendix: since the (now *complete*) official case for the just life has left the separate question of its pleasantness entirely open, these arguments simply serve to quell the worry that the just person, though happy, will nonetheless miss out in terms of pleasure. So despite some troubling appearances, the Socrates of Book IX is
not a hedonist. He is rather a pluralist of sorts; one who holds that the happiness of the just life can be proven without appeal to pleasure, but who also holds that hedonic considerations can in some sense boost the happy life’s appeal.

I have grave reservations about these lines of interpretation, on philosophical and textual grounds. I explain my reservations in connection with the *Protagoras* in Chapter 1; I explain my reservations about this reading of *Republic* IX in Chapter 3. But my general objection to these lines of interpretation is that they force us to read the texts in unnatural ways. Socrates certainly *looks* as though he is arguing as a hedonist in these passages, and the efforts to acquit him of hedonism do not seem to be worth the ad-hoc and unsatisfying interpretations they generate.

And yet the broad interpretive problem remains. If we look to the *Gorgias* and *Philebus*, then Socrates appears either to adopt one of the ‘exclusive’ positions (in the former dialogue, at any rate), or to be a pluralist who grudgingly admits some pleasures into the happy life (in the latter). If on the other hand we look to the *Protagoras* and *Republic* IX, then he appears to be a hedonist. Given the incompatibility of hedonism with both the ‘exclusive’ positions and pluralism, it seems we are confronted with incompatible pictures. Nor, it seems, will a developmentalist interpretation offer us any easy way out, if the developmentalism in question posits a shift either from an early, hedonist phase to a later, anti-hedonist phase, or vice-versa; not, at any rate, on the standard assumption that the chronology of composition runs as follows: *Protagoras, Gorgias, Republic* IX, *Philebus*. In this case we get the following pattern: hedonism; anti-hedonism; hedonism; anti-hedonism. It is difficult to see any development toward a ‘mature view’ here. Of course, the problem is even more acute for the unitarian interpreter. How can
Plato maintain a single view about the basic composition of happiness if he presents this composition in incompatible ways?

This is the interpretive puzzle this dissertation sets out to solve. Its basic strategy is to develop an interpretation of Plato’s view about the nature of pleasure and its contribution to happiness that can do justice to both sides of the apparent inconsistency. In the service of this goal, it undertakes to argue for an interpretation of Plato’s apparently ‘hedonist’ dialogues such that they are consistent with his apparent rejection of hedonism in his ‘anti-hedonist’ dialogues. On the view proposed here, Plato remains a consistent pluralist throughout the *Protagoras*, *Gorgias*, *Republic* IX, and *Philebus*. Pleasure is on Plato’s view to be counted among the goods that contribute to a happy life, which is to say that it has final value. So Plato consistently rejects both of the exclusive positions.

But what about the evidence for Socratic hedonism in the *Protagoras* and *Republic* IX? How is this consistent with the view that Plato is firmly committed to pluralism? My general strategy for addressing this evidence is as follows. If we pay careful attention to the evidence for Socratic hedonism, the key assumption at work in both dialogues is that one may safely infer a life’s superiority in happiness from its superiority in pleasure. In the case of the *Protagoras*, the validity of this inference seems to ground Socrates’ claim that the measuring art would save our lives. Likewise in the case of *Republic* IX, Socrates’ strategy of showing that the just life is happiest by showing its superiority in pleasure seems to rely on precisely the same inference. In these episodes interpreters see the unmistakable evidence of a hedonist Socrates. This is understandable, since hedonism is perhaps the most natural way to ground the inference: if pleasure *alone* makes a life happiest, as the hedonist maintains, then surely one may safely infer
that the pleasantest life is also happiest. However, the inference does not require hedonism. It can also be grounded in a very different view about the relationship between pleasure and happiness.

The way this relationship is best understood, in my view, is one of *tracking*: in addition to being one of the goods comprising happiness, pleasure *tracks* happiness. What is involved in this tracking relationship? When A *tracks* B, A stands as a reliable sign of B. For example, when we use the presence of antibodies (A) to determine whether a virus (B) is present in the body, we are taking the appearance of A to be reliable sign that B is also present. This is only half of the tracking relationship I have in mind. The other half is constituted by the reverse relationship, such that the presence of B also guarantees the presence of A. So the basic view is this: where a given life is pleasant, then it is to that extent happy. Likewise, where a life is happy, it is to that extent pleasant. Notice that in this tracking relationship, A and B are reliable indicators of each other *without being identical*. Antibodies are not identical with the virus, they simply guarantee its presence. Similarly, on the view I am proposing here, pleasure is a reliable indicator of happiness without being identical with either happiness or the good. In other words, that pleasure tracks happiness licenses Socrates’ key inference from a life’s pleasantness to its happiness without requiring a commitment to hedonism.

My use of the image of ‘tracking’ to characterize Plato’s conception of the relationship between pleasure and happiness may conjure comparisons to Robert Nozick’s famous discussion of truth-tracking in his *Philosophical Investigations*. There Nozick uses tracking to develop an original account of knowledge. He claims there are four basic conditions for S knowing P:
1. \( P \) is true

2. \( S \) believes that \( P \)

3. If it were the case that not-\( P \), then \( S \) would not believe that \( P \)

4. If it were the case that \( P \), then \( S \) would believe that \( P \)^9

Crucial to Nozick’s account are the counterfactuals in premises 3 and 4. The general idea is that \( S \) knows \( P \) only if \( S \)’s method for knowing \( P \) is responsive to counterfactuals in such a way that it reliably tracks the truth.

As we will see, Plato takes the relationship between pleasure and knowledge to run very deep. In chapters 4 and 5 we will see that on Plato’s considered view in the *Philebus* as to what pleasure is, it turns out to be an externalist and highly intellectual affair not unlike Plato’s own conception of knowledge. The main idea behind Nozick’s ‘tracking’ analogy – that tracking something involves a reliable sensitivity to counterfactuals – holds for Plato’s conception of pleasure as well. That pleasure tracks the good means crucially that it represents a reliable method for fastening upon happiness in the way an epistemic agent fastens upon truth. As we will see in more detail in the first chapter, in the *Protagoras* Plato calls this very method of hitting upon happiness ‘the measuring art.’ And perhaps like Nozick’s ‘tracking’ account of knowledge, Plato’s ‘tracking’ view relies on no claims about causation. That is to say, the ‘tracking’ view supports Plato’s purportedly ‘hedonist’ views without itself committing Plato to any view about the causal connection between pleasure and happiness. What is crucial for the ‘tracking’ view is *that* pleasure is a reliable tracker of goodness, and not *why*. Though, as we will see in Chapter 4 and 5, Plato’s externalism concerning pleasure goes some way toward furnishing an explanation as to *why* pleasure reliably tracks happiness.

^9 172-176.
How does this ‘tracking’ view accommodate the recalcitrant arguments in Plato’s ‘hedonist’ dialogues? As we will see in greater detail in Chapter 1, Socrates in the *Protagoras* needs to generate two specific conclusions in the *Protagoras*: first, that the popular account of akrasia is ridiculous; second, that the true cause of akrasia is ignorance, with the corollary that a certain species of knowledge (i.e. the measuring art) would remedy the defect and guarantee our happiness. There is virtual unanimity among interpreters that Socrates relies on hedonism to generate these conclusions. But all Socrates *really* needs, it seems to me, is something to ground the inference from the claim that a life is most pleasant to the claim that it is happy. Hedonism is one such ground, to be sure. But the view I have just sketched represents another way to ground the inference Socrates needs, with the additional advantage that it does not commit him to hedonism. And since the text of the *Protagoras* seems to leave open which of these views – hedonism or the ‘tracking’ view – Socrates is committed to, and since (I argue) the latter is compatible with the evidence for pluralism in a way the former is not, we have good reason to take Socrates in the *Protagoras* to be committed to the ‘tracking’ view rather than hedonism.

But what about *Republic* IX? Doesn’t Socrates argue as a hedonist in its last two arguments on behalf of the just life? As we have seen, resistance to this verdict has motivated a bold rethinking of the entire dialogue’s argumentative scope. But I think the ‘tracking’ view supplies us with a much less invasive way to resist this verdict – one that draws no fault lines down the middle of Book IX, at any rate. The key, again, is to recognize that here too, in the ‘pleasure arguments’ of IX, what Socrates really needs is not hedonism necessarily, but a way of grounding the inference from a life’s pleasantness to its happiness. When interpreters worry that IX presents us with the undeniable picture of a hedonist Socrates, it is because he seems to slide straightaway from a proof of the just life’s supreme pleasantness to the implicit conclusion that it
is supremely happy. But another way to ground this inference is with the ‘tracking’ view. That is to say, when Socrates argues breezily as though ‘superiority in pleasure’ were equivalent to ‘superior in happiness,’ it is because he holds that the supremely happy life does indeed turn out also to be supremely pleasant, but this is not because pleasure and happiness are identical, as the hedonist claims. It is rather because pleasure reliably tracks the good.

If we put together the evidence for Platonic pluralism in the *Gorgias* and *Philebus* with the evidence for the ‘tracking’ view in the *Protagoras* and *Republic* IX, then an internally consistent picture emerges: on Plato’s version of pluralism, pleasure plays a special role within the compositional framework for happiness. Pleasure performs a certain double-duty: on the one hand, pleasure itself has final value and makes its distinct contribution to the value of a life, just as the other compositional goods do; on the other hand, pleasure also plays an important epistemic role in that it tracks the happiness of the life as a whole.

This brings us to the second half of the apparent inconsistency in our interpretive puzzle. It is largely on the strength of the evidence of the *Gorgias* and *Philebus* that interpreters reject the apparent hedonism of the *Protagoras* and *Republic* IX. Part of this evidence comes in the form of specific Socratic arguments against this or that hedonist position. But additional evidence springs from the very dialectical frameworks of these dialogues: in both works, Plato decides to pit Socrates *against* a hedonist adversary. This decision signals that Plato wants to contrast his own position with a hedonist alternative, and so the evidence of the so-called ‘hedonist’ dialogues must be explained away in one way or another.

The tracking view can of course accommodate this anti-hedonist evidence. Since the ‘tracking’ view is distinct from hedonism, Socrates’ criticisms of hedonism don’t tell against the
‘tracking’ view per se. But the evidence of Gorgias and Republic IX may seem to challenge the ‘tracking’ view as well, in the sense that what Socrates is criticizing is not simply the hedonist’s thesis that pleasure is the good, but also the practical program of a life devoted to the pursuit of pleasure. By Socrates’ lights, the problem with Callicles or even Protarchus is not simply that they make a conceptual mistake and confuse the ‘tracking’ relationship between pleasure and happiness for identity. It is also that pleasure has at best a very weak and unreliable relationship with happiness, and so someone like Callicles who pursues pleasure as though it were the good is unlikely to hit upon happiness. And if Plato holds that the relationship between pleasure and happiness is weak, then in what sense can he possibly hold that pleasure ‘tracks’ the good?

This is a fair objection, but I think it rests on a misunderstanding of the evidence in the Gorgias and Philebus. In both works, Socrates’ criticisms of a given hedonist position is bound up with a particular conception of pleasure. That is to say, in both cases Socrates’ hedonist opponent is first committed to the hedonist thesis along the lines that ‘pleasure is the good,’ and only once this commitment has been made does the debate turn to the specific conception of pleasure the hedonist is now charged with defending as identical with the good. Most importantly, it is really this conception of pleasure that exposes the weakness in the hedonist’s position. He is committed to the view that pleasure is the good, and yet this identity claim is implausible on his own conception of pleasure.

In both of the ‘anti-hedonist’ dialogues we are considering, I propose, Plato analyzes the hedonist position into two distinct claims. The first is an ethical claim, a claim about what we should value and how we should value it. Callicles and Protarchus make essentially the same claim on this score: what we ought to value is pleasure only, and we should value it such that we
enjoy it in abundance. The second claim is conceptual; it is about what pleasure *is*. Without this second claim, the first appears to be vacuous: we cannot value pleasure in any meaningful sense unless we know what it is.

And as both Callicles and Protarchus come to learn, much of the real philosophical work for the hedonist lies in delivering on this second claim. In the case of Callicles, it seems his downfall is a *fait accompli* as soon as he commits himself to a restorative account of pleasure. We will explore this in greater detail in Chapter 2. Protarchus’ case is much more complex. As we will see in Chapters 4 and 5, much of Protarchus’ dialectical role in the dialogue is to give a defensible version of the second claim. He inherits the first claim from Philebus himself at the dialogue’s beginning; his job for the rest of the discussion is to arrive at a serviceable account of pleasure such that the ethical claim looks plausible.

So Plato’s target in the so-called ‘anti-hedonist’ dialogues is quite specific. He is not necessarily out to show that hedonism cannot possibly be right. Rather, Socrates’ debate with hedonist adversaries is at bottom a challenge: if the hedonist is to defend his position successfully, then he owes us an account of pleasure such that he can defend his ethical claim that pleasure is the good.

One of my key claims in this dissertation will be that in attempting to meet this challenge, Protarchus in the *Philebus* actually enjoys remarkable eventual success in arriving at a defensible conception of pleasure – one whose relationship to the good seems firm enough that it is difficult to see how they may come apart. However, this does not mean that Protarchus’ defense of hedonism succeeds. Rather, I will argue that Protarchus’ conception of pleasure supports the ‘tracking’ view rather than hedonism. In other words, when Protarchus’ conception of pleasure is
fully articulated and properly understood, it turns out that pleasure is a reliable sign that a life is happy without being a cause of its happiness. If this is correct, then the agent who devotes himself to the pursuit of Protarchean pleasure seems necessarily to hit upon the happy life.

So the general aim of this dissertation is to defend an interpretation of Socrates’ views on pleasure in the Protagoras, Gorgias, Republic IX, and Philebus such that, despite appearances, they are all consistent expressions of Plato’s commitment to pluralism plus what I have called the ‘tracking’ view. Chapter 1 focuses on the supposed hedonism in the Protagoras’ akrasia argument (352a-358a), arguing that while the Socrates of the Protagoras is not a hedonist, he takes pleasure to stand in a certain ‘tracking’ relationship to the good. This means minimally that where one possible life exceeds another in goodness, it will also exceed that life in net pleasure; and vice-versa. Chapter 2 then turns to the Gorgias. This work seems to present counterevidence for the view that Plato takes pleasure to track the good at all, as commentators tend to read the dialogue as a whole – and Socrates’ debate with Callicles in particular – as anti-pleasure. I argue that these commentators overestimate the role of hedonism in Callicles’ overall position, and that Socrates aims to refute a certain account of pleasure, rather than any and all versions of hedonism. Chapter 3 then turns to Republic IX. This work seems to present the strongest evidence that Plato takes the 'tracking' view, as two of its three arguments for the superiority of the philosophical life seem to argue that the philosopher’s life is happiest because it is pleasantest. I defend this view against some challenges. I then show that this reading can help to solve a seemingly unrelated problem of interpretation: I identify a puzzle concerning the number of arguments in Republic IX and propose a solution to this problem, arguing that each of the three arguments is directed towards a particular part of soul as outlined in Republic IV.
Chapters 4 and 5 focus on the *Philebus*, Plato's only sustained philosophical investigation of the nature of pleasure. Focusing on the dialogue’s so-called ‘Choice of Lives’ argument (22a1-b8; 60d3-e5), I propose in Chapter 4 that Plato holds that ‘true’ pleasure is attitudinal. In Chapter 5 I develop this view further and consider some advantages of this proposal for interpreting the *Philebus* as a whole. I then consider the implications of this account of pleasure for the ‘tracking’ view outlined in Chapter 1. I argue that once we accept that pleasure is attitudinal, then the view that pleasure reliably tracks the good becomes highly plausible. I conclude with an examination of some of the ways that Plato’s externalism about pleasure in the *Philebus* is consistent with his broader externalist campaign in ethics and psychology. I argue that this externalist campaign follows from Plato’s ethical intellectualism.
Chapter 1: The *Protagoras*

1.1: Introduction

This chapter aims to reconstruct the mechanics of the *Protagoras* ‘akrasia argument’ (351b3-358b5) so as to determine the precise role played by hedonism in that argument. 'Akrasia' refers to the phenomenon of an agent's acting voluntarily against the knowledge she has of the best course of action, under the influence of pleasure, pain, desire, and the like. In the service of defending his main thesis in the *Protagoras* that the virtues are one, Socrates argues that akrasia so-defined is 'ridiculous.' This argument has attracted a lot of scholarly attention, for a couple of reasons. First, the 'akrasia argument' seems to depend on a form of enlightened hedonism, and this comes as a surprise given Socrates' more critical remarks about pleasure in other dialogues. Second, it is not at all clear what sort of 'ridiculousness' Socrates has in mind. While there is broad scholarly agreement that the ridiculousness amounts to some sort of absurdity, and hence impossibility, there is a number of ways to interpret the impossibility at issue.

This chapter will argue for three related claims. First, the ‘ridiculousness’ at issue in the akrasia argument, which Socrates attributes to the popular account of akrasia, and which plays a crucial role in many interpretations, refers neither to logical nor psychological impossibility (as two prominent interpretations maintain), but to what I will call ‘causal’ impossibility. In short, the popular explanation of akrasia is ridiculous because it violates a key principle of the Socratic-Platonic theory of causation as outlined in the *Phaedo*. Second, I will argue that hedonism plays no important role in the argument’s first, negative stage. Rather, I maintain that this stage of the argument succeeds on the less determinate supposition that pleasure reliably ‘tracks’ the good. Third, I will argue that the argument’s second, positive stage does not rely on hedonism either.
Again, a commitment to the less determinate view that pleasure reliably ‘tracks’ the good is all that is required for the argument to succeed.

Section 1.2 will defend the first claim. Section 1.3 will defend the second claim. Section 1.4 will then defend the third claim. I discuss my conclusions in Section 1.5. The upshot will be that rather than supporting hedonism, Socrates in the Protagoras is committed instead to the view that pleasure reliably tracks the good. This is an exciting conclusion for several reasons. First, it allows us to interpret the akrasia argument as Socrates' own -- that is to say, as an airing of his own views, in contrast to prevalent dialectical or ad hominem interpretations of the argument, on which Socrates is simply appealing to views he does not accept in support of a conclusion he wishes to establish. Second, it potentially renders consistent the akrasia argument with Socrates' anti-pleasure remarks (and his anti-hedonist remarks in particular) in other dialogues. As we will see, the view that pleasure reliably tracks the good is consistent with a rejection of hedonism. These two implications go hand in hand: the less we worry about the akrasia argument's consistency with other dialogues, the less pressure there is to dismiss it as dialectical or ad hominem. Third, if this interpretation is along the right lines, then it exposes an important lacuna in the Protagoras, to be filled in by later dialogues. For it appears that any justification of the view that pleasure reliably tracks the good must involve a unified account of pleasure, an account that Socrates does not even attempt to supply in the Protagoras itself. Hence one of our main concerns as we examine later dialogues will be to find such an account.

For interpreters trying to reconstruct a unified picture of Plato's view concerning pleasure and its relationship to happiness, the 'akrasia argument' of the Protagoras represents the first piece of the puzzle. This is because the argument functions not only as a denial of akrasia, but also involves a claim about what success in practical life (i.e. happiness) consists in, and because
the argument clearly takes there to be an important connection between pleasure and happiness. Among the puzzles surrounding the argument is its contribution to the dialogue's main debate concerning the unity of virtue. While Socrates presents it as a necessary preparation for his case that courage is 'one' with the other canonical virtues (353b2-3), it also appears to have independent value as a support for both the Socratic and sophistic projects.

Let me explain. Protagoras has professional reasons for denying that akrasia is possible. Trust in the practical benefits of studying with a sophist assumes that there is a reliable connection between whatever he teaches and correct action. Socrates makes this plain early on in the dialogue when he asks the sophist on Hippocrates’ behalf a question that frames the entire discussion to follow: what will Hippocrates get out of his tutelage with you, Protagoras? The sophist’s reply is that Hippocrates will “get better and better” with each day of study. Protagoras is rather cavalier about the precise term for what he teaches, calling it sound deliberation, political excellence, and civic virtue. But his point seems straightforward enough. Protagoras’ student will invest his money wisely, speak persuasively, and form the right political alliances. In short, Protagoras’ sales pitch is thoroughly practical. One does not study with him to acquire knowledge for its own sake, but with a view to doing well in practical life, both domestic and public.

Given that this is Protagoras’ professional guarantee, his interest in denying the possibility of akrasia is simply that the phenomenon calls this guarantee into question. Socrates has no trouble securing the sophist’s enthusiastic agreement when he puts matters in the following terms:

Come now, Protagoras, and reveal this about your mind: What do you think about knowledge? Do you go along with the majority or not? Most people think this way about it, that it is not a powerful thing, neither a leader nor a ruler. They do not think of it in that
way at all; but rather in this way: while knowledge is often present in a man, what rules him is not knowledge but rather anything else – sometimes desire, sometimes pleasure, sometimes pain, at other times love, often fear; they think of his knowledge as being utterly dragged around by all these other things as if it were a slave. Now, does the matter seem like that to you, or does it seem to you that knowledge is a fine thing capable of ruling a person, and if someone were to know what is good and bad, then he would not be forced by anything to act otherwise than knowledge dictates, and intelligence would be sufficient to save a person? (352a7-c7)

Without hesitation Protagoras agrees, remarking that “it would be shameful indeed for me above all people” to think otherwise (352d1-3). His professional guarantee compels this answer. For only if there is a straightforward connection between the knowledge Protagoras teaches and correct action does paying his considerable tuition make sense. If on the other hand the popular view of knowledge as a mere slave is correct, then the practical benefits of studying with Protagoras seem negligible. Why pay hefty fees for knowledge from Protagoras when other forces such as pleasure and fear are what really determine our actions? If practical success is what one is after, then the money would be better spent on whatever can directly affect these motivational forces so as to benefit practical life – say, on an Athenian boot camp.

Socrates’ reasons for denying akrasia are, perhaps, less crass and more philosophical. But in so far as both men are committed to the view that the right sort of learning can pay off in practical life, Socrates and Protagoras are kindred spirits. Whatever his reservations about Protagoras’ conception of the knowledge in question, Socrates’ entire philosophical enterprise seems committed to the view that rigorous philosophical inquiry is a reliable source of moral improvement. It is, I propose, for this reason that he and Protagoras find themselves standing shoulder to shoulder against the popular belief in akrasia. If our actions are typically ruled by pleasure, or by anything else that cannot be counted as knowledge, then both men are simply
looking in the wrong place for moral improvement. So if Socrates is to defend his own philosophical enterprise, then he must show that the popular belief in akrasia is false.¹⁰

Let this suffice as an outline of what is at stake for Protagoras and Socrates in the akrasia argument. In the next section I turn to the two main interpretations of the ‘ridiculousness’ at issue in Socrates’ argument against the popular belief in akrasia. I then turn to the Phaedo’s doctrine of causation to provide the framework for explaining the causal impossibility Socrates finds in the popular explanation of akrasia.

1.2: Rival Interpretations of the Akrasia Argument

At the conclusion of the akrasia argument Socrates famously takes himself to have shown that the popular explanation of akrasia is ‘ridiculous’ (γελοίον). What does Socrates mean when he calls the popular explanation of akrasia ‘ridiculous’? While there seems to be a broad consensus that the ridiculousness at issue signals some sort of impossibility, commentary resolves into two broad camps of interpretation. According to the first camp, represented by Gallop, the ridiculousness in question refers to logical impossibility. On this view Socrates takes himself to have shown that the popular explanation of akrasia is self-contradictory. According to the second camp, represented by Vlastos, the ridiculousness refers to psychological impossibility. On this interpretation, Socrates takes himself to have shown that the popular explanation of akrasia is inconsistent with a widely-held principle of human nature. So the many’s account of akrasia is

¹⁰ On this point I disagree with Donald J. Zeyl (1980), who complains that prohedonists often miss the “irony (if not sarcasm)” at 357e in Socrates’ exhortation to the many to purchase a sophistic education (fn 37, p. 268). Cf. also M. J. O’Brien (1967), who takes this remark as “a clue that Socrates is not being straightforward at all” (p. 138). While I do not doubt that Socrates prefers his own instruction to that offered by Protagoras and the other sophists in attendance, he deftly appreciates that overturning the popular view about the tenuous connection between learning and action is as vital for the sophistic project as it is for his own. Having said this, I grant that Protagoras’ resistance to a thesis so friendly to his own much-maligned profession casts doubt on his mastery of practical excellence. Cf. Catherine Rowett, ‘Relativism in Plato’s Protagoras’ in Verity Harte and Melissa Lane (2013).
not, as the first camp holds, inconsistent with itself – it is only once an additional claim about human nature is established that their explanation is shown to court impossibility.

In this section I will argue that both interpretations are inadequate. I propose instead that the argument in question contains two stages. The first stage contends that being overcome by pleasure is what I will call ‘causally’ impossible. But the argument also contains a distinct but related stage, which tries to establish a psychologically necessary connection between a certain kind of knowledge – namely the measuring art – and motivation.

As I mentioned earlier, on one interpretation of the akrasia argument Socrates contends that the popular explanation is ridiculous because it courts logical impossibility. David Gallop’s work is perhaps the best representative of this line of interpretation. On Gallop’s view, Socrates’ strategy in the akrasia argument is to argue that the popular account of what is going on in putative cases of akrasia – that a man knows that what he does is evil, and yet he does it because he is overcome by pleasure – contains a contradiction. Gallop explains:

Let “X” be the compound assertion that Socrates undertakes at 355A to prove absurd. X may be regarded as a conjunction of two expressions. “P” and “Q”. P says that a man knows evil things to be evil; and Q says that he does these evil things because he is overcome by pleasure. Socrates argues in effect: “Q entails the denial of P. Hence to assert X is to assert both P and not-P. Hence X is absurd”. So the popular account of akrasia is ridiculous in that it asserts at once that the akratic knows and that he does not know that the evil things he does are evil.

Indeed, if this were an accurate reconstruction of the argument then it would explain the ridiculousness in question. One problem with this interpretation, though, is that it relies on

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11 For other versions of this interpretation see C. C. W. Taylor (1976) and David Wolsdorf (2006).

12 Gallop, p. 119.
Socrates’ ability to show that Q entails the denial of P – that is, that ‘doing evil things because one is overcome by pleasure’ entails that one is ignorant in the relevant sense.

As Gallop himself recognizes, his interpretation exposes a serious fallacy in the argument, for Socrates seems to establish that Q entails the denial of P only by means of a slide between two senses of the word ‘must.’ The argument actually establishes only that the pleasantest course of action ought to be preferred, and yet Socrates seems to take himself to have shown that it must be preferred as a matter of psychological necessity. The concluding paragraph of Gallop’s article makes all of this perfectly plain:

It is one thing to tell a man that he “must” take what he perceives to be the pleasantest or best course of action available, in the sense that it is the preferable thing to do. It is another thing to say that he “must” act in this way as a matter of psychological necessity. Socrates gets his opponents to agree that the action recognized as pleasantest is always preferable, and concludes that the pleasantest action, once recognized as such, will necessarily be preferred. Yet this would be true only if men always did act rationally; and to assume that they do is only to beg the whole question over again from the start.13

Gallop concludes that this begs “the whole question again from the start,” I take it, because the question framing the entire discussion is whether knowledge is a powerful thing. The many think they have found a powerful counter-example to the view that knowledge is a powerful thing, because the phenomenon of akrasia shows that a man can possess the right knowledge and yet do evil because he is overcome by pleasure. But on Gallop’s interpretation, Socrates only refutes this counter-example and shows that knowledge is a powerful thing by stipulating that a man necessarily acts in accordance with what he knows about the sizes of pleasures and pains before him. And this just seems to ignore the force of the initial challenge, which, I think, is to press Socrates to come up with an argument for any necessary connection between knowledge and

virtuous action. So Gallop seems to make sense of the argument only by interpreting it in such a way that Socrates begs the question. If we want to attribute a better argument to Socrates, we need to improve on Gallop’s interpretation.

There is a second main line of interpretation, for which I will take Gregory Vlastos as my representative.¹⁴ On Vlastos’ interpretation, the ‘ridiculousness’ signals psychological impossibility, not logical impossibility. So the issue is not, as it was for Gallop, that the popular account of akrasia boils down to a contradiction. Rather, on Vlastos’ view the popular account is ridiculous because it entails a conclusion that Socrates takes to be so implausible as to be embarrassing.

What is this embarrassing conclusion? Socrates shows that the popular account of akrasia commits the many to the conclusion that an agent may knowingly choose the lesser of two goods. Once Socrates establishes that this follows from the popular account, his work is over: “This is what Socrates takes to be so rank an impossibility that to confront his adversaries with

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¹⁴ Other members of the ‘psychological impossibility’ camp are Gerasimos Santas (1966), who takes the ridiculousness to lie in putative akrasia’s violation of psychological hedonism (p. 207); G. Klosko (1980), whose interpretation explicitly follows that of Santas (p. 307), argues that ‘Egoism’ (which appears to be equivalent to psychological hedonism) “is taken to be such an obvious truth that it is not mentioned and remains a tacit assumption” (pp. 313-314); Terry Penner (1997), who takes the argument to show specifically that ‘diachronic-knowledge-akrasia’ is psychologically impossible; and (perhaps) Roslyn Weiss (1990), who argues that it is psychologically impossible for an agent to choose the bad/painful on account of the good/pleasant. Weiss’ interpretation is difficult to classify, as some of her comments (particularly those on p. 23) seem similar in spirit to those of David Sedley (1998), whose outline of an interpretation goes undeveloped (p. 117), but who nevertheless inspires the interpretation I develop here. For provocative interpretations that seem to fall outside the two main camps, in that they both seem to take the view that the precise character of the ridiculousness simply goes unexplained in the argument, see M. Dyson (1976), who denies that the inconsistency in question is ever “spelled out” (p. 36), and Raphael Woolf (2002), who likewise searches in vain for an explicit explanation of the ridiculousness, and who complains that this is “an aspect of the argument that scholars have sometimes noted but never […] properly considered,” p. 225). In any case, I take it to be an advantage of my interpretation over those of Dyson and Woolf that it explains the ridiculousness that is so key to understanding the argument’s mechanics. For a helpful survey of all these views, see David Wolfsdorf (2006).
this consequence of their thesis is to leave them speechless, utterly crushed.” According to Vlastos, Socrates’ argument for the ridiculousness of the popular account ends at 355e3, and so the subsequent discussion of the measuring art contributes nothing to the argument.

Vlastos’ interpretation seems to suffer from the same fundamental inadequacy of Gallop’s, albeit less transparently. For to take as an obvious absurdity an agent’s failure to act in accordance with his knowledge of the sizes of the goods before him seems only to beg the question against the position of the many, who, after all, raised the occurrence of akrasia as a counter-example to the position that knowledge is a powerful thing. On Vlastos’ interpretation, Socrates effectively counters this attack with the revelation that the popular position implies that one could know the sizes of goods and yet act against this knowledge. But the many might not share Vlastos’ embarrassment with this implication. Indeed, an astute member of the mob (if there could be such a person) might well reply that the occurrence of akrasia shows that to know is one thing, to act is another, and Socrates has done nothing to establish any reliable connection between the two except by insisting on one. Moreover, our spokesperson might turn the tables and argue that if the obvious occurrence of akrasia cannot be reconciled with an unsupported

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15 Vlastos, p. 83. There is a certain conceptual connection between the ‘psychological impossibility’ camp and what I will call in the next Section the ‘prohedonist’ interpretation: the view that the hedonism in the akrasia argument is a genuine Socratic position. While Vlastos’ views are complicated – he evolves from prohedonism in 1956 to a denial in 1969 that hedonism is present in the argument at all (a conclusion with which I am in broad sympathy, as we will see, but for different reasons), Santas (1966), and Klosko (1980) both take some version of hedonism to be so widely-held and obvious that once Socrates reveals that the popular explanation of akrasia runs afoul of it, the ridiculousness is made plain. By the same token, the more widely-held and obvious the hedonism appears to be, the harder it is to see how Plato could expect the reader readily to appreciate that he means to insulate Socrates himself from this broad and natural consensus, especially without strong additional evidence. In fact, I doubt that Plato takes the hedonism in question to be either obvious or widely held. As I will argue later, the many do not take it to be obvious, since they resist it at first and acquiesce only owing to Socratic pressure. And since the many resist hedonism, it is hard to see how Plato could take it to be widely held.

16 Vlastos, p. 83 fn.
tenet of Socratic intellectualism, then so much the worse for Socrates; in which case it would seem that Socratic intellectualism is the position with the embarrassing implication. Vlastos’ interpretation seems to saddle Socrates with an argument that never really rises to this challenge.\footnote{This becomes even clearer as Vlastos gropes for propositions, admittedly not mentioned anywhere in the text, but which could be adduced in support of the argument. The most dubious among these is his (S1), which bears striking and deliberate resemblance to a key proposition in Donald Davidson’s treatment of the subject: “If one knows that X is better than Y, one will want X more than Y” (p. 83). Again, a spokesperson for the many might well reply that this simply assumes a connection between knowledge and motivation, a connection which may indeed be part of what the popular account means to challenge. Cf. Donald J. Zeyl (1980), p. 259.}

If these objections are on the right track, then we have good reason to seek an interpretation that overcomes the inadequacies of those of Gallop and Vlastos. In particular, what is needed is a reconstruction of Socrates’ refutation relying on no assumption that knowledge entails motivation and so governs action. I now turn to the Platonic-Socratic theory of causation in the Phaedo. This will furnish us with a notion of impossibility that is distinct from both Gallop’s logical impossibility and Vlastos’ psychological impossibility, which I will call ‘causal impossibility.’

Socrates’ discussion of causation in the Phaedo arises in his response to Cebes’ objection to the thesis that the soul is immortal (95b4-107a1). Socrates in effect undertakes to show that the soul is an essential bringer of life, and as such cannot be destroyed. To prepare his audience for this argument, Socrates recounts his intellectual autobiography. He explains that in his younger days he was concerned to explain the causes of all things, and sought the standard explanations of the natural philosophers, who posited such causes as bone, sinew, and the elements to explain the natural world. Socrates soon grew dissatisfied with causes of this sort, though, and sought a better explanation in Anaxagoras’ unorthodox view that mind is the cause of all. But Anaxagoras failed to deliver on this promise of a different kind of cause, in practice
explaining the world with the same old causes Socrates found to be inadequate. So as an
alternative Socrates proposes two ‘safe’ formulations for explaining the causes of things, a
simple hypothesis and a more sophisticated one.\(^{18}\)

It is worth noting a couple of features of Socrates’ understanding of the word ‘cause’. As
David Sedley has pointed out, Socrates uses a number of expressions to designate a cause:
‘ἀίτιον/αιτία,’ ‘διά + the accusative or causal dative,’ and the verb ‘ποιεîν.’\(^{19}\) That Socrates
seems to use these expressions interchangeably suggests that they all represent a unified view of
causation. And while Socrates seems to make a point of leaving open what can count as a cause,
he also seems to be working within a certain framework. For Socrates, a cause or ‘ἀίτιον’ is
essentially a \textit{thing responsible} for a given effect, much in the same way that we
talk of legal responsibility.\(^{20}\) So, for example, to convict Professor Plum of murder in a law court is to
designate \textit{him} as the \textit{person} responsible for the murder. A cause stands to its effect in roughly the
same way for Socrates. To designate fire as a cause of heat is essentially to designate it as the
thing responsible for the heat in question just as Professor Plum is the person responsible for the
murder.

So what, according to Socrates, is wrong with the causes of Anaxagoras and other natural
philosophers? What is wrong with nominating, say, air as the cause of thinking, or bones and
sinews as the cause(s) of his sitting in prison? As Sedley explains, Socrates holds that a cause

\(^{18}\) Naturally, this rich and important passage has generated complex debates about both the nature of Socrates’
rejection of Anaxagorean explanations and his preferred method of explanation. Cf. W. J. Goodrich (1903/4); J.
Burnet (1911); P. Shorey (1933, p. 179); N.M. Cornford (1939, pp. 74-80); N. R. Murphy (1936) and (1951, pp.
145-148); N. Gulley (1952); R. Hackforth (1955); J. B. Skemp (1959); D. S. Scarrow (1961); G. Vlastos (1969); D.
Gallop (1975); J. Annas (1982); K. Dorter (1982); D. Bostock (1986); C. J. Rowe (1993); J. van Eck (1996); F. J.

\(^{19}\) Sedley (1998), p. 115. Much of my discussion of the \textit{Phaedo}’s theory of causation is indebted to Sedley’s
excellent article.

\(^{20}\) Sedley, p. 115.
must share a kind of ‘logical sameness’ with its effect. The reasoning, I take it, is roughly that a
causal explanation provides an answer to the question, ‘What is it that is present here, making
this thing F?’ where F is a certain property, broadly construed. Causes are for Socrates things
that ‘bring’ their effects, such that whenever they are present their effects are compresent by
necessity. And a thing cannot ‘bring’ its effect in this way unless it is in some important sense
the same as its effect. Perhaps a simple example will make this less obscure. If fire is the cause
of heat in a given location, then the fire must itself be the same as heat in the sense that it must
possess heat. If fire were not itself hot, Socrates reasons, then how could it ‘bring’ heat to
anything else? I can only give you what I have myself – similarly, for a cause to ‘bring’ a certain
effect, F-ness, that cause must itself possess F-ness. 21

Conversely, Socrates also holds it to be a rule of causation that an opposite cannot be the
cause of its opposite. So, for example, if snow is always cold, then it cannot be the cause of heat
in anything else. The reasoning is roughly the same here: if snow is not itself hot, then it cannot
‘bring’ heat to anything else. To suppose that it could is, in Socrates’ view, so absurd as to be
unthinkable. 22 Parmenides’ unmistakable shadow hangs over much of this doctrine. To suppose
that what cannot itself possess F-ness could ‘bring’ F-ness to something else is to suppose that F-
ness could come out of nothing, in violation of a Parmenidean principle of metaphysics.

This framework generates the following three rules of causation. Let X be the putative
cause of F, and let F and un-F be opposites:

(1) X must not be un-F

(2) X’s opposite must not cause anything to be F

21 Jonathan Barnes calls this the “Synonymy Principle of causation,” p. 119. For an illuminating discussion and

22 Sedley, p. 117.
(3) X must never cause anything to be un-F\textsuperscript{23}

This generates a further restriction on a cause’s behaviour when it encounters its effect’s opposite:

(4) When anything bringing not-F advances, then X must either retreat or perish, taking F-ness with it. (103b4-c1)

So, for example, when snow enters a body it brings coldness with it. When this happens the fire present in that body must either perish or be destroyed, along with any heat it brought. Otherwise we would have a case of cold fire. Assuming that fire is indeed a cause of heat, then this is causally impossible. With this much established, I now turn to the mechanics of the akrasia argument itself. I will argue that the ridiculousness of the popular explanation of akrasia is owing to its violation of a key rule of this doctrine of causation; specifically, that an opposite cannot cause its opposite.

At 352a7-c7 (quoted in Section 1.1) Socrates asks Protagoras whether he agrees with the view of knowledge as a weak force in human action such as to be dragged about as a slave under the influence of pleasure, pain, fear, and so on. As we have already seen, Protagoras sees at once that his professional guarantee requires that he join Socrates in rejecting this view. This agreement places them in a slim minority, Socrates insists, for most men take a much dimmer view of knowledge. Socrates attributes the following commitment to the many:

They maintain that most people are unwilling [οὐκ ἔθελεν] to do what is best, even though they know what it is and are able to do it. And when I have asked them the reason (αἴτιον) for this, they say that those who act that way do so because they are overcome (ἡττωμένους) by pleasure (ἡδονῆς) or pain (λύπης) or are being ruled (κρατουμένους) by one of the things I referred to just now. (352d4-e2)

\textsuperscript{23} Sedley, p. 121.
This commitment seems to consist of two parts. The first is a statement of fact, claiming in effect that “most people”\(^{24}\) do not wish or are unwilling (οὐκ ἐθέλειν) to perform a virtuous action (I take this to be equivalent to ‘doing what is best’), although the following two conditions obtain for the agent: i) the knowledge of the best course of action; and ii) the ability to do it. The second part of the commitment seems to be a causal explanation of this phenomenon. When Socrates asks the many for the reason (αἴτιον) for this, they claim this occurs because the agent is either overcome (ήττωμένους) or ruled (κρατουμένους) by pleasure, pain, or by one of the other motivational forces he listed earlier.

The appearance of αἴτιον in the second part of the popular commitment signals that what is being sought by Socrates and offered by the many is a causal explanation. Though Lombardo and Bell translate it as ‘reason,’ we should take αἴτιον here in roughly the way we saw Sedley render it and related expressions in the last section. What is being offered by the many is an αἴτιον in the sense of a ‘thing responsible,’ with all of this term’s standard legal overtones. The many designate pleasure, pain, and so on as ‘responsible’ for akratic action in roughly the same way we might determine that Professor Plum is responsible for the butler’s murder. In nominating one of these factors as the αἴτιον for the phenomenon outlined in the first part of their commitment, the many are in effect claiming that, say, pleasure is the thing which is present in the akratic making him behave as he does. Socrates proceeds to narrow the field, focusing on cases in which an agent is overcome by pleasure.\(^{25}\) At 353c5-9 he speaks of a man being

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\(^{24}\) We are not told that the many have themselves in mind, but the supposition that there is some sort of self-reporting going on here seems natural enough.

\(^{25}\) Socrates uses both the singular and the plural form of ἡδονή. For his use of the singular see 353a5 (quoted above) and 355c4. Socrates uses the plural at 353a1 and 355a9.
overcome by “pleasant things” (ἡ δέων ὄντων) such as food, drink, and sex. This suggests that Socrates takes the many to have in mind particular concrete pleasures in the sense of things that give us pleasure (i.e. this wine, that slice of cheesecake).

Before moving on to the next step of the argument, Socrates announces the task he sets before himself and Protagoras. This moment in the dialogue has received little attention from commentators, but it is, I think, well worth dwelling on in getting a precise picture of the argument that is to follow. Socrates enlists Protagoras’ help with the following remarks:

Come with me, then, and let’s try to persuade people and to teach them what is this experience which they call being overcome by pleasure, because of which they fail to do the best thing when they know what it is. For perhaps if we told them that what they were saying isn’t true, but is demonstrably false, they would ask us: ‘Protagoras and Socrates, if this is not the experience of being overcome by pleasure, but something other than that, what do you two say it is? Tell us.’ (353a1-7)

Here Socrates seems to set two distinct but related tasks. The first, which only appears midway through our passage, is to ‘tell them’ (presumably, by giving a demonstration) that what they say is “false” [ψεύδεσθε]. The second task, mentioned both above and below the first one, calls upon Socrates and Protagoras to give their own diagnosis – that is, to explain what the experience commonly thought to be akrasia is, if it is not a case of being overcome by pleasure. This two-step strategy is of course common in philosophy when one wants not only to challenge a rival view but to establish one’s own. One begins with a negative argument showing some problem in the rival view, followed by a positive argument in support of the favored view. I propose that Socrates’ akrasia argument takes this shape: he first undertakes to tear down the popular explanation, and only when this is accomplished does he move on to his own account of the

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26 This is Lombardo’s and Bell’s translation. Lamb translates the passage as follows: “being overpowered by the pleasantness of food or drink or sexual acts…”
phenomenon. Moreover, I want to argue that it is in the first, negative stage of the argument that Socrates identifies the ridiculousness of the popular explanation.

Socrates begins with an inquiry into what it is the many mean when they speak of ‘bad pleasures’ and ‘good pains’. Again, in the case of ‘bad pleasures,’ he seems to have in mind cases in which we are said to go for this bottle of wine or that slice of cheesecake at the expense of the course of action we know to be best. He begins with the following question: “In what sense do you call these things ruinous [πονηρά]?” (353c9-10). Socrates presents them with a choice so as to make his point clear: are these deeds bad because they are pleasant at the time of action, or is it rather that they result later in diseases, poverty, and the like? Nudging toward the latter answer, he supposes the former would imply that these deeds would be ruinous even if they did not in fact result in later evils, as though the pleasures themselves, when isolated from all their consequences, were somehow objectionable. (This would be the anti-hedonist exclusivism I mentioned in the Introduction – a rarely adopted view, least of all by the many.) In any case, he secures Protagoras’ agreement that the many would reply that such deeds are ruinous only because they result in evils later on. He then establishes, again with Protagoras’ approval, that the many would agree that consequences such as disease and poverty are bad strictly because “they result in pain and deprive us of other pleasures” (353e5-354a2). Likewise, when the many call good such painful undertakings as athletics, military training, and medical treatments, they do so because these result in good physical condition, security, wealth, and the like. And they hold that these results are good for no other reason than that they in turn result in pleasure and the avoidance of pain (354b6-7).
Of course, none of this amounts to hedonism, for it does not commit the many to the view that only pleasure is good.\textsuperscript{27} It is only when Socrates attributes to the many a commitment that pleasure and pain are the only criteria for good and bad that he effectively foists something resembling hedonism upon them.\textsuperscript{28} Giving the many one last chance to rethink their position, he sums it up: “Or is it enough for you to live pleasantly and without pain? If it is enough, and you are not able to say anything else than that the good and the bad are that which result in pleasure and pain, listen to this…” (355a4-6). So the many recognize no other criterion for good and bad than pleasure and pain, which Socrates seems to take to be equivalent to the view that only pleasure is good and only pain is bad.

With these pieces in place, Socrates now thinks he can show that the popular explanation of akrasia is ridiculous. Why? Having committed the many to the view that pleasure is the only criterion for the good, he holds that this entails that ‘pleasant’ and ‘good,’ and also ‘painful’ and ‘bad,’ are equivalent, licensing their inter-substitutability. And since this inter-substitutability holds, we may simplify our way of speaking about akrasia by reducing these four terms to two. According to Socrates, this exposes absurdity in the popular explanation of akrasia:

On that basis, then, let us say that a man knowing bad things to be bad, does them all the same. If then someone asks us: ‘Why?’ ‘Having been overcome,’ we will reply. ‘By what?’ ‘By what?’ he will ask us. We are no longer able to say ‘by pleasure,’ – for it is has taken on its other name, ‘the good’ instead of ‘pleasure’ – so we will say and reply that ‘he is overcome…’ ‘By what?’ he will ask. ‘By the good,’ we will say, ‘for heaven’s sake!’ If by chance the questioner is rude he might burst out laughing and say: ‘What you’re saying is ridiculous – someone does what is bad, knowing

\textsuperscript{27} See Vlastos, p. 76.

\textsuperscript{28} We will deal with the question of whether (and where) Socrates commits the many, Protagoras, and himself to hedonism in subsequent sections. But to anticipate a bit, it is my view that Socrates doesn’t actually need to establish hedonism to get the intersubstitutability of ‘good’ and ‘pleasure,’ and likewise of ‘evil’ and ‘pain,’ on which the first, negative stage of the akrasia argument relies.
that it is bad, when it is not necessary to do it – having been overcome by the good.” (355c2-d4)

Now we have already seen how Gallop and Vlastos interpret the ridiculousness that Socrates’ ‘alter-ego,’ the rude questioner, takes to be obvious in this new formulation of the popular account of akrasia. Without ignoring their differences, both interpreters take the ridiculousness to rest on the absurdity of an agent knowingly choosing the lesser of two available goods. Moreover, we have already seen the problems with these two broad camps of interpretation. Fortunately, now that we have an outline of the Phaedo’s doctrine of causation, we are in a position to consider a different line of interpretation.

First, it is worth noting that the above passage locates the ridiculousness in the explanation of the putative phenomenon, as opposed to their claim that the phenomenon itself occurs. In other words, the ridiculousness is to be found in the second part of the popular commitment that Socrates is considering. Furthermore, this second part is unmistakably a causal explanation. The dialectic in the above passage runs roughly as follows. The many claim that a man may have knowledge that what he does is bad and is able to refrain from doing it, and yet he does it. They are then asked why, which is naturally taken as a request for some sort of cause or ‘thing responsible’; the interrogator is seeking some sort of statement identifying the thing responsible for the akratic’s behavior. The many then answer that this occurs because the akratic is overcome. This is felt immediately to be unsatisfying – what we want to know is what it is that overcomes the akratic, for this is surely the thing responsible for the akratic’s behavior. The many, who are now barred from giving their former answer of ‘pleasure’, must now give its synonym, namely ‘good’. So as a result of Socrates’ hedonistic substitutions, the many are compelled to designate good as the cause of the akratic’s bad behavior.
What is supposed to be so ridiculous about designating good as the cause of the akratic’s bad behavior? The *Phaedo*’s doctrine of causation suggests a straightforward answer to this question. For as we saw in the last section, the guiding principle of that doctrine was that the true cause must share ‘logical sameness’ with its effect. This principle generated three rules governing the designation of a true cause, only one of which need concern us here. Let X be the putative cause of F, and let F and un-F be opposites:

(3) X must never cause anything to be un-F

Once Socrates’ substitution is established, we see that the popular explanation of akrasia violates this rule. For the many designate good – a.k.a. pleasure – as the cause of something bad, namely akratic action. On the natural supposition that good and bad are opposites, this amounts to the claim that an opposite is the cause of its opposite, i.e. the denial of rule (3).

So the impossibility that the popular explanation courts is causal, and it is ridiculous for this reason. It is akin to the explanation of something’s coldness by appeal to fire, or a body’s health by appeal to fever. All such explanations ignore a fundamental rule about how opposites behave, and so they suppose that something that categorically cannot possess a given effect could ‘bring’ that effect to something else. The rude interrogator’s point is that this unavoidably rests on the supposition that something could be generated out of nowhere, which is ridiculous.

Let this suffice as our explanation of the ridiculousness of the popular explanation of akrasia. There remains an important question for this interpretation. For Socrates does indeed go on to outline the measuring art that is to be our salvation in practical life, and to contrast this art with the ruinous power of appearance. Recall that a weakness of Vlastos’ interpretation was that it left this discussion unexplained, as it seems to contribute nothing to Socrates’ argument against the many. It seems that any adequate interpretation owes us such an explanation. But I think we
can arrive at one if we attend to the distinction I made earlier between the two tasks Socrates sets for himself. In the next Section I turn to this negative stage of the argument, and consider the role hedonism plays in that positive stage in particular. I consider the same issue in the positive stage in the following Section.

1.3: Hedonism in the Argument’s Negative Stage?

The status of Socrates’ hedonism has dominated scholarly debates concerning the latter part of the Protagoras. That Socrates’ argument denying akrasia relies on hedonist premises is uncontroversial. The dispute among interpreters for some time now has been the precise character of Socrates’ ‘endorsement’ of a hedonist position. In short, one camp takes Socrates to be committed to hedonism, whereas the other argues that his hedonism is merely dialectical or ad hominem. Following Donald Zeyl, I will call the first camp the ‘prohedonists,’ the second camp the ‘antihedonists.’ Any verdicts about the precise nature of Socrates’ commitment to hedonism would be premature until we have taken a close, careful look at its role in the argument in which it appears. In what follows, I want to conduct a close reading myself to determine whether either the negative or positive stages of the akrasia argument relies on some commitment to hedonism. Only then will we be in a position to determine the precise nature of this commitment.

29 ‘Socrates and Hedonism: Protagoras 351b-358d.’ Phronesis 25(3): 250-269, p. 250. I take the antihedonist camp to include all interpretations on which the akrasia argument relies on a hedonist position to which Socrates does not himself subscribe. This covers the view that Socrates does not present himself as a hedonist but merely foists hedonism onto the many and Protagoras, as well as the view that Socrates does indeed present himself as a hedonist but only ironically or for the sake of persuading his interlocutors. Zeyl himself defends the antihedonist interpretation and notes (fn 1 p. 264) that this line of interpretation dates at least as far back as the fifteenth century with Ficino. Also falling into the antihedonist camp are J. P. Sullivan (1961); M. J. O’Brien (1967); Gregory Vlastos (1969); Roslyn Weiss (1990); C. C. W. Taylor (2003); Charles H. Kahn (2006); Catherine Rowett (2013).
In this Section I turn to the negative stage of the akrasia argument to argue that no view amounting to hedonism is necessary for the argument to go through. Rather, the less determinate claim that pleasure reliably ‘tracks’ the good is all that the argument requires. The next Section turns to the akrasia argument’s positive stage to reach a similar conclusion: that the argument’s positive stage relies on no commitment to hedonism, but rather goes through with a commitment to the distinct view that pleasure reliably tracks the good – the view I called the ‘tracking view’ (TV) in the Introduction.

Before turning to the akrasia argument itself, I need to explain what I mean by ‘hedonism.’ I take hedonism to be a position in moral philosophy about what is valuable. In answer to the question, ‘What sorts of things are valuable?’ a hedonist claims that pleasure enjoys a special status as a genre of value. This can be expressed in two broad forms: ethical hedonism and psychological hedonism. The former is a claim about what people ought to value, whereas the latter is a claim about what people do value.

For ethical and psychological hedonists alike, I take the main challenge to be explaining and justifying pleasure’s special status as a genre of value. Most moral philosophers (and indeed, most thoughtful non-philosophers) would grant that pleasure is in some sense valuable, and that certain pleasures enrich our lives. Such a view typically amounts to what I called in the Introduction pleasure-inclusive pluralism, the view that pleasure is among the goods that contribute to happiness. This view stops well short of hedonism, and is indeed incompatible with it. What qualifies a position as hedonism is, I take it, a much bolder claim about the relationship between pleasure and value. The hedonist insists that pleasure stands alone as a criterion of value, claiming that pleasure either is or ought to be the only thing we value.
Call this the uniqueness requirement (UR), since hedonists hold that pleasure constitutes the only non-derivative source of value. Of course, this is not to preclude the hedonist from recognizing non-pleasures as valuable, provided this means they are instrumentally (or otherwise derivatively) valuable only. For example, ingesting harsh medicine isn’t pleasant, but it is valuable because it promotes health. The hedonist can grant all this and simply insist that what makes health itself valuable is strictly that it is pleasant.

So let the following stand as my rough formulation of hedonism: the position that pleasure is the only non-derivative criterion of value. This has the virtue of breadth, embracing ethical and psychological hedonism, and all kinds of different conceptions about what pleasure is and how it contributes to the best life. But it excludes what it ought to exclude, namely any form of pluralism. In particular, because of UR, no form of pleasure-inclusive pluralism will count as hedonism on this definition. This constraint is key, as we will see. For in support of my first claim, I want to show that despite appearances, Socrates’ claims in the akrasia argument fall well short of hedonism, precisely because they stop short of UR.

Recall that Socrates reconstructs the reasoning the many employ in calling certain pleasures bad and certain pains good. All of this was meant to clear up what it is the many mean when they say that men who are ‘overcome by pleasure’ succumb to ‘ruinous’ pleasures. The pleasures in question are ruinous, they say, simply because they result in pain and in the deprivation of pleasure.

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This definition of hedonism seems to be in broad agreement with Matthew Evans’ in ‘Plato’s Anti-Hedonism,’ Proceedings of the Boston Area Colloquium in Ancient Philosophy 23, 2007: pp. 121-145, p. 123. In particular, Evans seems to hold as I do that what is crucial for a view to count as hedonism is my ER: “All that’s required to refute it [hedonism] is a sound argument to the effect that someone has a non-derivative, non-hedonic reason to do something” (p. 123). Thus ER seems to be what distinguishes hedonism from what Evans calls Liberalism (and which I call pleasure-inclusive Pluralism), i.e. the commonplace view that pleasure among other things generates non-derivative reasons for an agent to do something. Cf. Carone (2000), who also seems to recognize that ER is crucial for hedonism (p. 266).
This interrogation of the many is clearly meant to overturn what stood as a *prima facie* reason to reject Socrates’ proposals earlier on that living pleasantly is good, and that living unpleasantly is bad. The objection, which in all likelihood was responsible for Protagoras’ own reservations, is that ordinary people often recognize certain things as pleasant and yet call them bad, which shows that there is more to being good than being pleasant, in their view. Socrates has shown that once the many attend to their *reasons* for calling certain pleasures bad, this not only overturns that objection but actually counts in favour of Socrates’ thesis that living pleasantly is the same as living well. For it turns out that when the many call pleasures bad, they do so strictly because these pleasures bring pleasure’s opposite – pain or the deprivation of pleasure, which here appear to be treated as roughly equivalent.

Do we yet have hedonism, as defined in the last section? I don’t think so. For one thing, the thesis that living pleasantly is good could, on one interpretation at least, be asserted by a non-hedonist, which, as we have seen, for us means anyone who rejects UR. One could hold that there is a reliable coincidence between pleasure and goodness without committing oneself to UR. For example, one might hold that the best life reliably turns out to be both i) the pleasantest; and ii) the noblest – as Socrates indeed will in the *Protagoras* – and one might also hold that pleasure and the noble are distinct, non-instrumental sources of non-derivative value. Someone who holds this view has in no way committed herself to UR, and so is not a hedonist by our standard.

It may be objected that this is the wrong way to interpret Socrates’ claim that ‘living pleasantly is living well.’ Indeed, there are at least three ways to construe the all-important ‘is’ appearing between ‘living pleasantly’ and ‘living well’ in Socrates’ statement. First, the ‘is’ in this claim may be an ‘is’ of predication, as when we say ‘a robin’s breast is red.’ This clearly fails to satisfy UR, for just as other things besides a robin’s breast may be red, so other lives...
besides the pleasant life may be good in the very same sense Socrates means ‘good’ here – non-derivatively, presumably. But Socrates may be using ‘is’ here in a stronger sense, for it may express biconditionality – as we may mean it when we say, ‘living justly is living nobly.’ The idea here is that all and only cases of living justly are cases of living nobly. But even if Socrates has this sort of relationship in mind between ‘living pleasantly’ and ‘living well,’ this does not commit him to UR, it seems to me. For example, one may hold that the pleasant, the noble, and the good are all non-derivative sources of value and necessarily all converge; in which case all and only cases of living pleasantly are cases of living well, but also all and only cases of living nobly are cases of living well.

As a third way of construing the ‘is’ here, we may take it as an ‘is’ of essence, or constitution; as, for example, a student of chemistry may mean it when she makes an important discovery and exclaims, ‘H²O is water!’ Here the ‘is’ is not merely one of predication as it was in the case of the robin’s breast, for H²O is not being identified as a mere property of water that other, non-water substances could instantiate as well. Nor is it, at least in its emphasis and implications, the ‘is’ of biconditionality. The chemist seems to be saying something stronger than that all and only cases of water are H²O. What she seems to be saying is something along the lines that H²O explains all cases of water in an important way – cases of water count as such strictly because of the presence of a certain chemical structure expressed by H²O. Similarly, Socrates could be saying that the pleasant life is good strictly because it is pleasant. If Socrates means it in this, the strongest of the three senses, then it seems we do have a commitment to UR, since on this construal a life’s pleasantness is being singled out as something with an exclusive causal relationship to living well – that is, as the one and only thing that makes it the case that one is living well. But even if this is what Socrates means, he has said nothing yet to justify this
claim. All he has done is to show that for a certain range of cases, namely pleasures the many call ‘bad,’ they are called bad because they are painful; likewise with good pains. Socrates has said nothing to rule out that other non-derivative sources of value may exclusively explain the goodness or badness of things in other cases. In other words, exposing the strict concern with pleasure and pain behind the many’s linguistic practice does not satisfy UR. What Socrates needs to show is that for all cases, the goodness and badness of things is to be explained only by their pleasantness or painfulness. So if Socrates means to establish hedonism in the akrasia argument, then the proof of this is yet to come.

Socrates’ next move is to take stock of what he has shown about the practice of the many in calling certain pleasures bad and certain pains good. These pleasures are called bad strictly because they result in either pain or the deprivation of other pleasures. Likewise, bad pains are so called strictly because they result in pleasure or the avoidance of other pains. Perhaps it is with this next, stock-taking move that Socrates means to establish hedonism. Does Socrates purport to get anything as strong as UR from this?

Here we may worry that Socrates is proceeding, as he is wont, by wrenching a general claim from a few select instances. He has shown that in certain cases, namely those in which the many are calling pleasures bad and pains good, they really only care about pleasure and pain. But this hardly shows that in every case all the many care about is pleasure and pain. Socrates’ reasoning is more sophisticated than this, I think, as becomes clear when he spells out the conclusion of his interrogation of the many:

So this you regard as bad, pain, and pleasure, you regard as good, since you call the very enjoying of something bad [ἐπὶ καὶ ἀὑτὸ τὸ χαίρειν τότε λέγετε κακὸν εἶναι] whenever it deprives us of greater pleasures than it itself provides, or brings about greater pains than the very pleasures inherent in it? But if you call the very enjoying of something bad for some other reason and with some
other criterion in view \( [\text{ἐπεὶ εἰ κατ᾽ ἄλλο τι αὐτὸ τὸ χαίρειν κακὸν καλεῖτε καὶ εἰς ἄλλο τι τέλος ἀποβλέψαντες} ] \) than the one I have suggested, you could tell us what it is; but you won’t be able to.

(354c5-d5)

Here Socrates seems to be doing something more legitimate than merely generalizing from a few examples. Rather, he seems to be homing in on ‘bad’ pleasures and ‘good’ pains in support of an *a fortiori* argument. This is suggested by his remark, “since you call *the very enjoying* of something bad [my italics].” Socrates’ reasoning may be reconstructed as follows:

1. ‘Why doubt that the many hold that living pleasantly is the same as living well?’

2. ‘Well, because they call some pleasures bad and some pains bad. If they thought that living pleasantly were *the same* as living well – that is, if they held that there were some sort of necessary convergence between cases of living pleasantly and cases of living well – then whenever they came across something pleasant they would only call it good. Likewise, if they thought that living painfully were the same as living poorly, then they would call bad every pain they came across. Other examples of things they call bad – say, shameful acts – may admit of redescription in terms of pain, but clearly bad *pleasures* can’t be redescribed as pains, since as their very name implies, these are pleasures, not pains. Therefore bad pleasures and good pains are special counter-examples to the claim that the many hold that living pleasantly is the same as living well, for they show with unrivaled clarity that pleasure and goodness, and likewise pain and badness, can come apart as far as the many are concerned.’

3. ‘But if you ask the many why they call those pleasures bad, they’ll say it’s because they result in pain or the deprivation of pleasure. And if you ask them why they call those pains good, they’ll say it’s because they result in pleasure or the avoidance of pain. So these really aren’t cases where pleasure and goodness, and likewise pain and badness, come apart. On the contrary, this shows that for the many, (later) pain is the only thing that can make the very act of enjoying something bad, and (later) pleasure is the only thing that can make the very experience of agony good.

4. ‘So if bad pleasures and good pains are supposed to be special counter-examples to the claim that the many hold that living pleasantly is the same as living well, then they are no such thing. The many, it turns out, care only about pleasure and pain, as this practice confirms. And if the especially powerful counter-examples of ‘bad pleasures’ and ‘good pains’ turn out not to be counter-examples at all, then *a fortiori* no other counter-example will work, either.

Having overcome bad pleasures and good pains as counter-examples, Socrates goes on to issue a sort of challenge, insisting that if the many employed some other reason or criterion for calling
things good and bad, they would surely be able to name it; but in fact they cannot. Protagoras agrees. This is, of course, a strange moment in the argument, since there are no members of the many present to speak up. We are essentially being told that neither Socrates nor Protagoras (nor presumably any others in attendance) can come up with any other criterion for living well on behalf of the many.

Do we yet have hedonism? Even if we answer in the affirmative, we may well wonder precisely who in the dialogue is so committed. With this (inescapably speculative) report of the many’s views, we get what is perhaps only an odder version of a standard issue in Socratic elenchus, namely that we are left to wonder how much of what is being said wins Socrates’ endorsement. After all, Socrates may simply be undertaking to show that the many are committed to hedonism, and that the absurdity of their explanation of akratic behaviour follows from their commitment. So (the antihedonist camp may want to claim) Socrates in the Protagoras is merely arguing dialectically, and so there is no need to worry that he himself is committed to hedonism.

In fact, as I will go on to argue, I do not think that Socrates commits the many to hedonism at all in the akrasia argument’s negative stage. And, more importantly, he doesn’t have to commit them to hedonism for the argument’s negative stage to succeed. But for the moment, I want to suspend our investigation of these issues, and to raise a couple of worries about the antihedonist interpretation of the akrasia argument I just sketched. If we really take the akrasia argument to rely on a commitment to hedonism on the part of the many, then it is not clear that we can insulate Socrates from that commitment as the antihedonist interpretation would maintain, for several reasons.
First, the antihedonist camp tends to characterize the akrasia argument as Socrates’ foisting hedonism onto the many and Protagoras, and that he is careful not to commit himself along with his interlocutors. Even if we allow this characterization, that Socrates attributes the views in question strictly speaking to his interlocutors and not to himself is an exceedingly common feature of Socratic argumentation, perfectly in keeping with the norms of *elenchus* and the declaration of Socratic ignorance in the *Apology*. If we are to begin dismissing as dialectical any argument that fits this pattern, then a great many of Socrates’ arguments will turn out to be dialectical.\(^{31}\) Otherwise, we need some further evidence in the *Protagoras* that Socrates is distancing himself from the views of his interlocutors before dismissing the argument as dialectical.

But in any case, Socrates is not as careful to distance himself as this characterization would suggest. For example, at 353e5-354a1 Socrates presents the so-called hedonism in question as “what Protagoras and I are saying [ὡς φαμεν ἐγώ τε καὶ Πρωταγόρας]”; at 357a5-7 Socrates sums up the positive stage of the argument thus: “Since we have found that the salvation of our life depends on making a right choice of pleasure and pain…[ἐπεὶ δὲ ὅ ἡ δονὴς τε καὶ λύπης ἐν ὀρθῇ τῇ αἰρέσει ἐφὰνη ἡμῖν ἡ σωτηρία τοῦ βίου οὖσα]”; and at 358a3-5 in seeking joint agreement from Protagoras, Prodicus, and Hippias he asks “whether [they] think what I say is true [πότερον δοκῶ ὑμῖν ἀληθῆ λέγειν ἢ ψεύδεσθαι. — Ὁ περφυῖς ἐδόκει ἀπασιν ἀληθῆ εἶναι τὰ εἰρημένα]. So it seems the antihedonist camp must dismiss these moments as slips or otherwise explain them away.\(^{32}\) For Protagoras’ part, while he seems to resist at first the view

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31 For a similar argument in service of the thesis that Socrates is an anti-hedonist in the *Philebus*, see Matthew Evans, 2007.

32 All italics in the quoted passages are mine. Donald Zeyl (1980) offers the strongest antihedonist defence against the prohedonist reading of these passages, arguing that they may be read instead in a way that is both natural and consistent with his interpretation. Without going into too much detail, I find some of his renderings of the passage to
that living pleasantly is the same as living well, he seems to be convinced right along with the many, and airs no reservations at the argument’s close.\footnote{Protagoras airs his initial reservations at \textit{351c2-351e10}.}

Moreover, hedonism is attributable to the many only in a special sense. Recall that it is \textit{not} their view before Socrates interrogates them. On the contrary, when Socrates learns of Protagoras’ reservations he disapprovingly lumps the sophist in with the many as those who call “some pleasant things bad and some painful ones good (351c5-6).” That the many blame pleasure for cases of akrasia would suggest that they are anything but hedonists at the outset. Rather, they commit themselves to hedonism as Socrates’ interlocutors typically commit themselves to certain claims – unwittingly, and in response to Socrates’ questions, in this case about their practice of calling certain pleasures bad and about what this implies about their ethical outlook. Since hedonism is not the starting position of the many, it is unlikely that Socrates simply seizes it as a useful but false premise for some conclusion he favours. If it does appear in the argument, it is the offspring of Socrates’ questions and the many’s answers. So if the antihedonist camp wants to maintain that there is hedonism here but that it is merely dialectical, a premise Socrates knows the many will readily accept, then it seems they owe us an

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be strained. For example, Zeyl (p. 255) renders the line at 353e5-354a1 essentially as “what Protagoras and I are saying \textit{the many would say…}” so as to insulate Socrates from the hedonism. Although reading the line this way would presumably also insulate \textit{Protagoras} from the many’s hedonism, Zeyl does not deny that Protagoras accepts it. Cf. C. C. W. Taylor (1976), who considers this reading but rejects it for similar reasons. In any case, Zeyl himself grants that the text equally supports a prohedonist reading, and argues that other considerations (such as the dialogue’s dramatic setting and its conformity to anti-hedonist views aired in other dialogues) tip the scale in favour of his reading. I reject these ancillary reasons, though a full explanation here would take me too far afield. However, Chapters 2, 4, and 5 will argue that the anti-hedonist views aired in other dialogues are consistent with the interpretation of the \textit{Protagoras} I offer here. Other antihedonist readings seem to neglect these passages, cf. Roslyn Weiss (1990), Catherine Rowett (2013).
\end{flushleft}
explanation as to why Socrates seems to have to do so much work to secure the many’s commitment to it.\footnote{Zeyl (1980) recognizes this weakness in the antihedonist’s ‘dialectical’ reading, arguing (pp. 258-259) that Socrates nevertheless expects the unsound but valid argument from hedonism to be more successful than the (sound) argument representing his true view, which, following Vlastos’ (1969) antihedonist reading, relies on Vlastos’ (S1): “If one knows that X is better than Y, one will want X more than Y.” Unlike Vlastos, Zeyl recognizes that anyone who believes in akrasia will rightly reject this argument as question-begging, and provides a sketch as to how Socrates might supplement the argument to answer this charge. However, he fails to identify anywhere in the Platonic corpus where Socrates’ true argument is developed. I take this to be a grave disadvantage of this line of antihedonist interpretation. As I discuss in the introduction to this chapter, the denial of akrasia is vital for Socratic intellectualism, and yet on this reading Plato never gets around to explaining why Socrates subscribes to it.}

What both of these worries suggest, I propose, is that it will not do to shift hedonism to the many and away from Socrates as some ‘dialectical’ interpretations would have it. If hedonism is indeed crucial for this negative stage of the akrasia argument, then it seems Socrates is implicated along with the many.

Let us return to where we left off in the akrasia argument, and to the question of whether it relies on some commitment to hedonism. As we have seen in Section 1.3 above, the many’s explanation of akrasia as ‘a man doing something bad on account of being overcome by pleasure’ may be safely reformulated as ‘a man doing something bad on account of being overcome by the good,’ which is held by Socrates and all present to be absurd.

Socrates sets this up as the inescapable consequence of the view he has just established, namely that pleasure is the only non-derivative criterion for goodness and badness that the many can name. As is common in Socratic elenchus, Socrates gives his interlocutors one last chance to revise their position before locking in their final answer (355a2-b5). Setting to one side the question of whether Socrates thinks he has thereby committed the many to hedonism, did Socrates need to establish hedonism to license the crucial intersubstitutability of ‘pleasure’ and
‘the good’? That is, does one need to assent to UR before Socrates can have the intersubstitutability he needs?

It seems to me that a less determinate commitment would have sufficed. To see why this is so, consider our discussion earlier of different ways of construing Socrates’ vaguely hedonistic claim that ‘Living pleasantly is living well.’ As we saw, the ‘is’ here could be taken in a number of ways. First, it could be taken as a mere ‘is’ of predication, as in ‘A robin’s breast is red.’ Here the terms on either side of the ‘is’ are clearly not intersubstitutable. Since other things besides a robin’s breast are red, substituting the one for the other will change a sentence’s meaning. But recall the second way the ‘is’ could be construed, as an ‘is’ of biconditionality. In this case, ‘Living pleasantly is living well’ is a claim to the effect that all and only cases of living pleasantly are cases of living well. Are we licensed to substitute ‘living pleasantly’ for ‘living well’ and vice-versa? I think we are. For consider an analogous case. Suppose it is established that all and only creatures with hearts have kidneys. Here we have a truth that can be expressed with a biconditional, to the effect that every creature that has a heart has kidneys, and every creature that has kidneys has a heart. Consider the sentence, ‘The great Chicago fire was caused by a creature with a heart.’ Here we can safely substitute ‘creature with kidneys’ for ‘creature with a heart’ – generating the equivalent sentence, ‘The great Chicago fire was caused by a creature with kidneys.’

If this case may be generalized, then it seems that an ‘is’ of biconditionality would license the sort of substitution Socrates needs. Thus if all and only cases of pleasure are cases of the good – in other words, if ‘pleasure’ and ‘the good’ are co-extensive – then a similar biconditional relationship holds between ‘pleasure’ and ‘the good,’ licensing the very substitution exposing the absurdity in the many’s explanation of akrasia. But as we saw, a
commitment to this biconditional relationship is not equivalent to a commitment to UR or to hedonism. For it is consistent with the view that the noble, the pleasant, and the good are all distinct, non-derivative criteria of value, and that cases of all three are coextensive. In other words, if all Socrates needs is license to substitute ‘pleasure’ for ‘the good’ and vice-versa, then it seems he must only establish a necessary *coincidence* of pleasure and the good, and has no need for the additional commitment to the more determinate view about the unique relationship between pleasure and the good that defines hedonism.

Let this suffice as our reading of the akrasia argument’s first, negative stage. Our conclusion is that this stage of the argument need not rely on any commitment to UR, which is crucial to hedonism as we have defined it. But we might suppose that the argument’s second, positive stage does rely on hedonism. In the next section, I will argue that the akrasia argument’s positive stage does not rely on UR either.

**1.4: Hedonism in the Argument’s Positive Stage?**

Socrates undertakes to establish two conclusions in the akrasia argument’s positive stage (355d2-358d5). These are i) that the true cause of akratic behaviour is ignorance of the measuring art (357d2-9); and ii) that possession of the measuring art would ‘save our lives’ in that we would never fall prey to akrasia (357d2-9).

Socrates establishes these two conclusions by arguing that since there is a single criterion of goodness and badness, namely pleasure and pain, the correct action is always the one that yields a net excess of pleasure, and an incorrect action is always one that yields a net excess of pain. And since akratic behaviour, as a practical error, is necessarily an incorrect action, one who acts akratically does so out of ignorance about the net pleasure or net pain resulting from one’s
decisions. The measuring art, Socrates maintains, supplies this very information, as it is the art of correctly measuring and tallying the pleasures and pains to be had. And so i) one who acts akratically does so owing to ignorance of the measuring art; and ii) if that person only possessed the measuring art, then that person would never err.

Does Socrates need a commitment to UR to establish any of this? I don’t think so. In the last section, we saw that no such commitment was required for the argument’s negative stage to succeed. All that that stage of the argument seemed to require was a commitment to the view that pleasure and goodness are co-extensive. In this section, I want to propose that we suppose that Socrates carries this commitment over into the akrasia argument’s positive stage.

To argue for this claim, I want to propose a thought experiment. Imagine that pleasure and goodness stand in this bi-conditional relationship. In every case of pleasure, we would also have a case of goodness, and vice-versa. Now suppose in addition that pleasure reliably tracked excesses and deficiencies in goodness. That is, suppose that wherever there were two goods to be had, call them A and B, and wherever B exceeded A in goodness, then B would also exceed A in pleasure. In the Introduction I called this the ‘tracking view,’ or TV.

Now suppose the ordinary way for agents to determine what to do in practical life was by means of a good-detecting machine, as one could go about finding metal objects on a beach by means of a metal-detecting machine: the machine makes a sound as one approaches something made of metal, and the sound the machine makes gets louder the larger the metal object happens to be. Provided our good-detecting machine was in good working order, and provided we operated it correctly, then we could always locate the goods to be had in practical life. Moreover, since the sound the machine makes would tell us how great or small the goods in question were, we could always locate the greatest goods, and expend our efforts accordingly. Perhaps the
smaller goods, like smaller metal objects, aren’t worth the hassle of digging up, but the bigger goods are worth the effort.

Suppose that one day our good-detecting machine were to break down. We would no longer have any way of locating the goods in practical life, much less of determining their relative sizes. We would waste time and effort on tiny goods that aren’t worthwhile, and miss out on opportunities to secure the larger, more worthwhile goods, all because we would have no way of detecting goods *qua* goods. But imagine that we knew TV to be correct, and that someone were to offer to lend us a different machine, one that detects pleasures in the very same way that our broken down good-detector used to detect goods. Since all and only cases of pleasure are cases of goodness, and since pleasure reliably tracks not only the presence of a good but also its relative size, such a machine would restore our effectiveness and efficiency at securing goods to the same levels we enjoyed back when our good-detecting machine was operational. For all practical purposes, such a machine would serve us just as well as our good-detecting machine did.

Let this suffice as our (painfully elementary) thought experiment. The moral ought to be clear: if one could only establish TV, the view that pleasure reliably tracks the good and the relative sizes of its instances, then i) an art of measuring pleasures would save us from all practical error. And ii) if someone were to err in practical life, then we could confidently suppose that this is because that person lacked either the art of measuring pleasures, or the (perhaps unattainable) art of measuring goods directly. What this shows, I hope, is that Socrates doesn’t need anything stronger than TV to establish the two conclusions of the akrasia argument’s positive stage. Since *practical* success is what is at issue, the measuring art guarantees that success, even if one denies UR and with it the truth of hedonism. And since UR has already been
shown to be unnecessary for the argument’s negative stage, and has now been shown to be unnecessary for the argument’s positive stage, we have shown that nowhere does the success of the akrasia argument depend on UR or hedonism. The weaker TV is sufficient for both stages of the argument.

Of course, the natural objection is that nowhere in the Protagoras does Socrates even seem to attempt a proof of TV, much less succeed in proving it. This is correct, I think. But on the standard assumption that the argument requires a commitment to UR, the argument fares no better. That is, neither in the akrasia argument nor elsewhere in the dialogue is there anything amounting to a proof of either UR or TV. The argument clearly relies on a hypothesis about the relationship between goodness and pleasure. My contention is simply that the hypothesis of TV serves the argument just as well as UR.

As I discussed in the Introduction, TV and UR are not mutually exclusive: indeed, from the assumption that pleasure is identical with the good, as UR claims, it follows straightforwardly that pleasure reliably tracks the good, as TV claims. But the reverse is not true. UR does not follow from TV: Pleasure may reliably track the good without being identical with it. Since a Socratic commitment to UR (and hence to hedonism) provokes unitarian worries about the Protagoras’ consistency with other dialogues, a distinct advantage of taking Socrates in the Protagoras to be committed strictly to TV is that it furnishes a sound version of the akrasia argument without necessarily committing Socrates to hedonism. TV leaves open the precise reason why pleasure reliably tracks the good, and so the question of whether Socrates ever endorses hedonism must be settled by evidence outside the akrasia argument. In later chapters, I will defend the view that Socrates never endorses hedonism. Rather, when taken together his
various positions on pleasure all support the view that he is a consistent pleasure-inclusive pluralist, as I defined that position in the Introduction.

The glaring absence in the *Protagoras* of any account as to what pleasure *is* ought to tip us off that neither TV nor UR finds decisive argumentative support in the dialogue. It is difficult to see how Socrates could hope to establish UR – that is, that pleasure *is* the good in the strong, essential or causal sense UR requires – without establishing a great deal about the natures of pleasure and goodness. And yet on the natures of both pleasure and goodness the dialogue is effectively silent. What this means, I think, is that interpreters who expect the akrasia argument to rely on a satisfying (i.e. non-hypothetical) claim about the relationship between pleasure and goodness are likely going to be disappointed. The question is, On what sort of hypothesis does the argument rest, and in particular, how determinate does that hypothesis have to be? I propose that in the absence of a compelling interpretive reason to prefer the view that Socrates in the *Protagoras* commits himself to UR, we ought to take him to be committed to the less determinate TV, which, as we have seen, is enough to support his denial of akrasia without committing him to hedonism.

An implication of this reading for the debate between prohedonist and antihedonist interpreters of the *Protagoras* is that both lines of interpretation are mistaken. Prohedonists and antihedonists alike take the akrasia argument to rely on hedonism; they differ only in their verdicts as to the nature of Socrates’ commitment to this view. If the interpretation developed here is along the right lines, then the akrasia argument relies strictly on TV, which is compatible with hedonism, but which can also be filled in in ways that do not require hedonism.
1.5: Conclusions

In conclusion, I would like to first take stock. As we have seen in Section 1.1, Socrates and Protagoras each have compelling reasons to reject the popular belief in akrasia, and so the akrasia argument is vital to the intellectual projects of both interlocutors. Section 1.2 then considered two leading interpretations of the ‘ridiculousness’ at issue in the argument’s negative stage. I argued that both lines of interpretation are inadequate, and developed my own interpretation, drawing from some metaphysical views Socrates articulates in the *Phaedo*. With this much established, Sections 1.3 and 1.4 argued that neither the positive nor the negative stages of the akrasia argument rely on UR or hedonism; both succeed on the less determinate TV. Moreover, neither UR nor TV find any substantive, direct argumentative support in the dialogue. My contention is that since this is the case, we ought to take Socrates to be committed to the less determinate hypothesis of TV rather than the more determinate hypothesis of UR, at least in the absence of further evidence for Socratic hedonism.

If I am correct even in the narrower respect that the akrasia argument relies on some hypothesis about the relationship between pleasure and goodness (whether this hypothesis is expressed by UR, or by TV, or by neither of these but something else altogether), then it seems we must look outside the *Protagoras* for the defence of this hypothesis. As I suggested earlier, it is likely that any such defence will involve a fairly elaborate account of the natures of pleasure and goodness. Focusing on the ‘pleasure’ side of this equation, the natural places to look are the *Gorgias*, *Republic* IX, and the *Philebus*, all of which seem to undertake to give an account of pleasure, the very thing that would fill the lacuna in the *Protagoras*’ akrasia argument. Moreover, Socrates has much to say in these dialogues about the nature and appeal of hedonism. We will explore each of these works in due course.
Chapter 2: *Gorgias*

Section 2.1: Introduction

The last chapter developed an interpretation of the *Protagoras*’ akrasia argument (351b3-358b5). The main issue, as we have seen, is that Socrates seems to endorse hedonism in the akrasia argument, generating a debate between prohedonist and antihedonist interpreters. Our conclusions in that chapter were surprising because they suggested that this debate rests on a fundamental interpretive mistake: the mistake of taking the akrasia argument to rely on hedonism at all. As we have seen, neither the negative nor positive stages of that argument *requires* hedonism; both can succeed on the view that pleasure reliably tracks the good (TV) rather than on hedonism (which requires UR). Since TV is less determinate than UR, the verdict that the Socrates of the *Protagoras* is a hedonist – either a full-blooded one, as the prohedonist camp maintains, or merely a ‘dialectical’ one, as the antihedonist camp maintains – seems hasty.

Barring any additional evidence for Socratic hedonism, we should take Socrates to be committed only to TV.

The *Gorgias* seems to showcase a more hostile Socratic position concerning pleasure and its relationship to happiness. Nowhere is this clearer than in the dialogue’s final round, where Socrates is pitted against Callicles, a self-avowed hedonist.\(^{35}\) I suspect that many antihedonist

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\(^{35}\) Naturally, Socrates’ debate with Callicles in the *Gorgias* has generated a vast secondary literature: Shorey 1933 (133-54); Jaeger 1943 (II) (125-41); Barker 1951 (127-44); Dodds 1959 (esp. 12-15, 387-91); A.E. Taylor 1960 (103-22); Friedländer 1964 (II) (244-272); Kagan 1965 (124-32); Irwin 1979 (115-31); Santas 1979 (201-303); Gosling and Taylor 1982, Chapter 4 (69-82); Kahn 1983; G. Klosko 1984; McKim 1988 (34-48); Benardete 1991 (61-102); Berman 1991; Kastely 1991 (96-109); Grote 1992 (II) (90-151); Irwin 1992; Nightingale 1992 (121-41); Rudebusch 1992; Kahn 1996 (125-47); Nichols 1998 (141-49); Cooper 1999; Hobbs 2000; Newell 2000 (9-39); Voegelin 2000 (24-45); Woolf 2000; Stauffer 2002; Barney 2004; Kamtekar 2005; Doyle 2006; Tarnopolsky 2010; Urstad 2011.
readers of the *Protagoras* have this episode squarely in mind when they reason that the evidence from other dialogues compels a dialectical reading of the akrasia argument. Although TV is a less determinate position than hedonism, it too seems to be indicted by some of Socrates’ more prudential criticisms of pleasure. For if Socrates *really* subscribes to TV, then it is difficult to see why he seems to hold that those striving to live the pleasantest lives are, on *that* account, headed for disaster – as he seems to claim in the *Gorgias* on most readings.36

The key passage for evaluating the role of hedonism in the broader Calliclean worldview is the debate between Socrates and Callicles about the image of the jars, because it is with this image that Socrates commits Callicles to a particular ‘restorative’ conception of pleasure as the refilling of a painful lack. To be sure, Socrates’ anti-pleasure remarks in the *Gorgias* neither begin nor end with this passage. That the good and the pleasant can come apart – indeed, that they are diametrically *opposed* to one another – is implied by Socrates’ earlier distinction between craft and knack (464a-465e). And after the image of the jars has been explored, Socrates denies (499b4-d1) that the good and the pleasant are the same. While these moments are of course important, the distinction between knacks and crafts is grounded in no conception of pleasure whatever (neither from Socrates nor from his interlocutors); only when we arrive at the concrete conception of pleasure supplied by the image of the jars can this distinction be properly evaluated. The later evidence of 499b4-d1 also depends on the image of the jars, since Socrates’ refutation of Calliclean hedonism seems to rely on the conception of pleasure supplied by this image. Callicles’ acquiescence to the image and to its ‘restorative’ conception of pleasure as a

36 For a very different worry that even a non-hedonist’s pursuit of the pleasant life *as such* is bound to fail, consider Sidgwick’s famous ‘Paradox of Hedonism’ (1874/1963, p. 3). It is unlikely that Plato’s worry is anything like Sidgwick’s, given that the paradox in question would seem to pose a problem even for the eudaemonist view to which Plato subscribes in the *Gorgias* (506c5-d2).
refilling of a painful lack leads directly to Socrates’ refutation of his hedonistic claim that pleasure is the same as the good.

This is most clear in the Socrates’ first refutation (495e1-497d10). In short, Socrates secures Callicles’ commitment that a man cannot be doing both well and badly at the same time. However, on Callicles’ restorative model of pleasure, a man experiences both pleasure and pain at the same time, since the appetite itself is painful but the filling of the appetite is pleasant. Socrates then argues that since the conditions of ‘doing well’ and ‘doing badly’ cannot coexist in the same man at the same time, but ‘experiencing pleasure’ and ‘experiencing pain’ can coexist in the same man at the same time, it follows that ‘doing well’ cannot be the same as ‘experiencing pleasure,’ nor can ‘doing badly’ be the same as ‘experiencing pain.’ This refutation seems tailor-made for the Calliclean conception of pleasure, and clearly would not work against an adversary with a distinct conception of pleasure.

Similarly, in the second refutation (497d10-499b10) Socrates secures Callicles’ agreement that good men are good by the presence of good things, while bad men are bad by the presence of bad things. But under interrogation it becomes clear that cowards and fools enjoy at least as much Calliclean pleasure as brave and intelligent men. Here we see the tension between two of Callicles’ commitments: on the one hand he believes deeply that brave, intelligent men are superior and thus deserve greater happiness than their inferiors, and yet on the restorative conception of pleasure he accepts when he accepts the image of the jars, these superior men turn out to be no happier than their inferiors.

In short, all of Socrates’ apparently anti-pleasure comments either presuppose, or result from, Callicles’ conception of pleasure as the refilling of a painful lack. The image of the jars
provides us with this account, and so it will be my focus in this chapter. As we will see later in Chapters 4 and 5, the dependence of hedonism’s success on a suitable conception of pleasure will continue to loom large in the *Philebus*.

With its focus on the image of the jars, this chapter challenges the view that hedonism is central to the Calliclean worldview. Rather, it argues that Callicles commits to hedonism on the fly, as a natural complement to the ruthless way of life he recommends. In spite of Plato’s characterization of Callicles as Socrates’ most hotheaded interlocutor, he alone of Socrates’ opponents in the dialogue offers theoretical support for his conception of happiness, with his account of the workings of nature and his related conception of pleasure. What does the naturally superior orator get when he gets whatever he wants? Callicles’ answer is ‘pleasure,’ to be understood as the filling of an appetite. It is in this way that hedonism gets expressed in the *Gorgias*.

So Callicles’ hedonism is bound to a particular conception of pleasure, which is in turn grounded in his broader views about nature and happiness. Socrates secures Callicles’ commitment to this particular conception of pleasure with his vivid image of the jars (492e6-494a6). This move seems to give Socrates the foothold he needs to refute Callicles. I will argue that Socrates’ refutation of Calliclean hedonism takes as its target not the broad view that pleasure-seeking is a reliable way to be happy, but rather the view that seeking *Calliclean* pleasure is a reliable way to be happy. This leaves open the possibility that a different conception of pleasure would survive Socrates’ refutations of Callicles, and so my reading is compatible with the view that Socrates in the *Gorgias* continues to subscribe to TV. If this is along the right lines, then it suggests that the *Gorgias* provides no serious challenge to the interpretation
developed in the previous chapter. What Socrates’ showdown with Callicles does show is only that Calliclean pleasure cannot fulfill the role of a reliable tracker of goodness, as the Protagoras requires.

I begin in Section 2 by outlining the dialectical setting. Focusing on Callicles’ conception of happiness, I challenge the common interpretation of Callicles as a straightforward hedonist. Rather, I argue, Callicles’ actual position is foremost a rejection of self-restraint; his recommendation for the unbridled and indiscriminate pursuit of pleasure in fact develops out of this more fundamental position. In Section 3, I turn to what I take to be the central turning point of the argument between Callicles and Socrates, the image of the jars. I argue that the dispute between Callicles and Socrates about the jars does not reduce neatly to a debate between hedonism and anti-hedonism. On the contrary, both parties appear to accept subjective feelings of satisfaction and dissatisfaction, arguably indeed pleasure and pain, as their criterion for evaluating competing ways of life. Their dispute is in fact about which condition feels better: the perpetual vacillation between pleasure and pain that comes when our jars are leaky, as Callicles claims, or the Socratic ideal of stable satisfaction that comes only when our jars are full and sound. I then argue that the Calliclean and the Socratic conceptions of happiness follow from competing theories of nature. In Section 4, I identify what I think is a fundamental tension in the Calliclean position. Callicles values perpetual vacillation in all areas of life except one: in intellectual matters.

So read, Socrates’ refutation of Callicles ought not to be taken as a blanket refutation of hedonism. It is rather a more targeted refutation aimed at Calliclean hedonism, a view embedded in broader (and indeed more compelling) conceptions of nature, happiness, and pleasure in
particular. Socrates focuses on Callicles’ hedonism so as to draw out and challenge these broader conceptions. Since Socrates’ refutation takes these views as its real target, this leaves open the question of Plato’s own commitments about the nature of pleasure (properly understood) and its relationship to the good, and is thus compatible with the full range of ‘compositional’ eudaemonist options I identified in the Introduction, from Antisthenean exclusivism to pleasure-inclusive pluralism and even to non-Calliclean versions of hedonism. Callicles’ defeat in the debate illustrates the dependence of all of these views, but of hedonism in particular, on a suitable conception of pleasure. Calliclean hedonism fails because its conception of pleasure is an implausible candidate for the good.

Section 2.2: Calliclean Hedonism

Interpretations of Callicles’ position in Plato’s Gorgias tend to focus on his hedonism. This is understandable to a certain degree, since Callicles’ failure to defend his hedonism seems to track the trajectory of his overall performance: Callicles’ vigour as an interlocutor seems to wither along with his commitment to hedonism, and once he is finally forced to retract his commitment to hedonism he has little left to say. But this focus on Callicles’ hedonism also has its problems. As some commentators have noticed, Callicles’ brand of hedonism is unruly,

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37 For presentations of Socrates’ debate with Callicles in the Gorgias as primarily a debate about the correctness of hedonism, see, e.g., G. Klosko 1984 (see note 7); Shorey 1933, who characterizes Socrates’ image of the jars in that debate as an “anticipation of the fundamental ethical doctrine of the negativity of sensual pleasures, as explicitly set forth in the Philebus and the ninth book of the Republic” (p. 145); Nussbaum 2001, who characterizes the debate between Socrates and Callicles as a contest between the philosophical life and the life of pleasure-seeking (142-144); G. R. Carone 2000; G. Van Riel (2000), who presents Socrates’ debate with Callicles as a straightforward refutation of hedonism (p. 10); Doyle 2006.

38 See especially Irwin 1977, 120; Kahn 1983; Klosko 1984; Wolff 2000; Barney 2004; Stauffer 2006, 113; Tarnopolsky 2010, 82. For challenges to the view that Callicles’ hedonism is crude and indiscriminate, see Rudebusch 1992 and Urstad 2011.
indiscriminate, and poorly thought out, and so it is hardly the most sophisticated version of hedonism on offer. And whatever we think of Socrates’ refutations of Callicles’ position, it seems they miss the mark against more compelling versions of hedonism. (For instance, no Epicurean or Benthamite would grant Socrates that the most pleasant life is also the most painful.) These limitations on both sides of the debate throw serious doubt on its philosophical value. In short, the less impressed we are with Callicles’ particular brand of hedonism, the less point we see in refuting it.\footnote{G. Rudebusch 1992 and Urstad 2011, 3 each make this point.}

Reflection along these lines strongly suggests that we need to reconsider the place of hedonism, both in Callicles’ position, and, more broadly, in his debate with Socrates. After all, there is much more to Callicles’ position than hedonism: an account of nature and its opposition to convention; an insistence that the natural superior deserves more than his inferiors; and a critique of conventional temperance. Callicles airs all these views before ever committing himself to hedonism, and moreover his abandonment of hedonism appears to leave the correctness of these other elements of his position largely unsettled. To see how this is so, let us put Socrates’ image of the jars in its dialectical context.

The image of the jars makes its way into the discussion in the dialogue’s third and final round (481a7-499b9).\footnote{Here I follow the division of the \textit{Gorgias} appearing in Kahn 1983, 76.} Callicles has already burst onto the scene at 481b6, no longer able to contain himself when Socrates begins to argue that the only legitimate uses for rhetoric are in self-criticism and in contriving to let one’s enemies go unpunished. Callicles soon launches into a long speech laying out a theory of natural justice, according to which better men get a greater
share than weaker men. What follows is some Socratic pressure as to Callicles’ conception of the ‘better ones’ (τούς βελτίους), along with Callicles’ account of what it is that these better ones are to possess in greater supply according to natural justice. It transpires that these better ones go by many names, ‘the wiser,’ ‘the stronger,’ and ‘the brave’ among them. This abundance of names for the superior man is compensated for by total silence concerning his specific spoils. While Callicles makes it clear that he accepts none of the candidates suggested by Socrates’ examples – food, drink, clothes, shoes, land – his own answer to the question is yet to come.

It arrives in response to a provocative suggestion from Socrates in connection with the status of the better ones: As for these better ones, who are to get a greater share than those they rule, doesn’t each one also rule himself? (491d7-e1). Callicles calls for clarification, and Socrates explains that by ‘ruling oneself’ he simply means the virtues of being temperate (σώφρονα) and self-controlled (Εγκρατη), ruling one’s own pleasures (τῶν ἡδονῶν) and appetites (Επιθυμῶν). Callicles gets a whiff of the weak man’s morality he has already unmasked in his paean to natural justice, and launches into a tirade against these sham-virtues:

How could a man prove to be happy if he’s enslaved to anyone at all? Rather, this is what’s admirable and just by nature – and I’ll say it to you now in all frankness – that the man who’ll live correctly ought to allow his own appetites to get as large as possible and not restrain them. And when they are as large as possible, he ought to be competent to devote himself to them by virtue of his bravery and intelligence, and to fill them with whatever he may have an appetite for at the time. But this isn’t possible for the many, I believe; hence, they become detractors of people like this because of the shame they feel, while they conceal their own impotence […]. As for those who were either sons of kings to begin with or else naturally competent to secure some position of rule for themselves as tyrants or potentates, what in truth could be more shameful and worse than self-control and justice for these people who, although they are free to enjoy good things without any interference, should bring as a master upon
themselves the law of the many, their talk, and their criticism? […] Rather, the truth of it, Socrates – the thing you claim to pursue – is like this: wantonness, lack of discipline, and freedom, if available in good supply, are excellence and happiness […].(491e6-492c7)

Here Callicles’ reticence gives way to his fierce antipathy to the weak man’s morality of self-restraint. And we get some idea at last as to what his better ones are to enjoy in greater supply. But as is perhaps fitting for a man who rejects all discernable limits on his behaviour, Callicles’ good turns out to be amorphous. The truly happy man must eschew all restraint and allow his appetites to grow as large as possible, and then exercise the real virtues of intelligence and bravery to procure the things needed to feed them. But Callicles seems to hold that the objects of these appetites are entirely up for grabs: one man may prefer grand feasts, another fine clothes, another may collect stamps for all we know. Nor is there any indication that the better men are unified as a class by some set of ‘better appetites’ than those of ordinary men. What distinguishes the better ones is strictly their superior intelligence, strength, and bravery, all of which are instrumental in getting what one wants, but Callicles keeps the appetites of weak and strong alike indeterminate. This is clearly an innovation in his position, for earlier he rejected Socrates’ candidates of food, drink, shoes, etc., apparently on the ground that these were beneath serious consideration. Perhaps newly mindful that any such ranking of pleasures and appetites smacks of the very self-restraint he just railed against, Callicles is now a leveler when it comes to pleasures.42

41 My emphases. All references to the Gorgias are from Plato: Complete Works, Hackett 1997. Trans. Donald J. Zeyl.

42 As we will see in Chapter 4, Protarchus, Socrates’ more co-operative hedonist interlocutor in the Philebus nevertheless also rejects at first Socrates’ proposal that pleasures can be quite unlike each other. Plato seems to take the uniformity of pleasure to be something the hedonist feels he must insist on, whatever his temperament. Of course, the hedonisms of both Epicurus and Mill deviate from those of Callicles and Protarchus on this point.
But the leveling Callicles commits himself to in this passage seems to go even further than a tacit refusal to privilege the pleasures of one man to those of another. Recall that Callicles’ rant comes as a response to Socrates’ remark that a man must rule *himself*. With this suggestion, Socrates directs Callicles’ contempt for restraint inward to the soul of the agent. What had been a theory of the better man’s relationship to other men becomes a theory of a man’s relationships to his various appetites, or perhaps the relationship of each one of his appetites to the others. Callicles’ remark that a better man ought to fill his appetites “with whatever he may have an appetite for at the time [ἀποπιμπλάναι ὃν ἄν ἄει ἐπιθυμία γίγνηται]” implies that an agent’s appetite or pleasure at one time is no better than that same agent’s pleasure or appetite at another.

Thus a strong whim can and *ought* to usurp one’s other appetites, whether these are themselves whims or longstanding wants. For a man to suppress one of his appetites for the sake of another is slavish. It is the internal counterpart of the slave morality that counsels a powerful man to reign in his appetites and settle for an equal share with others. On Callicles’ view, if an appetite can have its way, even temporarily, by getting the agent to forgo all his other wants for its sake, then this is natural justice shining forth within the soul. An appetite should no more wait its turn out of deference to other appetites than a powerful man should reign in his appetites for the sake of his fellow-citizens. The only *legitimate* constraint on any given appetite appears to be its power to command the attention of its owner.

The position that emerges from Callicles’ rant is pre-reflective hedonism. Present pleasure – here understood as the feeding of appetites – is the good. But Callicles seems utterly heedless of the sorts of considerations that would push such a position toward enlightened hedonism: that each agent will discover many appetites within himself, some that can be satisfied
only at the expense of others, and that the agent has some tough decisions to make about which to satisfy and which to restrain in one way or another.\textsuperscript{43} But by calling the Calliclean position ‘pre-reflective’ and ‘heedless’ I do not mean to suggest that it is oblivious to these considerations so much as it is ideologically opposed to the outlook underpinning them. All restraint is for Callicles merely a sign of weakness, a sad coping-mechanism for ordinary men, but unbefitting a man of great power: real men don’t hold themselves back. From where Callicles stands, the warning that a happy life requires tough choices between pleasures and a binding list of priorities just sounds like more babble from the weak.\textsuperscript{44} Simply put, a Calliclean superman is a maverick – literally, a masterless person – one too powerful and important to order his appetites.

This picture of the Calliclean position is key to understanding Socrates’ use of the image of the jars, for it allows us to correct what is a natural but, I think, misleading impression of Callicles’ position as a hedonist from the outset. Let me explain. Callicles does indeed assert that pleasure (again, understood as the feeding of appetites) is the good, and so he is indeed a committed hedonist. But this is not his starting position. Rather, Callicles’ initial position concerns natural justice and its resistance to the conventions of the weak. It is only under Socratic interrogation that he considers the goods that the stronger ones are supposed to win when natural justice shines forth. And his slipping and sliding on this subject suggests that he has

\textsuperscript{43} As Klosko 1984, 131 puts it, “Callicles is committed to the view that drinking cyanide is pleasant and good, provided one has a craving for the taste of bitter almonds.”

\textsuperscript{44} D. Russell (2005) takes Callicles’ position to be that the ideal man ought “to live without restraint, satisfying one’s every desire (p. 56, my emphasis).” However, G. Rudebusch (1992) (p. 55) denies (albeit without much elaboration) that the claim that one ought to strive to satisfy all of one’s appetites follows from Callicles’ rejection of temperance at 491d-492c. The picture I sketch here is not meant to commit Callicles to this claim. However, it is my view that the natural consequence of Callicles’ rejection of all manner of restraint is a laissez-faire policy regarding competing appetites. To rein in one appetite for the sake of feeding a competing appetite would, it seems to me, run afoul of Callicles’ rejection of all manner of restraint.
not given this side of his theory much thought. He seizes pleasure as a generic catch-all for whatever it is we get when we succeed in getting what we want; nothing more concrete seems to be in play. So it is, I think, fair to say that Callicles stumbles into his hedonism as a consequence of his rejection of self-restraint. From this point about Callicles’ psychological attraction to a hedonism follows two philosophical points about the nature of his exchange with Socrates: i) Callicles’ hedonism is nonstandard and asserted strictly in defence of the more fundamental positions in Callicles’ worldview; ii) Socrates will refute Calliclean hedonism as a way of refuting these more fundamental positions. In taking aim at Callicles’ nonstandard hedonism, Socrates’ refutation leaves more standard versions of hedonism untouched.

This is apparent in Callicles’ formulation of happiness at the close of our passage, where he cashes happiness out, not as the pleasures it consists in, but in terms of the restraints it eschews: happiness is an abundance of “wantonness, lack of discipline, and freedom.” This is important for understanding the image of the jars to follow, because it suggests that Socrates’ target in deploying this image is more Callicles’ critique of self-restraint than the hedonism following from it. The central question the image is supposed to settle is, ‘Does self-restraint make a man happier or more miserable?’ and not, for example, ‘Is hedonism true?’ Socrates makes this plain at 493d2-4 when he declares that his aim in laying out the image of the jars is to persuade Callicles “that those who are orderly are happier than those who are undisciplined.”

45 On this point I take issue with G. Klosko 1984, 126-139. On Klosko’s picture, hedonism is Callicles’ fundamental position, and Callicles ends up rejecting temperance because he believes this follows from his hedonism (p.129-131). In my view this gets things exactly backwards: Callicles’ hedonism emerges, I maintain, as an improvised position in the service of his more fundamental rejection of temperance and of restraint generally. For interpretations that are in broad agreement with mine on this point, see Irwin 1979, 196; R. Barney 2004; R. Kamtekar 2005, 319-339; and D. Russell 2005, 57.
Close attention to the text reveals that Callicles’ identification of pleasure with the good is later taken on both sides of the debate as a claim that no pleasures are bad. For example, at 494e11-495a5, Socrates sums up Callicles’ position as a claim not only that pleasure is the good but that every single instance of pleasure is good. According to Socrates, Callicles argues “that those who enjoy themselves, however they may be doing it, are happy, and doesn’t discriminate [διορίζηται] between good kinds of pleasure and bad.” Socrates then asks Callicles whether there exists any pleasure that isn’t good. Callicles promptly denies it, declaring that consistency with his earlier statements requires this answer. And if we flash further forward to the payoff of Socrates’ use of the image of the jars, its major achievement appears to be Callicles’ admission that “some pleasures are better and others worse (499b8-10).” Socrates later twists the knife a few more times, getting Callicles to admit that the good pleasures are those resulting in health, strength or some other excellence, whereas bad ones result in their opposites (499d7-13), and that pursuit of these good pleasures requires a craftsman (500a7-10).

I submit that these claims would by no means trouble an enlightened hedonist such as Socrates in the Protagoras, who explains that by ‘bad pleasures’ all we mean are those that result in pains such as disease, or deprive us of greater pleasures such as those of health, and who argues after all that the successful pursuit of pleasure does indeed require a craftsman in the form

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46 As Kamtekar 2005 notes (p. 335), Callicles here retreats from hedonism, but nowhere does he abandon the principle that the superior man should get more. So this principle seems far more central to Callicles’ position than is his commitment to hedonism.

47 Prot. 353c1-354e5. Socrates in the Gorgias stops short of telling us what precisely the value of the bodily excellences (such as health and strength) is, whereas his position in the Protagoras is explicitly that these are good because they are exceedingly pleasant. So if there is a difference between the two positions, it would be on this score and not on what makes the pleasures promoting these excellences good. Cf. Berman 1991, 133-4.
of the measuring art (357b9-e9).\textsuperscript{48} All these clues support the thesis that Socrates’ target in his use of the image of the jars is strictly the identification of happiness with unrestraint and so with \textit{indiscriminate} pursuit of whatever it is one values. Socrates’ aim (for the moment at least) is not to debunk the identification of pleasure with the good \textit{per se}.\textsuperscript{49}

\textbf{Section 2.3: The Image of the Jars}

Let this suffice as our account of the dialectical setting for the image of the jars. It is now time to descend into the mechanics of the image itself. Socrates sets the stage by formulating the Calliclean position as follows: “if a person is to be the kind of person he should be, he shouldn’t restrain his appetites but let them become as large as possible and then should procure their fulfillment from some source or other” (492d5-e1). Callicles accepts this formulation and agrees that this is what excellence is. Socrates’ remark just before this, that the question before them is “how we’re to live” (492d4), suggests that ‘excellence’ (\textit{ἀρετή}) is here taken to be equivalent to ‘happiness’. Socrates’ next remark confirms this and lays out what he takes to be the crux of the disagreement: “So then those who have no [want] of anything are wrongly said to be happy? [οὐκ ἄρα ὀρθῶς λέγονται οἱ μηδενὸς δεόμενοι εὐδαίμονες εἶναι]” (492e3).

The translation of δεόμενοι as ‘need’ rather than ‘want’ is legitimate, but the latter is perhaps preferable, especially given the wider extension for ‘need’ in English: we often talk of soulless, insensate things as being incomplete or deficient in some way and thus having ‘needs,’

\textsuperscript{48} That the hedonism we find in the \textit{Protagoras} is invulnerable to Socrates’ line of attack in the \textit{Gorgias} is argued by Kahn 1983, 105 f. 51, and by Gosling and Taylor 1982, Chapter 4 (69-82). For a dissenting view, see Irwin 1977, 121-122.

\textsuperscript{49} That there are sound hedonic reasons to be temperate was fully appreciated by Epicurean hedonists, and perhaps also by Eudoxus before them, given Aristotle’s testimony about the latter’s character (\textit{EN} X.2 1172b9-15).
e.g. ‘this car needs a new muffler.’ ‘Want’ ordinarily carries the sense of a *felt* need, and so belongs to sensate things only. This added flavour of subjective feeling in ‘want’ also goes some distance toward explaining how the extensions of ‘want’ and ‘need’ may come apart for sensate things, as one can feel a deficiency that isn’t really there, and conversely a genuine need can go unfelt. As any parent of a teenager has probably had to explain, we can want things we don’t need and need things we don’t want. But it becomes clear that the dispute between Callicles and Socrates is about which of the two lives *feels* better, a life of felt deficiencies or a life free from such feelings. So hereafter I shall take Socrates’ question and the issue for the debate it frames to be about want, not need.\(^{50}\)

Callicles’ response confirms that *want* is central to their dispute. Those without want are indeed wrongly said to be happy, he reasons, “for in that case stones and corpses would be happiest” (492e5). Now, stones and corpses are of course free from both need and want, as there seems to be no sense in which they are deficient, nor can they feel any deficiency, real or imagined. But the force of Callicles’ reply here, I submit, points to the latter feature of stones and corpses. The thought seems to be that stones and corpses feel nothing at all, and therefore feel neither painful deficiency nor the enjoyment that comes when these deficiencies are filled, and so any conception of happiness on which these turn out to be supremely happy is deeply confused. This fits most naturally with Callicles’ earlier claims about what happiness consists in, namely the feeding of unrestrained appetite. Callicles is in effect arguing that freedom from want is also freedom from life – from the feelings of want and indulgence that are intimately bound up

\(^{50}\) *Pace* Nussbaum 2001, who presents the debate about the jars as a dispute about the role of *needs* in the happy life (142-144). Irwin 1992 recognizes the ambiguity between want and need in δισθαί (217 fn. 17), but maintains that the issue is unimportant for Socrates. This is because on Irwin’s view Socrates in the *Gorgias* holds that happiness consists in desire-satisfaction, and so what one *needs* to be happy turns out to be the satisfaction of one’s *wants*. While I am generally sympathetic to this line of interpretation, I will not address Irwin’s specific claims here.
with the subjective experience of any conscious organism, at any rate – and that such a model for happiness is perverse.

Indeed, he has a point. Socrates not only lets this characterization of the self-controlled life pass uncontested; his next move is to take it up, quoting Euripides’ speculation that our ordinary conceptions of life and death may be exactly backwards (492e8-9). Perhaps in deference to Callicles’ warning early on that he will not be cowed by shame, Socrates’ strategy for the time being is not to appeal to everyday moralizing about the relative merits of disciplined and undisciplined living. On the contrary, Socrates’ proposal that we could all turn out to be deeply confused about matters so simple and obvious as life and death recalls Callicles’ opening remark to Socrates that what he’s proposing, if true, would turn “this human life of ours” upside down (481c1-4). Callicles was right: Socrates is setting us up for a defiantly counterintuitive argument in support of the disciplined life. Whether this will pay off has yet to be seen, but it has the rhetorical effect of turning the tables on Callicles. For now at least, *Socrates* is the maverick.

Socrates then appeals to some myths of dark and distant origins.51 The first comes from an unnamed wise man who likened our bodies to tombs and claimed that the appetite part of the soul was susceptible “to persuasion and to shifting back and forth” [ἀναπείθεσθαι και μεταπίπτειν ἄνω κάτω] (493a5). This claim about the body being a tomb seems simply to build on the thought that the living are really dead, but the latter claim about the appetite part of soul introduces a new thought, recalling what was after all the original topic of the dialogue: rhetoric and the persuasion at which it aims. Persuasion here is being glossed as perpetual wavering

between opposing opinions, an allusion perhaps to the orator’s ability to argue on both sides of an issue and to lead his audience’s convictions wherever he wishes.

What is this connection between death and persuasion? Socrates is moving so quickly here that it is difficult to tell, but the point may be a kind of yoking together of physical and psychic vacillation. The tomblike body, in virtue of its location in the material world, is always being subjected to physical contraries: heating up and cooling, drying up and moistening, and, most importantly, filling and emptying. Similarly (so the reasoning may run) the soul is always to-ing and fro-ing between one opinion and its contrary, never fastening on any stable views.

Socrates then mentions a second wise ‘Sicilian or Italian’ – a nod perhaps to Empedocles or some follower of his, or to some Pythagorean, who noticed a similar suggestibility in the appetitive soul and called it a jar via etymological sleight of hand. Indeed, the apparent appeal to Empedocles in this context perhaps supports the speculation that physical and psychic vacillations are being assimilated, an allusion to the Empedoclean picture of the cosmos as consisting of the four elements in perpetual union and dissolution under the warring influences of cosmic love and strife. And Pythagoreanism is presumably being invoked for its eccentric views on life-and-death issues, but perhaps also for its understanding of the cosmos in terms of tables of opposites.

At any rate, we are told that the wise Sicilian or Italian compared the undisciplined appetitive part of fools’ souls to a leaky jar, on account of its “insatiability” (493b3). The word here is ἀπληστίαν, an insatiate desire or greediness, paradigmatically for food or money. The connection between this insatiability and a leaky jar may be clear enough in outline, but Socrates slows down to spell it out. Fools who wind up in Hades are constantly filling the ‘leaky jar’ of
their undisciplined appetite by means of another leaky implement, a sieve (493b8). This, we are
told, represents the soul itself. Such is the plight of the fool in Hades, according to Socrates: he is
forced to fill one leaky thing by means of another leaky thing. Socrates then revisits the
connection between physical and epistemic vacillation, remarking that these fools whose jars are
spilling out are also lacking in conviction [ἀπιστίαν] and forgetful [λήθην], unable to retain what
they learn (493c4). This connection between insatiable appetite and epistemic incontinence is yet
to be explained, but Socrates seems confident that in showing that the undisciplined man suffers
the former he will succeed in proving the inferiority of that way of life. Callicles’ superman turns
out to suffer roughly the same punishment as those meted out to famed tyrants Tantalus,
Sisyphus, and Tityus (mentioned in the myth at 525e1-2). His toil and insatiability seem (like
theirs) not to be a punishment externally imposed so much as a vivid uncovering of what his life
was all along: in eschewing all restraint and growing his appetites, Callicles’ hero has set himself
up for a restless life of constant want and incompleteness, one in which he can get everything
except satisfaction.

Callicles makes it known that he remains unpersuaded by this argument for the
superiority of the disciplined life, and so Socrates expands on the model and tries again. Before
Socrates seemed merely to want to illustrate the wretchedness of the undisciplined life, but this
time the two lives are explicitly compared. We are asked to compare two men, each with many
jars. Remaining loyal to Callicles’ egalitarianism concerning the objects of the appetites,
Socrates seems to suppose that the jars of both men are to be filled with the same fluid
foodstuffs. The disciplined and undisciplined man each have one jar for wine, another for honey,
a third for milk, etc. (493d9-e4). This seems to eliminate what might have seemed a fruitful
strategy for Socrates in defending the disciplined life: to argue that the disciplined man’s
appetites are for better things. Instead, Socrates seems to follow Callicles’ lead in assuming that disciplined and undisciplined men alike want the very same things. Their lives are to be compared, then, strictly in terms of their success or failure at getting what they want.\(^{52}\)

Moreover, the foodstuffs in question appear to be equally scarce and difficult to procure for both men (493e3-8).

The difference between the two men turns out to lie in the ability of the disciplined man to retain what he procures. He can procure his wine and honey only with much toil, but once he fills his jars he can rest and “relax over them” (493e6). Not so for the undisciplined man: he too can procure his goods only with difficulty, and because his jars are leaky and rotten “[h]e’s forced to keep on filling them, day and night, or else he suffers extreme pain” (494a1-2). This is clearly meant to press Callicles’ assertion that growing one’s appetites and feeding them is happiness. Socrates wants to show that while this policy may increase one’s capacity for pleasure, it inescapably must also increase one’s capacity for pain. And pain cannot be a good thing, can it? Especially not for a hedonist. But it is precisely this assumption about pain that Callicles is about to contest, as we shall see.

The image establishes three ‘conditions’ (broadly construed): the process of filling is pleasure; the process of emptying is pain; the last, which, unlike the first two, is not a process but a stable state, is the satisfaction the disciplined man feels when his jars are full. These map neatly onto bodily pleasures such as those of hunger and thirst. When our stomach is being emptied,

\(^{52}\) I think this fits with Socrates’ general argumentative strategy in the Gorgias – witness, for example, his argument that tyrants and orators fail to do what they want. On most interpretations of this admittedly vexing argument, Socrates takes desire for the good to be a psychological constant among men. The difference between good and bad men turns out to lie strictly in their success or failure at achieving the good. For more discussion of this argument, see note 21.
this is hunger and a pain; when it is being filled this is eating and a pleasure; once the stomach is full and we stop eating, this state of satisfaction is what the disciplined man feels when he relaxes over his jars. Now, two of these, the process of filling and the state of being full, have some claim on being designated a pleasure, broadly speaking.\(^5^3\) Both ‘feel’ good, albeit in different ways. The odd man out appears to be the pain of emptying – who would welcome this? Socrates has in effect shown that the undisciplined life courts two sources of pain that the disciplined life escapes: first, the additional pain of repeated needs to procure what can only be procured with much toil; second, and more to the point, the pain that comes whenever the undisciplined man’s appetites are being emptied. Having established this much, Socrates asks Callicles if he remains unpersuaded that the disciplined life is happier.

Callicles’ exchange with Socrates makes it clear that the choice between the disciplined and undisciplined lives turns out to be a choice between the pleasant/painful processes of filling and emptying on the one hand, and the stable state of satisfaction on the other:

Call: […] The man who has filled himself up has no pleasure any more, and when he’s been filled up and experiences neither joy nor pain, that’s living like a stone, as I was saying just now. Rather, living pleasantly consists in this: having as much as possible flow in.

Soc: Isn’t it necessary, then, that if there’s a lot flowing in, there should also be a lot going out and that there should be big holes for what’s passed out?

Call: Certainly. (494a6-b5)

Only with this last remark from Callicles does his dispute with Socrates start to become clear. Callicles’ position may fairly be called ‘hedonism,’ since he does seem to hold that pleasure

\(^{5^3}\) Compare the Epicurean distinction between kinetic and katastematic pleasures (Diogenes Laërtius, x. 136).
alone is intrinsically valuable. (As I explained in the Introduction, this claim is what distinguishes hedonism from what I call pleasure-inclusive pluralism.) But Callicles’ happy man isn’t the sort who pursues pleasure and avoids pain. Rather, he pursues both pleasure and pain in equal measure, for his pleasure – the constant filling of appetites – is only possible with the constant contrary process of painful emptying. His one object of avoidance, his only ‘bad’, is not pain but satisfaction. He avoids this as he avoids death, for as both parties agree, satisfaction spells death for an appetite.

So the disagreement here between Callicles and Socrates is not about whether the best life feels good, broadly speaking. Socrates recommends his own life of restraint as satisfying. True, it is without pleasure as they have defined it, since satisfaction is the terminus of filling. But this seems a mere semantic point. Socrates’ life is one of tranquility and peace, and the point he wishes to urge upon Callicles is clearly that this is in some sense an enjoyable state to be in; on Socrates’ inversion of life and death, it is a sign of life.54 Again, this tells against the impression we are often given of Callicles’ showdown with Socrates as a stark contest between hedonism and anti-hedonism, especially if the latter is taken to amount to the view that subjective feeling is an illegitimate test for whether one’s life is going well. Socrates’ characterization of self-restraint as a recipe for relaxation and leisure is hard to square with such an interpretation. Rather, this debate is of the sort that most naturally arises between two parties who agree in accepting the standard of subjective feeling in adjudicating between two competing...

54 Here I do not mean to follow Irwin 1992 in attributing to Socrates the view that happiness consists in unqualified desire satisfaction. Irwin himself finds this view unappealing, and with good reason. Rather, my point is that the debate between Socrates and Callicles at this stage sidesteps questions about the sorts of desires one ought to fulfill, and focuses instead on the question of which of the following conditions ought to be counted as happiness: the process of feeding one’s desires, on the one hand, or the state of satisfaction that arises when this process ends, on the other.
lives. It is closer to the truth to interpret Callicles and Socrates as offering up competing versions of hedonism, the one prizing the jolts associated with bodily to-ings and fro-ings, the other prizing the stable calm of a satisfied life.55

**Section 2.4: Struggle vs. Homeostasis**

How is this dispute to be settled? It is perhaps tempting to take the Calliclean position to be so obviously perverse that one has only to make it clear to refute it: how could a life that welcomes pain and spurns satisfaction be a happy one? Callicles’ opening charge against Socrates – that his position would turn ordinary life on its head – now seems to have doubled back on him, for his topsy-turvy reasoning implies that the pitiful Sisyphus is in fact supremely happy, and could only be made miserable if he were at long last allowed to complete his task and rest. All of this seems so at odds with commonsense intuitions about happiness in this life and the next that exposing the Calliclean take on the image of the jars is by itself enough to refute it.

But dismissing Callicles’ response as simply perverse seems to ignore the tendentiousness of the image itself. Here as elsewhere the charge of perversion carries with it a claim about the natural order, in this case a claim about the proper functioning of the appetites. Casting the appetites as jars, artifacts which are most beneficial to us when they are full and

55 For the view that the debate between Callicles and Socrates is a contest between two versions of hedonism, see G. Rudebusch 1992, (esp. 65) and S. Berman 1991. And as T. Irwin 1992 notes (207), in a similar inversion of life and death, Socrates in the *Apology* speculates that death is to be welcomed even if it is like an endless, dreamless sleep, for in this case it resembles the times we have passed most pleasantly (ἵδιον) throughout our lives (40a9-e6). What is so pleasant about dreamless sleep? Irwin proposes that it is freedom from unsatisfied desire. If this account is along the right lines, then here we have a second example of Socrates’ identification of the pleasantest condition with the satisfaction of certain desires, or at any rate with the absence of dissatisfaction. For another comparison of the dreamless sleep in the *Apology* with relaxation over the jars in the *Gorgias*, see N. Reshotko 2009, 13-14, which follows G. Rudebusch 1994, 167. As we will see in Chapters 4 and 5, Plato will continue to reflect on questions about the subjective component of the happy life, and whether hedonism is best positioned to account for it.
sound, seems to freight them with teleology, their capacities setting not just limits but a goal of satisfaction and completion. We strive to fill our jars, and when they are full we stop striving and rest contented. The irrationality of Callicles’ happy life is thus to be cashed out in terms of its perversion of this natural teleology: he is undermining the natural goal of fullness by poking holes in the bottoms of his jars. At work here is an application of a general view about nature, one Socrates unveils only later on:

Yes, Callicles, wise men claim that partnership and friendship, orderliness, self-control, and justice hold together heaven and earth, and gods and men, and that is why they call this universe a world order, my friend, and not an undisciplined world-disorder. (507e5-508a4)

Self-control, which, as we have already seen, Socrates identifies with stable satisfaction of certain appetites, is being grouped with partnership and friendship, orderliness, and justice. The common denominator here appears to be stability – all of these forces are themselves manifestations of stability, and their combined contribution to the cosmos is to hold it together.

So implicit in Socrates’ charge of perversion is a particular theory of nature, one in which the respective statuses of struggle and homeostasis are important. On Socrates’ view, the natural condition is characterized by the stable unity of parts or forces within a system. Struggle – in the case of the soul, the conflicts between its various appetites – is a sign that the thing in question has not yet reached its optimal condition; if it had, the struggle would cease, and the system would reach equilibrium. Similarly, say, in the development to maturity of an organism’s body, or in the stabilization of the elements into one compound or another, homeostasis supplies the goal by which we understand the processes of growth and chemical reaction. In short, the
Socratic conception of nature sees struggle as a sign of a work in progress, and *homeostasis* as a sign of completion.

All of this is of course alien to the Calliclean conception of nature as perpetual strife. As the earlier allusion to Empedocles may have been meant to alert us, Callicles’ position concerning the appetites is the moral analogue to that of the hard-bitten φυσικός who deals in mechanical explanations, not in purposes. As we have already seen in his opening paean to natural justice, natural processes are checked not by some principle of stability within the greater system to which they belong, but strictly by their collisions with contrary processes of equal or greater force. The application of this worldview to the appetites is clear: a particular appetite has no goal of completion. It is checked not by some stopping-point related to its role within a system, but only by rival appetites, either individual or collective, and comes to a halt not because it reaches some natural limit of completion, but strictly through the intervention of some competing appetite it is too weak to overcome. ‘Satisfaction’ is just another word for settling in the Calliclean lexicon, the quiet death that envelops the weak man as soon as he stops struggling and resigns himself to what he has. This account of what it is to be an appetite isn’t simply some provocative, desperate jab on the part of Callicles. It is rather a perfectly loyal application of his general view about the nature of things. From the cosmic clashes of the elements to Persian imperialist campaigns right down to the tiny struggles in a drop of pond water, nature reveals itself to be a crucible of conflict. All of this reverses the roles of struggle and *homeostasis* in the Socratic model sketched above. In the Calliclean cosmos, struggle is the norm, as each thing strives to dominate its neighbour. *Homeostasis* is the temporary condition and the ultimate sign of deficiency in nature, for things stop struggling because they are too weak to carry on; or worse yet, because they are dead.
2.5: Dialectic and the Intellectual Virtues

It is for this reason that Socrates still has work to do in reaching his stated goal of showing that it is better to be disciplined than unrestrained. For Callicles’ ‘strife model’ of the appetites eliminates what would in other dialectical contexts be a natural strategy: to claim that a satisfied appetite is better than an unsatisfied one, and therefore that happiness requires some discrimination between the satiable and insatiable. The image of the jars reveals a clash of worlds, one in which homeostasis is success and struggle is deficiency, the other in which struggle is success and homeostasis is deficiency.

Despite these differences in their respective worldviews, Socrates and Callicles do share the experience of being in love. But even in this case their experiences appear to be wrapped up in their respective worlds. Callicles’ feelings both for the son of Pyrilampes and for the Athenian public, much like his other appetites, pull him to and fro, with the result that he would rather contradict himself than disappoint his beloved. Whatever can be said of Socrates’ relationship with Alcibiades, his love for philosophy is stable, due to the stability of its object. Since philosophy always ‘says the same things,’ Socrates can devote himself to it without ever having to contradict himself (482a7-b2).56

This seems to present a dialectical foothold for Socrates, for while Callicles’ feelings for logic may not reach the level of consuming erotic love, he shows considerable appreciation of some of its charms. Indeed, the test of logical consistency is one Callicles seems, in his more cooperative moments at least, to respect – witness his vow that he will not be moved by shame to contradict himself as his predecessors were (482e5-483a8), or his decision to stand behind his

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56 Cf. James Doyle 2006 for similar observations
claim for consistency’s sake that all pleasures are good (495a5-6). This sensitivity to consistency in fact runs fairly deep in Callicles’ soul, for he counts intelligence among the qualities of the naturally superior man. Like his adversary, he recognizes that the mark of intellectual strength is the ability to defend one’s position without contradicting oneself, so much so that he seems to think it is his singular advantage against Socrates. Gorgias and Polus were in the end too cowardly to offend conventional morality and say what they really thought, but the man who throws off the straightjacket of shame and speaks freely will be impossible to refute (482c5-483a8).\(^{57}\)

How does this respect for logic expose a flaw in Callicles’ position? Here the image of the jars’ assimilation of appetitive insatiability to epistemic vacillation provides a hint. That the naturally superior man manifests his strength in avoiding contradiction stands as a sort of counterexample to the entire Calliclean conception of nature as perpetual struggle. Recall that in the Calliclean cosmos struggle is the sign of strength, homeostasis of weakness. Epistemically speaking, the naturally strong man ought to be a restless one on this conception. The strong thinker ought to be changing his mind without end, affirming \(p\) and then not-\(p\), as we might expect of a skilled orator who can make either side of a case the stronger but has no settled view about the truth of the matter. Reaching a settled view on the nature of things is, like appetitive satisfaction, a kind of death to be resisted with all of one’s might. The sudden cessation of

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\(^{57}\) To this it may be objected that Callicles’ opening speech seems fiercely anti-intellectual when it counsels Socrates to leave the “subtleties” of philosophy to others and to turn instead to politics and culture (484c4-486d1). But Callicles’ advice here is not as anti-intellectual as it appears: his point is that public life will better earn Socrates a reputation for intelligence (φρονεῖν) (486c6). The thought seems to be that Socrates’ intellectual talents are going unrecognized in philosophy, and ought to be put to more profitable use elsewhere. So while Callicles may doubt the value of thinking for its own sake, he never doubts that intelligence profits its possessor. On the contrary, he rebukes Socrates for failing to profit from intelligence as much as possible. Also, Urstad 2011 notes that Callicles shows a good command of history and literature.
inquiry when one reaches a conclusion is for the thinker akin to the satisfaction of an appetite, a
terminus for both the pain of doubt as well as the thrill of discovery and intellectual progress. If
Callicles were to treat his capacity for thought as he does his appetites, he would ensure that he
never stably retains anything he learns. Yet the exceedingly confident impression he wishes to
project to the world is clearly the opposite: Callicles alone has reached firm conclusions about
how nature works, and therefore he can defend his conception of happiness against all comers
without a single misstep. Such is the dizzying position of Callicles: his very claim to a firm
understanding of the cosmos undercuts his self-image as its epitome of strength.\footnote{That Callicles’ admiration for intelligence undermines his initial claims about natural justice is noted by T. Irwin 1979, 187 (note on 490a). Irwin points out that none of Callicles’ original examples of the superior ones getting more in accordance with natural justice, based as they are in realpolitik and in the food chain (483d3-e2), seems to lend any support to the view that the wise ought to get more. So when Callicles identifies superiority with intelligence, he does so at the expense of the apparent ‘realism’ of his initial account of natural justice.}

The clash of these two conceptions of nature, and of happiness in particular, is illustrated
in the drama of Socrates’ sustained exchange with Callicles. It is Socrates who manages to
defend his conception without a single concession. Meanwhile, our impression of Callicles is of
a man flailing about in debate, as shown in his retraction of the claim that all pleasures are good.
For all his bluff and bile, Callicles is intellectually weak.\footnote{G. Klosko (1984) argues persuasively that Callicles’ downfall in the Gorgias is due to a number of argumentative overreaches and exaggerations on his part, the most decisive being his commitment to hedonism. If Callicles were to opt for a more moderate position, Klosko insists, then he would not be so easily refuted. While I find this line of interpretation intriguing, it seems to me only to support my claim contra Klosko and others that rejection of all restraint is the more fundamental position for Callicles. For on Klosko’s picture, what explains Callicles’ assent to hedonism along with his other missteps seems to be his personal rejection of restraint in argument and debate: even though a more modest position would serve him better, Callicles simply can’t resist taking more rope than he needs. In any case, I pursue this connection between appetitive and epistemic indulgence in the rest of this paper.} Nor does he appear to be a paragon of
courage either. Not only does he give up on the hedonism he once asserted, but he ends up
shrinking from the debate entirely. In fact, it is Socrates who appears to be in secure possession
of the Calliclean virtues of strength and courage. Knowledge, as it turns out, equips a thinker
both with strength when challenged and daring to assert things that sound outrageous to the majority of men. As is often the case with Socrates, the upshot appears to be a strange confirmation of the interlocutor’s generic conception, but with a rethinking of its key terms. That the happy life is one of strength, courage, and intelligence appears to be true in the Socratic cosmos as well as in the Calliclean one. But Callicles’ failure in debate throws doubt on his specific conceptions of these virtues, and hence on his theory of the cosmos. The truly strong, courageous, and intelligent ones lead stable, restful lives. They are neither restless nor insatiable.

So apart from the details of Socrates’ subsequent refutation of Callicles, the model of the jars makes a broader point about the happy life and its relationship to self-restraint. The Calliclean conception of happiness, despite its ring of plain common sense, is in fact grounded in a fairly sophisticated and compelling view of the cosmos as characterized by perpetual struggle. But the application of such a view to the intellect is repugnant even to Callicles himself: he is not willing to reject the telos of thinking as a firm, satisfying account of the cosmos. In a sense, this sets Callicles and Socrates apart from the other two main characters in the dialogue.\footnote{General affinities between Socrates and Callicles have been noted by W. Jaeger 1939-45 (I), 324; J. Skemp 1952, 29; G. Klosko 1984, 134-5; and R. Barney 2004.}

For Gorgias, the singular virtue of his own ‘art’ of rhetoric was that it makes one strong and happy \textit{without} any deep insight into the nature of things: why take pains to learn medicine or astronomy when the orator gets all the benefits of these crafts without the toil involved in learning them?\footnote{As we see in Socrates’ conversation with Gorgias, the very indifference to the truth that provokes moral condemnation of rhetoric is hailed by the orator \textit{himself} as proof of its supreme power. Witness Gorgias’ boast that the orator outperforms a craftsman in any public gathering (456a4-c6): one might expect knowledge of some kind to provide the surest path to success, but in fact knowledge gets the craftsman nowhere when he is up against a skilled orator. The imagination runs wild with all of the possible unjust uses of this skill, so much so that Gorgias is quick to pin the blame for its misuses squarely on the student rather than the teacher. But rhetoric’s ‘superhuman’ (δαιμονία) ability to do ‘just about anything’ (ὑπάρχων τὰς δυνάμεις συλλαβοῦσα ὑπὸ αὐτῆς ἔχει) begins to vanish when Gorgias concedes that the orator must know and teach justice, for as Socrates goes on to argue, knowledge}
Likewise, Polus’ admiration for tyrant and orator alike hardly seems to be of the order of intellectual admiration. He admires them for how they live, not for what they know. Both men wind up conceding some connection between knowledge of nature and happiness, in part because they want ultimately to defend rhetoric as the key to real – and not just apparent – happiness. But each is driven to this position under Socratic pressure. Only Callicles enters the dialogue with the view that knowledge, and especially a deep understanding of the nature of things, is necessary for success both in debate and in practical life.

But any such theory necessarily imposes structure and order no less on the theorist than on the cosmos; physical rules in the case of the cosmos, logical ones in the case of the theorist. Akin to the question of the value of self-restraint in practical life, in the dialectical arena too there is a real question about the value of intellectual commitment. To the thinker who is simply out for profit in the courtroom or in the assembly, where public opinion is the ultimate authority, airing one’s grand theory of nature can appear to be a real liability. Why bind yourself to a certain view of nature, so that others can use it to refute you? Why not pick and choose from

imposes limitations on the knower – specifically, on the orator’s behaviour – culminating in Gorgias’ admission that since an orator knows what justice is, he will only do just things (460a3-e3). As it turns out, knowledge of the nature of things comes at the price of freedom. The orator appeared to be free to do whatever he liked until he claimed to know something.

62 We are told at 462a8-9 that Polus follows the practice of his teacher (established at 447c5-448a3) in inviting his audience to question him on any matter they please. The aim for Gorgias and Polus alike is clearly to showcase the awesome power of the orator, who manages to give dazzling answers without ever bothering to learn the nature of things. Later, Polus claims he admires tyrants and orators for their common ability to exercise great power by doing whatever they see fit (466d5-e4). At the risk of oversimplifying the very complicated exchange that follows, Socrates counters this immediately by securing Polus’ agreement that doing what one sees fit is not a case of exercising great power so long as it occurs in the absence of intelligence (466e9-12). This qualification throws into question the freedom that tyrants, orators, and any others exercising ‘great power’ are supposed to enjoy, for now it looks as though they may do only those things that are compatible with the presence of intelligence: presumably, intelligent courses of action. And if their actions must be so directed by intelligence, then it is no longer clear in what sense tyrants and orators are free to do whatever they see fit. Much like his teacher, Polus wants a life combining incompatible elements: intelligence and unlimited freedom. For an impressive and influential discussion of Socrates’ refutation of Polus, see T. Penner 1991.
various theories as they suit you? To the nimble, uncommitted mind, the theorist is a bound Gulliver, except he is more pathetic because he is bound by rules of his own making. When one’s more uncommitted interlocutors are able to dart this way and that, tying oneself down to one view about the world can appear to be stupid or crazy. Yet the rejoinder to this on behalf of the theorist is clear enough in Callicles’ opening remarks: what he seems to be saying is: ‘Being bound to these logical rules is not a liability; it is the source of my strength. It is only because I am committed to a theory of the cosmos that I have the confidence to say what I think and do not yield to shame, as more superficial thinkers do.’ In matters of the intellect at least, Callicles recognizes that a comprehensive, satisfying theory of the cosmos is in fact the secret to intellectual might.

Of course, staking one’s claim to such a theory is to spin a web of logical commitments around oneself, and to open oneself up to a devastating refutation from someone without those commitments. But Socrates and Callicles alike seem to recognize that these commitments provide the scaffolding for genuine strength and courage as well. The nomadic life courts all sorts of dangers, but there is something to be said for the thought that the opportunity for genuine courage presents itself only when one has a home to defend. Both Socrates and Callicles are willing to defend claims that fly in the face of conventional morality precisely because these claims are backed by a particular theory of nature and a network of logical entailments. As Socrates tells Callicles when talking stock of the debate:

These conclusions, at which we arrived earlier in our previous discussions are, I’d say, held down and bound by arguments of iron and adamant, even if it’s rather rude to say so […] And if you or someone more forceful than you won’t undo them, then anyone who says anything other than what I’m now saying cannot be speaking well. (508e6-509a3)
On the other hand, the claims of opinion-chasers like Gorgias and Polus move back and forth because these men can avail themselves of no intellectual resources beyond the views of the many. When their claims inevitably turn out to contradict some ‘tenet’ in the confused patchwork of public opinion, they have nothing deeper on which to draw in defending themselves.

So Socrates’ point in introducing the image of the jars is to illustrate a deep tension in the Calliclean position between the value of struggle in his cosmos and the value of stability in his approach to thinking and debate. Callicles clearly believes that a sedentary mind will defeat a nomadic one; that a mind that acquires what it is after – that is, a satisfying theory of nature – is stronger and happier on that account than a restless, unsatisfied one. Yet in the case of the appetites he holds that satisfaction and stability are to be avoided at all costs, on the ground that they make a man weak and corpse-like. In exposing an antipathy to satisfaction at the heart of the Calliclean cosmos, the model of the jars shows that Callicles has yet to synthesize his epistemology with his cosmology, and suggests that consistency requires him either to join his colleagues and disavow his grand theory of nature, or else reflect upon what the value of intellectual satisfaction tells him about the workings of the cosmos in general. That is, if Callicles recognizes that self-restraint and submission to rules is a source of strength in intellectual matters, why couldn’t it turn out that these are an indispensable source of strength in his practical life as well? Callicles seems to see the superiority of restlessness to satisfaction everywhere but where it matters most for him: in thought and debate.
Section 2.5: Conclusions

Let us take stock. This chapter argued that hedonism is not Callicles’ fundamental position. Rather, his original commitment is to a view of nature as perpetual strife. His ethical positions flow from this position: his view that natural justice dictates that the superior man gets whatever he wants at the expense of his inferiors, and that temperance makes a man wretched. As we have seen, Callicles commits himself to hedonism in defence of these positions, and while it is a crude and poorly conceived version of hedonism at that, Callicles rightly sees it as a natural outgrowth of his conception of the natural order. Moreover, while Callicles’ ethical outlook is broadly in tune with those of his predecessors, he gives it substance by grounding it both in a concrete ethical theory (i.e. hedonism) and in a particular conception of pleasure (i.e. the filling of an appetite.

Nevertheless, Callicles gives his view substance at great cost, for his commitment to this ‘restorative’ model of pleasure leads directly to Socrates’ twin refutations of his claim that pleasure is the same as the good. This is clearest in Socrates’ first refutation (495e1-497d10), where he seizes on Callicles’ conception of pleasure as a refilling – a conception marketed to Callicles with the help of the image of the jars – to show that ‘doing well’ cannot be identified with the experience of pleasure, and so pleasure cannot be identified with the good as Callicles’ hedonism requires. Had Callicles resisted the image’s restorative conception of pleasure, it seems this first refutation could not even get off the ground. As we will see in Chapters 4 and 5, in the Philebus Plato will endorse a distinct conception of pleasure as a knowledge-dependent species of intentional attitude. On this much more sophisticated conception it is not at all clear what the compresence of pleasure and pain would involve, nor is it clear that such a state is even possible.
Similarly, Socrates’ second refutation (497d10-499b10) depends on Callicles’ restorative conception of pleasure. As in the last refutation, here too Callicles’ nonstandard and improvised conception of pleasure undoes his more firmly held and compelling conception of natural justice: if a cowardly and foolish man experiences as much restoration as a brave, intelligent one, then Calliclean hedonism must declare inferiors to be as happy and successful as their superiors.

Clearly, the immediate goal of these two refutations is to defeat Callicles. But beyond this, in these two lines of argument Plato raises what was in the Protagoras a key question for Plato’s own positive view: can happiness and pleasure be thought to converge in the case of the good man, and if so, why? As I will argue in the next Chapter, in Republic IX Socrates himself makes some use of a restorative conception of pleasure to show that the philosophical life is pleasantest. As we will see, however, Republic IX fails to offer a satisfyingly unified conception of pleasure. In Chapters 4 and 5 I argue that the Philebus finally provides a unified account of pleasure and undertakes to argue that given the right conception of pleasure only the good man’s life is genuinely pleasant.

If my reading of Callicles’ downfall is along the right lines, then it carries an important moral for the central question of this chapter, namely, ‘Is Socrates’ refutation of Callicles consistent with the interpretation of the akrasia argument developed in the previous chapter, and with TV in particular?’ I believe that it is, because when we attend to the details of Callicles’ refutation it becomes clear that Socrates’ refutation of Callicles is not a sweeping indictment of even more formidable versions of hedonism, let alone a weaker view such as TV. As I suggested in this chapter, Socrates’ attacks would entirely miss the mark against a hedonist who holds (as the Socrates of the Gorgias seems to hold, and as the Epicureans did clearly hold) that happiness is to be characterized by a stable, tranquil disposition. On the contrary, it is directed strictly
toward Calliclean hedonism, built as it is on the Calliclean conception of pleasure as restoration. For this reason, it seems a mistake to take Socrates’ refutations of Callicles as expressions of Plato’s considered view on either hedonism, more generally, or the contribution of pleasure to happiness. What the showdown with Callicles has shown us is that Calliclean pleasure is an unsuitable candidate to fill in the missing account of pleasure in the Protagoras.

Let this suffice as our discussion of the Gorgias. In the next chapter we find ourselves on the smoother terrain of Republic IX. I call this ‘smoother terrain’ because Republic IX seems to support the view that Socrates continues to subscribe to TV, for in this work he appears to argue that the philosophical life is happiest because it is pleasantest. Much as with the Protagoras, in this case too the appearance of Socratic hedonism has provoked errors in opposite interpretive directions. That is, while there is general agreement that Socrates is arguing ‘hedonistically,’ the debate has been about what to make of this hedonism: some interpreters embrace it, while others undertake to sequester some of these arguments on the ground that they must fall outside the Republic’s argumentative scope. And much as we saw in the Protagoras, I think in this case too recognising the availability of TV as a distinct option to Socrates exposes this as a false choice. That is, if Socrates subscribes to TV then he can appeal to the fact that a certain life is pleasantest without holding that that life is happiest because it is pleasantest.

In any case, in the next chapter I will take direct aim at one such attempt to sequester the second and third of Republic IX’s three arguments for the philosophical life. I will then raise a problem about the number of Book IX’s arguments, and proceed to solve it by appeal to some of the psychology of Republic IV. The result will be a confirmation that Socrates continues to subscribe to TV in Republic IX.
Chapter 3: Republic IX

3.1: Introduction

Let us sum up our findings so far. Chapter 1 developed an interpretation of the Protagoras’ akrasia argument. The crux of this interpretation challenged what comes as close to orthodoxy as perhaps anything does in Plato scholarship: the view that the Socrates of the Protagoras relies upon hedonism in some sense for his proof that akrasia is impossible. Our interpretation challenged this consensus in arguing that the argument relies on no more than the view that pleasure reliably tracks the good (TV), which is significantly less determinate than hedonism, i.e. that pleasure is the same as the good. Hedonism is one way to fill in the tracking relationship in TV – that is, pleasure could be thought to track the good because it is the same as the good. But other ways of filling in the tracking relationship – ones which preserve the distinctness of pleasure and the good and thus fall short of hedonism – are left open on TV. From this point we argued that a certain principle of charity dictates that we attribute to Socrates TV but not necessarily hedonism, which requires UR. So on the interpretation developed in Chapter 1, the Socrates of the Protagoras holds that pleasure tracks the good such that the pleasantest life is also necessarily happiest, but he does not necessarily hold that pleasure is identical with the good, and so he is not necessarily a hedonist.

We also concluded that, as it stands, the akrasia argument of the Protagoras contains a crucial lacuna, in that it is in need of an account of pleasure that supports TV. That is, to defend the position that pleasure reliably tracks the good, and with it the claim that the measuring art would save our lives, it seems Socrates owes us an account of pleasure such that it becomes clear that pleasure can fulfill this role. Since the Protagoras contains no account of pleasure whatever,
it seems we have no choice but to examine Socrates’ accounts of pleasure elsewhere to
determine whether any of these accounts fits the bill.63

In Chapter 2 we then turned to the Gorgias, arguing that Callicles does indeed supply a
particular conception of pleasure, but that it is precisely this conception that leads to his downfall
in the dialogue. To flesh out what it is that Callicles’ superior, happy man gets in greater supply,
he claims that this is pleasure, and in turn fleshes out ‘pleasure’ as the filling of appetites. But
once the implications of this conception of pleasure are made plain, the pleasure-seeking life is
no longer attractive, even to Callicles himself. To put this in the terms we discussed in the
Introduction, Callicles’ problematic answer to the conceptual question (i.e. ‘What is pleasure?’)
undermines his answer to the ethical question (i.e. ‘Why should I pursue pleasure?’). Since the
source of Callicles’ downfall appears to be his particular conception of pleasure, the moral of his
downfall in the dialogue is not that any recommendation of the pleasure-seeking life is
necessarily doomed, but rather that the recommendation of such a life on the Calliclean
conception of pleasure is doomed. Calliclean pleasure is thus not a suitable candidate to fill the
lacuna in the Protagoras I mentioned earlier.

My aim in this chapter is to show that Plato in Republic IX retains his commitment to TV
and to the measuring art. At first glance, evidence for this view in the Republic may appear to be
mixed. After all, the work is at times critical of pleasure, in much the same tone as that of the
Gorgias.64 But more importantly, Plato’s newfound psychological ‘realism’ in the Republic may
seem to rule out the view outlined above. After all, the Protagoras’ measuring art works only so

63 Note that this shortcoming of the Protagoras remains even if one takes the standard view that the akrasia
argument relies on hedonism -- that is, the view that pleasure is the same as the good – rather than TV. For it is hard
to see how one could defend this identity claim without an account of pleasure.

64 See esp. 505b-c and 509a3-5.
long as pleasure reliably tracks the good. But now that Plato in the *Republic* recognizes three parts of soul with distinct and even potentially *conflicting* motivations, the measuring art may seem utterly unworkable. On the *Republic*’s picture, one part of soul prefers (bodily) pleasure, but spirit prefers honour, and reason prefers calculation and understanding. With these three apparently incommensurable goods, how can Socrates get anything like the measuring art off the ground?

If the *Republic* ended at the close of Book VIII, then this might well be a devastating objection. But in fact *Republic* IX seems to go out of its way to quell this worry, for in that book we find an important addition to IV’s psychological theory. In IX’s second argument for the supreme happiness of the just life, Socrates reveals that *each* of the soul’s three parts pursues its own distinctive pleasures (580d3-581e4). Moreover, this argument and the following one both explicitly undertake to show that the just life is *more pleasant* than the unjust life. So once again it seems Plato is arguing for a life’s superior happiness on the ground that it *exceeds* its rival in pleasure. In other words, IX’s general argumentative strategy for proving the just life’s supreme happiness seems to share a key assumption with the *Protagoras*’ akrasia argument about the connection between pleasure and happiness, namely TV.

To refine my aim in this chapter, then, I will argue that all three of Book IX’s arguments for the just life’s supreme happiness argue that because the just life exceeds the unjust life in a certain set of pleasures *that are particularly dear to the listener*, the just life therefore exceeds the unjust life in happiness (*for that listener*) as well. The italicized caveats are important. The psychological theory of Book IV reveals that there are three potential listeners for Book IX’s

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65 This general picture is the result of the argument from 435d7-441c6.
arguments: appetite/the profit-lover; spirit/the honour-lover; reason/the philosopher.\textsuperscript{66} In this chapter I will argue that each of IX’s three arguments appeals to the distinctive pleasures of a specific psychic part and political character. The dialectical result of IX is agreement, both within the soul and within the body politic, as to the supreme happiness of the just life. What this shows, I think, is that the \textit{Republic} continues the \textit{Protagoras’} project of demonstrating the value of a certain life by showing that that life is more pleasant than its competitors.

Before making our way to this argument, however, we must confront some puzzles concerning Book IX’s dialectical role within the \textit{Republic} as a whole. On my view, all three of IX’s arguments undertake to prove that justice is valuable instrumentally, i.e. for the happiness it confers. That is to say, Socrates’ general strategy in Book IX is to show that since justice’s pleasant consequences exceed those belonging to the unjust life, and since pleasure reliably tracks happiness, the just life is therefore happier than the unjust life. Book IV established earlier that justice is psychic health, and therefore that it is also valuable for its own sake (444e6-445b6). Thus, when we put IV and IX together, we get Socrates’ completed proof that justice falls within Glaucon’s second division of goods, i.e. those that are desirable both for their own sakes and for their consequences (357b9-c3).\textsuperscript{67}

But the view that IX’s second and third arguments (hereafter, ‘the pleasure arguments’) contribute \textit{at all} to Socrates’ case for the just life has come under attack in recent scholarship. On

\textsuperscript{66} Here I sidestep some important puzzles concerning Plato’s practice of treating a part of soul as parallel with a \textit{person} dominated by that part of soul. For some discussion of these problems, see J. Moline (1978); J. Annas (1981), p. 306; and H. Lorenz (2006), Part One.

one prominent view (hereafter, ‘the common interpretation’), the last two of IX’s three arguments fall outside the Republic’s proper case for the just life; these arguments address residual concerns once Socrates’ official case for the just life is complete, but they contribute nothing to the official case itself, which concludes with IX’s first argument.68

So to clear the way for my own interpretation of Book IX, I will begin in this chapter by arguing that the common interpretation faces serious philosophical and textual objections, and is moreover motivated ultimately by a misinterpretation of Glaucon and Adeimantus’ fundamental challenge in Book II. Once the fundamental challenge is properly understood, the worries motivating the common interpretation disappear, and the (more natural) view that all three of IX’s arguments contribute to Socrates’ case for the just life is vindicated.

I begin in Section 3.2 by sketching the common interpretation’s account of the role of the pleasure arguments in Republic IX. I then present two lines of objection to this interpretation, _...

68 In referring to this line of interpretation as ‘the common interpretation’ I follow J. Butler, ‘The Arguments for the Most Pleasant Life in Republic IX: A Note Against the Common Interpretation,’ in _Apeiron_ 32 (1999), 37-48. Butler includes N. R. Murphy (1951), who claims that the unjustlife has already been defeated before we get to IX’s pleasure arguments, which are meant merely to turn this “defeat […] into rout” (207) by showing that even on the sophist’s ostensibly safe turf of pleasure, the just life can be shown to outscore the unjust life, and who nonetheless characterizes the “latent hedonism” (223) of Book IX as “alien […] to the work as a whole,” to be repudiated in the later _Philebus_; R. C. Cross and A. D. Woolzley (1964); N. P. White (1979), pp. 79, 226, 233f., who takes Plato’s true view to be that the just life outdoes the unjust life by the extra-hedonic metrics of “grace, beauty, and excellence” (233), but since Plato takes the superiority of the just life on these scores to be “fairly obvious,” (234), he focuses on pleasure instead so as to appeal to Thrasymanchus and his kind; J. C. B. Gosling and C. C. W. Taylor (1982) in this camp, on the ground that all of these commentators take the first of IX’s arguments to argue for a distinct conclusion from that of the second and third arguments. In this paper I take as my representative for the common interpretation Richard Kraut, ‘The Defense of Justice in Plato’s Republic’, in R. Kraut (ed.), _The Cambridge Companion to Plato_ (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992). I also include in this broad camp J. D. Mabott (1937) pp. 472-4; T. Irwin (1977) p. 338 n. 62; J. Annas (1981) pp. 294, 314, cf. 168, 316, 326f.; C. J. Rowe (1984), p. 106 on the ground that all seem to take the view that Book IX’s pleasure arguments somehow fall outside the Republic’s official case for the just life. Dissenting views include Butler (1999) himself, D. Russell, _Plato on Pleasure and the Good Life_ (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2005), pp. 112-116; and Eric Brown ‘Eudaimonia in Plato’s Republic’ (forthcoming), fn 4. Russell cites 449a1-b1 at the beginning of Book V, where Socrates is about to develop further Book IV’s case for justice where Polemarchus interrupts him with different concerns, and 543c4-544b2, 5, at the beginning of Book VIII, where Socrates is presented as resuming the Book IV case after the long detour of Books V-VII. And since Russell reasonably holds that Book VIII moves seamlessly into Book IX, he concludes that Books IV and IX develop the same case for justice.
one philosophical and the other textual. Section 3.3 considers the common interpretation’s
defence against some of these objections, and then presents my objections to this line of defence.
With this much established, Section 3.4 identifies a neglected puzzle in Book IX concerning the
number of its arguments, which frames my interpretation of Book IX. It then sketches my
proposed solution to this puzzle. In short, I argue that IX presents three arguments for the
supreme happiness of the just life because each argument is directed to a distinct psychic part
and political class. Section 3.5 presents my interpretations of IX’s three arguments, in order of
their appearance in the text. Section 3.6 presents my conclusions.

3.2: The Common Interpretation; Philosophical and Textual Objections
The common interpretation develops in response to an interpretive puzzle in Republic IX. The
book’s aim is clear enough in outline: Socrates undertakes to show with three arguments that the
most unjust man – the tyrant – lives most miserably, whereas his extremely just counterpart is
most happy. But Socrates’ strategy in showing the superiority of the just life is puzzling, for
whereas he states the conclusion of the first argument as he promised, in terms of the just man’s
superiority in happiness, the conclusion of the second and third arguments is that the just man’s
life is more pleasant than the tyrant’s. Yet Socrates seems to present these as three arguments
for the same conclusion that the just man is happier than the tyrant. What then are we to make of
this slide between the conclusion of first argument and those of its successors?

This is of course an interpretive problem regardless of the interpreter’s broader
commitments: Socrates tells us he is arguing for one conclusion with three arguments, and then
once the first argument is complete he appears to argue on behalf of a distinct conclusion. But it

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69 On my view, Book IX’s first argument for the supreme happiness of the just life runs from 571a1-580c9; the
second from 580c10-583a11; the third from 583a1-587b6.
is particularly troubling for the interpreter who wants to deny that Plato ever recognizes any reliable connection between a life’s pleasantness and its happiness.\textsuperscript{70} For the natural explanation for this slide between happiness and pleasure seems to be that Socrates holds that the happiest life is necessarily also the most pleasant one, so that in vindicating the latter he also vindicates the former.\textsuperscript{71}

Thus interpreters who are scandalized by the apparent slide in Book IX from ‘pleasantest’ to ‘happiest’ must offer an interpretation on which pleasure’s connection to happiness is less straightforward than it appears. This position is not without resources. On the common interpretation, the slide is to be explained not by any reliable connection Socrates recognizes between pleasure and happiness, but rather by distinct aims belonging to the first argument, on the one hand, and to the second and third arguments, on the other. Richard Kraut explains:

As I read the \textit{Republic}, its fundamental argument in defense of justice is the one that comes to a close in Book IX before anything is said about how the just and unjust lives compare in terms of pleasure [...] the two arguments that connect justice and pleasure are merely meant to assure us that we do not have to sacrifice the latter good in order to get the former. They add to the attractiveness of the just life but they are not in themselves sufficient to show that justice is to be chosen over injustice as is the lengthier argument that precedes them.\textsuperscript{72}

\textsuperscript{70} See esp. N. P. White (1979); J. Annas (1981); and R. Kraut (1992) for interpretations that seek to weaken the apparent connection between pleasure and happiness in Book IX. See also D. Russell (2005) for a view resembling my own in that it takes the connection between pleasure and happiness in IX to amount roughly to a tracking relationship. For interpreters who hold that Socrates recognizes an important connection between pleasure and happiness, and who are nevertheless frustrated by the slide from ‘most happy’ to ‘most pleasant’ in IX, see Gosling and Taylor (1982).

\textsuperscript{71} Throughout this essay I shall assume, uncontroversially I think, that ‘the best life’ and ‘happiness’ are synonymous expressions; thus a life that exceeds another in goodness exceeds it in happiness.

\textsuperscript{72} R. Kraut (1992), p. 313.
So on the common interpretation, IX’s second and third arguments merely supplement the first by showing that the just life is also pleasant, in effect answering a residual worry once the case for the just life is complete. They are merely meant to boost in hedonic terms the attractiveness of the just life – which has already been shown to be best – in hedonic terms. There are a number of lines of objection to the common interpretation, but here I will restrict myself to two: one philosophical and the other textual.

I turn first to the philosophical objection. To begin with, the common interpretation’s account of the division of labour in IX is at least a bit odd. For it claims that the case for the superiority of the just life closes with the end of the first argument; that argument is sufficient to show that the just life is to be preferred to the unjust one. But we may wonder what this sufficiency amounts to if it is in need of a boost from two further arguments appealing to pleasure. To this it might be objected that the common interpretation means to claim that while the first argument is logically sufficient to prove its conclusion, it is, as it were, rhetorically insufficient. But in this case it isn’t clear why further argument of any kind will play the supplementary role the common interpretation envisages. If the interlocutors aren’t fully impressed by logic to begin with, why then will two more arguments for the pleasantness of the just life succeed where the first argument failed?

What compounds the problem for the common interpretation is that its view depends on the claim that Glaucon and Adeimantus are not concerned with the pleasantness of the just life in their formulation of the fundamental question of the Republic in Book II (as we will see in greater detail when I turn to my textual objection). On the common interpretation, neither Glaucon nor Adeimantus asks for a defense of justice in hedonic terms, nor does Socrates ever
“even hint” that he plans to offer any such defense. Yet in Book IX Socrates suddenly undertakes to provide something he never even hinted at before to two interlocutors who never even asked for it. I submit that the abruptness of all this is ad hoc and implausible.

Moreover, on the common interpretation Socrates actually seems to overshoot his ostensible goal in the second and third arguments. The common interpretation argues that Socrates undertakes in those arguments merely to quell the worry that the just life, for all its happiness, will miss out on the unjust man’s pleasures. For that task it would indeed be enough to show that the just life yields an equal share of pleasure, or perhaps even a smaller but comparable amount of pleasure. But the second and third arguments clearly undertake to show that the just life is vastly more pleasant than the unjust life. Both conclusions go well beyond Socrates’ more modest aim (on the common interpretation) of showing that the philosopher’s just life isn’t significantly inferior to the unjust life in terms of pleasure.

Let this suffice for my philosophical response to the common interpretation. I turn now to my textual response. The most obvious textual hurdle for the common interpretation comes at 583b2-6, where Socrates heralds the third argument as follows:

These, then are two proofs in a row, and the just person has defeated the unjust one in both. The third is dedicated in Olympic fashion to Olympian Zeus the Savior. Observe then that, apart from

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73 R. Kraut (1992), p. 313. J. Annas (1981) also denies that pleasure figures in Glaucon and Adeimantus’ challenge in Book II (p. 306), and claims that the complaint that pleasure is irrelevant to Socrates’ defence of justice has been raised “almost universally” (p. 307).

74 R. Waterfield (1993), p. 439 seems to take a similar view: “Plato has not infrequently been criticized for introducing pleasure into a discussion of happiness, but in my view he is merely being realistic: a life devoid of any pleasure is surely not worth living.” But Socrates seems to go well beyond the modest claim that the just life is not devoid of pleasure. For IX’s second argument see 583a3, where the just, philosophical life is said to be “most pleasurable” (ἡδιστρόφητος), and the lives of the honour- and profit-lovers come in second and third, respectively. For IX’s third argument see 587b8-9, where again the philosopher-king’s life is said to be “most pleasant” (ἡδιστρωτής) and the tyrant is said to live “most unpleasantly” (ἀηδεστρωτής). Such formulations seem unnecessarily strong on the view that these arguments aim merely to show that the just, philosophical life isn’t seriously less pleasant than its competitors.
those of a knowledgeable person, the other pleasures are neither entirely true nor pure but are like a shadow-painting, as I think I’ve heard some wise person say. And yet, if this were true, it would be the greatest and most decisive of the overthrows.  

First, note that in the first sentence Socrates characterizes the first and second arguments breezily as “two proofs in a row [δύ’ ἐφεξῆς].” So if there is any crucial fault line between the first and second arguments, as the common interpretation maintains, then Socrates seems to go out of his way to choose wording that obscures it. In the same sentence Socrates claims that “the just person has defeated the unjust one in both [δίς νενικήκως ὁ δίκαιος τὸν ἄδικον],” with no mention that the ‘defeats’ in question came in distinct contests: the first for happiness, the second for pleasure. On the contrary, the implication of this first sentence is clearly that the unjust life has lost two rounds in the same contest. This undermines the common interpretation’s claim that the first and second arguments have distinct aims.

Matters get even worse for the common interpretation as Socrates continues, announcing the argument to come simply as the “third” [τρίτον]. By the common interpretation’s count this of course ought to be the second argument for the conclusion that the just life is pleasant, and yet Socrates is once again going out of his way to present the set as a trio singing in unison. Then in the last line of the passage, as if to dispel all doubt about the coming argument’s relationship to its two forerunners, Socrates sets it up as the “greatest and most decisive of the overthrows [μέγιστόν τε καὶ κυριώτατον τῶν πτωμάτων].” The difficulties flowing from the superlatives are eliminated on the supposition that all three arguments argue for the same conclusion. Clearly the natural way to read the closing line of the passage is as a drum roll for the last and strongest of three arguments on behalf of the same conclusion.

75 All translations are from the G. M. A. Grube, rev. by C. D. C Reeve, in Plato: Complete Works (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1997), unless otherwise indicated.
3.3 The Common Interpretation’s Defence; Objections to this Defence

The common interpretation acknowledges the general difficulty this passage presents for its reading. Its strategy for surmounting the difficulty is not to disarm it, but rather to offer a countervailing textual consideration from earlier on in the Republic. This is the move I alluded to in my philosophical response, when I noted that the common interpretation denies that pleasure figures in Glaucon and Adeimantus’ challenge in Book II (see note 11). Commenting on the passage we have just examined, Kraut defends his reading:

Why should we read the Republic in this way, despite Plato’s statement that “the greatest and supreme fall” of injustice comes with his final argument? The answer lies in the way he poses, in Book II, the fundamental question to which the rest of the dialogue is an answer. The thesis he there undertakes to prove is phrased in various ways […] Notice, however, that Plato never promises, in Book II to show that justice provides greater pleasures than does injustice and never even hints that he would have to defend this thesis in order to show that we should choose the just life. This suggests that the question whether the just or the unjust life has more pleasure will still be an open one, even after the greater advantages of the just life has [sic] been demonstrated.76

So the common interpretation argues from (1) the absence of any mention of pleasure in the various articulations of the fundamental challenge; to the claim that (2) pleasure plays no part in Socrates’ task in the Republic. And if it forms no part of Socrates’ task to show how the just and unjust lives fare in terms of pleasure, then (3) any argument addressing this question falls outside the Republic’s argumentative scope. Therefore, the common interpretation reasons, since (4) the second and third arguments of Book IX are strictly about pleasure, (5) they are not part of

76 R. Kraut, p. 313. Not all versions of the common interpretation follow Kraut on this point. For example, N. P. White (1979) takes the pleasure arguments not to represent Plato’s true view as to the superiority of the just life, but proposes that the focus on pleasure is directed toward Thrasymachus and those who share his worldview. Since Glaucon claims in Book II to be renewing Thrasymachus’ argument (358b7-c1), presumably White holds that pleasure does indeed figure in II’s fundamental challenge.
Socrates’ task in the Republic. Thus the common interpretation defends the view that the second and third arguments ought not to be read as establishing the superior happiness of the just life by way of showing its greater pleasantness, but rather as auxiliary arguments aiming strictly to show that the just life involves no serious sacrifice in terms of pleasure.

I do not dispute the common interpretation’s point here that Glaucon and Adeimantus’ articulation of their challenge ought to guide us in determining the contribution of later arguments. Book II is indeed the exposition of Socrates’ task, and so the apparent absence of pleasure in this exposition ought to give pause to those of us defending the more natural interpretation. After all, the unity of the Republic as a whole seems greatly compromised on the view that Socrates in Book IX addresses hedonic considerations that appear nowhere in his initial challenge.

But the common interpretation’s response leaves us with a number of problems. First, as I noted earlier, Kraut says nothing here directly to resolve the worries I have outlined about his reading of the Book IX arguments. He has merely given us a countervailing reason to bite the bullet on the philosophical and textual infelicities his reading generates. So the common interpretation’s response is unsatisfying. Moreover, both the truth of the common interpretation’s (1) and the validity of its inference from (1) to (2) seem questionable. It is not clear that the common interpretation is right when it claims that the fundamental question of Book II makes no mention of pleasure. And even if this claim is granted, the inference from the absence of any explicit mention of pleasure to the claim that pleasure plays no role in the Republic’s case for justice is subject to challenge.

In fact, there is a convincing case to be made not only that pleasure is mentioned in the fundamental challenge in Book II, but also that considerations of pleasure play a central role in
that challenge. For the rest of this section I will focus on a passage within the fundamental challenge of Book II and argue that it indeed mentions pleasure. I will then return to the common interpretation’s account of Book II, and in particular to the evaluative terms it claims do figure in the fundamental question. I will argue that many of these terms imply that pleasure is a concern.

First, my refutation of the common interpretation’s defence: that it is simply wrong when it claims that there is no mention of pleasure in the fundamental question of Book II. The common interpretation neglects a passage in Book II where Adeimantus, in arguing on behalf of the unjust life, contrasts its pleasures with the toils of the just life. As we will see, this passage says outright that among the attractions of the unjust life is that it is pleasant:

Consider further Socrates, another kind of language about justice and injustice employed by both laymen and poets. All with one accord reiterate that temperance and justice are fine [καλὸν], to be sure, but difficult and laborious [χαλεπὸν καὶ ἐπίπονον], while licentiousness and injustice are pleasant [ἡδὺ] and easy to win and are only in opinion and by convention disgraceful [αἰσχρόν]. Injustice is more profitable [λυσιτελέστερα] than justice, for the most part, they say; and bad and rich people and others holding power are happy [εὐδαιμονίζειν]. (364a1-9)

Before getting to the explicit mention of pleasure (or, strictly speaking, ‘pleasant’: ἡδὺ), let me trace the line of thought leading up to it. Adeimantus here calls Socrates’ attention to the very language that poets and laymen alike use when contrasting justice and injustice, and so presumably he is choosing his words carefully. This means that the passage cannot be easily dismissed as sloppy in its wording. First, notice that Adeimantus actually yokes justice and temperance together, as though any differences between the two are irrelevant for present purposes. Now, temperance is conceptually tied to considerations of pleasure, to put it mildly: in

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77 This passage comes from Shorey’s translation in Edith Hamilton and Huntington Cairns eds., *Collected Dialogues* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1961), 575-844. My reason for preferring this translation will become clear in the discussion to follow.
Greek thought about the virtues, it is essentially the excellence of character concerning pleasure and the behaviours it elicits. A temperate man is paradigmatically one who keeps his wits and is beguiled neither by excessive food or drink, nor by shameful sexual encounters. So the pairing of temperance and justice in this passage suggests that pleasure is very much at the fore of Adeimantus’ mind as he discusses the epithets that poets and laymen use in connection with both virtues.

Adeimantus then explains that these two virtues taken together are a mixed blessing in traditional praise. Each is on the one hand fine, but on the other hand also difficult and laborious [χαλεπόν καὶ ἐπίπονον]. It is worth noting here that χαλεπός, standardly translated as ‘difficult,’ ordinarily conveys pain just as ‘difficult’ does: when something is difficult, it can only be accomplished with pain or toil. The first entry in LSJ begins as follows: “in reference to the feelings, hard to bear, painful, grievous …” So one way of construing the drawback of temperance and justice is that they are painful, and indeed this seems to be a perfectly reasonable thing to say: it hurts to forgo a tasty dessert or to pay back a loan. Likewise for ἐπίπονος: this standardly just means ‘painful.’ So the twin drawbacks of temperance and justice both point to pain, or to the deprivation of pleasure.

Next, Adeimantus turns to the opposites of temperance and justice, namely licentiousness and injustice [ἀκολασία δὲ καὶ ἀδικία]. As ought to be clear from my discussion of temperance, licentiousness is, first and foremost, the vice one displays in going for excessive or shameful bodily pleasures. Again, its pairing with injustice in this passage suggests a close conceptual connection for Adeimantus between the two vices. These too turn out to bring good and bad, though the implication of the ‘only’ [μόνον] a line below is clearly that the good outweighs the bad in their case. So what is so good about licentiousness and injustice according to poets and
laymen? Along with being easy to win [ἐύπετεξ κτῆσασθαι: clearly contrastive with ‘difficult and laborious’], they are pleasant [ἡδον]. Now, Grube and Reeve translate this as ‘sweet,’ which is also legitimate. But obviously the sweetness here cannot be literal, and indeed that the term is being applied to licentiousness removes all doubt that what Adeimantus is relating here, on behalf of poets and laymen, is the perfectly natural thought that the behaviours associated with licentiousness and injustice – eating and drinking excessively, visiting brothels, reneging on one’s debts, seizing one’s neighbour’s rightful share – are exceedingly pleasant. Their only drawback, on the views Adeimantus is considering, is that they are condemned in polite society as shameful.

So what we see in this passage is that part of what Adeimantus wants to hear from Socrates is an answer to the explicit worry that the unjust life fares better in terms of pleasure: ‘All poets and laymen declare injustice to bring great pleasure, Socrates. What say you?’

But should we worry that the common interpretation might dismiss this passage on the grounds that it isn’t representative of the fundamental challenge of Book II? Kraut himself includes λυσιτελεῖν and εὐδαιμονίζειν among the various ways the fundamental question gets cashed out, and yet in our passage only a few lines separate these terms from ἡδον in Adeimantus’ case for injustice. To exclude ἡδον from II’s fundamental question thus seems highly selective, and unmotivated unless one is out to eliminate all evidence that the fundamental question includes a concern about pleasure.

Let this suffice for my response to the common interpretation’s defence. If it is on target, then it seems that the common interpretation’s account of Book IX’s pleasure arguments cannot stand: IX’s pleasure arguments ought not to be sequestered as an ‘appendix’ lying outside the Republic’s proper argumentative scope.
3.4: Republic IX: A New Puzzle

If the previous sections are on the right track, then this proves, I hope, that the apparent difficulties motivating the common interpretation are illusory. On the interpretation of Book IX’s case I will present, on which Socrates argues in all three of IX’s arguments that justice is valuable for its pleasant consequences, Book IX as a whole addresses concerns central to Book II’s fundamental challenge, and thus does not seriously undermine the Republic’s unity as the common interpretation claims. Before moving on to my own interpretation, however, there is, I think, a neglected puzzle lurking in Book IX relevant to the question of the contribution made by IX’s three arguments to the Republic as a whole, which I would now like to illuminate. My own interpretation will develop as a solution to this puzzle.

This new puzzle concerns the number of Book IX’s arguments. Book IX presents three arguments for the same conclusion, viz. that the just life is happier than the unjust life. Generally speaking, the strategy of offering multiple arguments for the same conclusion is mildly problematic, in that it invites the following worry: ‘Either the first argument proves its conclusion, or it doesn’t. If it does, then any further arguments are really unnecessary. Why then include them? And if the first argument fails to prove its conclusion, then it really isn’t accomplishing anything. Why not just delete it and begin with the next argument?’ In short, the use of multiple arguments for the same conclusion generates the worry that some of those arguments are either unnecessary or unsound. Provided we take this general worry to be legitimate, we may apply it to the specific case of Republic IX and ask of Plato why he there presents three arguments for the supreme happiness of the just life.

Of course, this puzzle rests on a rather simple and demanding picture of argumentation, one in which each distinct argument is, as it were, free-standing. Arguments often function
legitimately as a team.  

Couldn’t something like this be going on in Book IX? However, support for this hypothesis is hard to find in the text. If any of IX’s three arguments are meant to depend logically on one another, then Socrates seems to go out of his way to obscure this as he presents each subsequent argument as independent. None of the three arguments makes any explicit appeal to the others, and moreover Socrates’ segues from one argument to the next give the distinct impression that we have left the last argument entirely behind and are beginning anew (580c7-d1; 583b1-7). Not only this, but Socrates announces the third argument as ‘the main and decisive bout’ after dedicating it alone to Zeus. This remark, it seems to me, only sharpens our puzzle. Why is the third argument more central and decisive than the first two, in Socrates’ view? And given that he takes it to be so, why does he even bother with the first two?

So it looks as though the puzzle of IX’s three arguments cannot be explained away by considerations of logical interdependence. There is, however, another kind of explanation on offer. For in political matters, where one must make one’s case to a diverse body politic consisting of different (and indeed competing) beliefs and values, it is often necessary to present multiple arguments for the same conclusion. A single, one-size-fits-all argument will not do in such cases, as individual premises are often divisive in plural societies. So the basic strategy is to craft one argument which relies on premises that Constituency A will readily accept, and then to construct another argument from premises congenial to Constituency B but perhaps unattractive or even repulsive to Constituency A, and so on. The usefulness of such a rhetorical strategy is well-known to anyone who has been charged with building a political coalition. By constructing multiple arguments in this way, one can overcome disharmony within diverse societies and forge a consensus among distinct, and even mutually hostile, groups.

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78 Though, of course, this may undermine to some degree their claim to be distinct arguments.
The political character of the *Republic* suggests that this offers a promising solution to our puzzle. Moreover, the challenges of forging a political consensus are never far from view in the dialogue. As we learn in Book IV, a city consists of three classes, and the major challenge of statecraft consists in the stable, harmonious blending of these classes.\(^79\) Later, Socrates insists that the establishment of political justice requires that all citizens – rich, poor, old, young, men, women, etc. – say “mine” about the same things (462c3-7). Indeed, the political virtue of moderation consists in the establishment of a specific consensus among all three classes that the philosopher kings ought to rule (431e10-432b1). The progressive unraveling of this consensus is, as it were, the *leitmotif* of Book VIII’s narrative of degenerate political constitutions. And since Book VIII moves seamlessly into Book IX, it is not much of a stretch to suppose that the challenges involved in achieving political consensus remain close at hand in Book IX as well. So it seems plausible that the Socrates of Book IX offers three distinct arguments so as to forge a form of political *consensus* around the verdict that the just life is supremely happy.

But there is more concrete evidence in Book IX itself that something along these lines is afoot. For Socrates’ isomorphism concerning the city and the soul requires that specific psychological conditions underlie the challenges of political consensus. The harmonization of craftspeople, warriors, and rulers within a political community corresponds to the harmonization of the appetitive, spirited, and rational parts of soul. Now, this psychological theory looks to be essentially complete by the close of Book IV, but Socrates waits until Book IX to make an important addition to it. Up until now, the general impression had been that only the lowest part of soul, namely the appetitive part, is to be characterized by its desire for pleasure. Part of the general unruliness, both of this psychic part and of its corresponding political class, was due to

\(^{79}\) See esp. 443c7-444a1.
its gluttonous desires for the pleasures of the body: those of food, drink, and sex, as well as for money insofar as it allows one to acquire these things (442a3-b1). But what spirit and the city’s warriors love – we might think – isn’t pleasure but honour, status, and victory. Likewise the rational part and the philosopher kings care too much about learning and understanding to go in for pleasure; or so it seemed.

But ‘pleasure’ turns out in Book IX to be a broader category than it first appeared, so broad in fact that every part of soul and political class may be said to pursue pleasure in a way. For in the second argument of this book, the first of the so-called ‘pleasure arguments,’ we find the novel claim that there are three distinct forms of pleasure, one belonging to each psychic part and to its corresponding political character. As we were led to believe earlier, the appetitive part of soul and the profit-lover care about the bodily pleasures and the money used to satisfy them. But we learn in Book IX that spirit and the victory-lover pursue pleasure as well, albeit of a different kind; viz. those associated with honour, victory, and status. Likewise, the pleasures of learning and understanding are dearest to the rational part and to the philosopher (580d7-581c7).

So Plato sees the need in Book IX both to revisit his tripartite theory of the soul, and to expand dramatically his account of pleasure as a psychological motivation. One reason for this innovation is clear enough from the text, for the argument in which it appears relies on the claim that each of the three basic types of people – money-lover, honour-lover, and philosopher – enjoys distinct pleasures. But another reason for this conspicuous bit of innovation may be that it informs the structure of Book IX more generally: perhaps Socrates in Book IX presents three distinct arguments for the just life because each argument is meant to appeal to the distinctive pleasures belonging to a specific part of soul and political class, of which we have just now been informed.
In what follows, I explore this hypothesis. First, though, I would like to refine the hypothesis in question. For it may be objected at the outset that my claim that each argument in Book IX ‘appeals’ to the distinctive pleasures of a part of soul is too vague. What does this ‘appeal’ consist in? Perhaps the natural way to interpret this hypothesis is as a claim about the specific premises of the arguments – that, say, the argument directed at spirit includes premises expressing justice’s rewards in terms of the distinctive pleasures connected with victory, status, and the like. While this is part of what I have in mind, my use of the word ‘appeal’ is meant to be broader, in that I am interested as much in argumentative form as I am in the content of this or that premise. That is to say, an important part of my claim is that in each argument, the form of reasoning the argument takes is itself meant to be pleasing to its intended listener. This is, no doubt, still obscure as it stands, but I hope to make my meaning clearer in the next section.

This formal feature of the arguments is more conspicuous where the target listener is in some important sense sub-rational, as in the case of the appetitive and spirited parts. After all, what pleases the philosopher above all is surely an ironclad, deductively sound argument. In the case of the lower parts of city and soul, however, other considerations may well play more of a role. So in setting out to solve our new puzzle in Book IX, I will undertake to answer three related questions:

1) Why does Socrates in Book IX present more than one argument for the conclusion that the just life is supremely happy?

2) Why does Socrates present precisely three arguments for this conclusion?

3) Why does Socrates hold that the last of these arguments is the most decisive?

My proposed answers to the first two of these questions ought to be clear enough in outline, at
any rate: 1) Because Socrates in Book IX is trying to build a consensus among civic and psychic
parts as to this conclusion, and he cannot accomplish this with a single argument; 2) Because
there are three civic and psychic parts, each with its own distinctive pleasures, and so Socrates
needs to present a distinct argument appealing to each set of distinctive pleasures.\textsuperscript{81} As for 3), my
answer will be that Socrates holds that the last of these arguments is the ‘most decisive’ because
this argument alone is directed to the philosopher and to the rational part of soul, and so it alone
identifies what the appeal of the just, philosophical life is for the person who leads such a life.
Moreover, this argument alone rises to the philosopher’s standards of argumentative rigour. We
will dwell on these points in due course.

3.5: The Three Arguments of Republic IX

The first argument presents a couple of interpretive difficulties. First, it seems to be less free-
standing than the others, in that it appears to finish some of the business of the previous book.
VIII’s narrative of constitutional decline is incomplete, for it sketches the degenerate
constitutions and characters of timocracy, oligarchy, and democracy, but postpones its discussion
of tyranny – the polar opposite of just rule and its corresponding character – to Book IX. So the
first of IX’s arguments is doing a form of double-duty, in that it completes VIII’s narrative while
it also constitutes Socrates’ first argument for the supreme happiness of the just life.

A second wrinkle in IX’s first argument concerns its conclusion. As I noted earlier, this
argument stands alone in the wording of its conclusion. The second and third arguments
conclude that the just life is \textit{more pleasant} than the unjust life, whereas the first concludes with

\textsuperscript{81} In fact, Socrates hedges a bit on the question of whether there are precisely three political classes and psychic
parts. Cf. 434d1-4ff.
the claim that the just life is 

happier. This second problem may seem to derail my interpretation before it has even begun, for how, it may be objected, can IX’s first argument take as its twin targets the profit-lover and appetite when it alone among IX’s arguments doesn’t word its conclusion in terms of pleasure? We have known since Book IV that these types are motivated by pleasure, so shouldn’t we expect this argument above all others to express its conclusion in hedonic terms if it indeed takes appetite and the profit lover as its audience?

This is a powerful objection, but I think it rests on a false picture of the first argument. For that argument is clearly not devoid of hedonic considerations. On the contrary, and as we will see, its case boils down to the claim that the supremely unjust person, the tyrant (along with the city he rules), is wretched, where this wretchedness is to be cashed out in a number of terms that unmistakably evoke pain and other forms of suffering. The other side of this coin is less explicit – presumably, Socrates holds that the more pain and suffering he identifies in the tyrant’s way of life, the less he has to say on the just life’s behalf. This is, after all, a contest of two lives, a contest Socrates can win just as well by denouncing his opponent’s favoured way of life as he can by praising his own.

In any case, the troubling wording of this first argument is best explained, I propose, by the double-duty I identified earlier. It is also the last installment in the narrative begun in Book VIII, and in carrying on that narrative it focuses on the wretchedness of the tyrannical life. The conclusion Socrates wishes to draw from this damning picture for Book IX’s purposes is that therefore the opposing just life is exceedingly happy, and Socrates does indeed move quickly and cavalierly to this conclusion. But if we attend to the explicit disadvantages of the tyrannical life

82 For the general observation that Plato in Book IX is keener to condemn the bad condition than to argue concretely for the good condition, see G. Van Riel (2000), p. 16.
and, as it were, fill in the corresponding benefits of the just life, as I think Socrates expects us to do for this argument, then the line of argument runs roughly as follows:

1. The tyrannical life is supremely painful.
2. Opposing lives fare in opposite ways when it comes to pleasure and pain.
3. The just life is opposed to the tyrannical life.

C1. [From 1-3] The just life is supremely pleasant.
4. A supremely pleasant life is also supremely happy.

C2 [From C1 and 4]: The just life is supremely happy.

How does Socrates establish the crucial first premise? He does so over several pages, and so a detailed reconstruction would require many more. Fortunately, Socrates sums up the argument with a succinct tally of the tyrant’s miseries. When we see past the tyrant’s façade and look deep into his character (576e4-577a5), Socrates insists, we will see that he is plagued by a host of evils:

In truth, then, and whatever some people may think, a real tyrant is really a slave (δοῦλος), compelled to engage in the worst kind of fawning (θοπείας), slavery (δουλείας), and pandering (κόλας) to the worst kinds of people. He’s so far from satisfying his desires (τὰς ἐπιθυμίας) in any way that it is clear – if one happens to know that one must study his whole soul – that he’s in the greatest need of most things (πλείστων ἐπιδεέστατος) and truly poor (πένης).

And, if indeed his state is like that of the city he rules, then he’s full of fear (φόβου), convulsions (σφαδῶσμῶν), and pains (ὀδυνῶν) throughout his life. […]

And we’ll also attribute to the man what we mentioned before, namely, that he is inevitably envious (φθονερῷ), untrustworthy (ἀπίστῳ), unjust (ἀδίκῳ), friendless (ἀφίλῳ), impious (ἀνοσίῳ), host and nurse to every kind of vice, and that his ruling makes him even more so. And because of all these, he is extremely unfortunate and goes on to make those near him like himself. (577d8-580a5)
Let us now unpack this fraught list of evils. Calling this a ‘list’, though, is perhaps misleading if it suggests a mere itemization. For what we have here seems more along the lines of a nested set of explanations for the tyrant’s misery, the root cause appearing at the centre of our first paragraph in the form of the tyrant’s insatiable appetites, and with evils of lesser and lesser explanatory value the further we move in the passage either upwards or downwards from this centre.

Let me explain. First, we hear that the tyrant is a slave. Socrates leads with this evil perhaps for dramatic effect – what could illustrate the tragic contrast between the tyrant’s bold public image and his true character more vividly than the insight that he is in fact a slave? In the next few lines we get, it seems, the explanation for this first claim. The tyrant is a slave in that he is compelled to fawn and pander to unsavoury people. But next we get the root cause of the evils we’ve encountered so far: the tyrant’s insatiable appetites. Here the thought seems roughly along the lines of Socrates’ debate with Callicles in the *Gorgias* (491d4-495a5). The tyrant has nourished and enlarged his appetites to such a degree that they are now impossible to satisfy. This explains the need to fawn and pander, for these insatiable appetites force him to scare up resources from every source. The tyrant grovels for money because he must.

As we pass the first paragraph’s centre and move toward its conclusion, we encounter other evils that are plausibly explained by the tyrant’s insatiable appetites. Since the tyrant can never satisfy these appetites, he is always in need of more of whatever it is they want. So no matter how much money he manages to raise through flattery, groveling, or by other means, it is never enough; hence the evils of need and poverty. Finally, because it is never enough, the tyrant is tormented by certain affections. His poverty and constant need make him a skittish, fearful sort

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83 See Chapter 2.
of person. And due to his perpetually insufficient funds he experiences convulsions and pains, the inner experiences of unsatisfied appetite.

So far we have heard of the private sufferings of the tyrant. Poverty, fear, convulsions, pain – these are oppressive whether one lives in downtown Athens or alone on a deserted island. True, flattery involves other people. And even though the ‘slavery’ mentioned in our passage seems to gesture toward a loose, metaphorical notion rather than to any strict legal category, it too has undeniable social overtones. Be that as it may, in our second paragraph we learn of the distinctively social evils of tyranny – evils that don’t simply involve other people, but rather the sorts of evils that stand in the way of the tyrant’s enjoyment of healthy social relationships.

As in the paragraph before it, the root cause of these social evils appears to be the tyrant’s dysfunctional appetites. Indeed, the social ravages of tyranny turn out to be much the same as those connected with familiar forms of drug addiction. Insatiability inevitably results in poverty and perpetual need, which means that no matter how much money the tyrant manages to raise, it is never enough. Thus the tyrant necessarily falls prey to the sin of envy; wealth in any hands other than his is a source of pain and resentment. And because the tyrant must raise funds by any means, he is not to be trusted. He will turn against friends, family, fellow citizens, and even the gods to feed his appetites. This adds injustice (in its social, rather than psychic, manifestation) and impiety to our tally of the tyrant’s evils. And since the tyrant sees every member of the social fabric only for what they can offer his appetites, everyone is for him either an inferior to bully or a better to grovel to. Never knowing social equality, he can never know true friendship, either.
While this goes some way toward explaining the structure of the first argument, calling it an argument *at all* is indeed fairly charitable, seeing as Socrates does not present it as a deductive proof: as my earlier attempt may have illustrated, it resists reconstruction into discrete premises entailing a conclusion. It is rather a narrative, or perhaps a *portrait*, of the tyrannical life, a vivid uncovering of the tyrant’s psychic condition and the evils flowing from that condition. One way of illustrating its weakness as a deductively valid argument is to pose the question, What would a compelling *objection* to this argument look like? Since it resists analysis into discrete premises, the best one could do, it seems to me, would be to contest the general story Socrates tells, either by:

1) Identifying a real person whose status as a tyrant is uncontroversial, and who nevertheless avoided Socrates’ list of evils; or

2) Denying that Socrates’ list of evils makes the tyrant’s life altogether unhappy, perhaps by insisting that the tyrant is compensated in other ways.

But in both cases, the debate appears to be basically empirical, a question of whether Socrates’ general account of how life shakes out for the tyrant is accurate, as a rule.  

So Book IX’s first argument sets out to *prove* that the just life is happier than the unjust life, and so it is an argument in some sense. But it does so on the basis of a narrative or portrait. Indeed, portraiture seems the best analogy, given Socrates’ preliminary remarks for that argument that the listener must be of the sort who can “see past” (διορᾷ) the tyrant’s dazzling façade and can instead “observe” (ἰδόντα) the tyrant’s true character and behavior (577a4; 577b2).  

Prepared by the psychological theory of Book IV, the target listener is supposed to *see*

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84 Such a debate would look suspiciously like the exchange between Socrates and Polus at *Gorg.* 470c1-472d5, where Polus appeals to real tyrants Archelaus of Macedonia and the Great King of Persia to refute Socrates’ claim that tyrants are miserable. Socrates calls Polus’ style of refutation “worthless,” contrasting it with his own.

85 At 580b3, Glaucon compares judging ways of life to judging choruses. This is clearly an allusion to tragedy, and more broadly to the criticisms of poetry developed earlier in Books II and III, and yet to come in Book X. Cf.
that what Socrates is saying is true. IX’s first argument is thus more like a vivid cautionary tale about the hazards of the unjust life than a deductive proof of tyranny’s harms. This is what we ought to expect if the argument takes one of the sub-rational parts of soul as its audience.

But there is additional evidence for the hypothesis that IX’s first argument specifically takes the profit-lover as its audience, starting with the character of the tyrant’s private evils. The first few private evils – fawning, slavery, pandering – may seem to be ambiguous when it comes to deciding which of the sub-rational part of the argument’s target audience. Enslavement is naturally unappealing to anyone, but it presumably strikes distinct responses of aversion in honour- and profit-lovers. An honour-lover is most plausibly repulsed by the social stigma attached to the slave. On the other hand, slavery may trigger a very different species of aversion in the profit-lover. For this character, what is repulsive about a life of slavery is presumably the poverty and consequent lack of access to sensual pleasure in such a life. The slave is without resources, and so the scant food, drink, or other sensual pleasure he receives comes only at the whim of his master.

So, which set of considerations seems more salient in IX’s first argument? If we read on to the remaining private evils besetting the tyrant – unsatisfied desires, poverty, fear, convulsions, pains – then slavery’s lack of resources seems more consistent with these other evils. A slave is the sort of person who must beg and plead for any scraps of food he receives; hence the pandering and fawning. The unifying thread here seems to be the conditions of


86 Throughout I will refer to the profit-lover and to his psychic counterpart, the appetitive part of soul jointly as ‘the profit-lover,’ and likewise I will refer to the honour-lover and to his psychic counterpart, spirit jointly as ‘the honour-lover.’ For some problems concerning the isomorphism between soul and city see J. Moline (1978); J. Annas (1981), p. 306; and H. Lorenz (2006), Part One.
destitution and material dependence. If a deficit in esteem were the salient feature of slavery in our passage, then we might expect Socrates to dwell immediately instead on the slave’s low social standing – stressing the abuse heaped upon the slave, his inability to seek redress when he is wronged, and so forth.

Moreover, the tyrant’s convulsions and pains, his poverty, along with his general inability to satisfy his desires all seem to point to the profit-lover’s moral sensibilities. To one devoted to money for the satisfaction of the bodily appetites, avoiding the evil of poverty is likely to be paramount in deciding what sort of life to live. Similarly, the narrative that a tyrannical life is painful and insatiable hits precisely the right note if one’s target audience consists of people devoted to the pursuit of sensual pleasure. If this analysis is along the right lines, then there are good reasons to conclude two related things about IX’s first argument. First, despite some appearances to the contrary, it seeks to establish that the just life is happier on the ground that it is more pleasant. Second, the argument takes as its target the profit-lover, and aims to show that the just life exceeds the unjust life in precisely those pleasures that are dearest to this particular audience.

Let us turn now to IX’s second argument for the supreme happiness of the just life. This argument figures prominently in the case I want to make, for on the view I am proposing it furnishes the framework for understanding the role that all three of IX’s arguments play. Specifically, this argument makes an important modification to the psychology of Book IV in what appears to be its first premise, when Socrates begins the argument with the following claim: “[I]t seems to me that there are three pleasures corresponding to the three parts of soul, one peculiar to each part, and similarly with desires and kinds of rule (580d7-9).” With our treatment

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87 This is precisely Socrates’ line of objection against Callicles’ crude hedonism in the Gorgias. See Chapter 2.
of the first argument complete, my aim is now to show that this second argument takes the
honour-lover as its intended audience.

In fleshing out the psychological picture on which this argument relies, Socrates claims
more than that each psychic part/political character prizes certain pleasures. He also claims that a
specific psychic part/political character spurns alien pleasures, i.e. those belonging to the other
types. On this picture, Socrates’ claim is that appetite regards the pleasures belonging to the
other parts as “worthless compared to that of making a profit, if he gets no money from them
(581d1-2).” Similarly, the honour-lover dismisses the profit lover’s pleasures as “vulgar,” and
considers the philosopher’s pleasures of learning to be “smoke and nonsense” unless these bring
him honour (581d4-6). Reason and the philosopher prize the pleasures involved in “knowing
where the truth lies and always being in some pleasant condition while learning.” When it comes
to the other pleasures, namely those belonging to the profit- and honour-lovers, the philosopher
dismisses these as not desirable in themselves but “really necessary, since he’d have no need for
them if they weren’t necessary for life (581d8-e3).”

So Socrates presents us with a dispute as to which pleasures are in fact most pleasant.
Each part is equally chauvinistic about its own pleasures, and hence equally dismissive of the
others’ pleasures. But clearly all three parties can’t be right about this. At best, only one of the
three parties in this dispute can be right. So, Socrates reasons, we must settle the dispute. Before
moving on to his proposed method for settling the question, Socrates wants to stress that the
three classes of pleasure are about to be compared in accordance with a single standard. The
question before us, he claims, is “not about which way of living is finer or more shameful
[κάλλιον καὶ αἰσχρόν] or better or worse [χείρον καὶ ἁμένον], but about which is more pleasant
and less painful [ἡδόν καὶ ἀλυπότερον] (581e6-582a1).” In other words, Socrates wishes to bracket all other evaluative domains and to focus on how three ways of life and their corresponding pleasures rank when it comes to the question of which life is most pleasant (and least painful).

With the character of the dispute established, Socrates proposes a set of criteria for judging it, proposing that the best set of criteria for judging matters – presumably, not just this matter but any matter at all – consists of “experience, reason, and argument” [ἐμπειρία τε καὶ φρονήσει καὶ λόγῳ] (582a3-4). As becomes clear only later, Socrates views the last two criteria as essentially of a piece, so that what we are getting are basically two criteria: experience, on the one hand, and reason and argument, on the other.89

Socrates first sets his sights on the criterion of experience. Here ‘experience of a pleasure’ seems simply to refer to participating in or otherwise enjoying the pleasure in question. Socrates and Glaucon begin by comparing the profit-lover’s experience to that of the philosopher, and agree that the philosopher’s experience is broader. Appearing to agree with the philosopher’s claim that the profit-lover’s pleasures are necessary in a way his own are not, they reason that the philosopher must experience the bodily pleasures and those connected with profit if he is to live – a philosopher has to eat, after all. By contrast, the profit-lover may well pass his whole life without ever even having to participate in any serious learning or the pleasures connected with it. And even if he suddenly got the urge to, say, do some advanced geometry, he couldn’t easily do so (582b2-c1). The philosopher’s experience is thus broader than the profit-

88 In this passage Socrates seems to treat the question of which pleasures themselves are most pleasant to be equivalent to the question of which life is most pleasant.

lover’s, and this means that if we are to judge by experience, we ought to take the philosopher’s preference for his own pleasures to be authoritative. So the pleasures of learning are more pleasant than those of the body and of profit, by the criterion of experience.  

Could the honour-lover’s pleasures be more pleasant than those of the philosopher? Glaucon observes that all three types – the rich man, the courageous man, and the wise man – share in these pleasures to some degree, since honour comes to anyone who “accomplishes his aim (582c4-5).” However, the pleasures of learning appear to be an exclusive perk of the philosophical life; only the philosopher gets to taste them. Since the philosopher’s experience has been shown to be broader than both of his rivals, he is the “finest judge [κάλλιστα τῶν ἄνδρῶν κρίνει οὖτος],” and so (presumably) the philosopher’s preference for his own pleasures has the best claim to be true in our dispute (582d1).

The second stage of the argument undertakes to show that the philosopher’s pleasures are most pleasant by the joint criterion of ‘reason and argument’ as well. The argument may be reconstructed as follows:

1. Reason and argument are the best “instrument” [ὄργανον] for judging things (582d8).  

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90 Many commentators compare Socrates’ method here to John Stuart Mill’s method in Utilitarianism, Ch. 2 for distinguishing ‘higher’ from ‘lower’ pleasures. See, for example, N. R. Murphy (1951), pp. 208-9. For some helpful cautionary remarks, see J. Annas (1981), p. 309.

91 Socrates’ order of operations in this stage of the argument seems to mimic that of IV in dividing the soul: First, distinguish reason from appetite. Next, distinguish reason from spirit. He skips the intermediate step of comparing appetite’s pleasures to those of spirit (as he distinguishes these parts themselves with the Leontius example in IV), presumably because this is immaterial to the issue at hand. Socrates wants to know which pleasures come out on top, and appetite’s pleasures have already met defeat, so the question of which part gets second prize is not that important to Socrates for the moment. He does explicitly award second place to spirit at 583a5-7 when he considers our second criterion, namely reason/argument.

92 Strictly speaking, Socrates claims only that we ought to judge by reason and argument, but this seems ordinarily to be equivalent to the claim that these are the best means to judge, and the latter formulation appears at 582e6, albeit with ‘experience’ included among the best means so as to wrap up the entire second argument.
2. This instrument belongs most of all to the philosopher (582d10).

3. The person to whom the best instrument belongs makes the truest judgment [implied by 582d12-17].

C1. The philosopher makes the truest judgment (582e7) (1-3).

4. The philosopher’s judgment is that his own pleasures of learning are most pleasant [background claim].

C2. The judgment that the philosopher’s pleasures of learning are most pleasant is truest (C1-4).

The joint conclusion of the first and second stages of the argument, then, is that the philosopher’s judgment is most firmly backed by all of the criteria that were agreed to be most reliable or best: experience, reason, and argument, and so his position in the dispute outlined earlier is most authoritative.

The strongest evidence for the claim that the honour-lover is the second argument’s target, it seems to me, concerns the general strategy of the argument itself. Recall that Plato characterizes the honour-lover as a character who comes closer to the philosopher’s standards of rationality than his profit-loving rival does, but who nevertheless falls crucially short of the philosopher’s standards of rationality. This as it stands is a nebulous claim, but IX’s second argument perhaps furnishes it with some content. In both its stages, the second argument relies on an appeal to authority. In the first stage, the philosopher’s authority is grounded in his use of experience as a criterion, while in the second his authority is grounded in his use of reason and argument as a criterion. But in their respective appeals to authority, both stages seek to establish the correctness of the philosopher’s preference without, as it were, telling us anything about why the philosopher prefers the pleasures he does. IX’s second argument tells us nothing about the relevant feature of the philosopher’s pleasures that makes them most pleasant (nor, indeed, about

93 Throughout this reconstruction I take “truest” [ἀληθέστατα] to be equivalent to “most likely to be true.”
what it is about experience, reason, and argument that makes them such reliable criteria). It argues rather that we ought to trust the philosopher’s judgment that his pleasures are in fact most pleasant.

This approach seems to strike precisely the right chord for a non-philosophical listener, someone for whom the workings of reason itself remain opaque, but who is nevertheless of such a character as to respect the philosopher’s pronouncements. The argument’s appeal to authority renders it a strange one to pitch to the philosopher himself – it would in effect be arguing, ‘You should pick your own side in the dispute, since people like you prefer the pleasures you already enjoy, and people like you ought to be trusted.’ Presumably, a true philosopher would be more interested in the specific reasons philosophers have for preferring the pleasures they do, and would be happy to dispense with blanket endorsements of the philosopher’s method and authority. From the philosopher’s perspective, real respect for reason and argument is presumably best expressed by one’s own efforts to think things through and to follow the reasons themselves. IX’s second argument is thus most appropriate for spirit/the honour-lover, for whom appeals to one’s merits as a judge are plausibly more central than the grounds on which one judges.

94 Socrates refers to spirit as reason’s “natural ally” (441a1-2) [ἐπίκουρον ὅν τῷ λογιστικῷ φύσιν], (cf. Tim. 70a-b; Phaedr. 253d). Spirit’s ‘alliance’ with reason is not between equals, however, as Socrates makes clear when he proceeds to characterize spirit’s distinctive task of being “subject” [ὑπηκόος] to reason as well as its “ally” [συμμάχω]. With its distinctive virtue of courage – that is, the excellence that spirit possesses in virtue of which we call a man courageous – it “preserves in the midst of pains and pleasures the rule handed down by the reason as to what is or is not to be feared” [διασωόμαι διὰ τὰ λυπητὰ καὶ ἡδονῆς τὸ υπὸ τῶν λόγων παραγιγελθὲν δεινὸν τε καὶ μή]. So spirit naturally helps reason, but as a subordinate. One way of understanding spirit’s relationship to reason, I propose, is that it is disposed to accept and obey reason’s edicts even though it often – perhaps never – fully understands the reasoning in support of those edicts, as would a good soldier or a loyal dog. As Tennyson put it, “Theirs not to make reply/Theirs not to reason why/Theirs but to do and die,” The Charge of the Light Brigade, 1854.
So far we have examined the evidence that i) IX’s first argument takes appetite/the profit-lover as its target; and ii) that IX’s second argument takes the honour-lover as its target. We must now examine the evidence that IX’s third and final argument is directed to the philosopher. As we have already seen, Socrates heralds this as “the most decisive of the overthrows,” and so he clearly takes this argument to be the most successful by some standard. My suggestion here is that he takes this argument to be the most successful because it alone of IX’s three arguments rises to the philosopher’s standard of a rigorous argument. Unfortunately, proving this rigour by means of a complete reconstruction would take a long time, because the argument is simply too long and complex.\textsuperscript{95} Instead, I merely want to note that it involves no long narratives as the first argument does, nor is it at bottom an appeal to authority, as the second argument is. And, broadly speaking, it actually \textit{explains} the philosopher’s preference for the pleasures of learning by showing that these pleasures are most pleasant because they are truest, where this means that they rest on (or just are) correct opinions about reality (585b13-15). The precise content of this claim need not detain us here.\textsuperscript{96} Suffice it to say that this argument fills the lacuna in the second argument’s appeal to authority, in that it specifies the feature that \textit{explains} the philosopher’s preference for his own pleasures.

Moreover, the argument contains certain key claims that are categorically unappealing to the lower parts of soul. Consider the claim that what participates less in truth and knowledge also participates less in being (585c6-12). We are told in the second argument that only the philosopher \textit{cares} about where the truth lies – honour-lovers care more for control, victory, and


\textsuperscript{96} We will consider in great detail the role played by true opinion in certain pleasures in the next two chapters, in connection with the \textit{Philebus}. 
reputation, whereas profit-lovers care more for money and gratification. To be a member of one of the lower types is necessarily to care more about something other than discovering the truth of things – if this were one’s top concern, one would just be a philosopher. It is, thus, as it were, psychologically impossible for the lower types to care about this premise and to accept it, and indeed the argument in which it figures, without ceasing to be members of the lower types at all. The third argument also contains scathing critiques of the pleasures of the lower parts. Socrates denounces the appetitive part’s pleasures for creating an insatiable life, and moreover insists that their mixture with pain makes these pleasures “mere images and shadow-paintings of true pleasures (585e5-586c4).” And spirit’s distinctive pleasures come under attack for promoting envy and violence, and for operating “without calculation or understanding (586c5-d2).” Once again, to accept either of these critiques is, as it were, to repudiate one’s membership to the psychic part or political class defined by the patterns of pursuit being criticized.

3.6: Conclusions

So read, Republic IX presents strong evidence for the view that Socrates remains committed to TV. For two of IX’s three arguments for the just life appear to argue that this life is supremely happy on the ground that it is pleasantest, and TV licenses precisely this inference from ‘pleasantest’ to ‘happiest.’ As we have seen, the common interpretation denies that the pleasure arguments are really meant to establish that the just life is supremely happy. This line of interpretation undermines in a couple of ways the view that Socrates retains TV. First, it implies that Socrates isn’t really inferring the just life’s supreme happiness from its being pleasantest. More broadly, in support of its claim that the pleasure arguments are made to play a subsidiary role, the common interpretation denies that considerations of pleasure figure at all either in the
fundamental challenge of Book II or in Socrates’ complex attempt to meet that challenge in the rest of the Republic. Thus I began with arguments to overturn the common interpretation, on both philosophical and textual grounds. This vindicated the more natural line of interpretation that IX’s pleasure arguments argue that the just life is happiest on the ground that it is pleasantest. It also confirmed that considerations of pleasure are central to Socrates’ case for justice.

Overturning the common interpretation also cleared the way for my own interpretation of IX’s three arguments. Perhaps its most surprising claims concern IX’s first argument. Despite appearances to the contrary – particularly the wording of that argument’s conclusion – my contention is that this argument, like its two successors, argues that the just life is happier than the unjust life on the ground that it is more pleasant. More broadly, we have seen the evidence for the claim that each of IX’s arguments targets a distinct part of soul and political class, and moreover that each argument seeks to recommend the just life on the ground that it offers a greater share of the specific target’s distinctive pleasures than the unjust life does.

How does this support the view that Republic IX continues the basic project of the measuring art in the Protagoras? First, if this interpretation is along the right lines, then in all three of IX’s arguments, it seems, Socrates relies on the assumption that there is a reliable connection between pleasure and happiness, which is precisely what we ought to expect on the supposition that he maintains committed to TV.

One reason for this general focus on pleasure in Book IX may flow from the fundamental challenge in Book II, where Glaucon and Adeimantus insist that Socrates defend justice in a way that ignores reputations, social status, and the like. If we pause to consider the formidable constraint this imposes on Socrates’ subsequent defence, we may well ask ourselves, ‘What
remains exactly for Socrates to appeal to in defending justice, now that the entire social realm appears to be off-limits?’ Part of the answer to this question arrives no doubt in Book IV in Socrates’ discussion of psychic health. But if my interpretation of Book II’s fundamental challenge is on target (along with my understanding of Book IV’s discussion of psychic health), then IV appears to establish only half of what Socrates needs: that justice is psychic health seems to explain why it is valuable for its own sake, but Socrates must still prove that justice is also valuable for its consequences if he is to prove that justice is to be placed among the finest goods in Glaucon’s threefold schema.

On my view, IX fulfills this role by showing that justice confers more favourable consequences than injustice does. And since reputations and the like are non-starters on Glaucon’s and Adeimantus’ stipulation, pleasure presents Socrates with a fruitful domain in which to find justice’s favourable private consequences: many pleasures seem to be reputation-independent in just the sense Socrates needs, in that we seem to be able to enjoy them privately, and whatever our reputation happens to be. So pleasure offers an attractive class of goods for Socrates to appeal to as he tries to thread the needle of establishing justice’s favourable consequences without breathing a single word about reputation and other external, contingent consequences.

What of the lacuna in the akrasia argument we identified in Chapter 1? That is, does IX furnish us with a suitable account of pleasure to ground TV in the Protagoras? There are a number of reasons to doubt this. First, even if we suppose that IX develops a single, unified account of pleasure, its tripartite schema of pleasure seems to be tied, both to the psychology of Book IV – a psychology which, according to most interpreters at any rate, is absent in the Protagoras – and to the political and rhetorical concerns we have identified, and so it is also
difficult to determine how much of what we know about pleasure in IX can be transposed to the Protagoras. But in fact, it is not clear whether Republic IX furnishes us with a unified account of pleasure at all: Socrates seems to hold that the pleasures of the profit-lover, those of the honour-lover, and those of the philosopher are in some important sense distinct, such that in defective constitutions one part is forced by another to pursue “alien [ἄλλοτρίαν]” pleasures instead of its own (587a4). Depending on how distinct we take these three sorts of pleasures to be, there is a worry that IX develops three distinct accounts of pleasure rather than a unified account.

Nonetheless, a number of commentators take IX to offer just such a unifying account, subsuming the intellectual, spirited, and appetitive pleasures under the general conception of pleasure as replenishment, a conception we met in the last chapter in connection with Callicles.97 On this theory, all pleasure consists in the refilling of a painful lack. However, as some of these same commentators acknowledge, this account of pleasure as it appears in IX seems to be underdeveloped and confused. For example, Socrates begins the third argument by positing three states: pleasure, pain, and the intermediate state between them (583c1-584a11). He characterizes the first two as kinds of motion [κίνησις], whereas he refers the intermediate state, which is often confused with either pleasure or pain, as a state of calm [ἡσυχία]. This would seem to suggest that on Socrates’ view all pleasure is a ‘motion’ – specifically, a process of filling – such that whenever someone is experiencing a pleasure, she is necessarily undergoing a kind of motion. And yet in the very same argument Socrates proceeds to fault those who go in for the pleasures of feasts and the like on the ground that they fail to “taste any stable or pure pleasure” [οὐδὲ βεβαίου τε καὶ καθαρᾶς ἡδονῆς ἐγεύσαντο]. This condemnation of sensual pleasure is indeed confusing given the categories Socrates has just drawn: if all pleasure is a kind of motion, then

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what could count as a stable pleasure? One would expect Socrates to identify all states of stability and rest with the calm, intermediate state which he has just been careful to distinguish from both pleasure and pain.

Socrates introduces further confusion as to whether or not the pure pleasures enjoyed only by the philosopher should be taken to fit the replenishment model of pleasure. On the one hand, he characterizes intellectual pleasures as cases of psychic ‘filling’ [πλήρωσίς] which would seem to support the view that even the philosopher’s pleasures consist in replenishment, albeit in the soul rather than in the body (585a6-e5). While this account fits the pleasures of learning well enough – the acquisition of knowledge is plausibly the ‘filling in’ of a painful gap in one’s understanding – it is hard to see how it is supposed to cover the more stable pleasures that one might think truly characterize the philosophical life: those involved in the steady contemplation of what one already knows, for example.98 Socrates even seems at one point simply to define pleasure as a kind of natural filling, although this definition is couched in a conditional [εἰ ἄρα τὸ πληροῦσθαι τῶν φύσει προσηκόντων ἡ δύστι] (585d10). On the other hand, he focuses on the pleasures of smell to drive home the point that there exist pure [καθαρός] pleasures, i.e. those that are unmixed with pain. The point seems to be that, say, the pleasure of walking through the food court at the mall and suddenly smelling freshly-baked cinnamon rolls is neither preceded nor followed by any discernible pain. And yet if Socrates defines pleasure as the refilling of some painful lack, then it is odd indeed that he singles out as pure precisely those pleasures that are unmixed with pain. Of course, Socrates could remain loyal to a version of the replenishment model with the added claim that the so-called pure pleasures consist in the refilling of strictly

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98 In Chapter 2 I outlined some of the perversity of applying this model to intellectual life. To continue to experience the pleasures of learning, it seems Callicles must continually forget what he knows so that he can learn it again and again.
unfelt (and hence painless) lacks – perhaps I simply didn’t know what I was missing before a smelled the cinnamon rolls. But nowhere in IX’s third argument does Socrates ever pause to make this distinction clear. And in any case, Plato may rightly have feared that the identification of pleasure with replenishment per se would lead to the view that certain pleasures themselves may go unfelt, just as certain replenishments presumably do; a view that would invite something very close to the Calliclean worry that Socrates’ ideal life is fit for stones and corpses (492e5).99

Matters get even more confusing when Socrates refers to the strictly psychic pleasures as ‘true’ [(ἀληθὲς)] (585e1), leading us to wonder what to make of the fuss he has just made over the ‘pure’ and yet unmistakably bodily pleasures of smell. Are these pleasures pure yet untrue? In short, in IX Plato introduces a number of non-coextensive standards for evaluating pleasures: the mixed versus the pure; the untrue versus the true; the bodily versus the psychic. Given these problems, it is doubtful that Plato presents Republic IX’s replenishment model as his considered view as to the nature of pleasure. It is more likely that this model represents the sort of account of pleasure Socrates could expect Glaucon and Adeimantus to accept without resistance.

For this reason we must look to the later Philebus for Plato’s considered view as to the nature and value of pleasure. Indeed, this dialogue sorts out many of Republic IX’s conceptual muddles and raises for the first time a deeper question about pleasure’s very status as a definite conceptual category. I will thus take up Plato’s answer to this question in the next two chapters, which will focus on the Philebus’ so-called ‘Choice of Lives’ argument to determine what account of pleasure (if any) Socrates and his interlocutor, Protarchus end up recognizing, and whether pleasure turns out to track the good on this account in the way TV requires. I will argue that in the dialectic between Socrates and Protarchus Plato develops an account of pleasure

according to which pleasure consists of two elements: i) the existence of some state of affairs; and ii) the subject’s taking a suitably favourable attitude toward that state of affairs. I will also propose that this account of pleasure does indeed complete the project of the *Protagoras* by furnishing us at long last with an account of pleasure that reliably tracks happiness in the way TV requires.
Chapter 4: Attitudinal Pleasure and the Choice of Lives in Plato’s *Philebus*

4.1: Introduction

The previous three chapters have defended a particular unitarian picture of Plato’s account of pleasure across several dialogues. In Chapter 1, the elements of this picture developed out of a novel interpretation of the *Protagoras*’ akrasia argument. Contrary to a scholarly consensus about that argument’s reliance on hedonism in some sense, I argued that it relies on no more than TV, the distinct view that pleasure reliably tracks goodness or happiness. I then argued that the akrasia argument stands in need of a concrete conception of pleasure if it is to be defended.

The following two chapters then examined other dialogues in search of such a conception. Chapter 2 dealt with the *Gorgias*, focusing on Socrates’ debate with Callicles. I distinguished between Callicles’ core commitments, on the one hand, and those he develops on the fly in defence of those core commitments, on the other. I argued that Callicles’ core commitments consist in a particular conception of nature as perpetual strife, coupled with a rejection of all self-restraint as a conception of happiness. I then argued that Callicles’ commitment to hedonism as an ethical position, his commitment to a particular sort of pleasure-seeking life as a happy one, and his particular conception of pleasure all develop in defence of his core commitments. I then proposed that Socrates’ aim in attacking Callicles’ hedonism and preferred way of life is not to defeat hedonism or the pursuit of pleasure *tout court*, but rather to defeat these as they are grounded in Callicles’ conception of pleasure. This narrower aim thus leaves open the possibility of Socratic approval of a distinct pleasure-seeking life grounded in a distinct conception of pleasure, and so the evidence of the *Gorgias* does not imperil the
interpretation developed in Chapter 1. It merely reveals that Calliclean pleasure will not fill the gap I identified in the akrasia argument in Chapter 1.

Then in Chapter 3 we moved on to consider Republic IX, in which Socrates seems to advance (at least) two arguments that the just, philosophical life is happiest on the ground that it is pleasantest. This of course makes complete sense if we take Socrates to be committed to TV: hence the interpretation developed in Chapter 1 uniquely positions us to explain why Socrates argues as he does without committing to hedonism. That is, since Socrates subscribes to TV, he can argue that the just life is happiest on the ground that it is pleasantest without arguing that it is happiest on account of its being pleasantest. So it seems that Socrates remains committed to TV in Republic IX.

But does Republic IX provide a satisfying account of what pleasure is? I concluded that it does not. While the second and third arguments of IX seem to identify different sorts of pleasure, neither argument furnishes us with the sort of account it seems the Socrates of the Protagoras needs to generate a plausible defence of TV. In particular, we have yet to find a suitably unified account of pleasure such that all instances of pleasure may plausibly be thought to track goodness in the way the akrasia argument requires.

As a result, we find ourselves with one important task left to complete: namely, we must now turn to the Philebus to investigate whether it provides us with the conception of pleasure that eluded us in Chapter 3. This dialogue offers mixed prospects for success. On the bright side, the Philebus stands as Plato’s last and most developed treatment of pleasure, and so there is a good chance that it contains the answer to our question. On the other hand, the Philebus is among Plato’s most difficult and complicated dialogues, and so our task is not likely to be easy. Moreover, the Philebus is not just an exploration of the nature of pleasure. Its various
pronouncements on this subject arise in connection with a contest of lives, with Socrates championing the life of pure intelligence and his interlocutor, Protarchus, championing the title character’s favoured life of pleasure.

Seen in this way, the dialectical framework of the *Philebus* may seem to present a problem for our unitarian picture, in much the same way as Socrates’ debate with Callicles in the *Gorgias*. Once again, Socrates is arguing *against* an interlocutor who holds that the pleasure-seeking life is happiest, and hence, it seems, against the truth of TV as well. There is an important difference between the dialectic of the *Gorgias* and that of the *Philebus*, however. As we have seen, the showdown between Socrates and Callicles is highly combative. This is in part owing to Callicles’ bellicosity, to be sure. But it is a structural feature of the dialectic as well. There can be only one winner in Socrates’ debate with Callicles – success of Socrates’ refutation entails that Callicles’ position falls. But matters are not quite so clear-cut in Socrates’ extended debate with Protarchus in the *Philebus*. While there may be important temperamental similarities between Philebus himself and Callicles, Protarchus comes across as a much more thoughtful and reasonable interlocutor. And his debate with Socrates cannot accurately be characterized as winner-take-all. Indeed, Socrates and Protarchus seem to experience a kind of rapprochement, as both interlocutors concede that the pure life they champion must incorporate elements of its rival in some way. This rapprochement begins early in the dialogue, in the ‘Choice of Lives’ argument (hereafter CL) (22a1-b8), and the recapitulation of this argument at a late stage (60d3-e5) suggests that it survives later developments.

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106 Plato gives us very little to go when it comes to Philebus, but his remark at 12a7 – “I think and always shall think that pleasure is the victor” – seems to cast him as stubborn and unreasonable (Unless otherwise indicated all references to the *Philebus* refer to Harold North Fowler’s translation in *Perseus*, 1925).
It is worth dwelling on an important implication of this dialectical structure for our interpretation of the *Philebus*. In sharp contrast with that of Callicles, Protarchus’ position is not one simply to be driven into the ground. Protarchus’ hedonism does not carry the day, to be sure, but it clearly has something to be said for it in Plato’s view – so much so that Socrates must modify his own intellectualist position and synthesize it with that of Protarchus if he wants to give a satisfying account of the happy life.

I propose that these concessions open up a certain distance between Plato’s considered position and the opening positions on either side of the debate, such that Plato’s view lies somewhere in between. Of course, the real question is how exactly Plato’s own position falls somewhere ‘in between’ those of Socrates and Protarchus. I will answer this question in due course. But what this means for our general approach to the dialogue is that both Protarchus and Socrates will be treated tentatively as representatives for Plato’s own view – as imperfect representatives, to be sure, but as representatives nonetheless. Once we arrive at Plato’s full-fledged account of the happy life towards the end of the dialogue, we will be in a position to examine what elements Plato has taken up from each side of the debate.  

*The Philebus* seems to stand apart from all of Plato’s earlier treatments of pleasure in another important way. At the risk of oversimplifying, in earlier dialogues Plato’s general aim seems to be to show that the lives of intelligence and pleasure-maximization converge. In the *Protagoras*, the agent with a certain species of wisdom (namely the measuring art) is also the one who gets the most pleasure (and the least pain) out of life. In the *Gorgias*, even the debate between Socrates and Callicles is best understood as a showdown between enlightened and

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101 Another example of the sort of synthesis I have in mind appears in the famous Battle of the Gods and the Giants in Plato’s *Sophist* (245e-249d), in which it seems that the positions of two warring sides are being integrated into a superior view. Cf. Lesley Brown (2011), Mary Louise Gill (forthcoming), and Rachel Barney (forthcoming).
unenlightened hedonism, respectively – or so I have argued in Chapter 2. And in Republic IX, Socrates’ explicit aim is to show that the just and philosophical life turns out also to be supremely pleasant, and thus supremely happy.

With pleasure and wisdom yoked together in this way in earlier works, it is not always clear what Plato takes to be the distinct contributions of each of these elements in the happy life. But in the Philebus, he finally pries pleasure and wisdom apart and considers them as competing goods, with Protarchus championing pleasure and Socrates championing wisdom. CL represents a key move in this debate. In this argument, Socrates considers a life of unmixed pleasure and a life of unmixed wisdom and rejects both of them in favour of the mixed life – that is, a life containing both pleasure and wisdom. With this much established, Socrates and Protarchus go on to consider which of the two elements in the best life – pleasure and thinking – is the cause (αἴτιον) of its being the best life (22d2). At long last (albeit over the course of many subsequent pages), it seems Plato is finally going to settle the issue of what it is about the wise and pleasant life that makes it the best life for human beings.

CL. The importance of this argument for the dialogue as a whole is widely appreciated, but the interpretation I will offer here challenges a widely-held view about the argument’s

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102 In short, I argue in Chapter 2 that hedonism is more remote from Callicles’ core position than is often supposed, and so Socrates’ real target in their debate is not hedonism but Callicles’ fundamental rejection of self-restraint. On this picture, Socrates’ main point is that Callicles must rein himself in if he is to achieve the good, whatever he takes that good to consist in.

103 Here I pass over at least one important exception, the Phaedo, the broad dualism of which seems to pit ‘pleasure’ – understood, it seems, as bodily pleasure – against the rational soul and its distinctive activity of thinking. I do so because the Phaedo differs from these other dialogues in several important ways. First, although the Phaedo is of course concerned with ethics and the good life, this is not its main concern, but rather Socrates’ proofs for the soul’s immortality. Second, unlike these more ethics-focused dialogues, the Socrates of the Phaedo faces no opposing conception of the good life to speak of. He is among friends and fellow philosophers, all of whom are generally on board with the view that the philosophical life is best. Third, and most importantly, the explicit dualism of the Phaedo leads Socrates to target bodily pleasure exclusively, leaving obscure the nature and value of non-bodily pleasure.
consequences for Protarchus in particular. On this popular view, CL marks Protarchus’ conversion from his starting hedonist position to a form of pleasure-inclusive pluralism; specifically, on this interpretation the result of CL is that Protarchus takes the view that pleasure and knowledge constitute distinct goods with distinct contributions to happiness. In this chapter I challenge this interpretation (along with an alternative interpretation), and argue that Protarchus remains a hedonist in the wake of CL. On the view I present here, CL exposes a serious flaw in Protarchus’ working conception of pleasure as consisting of ‘pleasant feelings’, leading him to reject this conception. CL thus represents the first of two important developments in the dialogue leading to Protarchus’ adoption of the view that pleasure (properly understood) consists of a species of mental attitude taken towards certain states of affairs. The second of these developments, discussed in Chapter 5, occurs in the dialogue’s infamous debate over the existence of false pleasures. On my view, also developed later in Chapter 5, Protarchus concedes pleasure-inclusive pluralism only in the dialogue’s closing section.

I begin here in Section 2 by outlining the problem that pleasure’s diversity presents for Protarchus’ hedonist position. I then argue that this places Protarchus in a specific dialectical position. That is, his main task in the dialogue is a familiar one for the hedonist: he must find an account of pleasure that furnishes him with a plausible candidate for the good. In Section 3 I leave the Philebus to consider a distinction between two sorts of value, final value and intrinsic value. Then in Sections 4 and 5 I apply this to the Philbeus, and to CL in particular. I argue that Protarchus rejects the pure life of pleasure because it fails the second criterion of the good; that is, because it lacks intrinsic value. Then in Section 6 I propose that CL pushes Protarchus in the direction of an alternative account of pleasure for Protarchus, one that seems to satisfy the criterion of intrinsic value. I call this new conception of pleasure ‘Attitudinal Pleasure.’ In
Section 7 I conclude by outlining the three interpretive puzzles in the *Philebus* that this interpretation solves. These, along with some refinements of AP, are the focus of my fifth and final chapter.

4.2: The Diversity of Pleasure

*Philebus* Socrates doubts that pleasure represents a genuine kind. He has a point. Though pleasure is familiar to us all, arriving at an account of it proves to be surprisingly difficult. This is an especially serious problem for the hedonist, who owes us not only an account of pleasure, but also an explanation as to why it stands for us as a special object of pursuit. Already committed to the view that pleasure alone is what we ought to pursue, the hedonist needs the answer to the question ‘What is pleasure?’ to furnish a plausible candidate for the good.\(^{109}\)

This connection for the hedonist between the conceptual question (i.e. what is it?) and the ethical question (i.e. why/how should I care about it?) goes some way toward explaining what is, I think, a frustrating feature of the dialectic between Socrates and Protarchus, namely that it seems they are debating the merits of pleasure before they have arrived at a satisfying account of what it is. Since the dispute in the *Philebus* is about what makes us happy, and since Protarchus is committed at the outset to the title character’s view that the answer to this question is pleasure, his main job in the dialogue is to arrive at an account of pleasure that makes his position look plausible. So at every point in the dialogue that pleasure is being defined or marked off, Protarchus ought to be asking himself the following question: Does the account of pleasure I am assenting to here furnish me with a suitable candidate for the ethical claim I want to make?

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\(^{109}\) As we have seen, our interpretation of the akrasia argument in the *Protagoras* identified a gap in the argument; specifically, the argument furnishes no account of pleasure whatever, as is required to establish the truth of TV. In our examinations of the *Gorgias* and *Republic* IX in chapters 2 and 3 respectively we searched in vain for such an account. I contend that such an account finally arrives in the *Philebus* as Protarchus searches for a unified account of pleasure that renders plausible his thesis that pleasure is the good.
What I want to propose in this section is that the Protarchus who confronts CL takes
to consist of ‘pleasant feelings’, as I defined these earlier – i.e. the sort of feelings one
experiences when one eats or drinks, or when some part of the body is otherwise suitably
stimulated. This may indeed be what Philebus takes to be the scope of ‘pleasure,’ or at any rate
what Protarchus takes Philebus’ view to amount to.110 If we suppose that Protarchus is working
with a conception of pleasure as ‘pleasant feelings’ only, then the function of CL appears to be to
disabuse him of that conception. When CL presents Protarchus with a pure life of ‘pleasant
feelings’, he recognizes at once that such a conception of pleasure fails to furnish him with a
suitable candidate for the good. Now, the dialogue of course does not end there, and soThe
outcome of CL appears to be twofold for Protarchus, or so I will argue. First, he recognizes that
‘pleasant feelings’ cannot serve as a plausible conception of pleasure for his hedonism. Since he
wants to continue to defend some version of hedonism, it seems he must find some other
conception of pleasure to make his case.111 Second, he and Socrates agree that a mixed life
containing pleasure and thinking is preferable to either of the pure lives. Protarchus can
consistently hold both of these positions; or so I will argue in Section 5.

110 I find nothing in Socrates’ statement of Philebus’ position that tells against this interpretation: “Very well: Philebus says that to all living beings enjoyment and pleasure and gaiety and whatever accords with that sort of thing are a good [Φίληβος μὲν τοίνυν ἁγαθὸν ἐξαίρετον φησι τὸ χαίρειν πάσιν ζῷοις καὶ τὴν ἡδονὴν καὶ τέρψιν, καὶ ὅσα τοῦ γένους ἐστὶ τούτου σύμφωνα] (11b4-5). And the explicit inclusion of all living beings within the scope of Philebus’ claim may suggest that the pleasures, enjoyments, etc. in question would be those that humans share with non-human animals (including the mollusks of CL), which are presumably ‘pleasant feelings’ as I have defined them. It is not clear that either Philebus or Protarchus take ‘living beings’ to include the gods, although this arises as an issue later on (32d-33c; cf. Carone p. 263 fn. 13 for evidence from the Philebus and other dialogues that Plato conceives of the gods as ‘living beings’ or ζῶοι).

111 That Protarchus is rethinking the conception of pleasure handed over to him by Philebus is perhaps playfully hinted at by Plato at 15c7-9. Socrates and Protarchus have just agreed that their first order of business is to investigate the genuine problem concerning the one and the many as it applies to their respective candidates for the good. When the question of Philebus’ agreement arises, Protarchus remarks, “As for Philebus, it might be best not to bother him with questions any further, but let sleeping dogs lie.”
Let us begin with the general problem confronting Protarchus. Why is pleasure so hard to define? One reason is that a wide variety of things gives us pleasure. We ordinarily experience pleasure when slipping into a warm bath, or when receiving a soothing foot massage, or while drinking cold beer. On the one hand, such mundane observations go some way toward explaining hedonism’s intuitive appeal. After all, goodness seems to be a rather broad and heterogeneous category as well—we take many diverse things to be valuable. If hedonism is roughly the view that pleasure alone is the good, then the seemingly endless heterogeneity of things that give us pleasure would seem to support the sort of identity claim the hedonist must defend. But on the other hand, if the hedonist is to explain what it is that we ought to pursue—what it is that makes a life worthwhile—then pleasure’s diversity also presents a real problem. It is hard to put one’s finger on the common feature in the taking of a warm bath, the foot massage, and the drinking of cold beer such that we count them all as pleasures.

The problem does not wait long to arise in the *Philebus*. No sooner have the terms of the debate been set, and Protarchus assigned the job of defending the title character’s hedonism, than Socrates remarks:

>[A]s to pleasure, I know that it is complex and, just as I said, we must make it our starting point and consider what sort of nature it has. If one goes just by the name it is one single thing, but in fact it comes in many forms that are in some way even quite unlike each other. Think about it: we say that a debauched person gets pleasure, as well as that a sober-minded person takes pleasure in his very sobriety. Again, we say a fool, though full of foolish opinions and hopes, gets pleasure, but likewise a wise man takes pleasure in his wisdom. But surely anyone who said in either case that these pleasures are like one another would rightly be regarded a fool. (12c3-d5)

Here Socrates observes that while many species seem to fall under the genus of pleasure, some of these species are in fact “quite unlike each other.” To illustrate just how unlike each other they
are. Socrates gives two sets of opposites or contraries, all of which seem straightforwardly to belong in the genus: pleasures of debauchery versus those connected with sobriety; and likewise pleasures of folly versus those connected with wisdom. Presumably, the force of the opposition here is roughly one of mutual incompatibility. A sober man cannot experience the pleasures of debauchery so long as he remains a sober man enjoying the distinctive pleasures of his condition, and vice-versa. Likewise, a fool cannot know the pleasures connected with wisdom so long as he remains a fool enjoying foolish pleasures, and vice-versa.

Socrates’ challenge seems clear enough. If Protarchus wants to claim that pleasure is what makes a life happy, and that one who wants to be happy should therefore pursue pleasure, then it seems this is equally a prescription for the pleasures of debauchery and for those of sobriety. Since we cannot enjoy both species of pleasure at once, it seems we have a choice on our hands. Perhaps Protarchus may remain indifferent as to which species of pleasure we choose, on the ground that there is ample pleasure to be had from both debauchery and sobriety. But in that case the brand of hedonism on offer seems to fall short of an informative plan for happiness, especially as dilemmas like these begin to multiply. Perhaps more to the point, it may well embarrass Protarchus to grant that a drunk fool is as happy as a sober wise man.

On the other hand, if Protarchus prefers one side in a pair of opposites – pleasures of wisdom to those of folly, say – then he owes us an explanation as to why one ought to prefer one species of pleasure to another. Are some species of pleasure worse than others? While it seems that Protarchus could remain a card-carrying hedonist and even do his position some good early on by taking some such position, Protarchus himself sees things differently. He roundly rejects this move when Socrates offers it, apparently on the ground that the hedonism he is sworn to defend amounts to the thesis that “pleasure [i.e. all of it] is the good,” and that this is
incompatible with any admission that there are bad pleasures (13b6-c2). Thus he responds to Socrates’ challenge as follows: “Well yes, Socrates – the pleasures come from opposite things. But *they* are not at all opposed to one another. For how could pleasure not be, of all things, most like pleasure? How could that thing not be most like itself?” (12d6-9).

What sort of unity does Protarchus envision here? That is, what is common to all and only species of pleasure, such that they earn that name? So far we know that Protarchus distinguishes pleasures from their sources, but we have little else to go on. However, judging from the examples he seems to accept without reservation from Socrates, it seems that Protarchus takes pleasure to include ‘pleasant feelings’; i.e. the sorts of feelings one experiences in connection with food, drink, and sex. We know this because among Socrates’ examples of pleasures are those connected with debauchery. The force of Protarchus’ distinction in the case of these pleasures seems to be that there are the sources of these pleasures, on the one hand; these are presumably activities (broadly construed) such as eating a large meal, drinking wine, sexual intercourse, etc. On the other hand, there are the pleasures we get from these sources. Most plausibly, these refer to the ‘pleasant feelings’ we experience when our stomach is being filled with food or wine, along with the feelings we experience during sexual intercourse, and so on. Unless Protarchus has something else in mind – and I see no evidence that he does – then ‘pleasant feelings’, i.e. those feelings we experience when a certain part of the body is suitably stimulated, are to be included under the genus of pleasure.

No surprise there. Protarchus would be working with an unusual account of pleasure if it did not include such things. But we may wonder whether Protarchus takes *all* pleasure to consist of ‘pleasant feelings’, so defined. While the pleasures of debauchery seem to fit this picture, it is not so clear for the remainder of Socrates’ examples. Are the pleasures of sobriety to be
understood as ‘pleasant feelings’? Perhaps they refer, say, to the sort of pleasure the sober man experiences when he turns down a drink. On the other hand, they may refer to the pleasures of being in a sober condition, i.e. those connected with lucid thinking, unimpaired motor skills, etc. We may ask the same questions about the pleasures of folly and wisdom. If we take seriously Protarchus’ insistence that pleasures are ‘most like’ each other, and add it to the view that he takes the pleasures of debauchery to be ‘pleasant feelings’, then it seems Protarchus must hold at this stage of the debate that all pleasures are ‘pleasant feelings’, even if this works less easily for some examples than for others.

There are modern counterparts to this way of defending pleasure’s uniformity. For example, G. E. Moore’s *Principia Ethica* seems to confront the very problem with which we began, viz. how one can arrive at a general account of pleasure when pleasures seem to come in such variety. According to Moore, when a person experiences pleasure,

> ...his mind, a certain definite mind, distinguished by certain definite marks from all others, has at this moment a certain definite feeling called pleasure. ...and though we may be more pleased or less pleased, and even, we may admit for the present, have one or another kind of pleasure; yet in so far as it is pleasure we have, whether there be more or less of it, and whether it be of one kind or another, what we have is one definite thing, absolutely indefinable, some one thing that is the same in all the various degrees and in all the various kinds of it that there may be.\(^{112}\)

Now, here Moore does not hold (as I think Protarchus does) that all pleasures involve stimulation of the body. The important agreement between Moore and Protarchus, I propose, is that they both want to preserve the unity of pleasure by distinguishing between a feeling from its source, and by identifying pleasure with the feeling alone. On Moore’s picture, whatever “kind of

pleasure” we are enjoying – i.e. whatever the pleasure’s source – there is a “definite feeling” we experience that alone answers to the pleasure we are experiencing. Let us call this feeling ‘pleasure itself’. The thought seems to be that when we are enjoying a warm bath or a soothing foot massage, this experience may involve feelings of various kinds. But in this more complex experience there is one feeling that is the pleasure itself, and this feeling in the cases of the bath and of the foot massage is basically uniform, differing only in amount (which is presumably to be cashed out in terms of intensity, or duration, or both intensity and duration). Moore’s proposal attributes a considerable unity to pleasure as a kind, and so some such view seems to furnish Protarchus with a reasonably principled account of pleasure. What makes something a pleasure on Moore’s picture is that we are experiencing this “definite” feeling.113

Let this suffice as our reconstruction of Protarchus’ working conception of pleasure going into CL. Later on we will turn to CL itself to examine how precisely it challenges this conception. But first, and in preparation for the criteria of the good that inform CL, we must dwell on an important ethical distinction, namely between final and intrinsic value.

4.3: The Distinction between Final and Intrinsic Value

What does the hedonist mean when she claims that pleasure ‘is’ the good? To flesh this out, it is standard among hedonists to appeal to the notion of intrinsic value. Thus hedonism’s central claim is either that only pleasure has intrinsic value; or that all and only pleasure has intrinsic

113 Moore’s account has its problems. For starters, it is an unmistakably phenomenal account of what it is to experience pleasure. As such, it seems that Moore is simply appealing to our own awareness of our experience when we enjoy pleasures of various kinds. In other words, it seems to be an appeal to introspection. But, I submit, as a phenomenal account of our experience of pleasure, Moore’s account is implausible. One does not have to be in the grips of any sophisticated account of pleasure to recognize that we simply feel no such thing as ‘pleasure itself’ when we enjoy a warm bath or a cold beer. There is an experience of pleasure in both cases, to be sure, but introspection simply does not support the claim that in both cases we experience a definite feeling answering to ‘pleasure itself.’ In many cases, at any rate, the pleasure we feel seems intimately bound up with its source in a way that seriously undermines Moore’s account, and with it Protarchus’ firm distinction between a pleasure and its source.
value. Setting aside the differences between these formulations, what is this notion of *intrinsic value*? A helpful first step in answering this question is to distinguish *intrinsic value* from *final value*, since the two are often conflated. Matthew Evans defines them as follows:

1. **Final Value.** “Roughly speaking, some x has final value just in case x is worth pursuing as an end or for its own sake, not merely as a means or for the sake of another thing.”
2. **Intrinsic Value.** “[S]ome x has intrinsic value just in case x is worth pursuing because of how x is in itself, not merely because of how x stands in relation to another thing.”

Final value refers to a good’s status as an end, whereas intrinsic value refers to a good’s independence, as it were, as an object of pursuit. A good has intrinsic value insofar as its value does not depend on its relation to other things, including the consequences that flow from the good in question, the sorts of creatures who desire it, or, more generally, the way the rest of the world is constituted. As Matthew Evans points out, intrinsic value is the more fundamental notion, since goods are typically taken to have final value *because* they have intrinsic value of a certain kind.

To see how *final* and *intrinsic* value may come apart, consider the following example. Suppose I adopt the goal of obtaining the Mona Lisa because I take it to be the most admired painting in existence. Moreover, suppose I take owning the Mona Lisa to be strictly valuable for

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114 Following Evans, I take hedonism to be essentially the view that pleasure alone is intrinsically valuable. This is what distinguishes hedonism from the much more popular (and arguably less philosophically interesting) view known as Pluralism (Evans’ term is ‘Liberalism’), which holds that pleasure among other things has intrinsic value. However, Fred Feldman (*Pleasure and the Good Life*, p. 24) identifies a problem with formulating the Hedonic Thesis as the claim that only pleasure has intrinsic value. Hedonists typically want to claim that complex pleasure-containing things (e.g. a life, a possible world) also have intrinsic value. While it is true that they hold that these complex things are intrinsically valuable in virtue of the pleasure (or balance of pleasure over pain) they contain, it seems that such things cannot, strictly speaking, be intrinsically valuable at all if only pleasure has intrinsic value.


its own sake – that is, I do not plan to sell the painting for a sizeable profit, nor do I want it because it will impress my friends, etc. In this case it seems that owning the Mona Lisa has final value for me, since I want this for its own sake only and not as a means to anything else. However, since I take the value of the Mona Lisa to consist in its being the most admired painting in existence, it seems that it has absolutely no intrinsic value for me. For let us imagine that the day after I acquire the Mona Lisa the art world abruptly decides unanimously that my painting is wildly over-rated. In this case it seems that owning it will lose all its value for me, for that value depended on the Mona Lisa’s standing in relation to something else, namely the esteem of the art world. Once the painting loses this esteem, owning it loses its value for me. But notice that this is not due to considerations having to do with final value; owning the Mona Lisa did not somehow shift from being valuable for its own sake to being valuable only as a means to something else. True, it ceases to be valuable as an end for me, and so it seems to have lost its final value as well. But this is only because it now has little or no intrinsic value for me, as evidenced by the fact that I no longer want it when a distinct state of affairs – namely, the art world’s esteem – no longer obtains. If this is along the right lines, then final and intrinsic value are quite distinct.

Let this suffice as our discussion of final and intrinsic value. In the next section I turn to CL to examine how it challenges Protarchus’ conception of ‘pleasure’ as consisting only of ‘pleasant feelings’, and thus his ethical claim that the good consists of ‘pleasant feelings’. I will argue that Socrates’ preliminary delineation of criteria for the good establishes the possession of both final and intrinsic value as distinct criteria for the good. I will then argue that Protarchus rejects the pure life of pleasure – which, as we have already seen, is on his conception a life with an
abundance strictly of ‘pleasant feelings’ – on the ground that such a life has little if any intrinsic value.

**4.4: The Philebus’ Criteria for the Good**

We return now to the *Philebus* to consider its ‘Choice of Lives’ argument. In the last section I proposed that Protarchus subscribes to the view that ‘pleasure’ consists strictly of ‘pleasant feelings’. Elements of CL itself seem to support this proposal, as we will see. In any case, this proposal allows us to fill in, as it were, Protarchus’ ethical hedonism: what makes a life good, and thus happy, in Protarchus’ view is strictly a sufficient supply of ‘pleasant feelings’. But as we shall see, Protarchus comes to realize by the conclusion of CL that such a view is untenable and needs to be replaced; or so I will argue in Section 5.

A key move in CL comes even before the two pure lives have been delineated. Socrates is just about to distinguish the two lives in question when, with typical understatement, he proposes that there are a few “small matters” to be discussed first. This turns out to be a fairly abstract discussion of the criteria for the good itself. The good, Socrates and Protarchus agree, must be i) “perfect” [τέλεον]; and ii) “sufficient” [ἱκανὸν]; and moreover iii) “everything that has any notion of it hunts for it and desires to get hold of it and secure it for its very own, caring nothing for anything else except for what is connected with the acquisition of some good [πᾶν τὸ γιγνῶσκον αὐτὸ θηρεύει καὶ ἐφίεται βουλόμενον ἐλεῖν καὶ περὶ αὐτὸ κτῆσασθαι, καὶ τῶν ἄλλων σοῦ δὲν φροντίζει πλὴν τῶν ἀποτελουμένων ἄμα ἁγαθοῖς] (20d1-8).”

It is by no means clear what each of these three criteria amounts to. τέλεον may refer to final value, in that τέλεον seems to carry the sense of completing one’s end. On the other hand,

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117 This is Dorothea Frede’s (1997) translation. Fowler renders the line as follows: “And nothing, I should say, is more certain about it than that every intelligent being pursues it, desires it, wishes to catch and get possession of it, and has no interest in anything in which the good is not included.”
τέλεον can also mean ‘complete’ in the sense of ‘fullness’ or ‘comprehensiveness,’ e.g., as we would say that a given university course on economics provides its students with a complete understanding of the field, that it leaves out nothing of importance, etc.¹¹⁸ When τέλεον in this sense is applied to a candidate for the good, this means presumably that it is comprehensive, excluding no goods that could conceivably contribute to our happiness. As we shall see, Socrates’ line of questioning a little later on suggests that he and Protarchus use τέλεον in this second sense.

‘Sufficient’ (ικανόν), it would seem, may also be interpreted in one of two ways. First, it may represent a vaguely quantitative notion, as when we say, ‘I have sufficient gas in the tank of my car to make it home.’ On this construal, a candidate for the good is presumably sufficient iff it contains enough goodness to contribute to a life in such a way that that life may be declared a happy one. On a second construal, sufficiency refers to something more like independence. On this reading, a candidate for the good is sufficient iff its contribution to our happiness is such that that contribution does not depend on the condition of other things or states of affairs. And in this case, ‘sufficiency’ clearly refers to something very close, if not identical, to intrinsic value as outlined in the previous section. A good in this case is sufficient insofar as its contribution to happiness – that is, its goodness – remains unaffected whether or not distinct conditions or states of affairs obtain.¹¹⁹ To return to our example in the previous section, owning the Mona Lisa

¹¹⁸ See LSJ, especially entry 3.b: “συνθέσεις λευκὰς τελείας δέκα τριῶν thirteen complete white suits, PHamb.10.14 (ii A.D.); t. ἁποζυγή complete divorce, PGrenf. 2.76.19 (iv A.D.); ἄφις τελεία, κράβακτος ξύλινος τ., etc., PTab.406.19, al. (iii A.D.); of land, fully inundated, opp. ὄβροχικός, PMass. 107.13, al. (vi A.D.), prob. in PFlor.286.23 (vi A.D.).”

¹¹⁹ Cf. the first entry in LSJ: “of persons, sufficient, competent to do a thing, c. inf., Hdt. 3.45, Antiph. 1 15, etc.; i. τεκμηρίωσιν sufficient to prove a point, Th.1.9.” Sufficiency in the case of persons presumably means ‘in need of no help to complete a task,’ whereas sufficiency in the case of a proof (as Thucydides uses it at 1.9) means ‘requiring the addition of nothing else to support a given conclusion’; in Thucydides’ case the conclusion is that Agammemnon
failed to have intrinsic value for me because the value of owning the Mona Lisa depended on the distinct state of affairs of the Mona Lisa receiving great esteem in the art world. Insofar as the value of owning the Mona Lisa is unaffected by this and other distinct states of affairs, then to that extent owning the Mona Lisa has intrinsic value, and thus is ‘sufficient’ in the way that the good is.\textsuperscript{120} While this sense of ἰκανὸν may seem less natural than the alternative construal as ‘enough,’ I will argue that it helps us make better sense of the text.

The third, more involved criterion seems to gesture towards something like final value in the first sense outlined above, as the sort of thing that marks the completion of one’s end, since the good is said to be the sole aim or end for any creature who grasps it. Whether the notion of intrinsic value is at play or, indeed, undermined in this third criterion seems to depend in part on one’s translation of ἀποτελομένων – what exactly does it mean for something to be “connected” with the good in this way?\textsuperscript{121}

More importantly, it seems to me that this third ‘criterion’ of the good ought to be bracketed, because unlike the first two criteria, it is not directly a claim about the good, precisely. Rather, it is a claim about the behaviours of “everything that has any notion of it.” Whereas

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item [120] Compare Aristotle’s reasoning at 1095b25-26 in Book I of the Nicomachean Ethics, where he rejects the political life aiming at honour on the ground that this life fails to be “proper” [ἀκριβῶς] and “hard to take away” [στεφανωπερτος], these being two criteria for the human good. The thought here seems to be that something cannot count as the chief human good if it is easily taken away from its possessor, but an honour \textit{can} be easily taken away from the recipient if, for example, the people giving out the honour change their minds. Thus whether one possesses an honour depends on a specific state of affairs (namely, the continued esteem of the honour-givers), with the result that a life \textit{aiming} at honour changes from a successful one to an unsuccessful one once this state of affairs fails to obtain. If this account of Aristotle’s reasoning is correct, then he rejects the political life aiming at honour as a candidate for the chief human good on the ground that it lacks intrinsic value in our sense.

\item [121] Again, on Fowler’s translation what every creature eliminates from its interest is “anything in which the good is not included,” which gives a very different sense. For a discussion of these criteria, see Evans (2007), pp. 341-2, although Evans does not explicitly consider their connection to the final/intrinsic good distinction he raises earlier. Cf. Also Bobonich (1995), pp. 118-123 and Bobonich (2002), pp. 153-159.
\end{enumerate}
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τέλεον and ἤκανὸν are being applied to the good itself, the various desires and strivings discussed in the third ‘criterion’ are clearly being applied to the living things that apprehend the good.

Given this slide, it seems natural to suppose that this third ‘criterion’ is meant to follow from the first two fairly naturally. The reasoning here seems to be that given that the good is τέλεον and ἤκανὸν in some of the ways just outlined, any living beings who apprehend it respond to it by desiring it and hunting for it in the devoted, single-minded ways mentioned in the third ‘criterion.’

But if I may sidestep Socrates’ puzzling third criterion, I want to now argue that Protarchus’ subsequent praise for a life consisting of great ‘pleasant feelings’ but devoid of any goods of the mind (henceforth, ‘the mindless life’) seems to focus on its being τέλεον in the second sense just outlined. That is to say, what grounds his conviction that the mindless life is supremely desirable seems to be its fullness or comprehensiveness as a good; that it excludes no good that could conceivably contribute to one’s happiness:

Soc: Would you find it acceptable [δέξαι᾽ ἀν] to live your whole life in enjoyment of the greatest pleasures?
Prot: Why, certainly!
Soc: And would you see yourself in need of anything else if you had secured this altogether? [Ἄρ’ οὖν ἔτι τινός ἂν σοι προσδέειν ἡγοῦσθαι, εἰ τοῦτ’ ἔχεις παντελῶς;]
Prot: In no way.
Soc: But look, might you not have some need of knowledge, intelligence, and calculation, or anything else that is related to them?
Prot: How so? If I had pleasure I would have all in all! [καὶ τί; πάντα γὰρ ἔχομι’ ἂν που τὸ χαῖρειν ἔχον] (21a7-21b2)

Here the most important feature of the mindless life for Protarchus appears to be that it is complete – not in connection with τέλεον in the first sense outlined, i.e., as when we say that someone has completed their end, but rather in the sense of being comprehensive, i.e., excluding
no goods that could conceivably contribute further to one’s happiness. Socrates’ second question in our passage, namely whether Protarchus would see himself “in need of anything else” if he had already had “enjoyment of the greatest pleasures” seems to be pressing Protarchus on the mindless life’s completeness in this sense. When Protarchus seems to insist that the mindless life is indeed complete in this sense, claiming that he would “[i]n no way” be in need of anything further, Socrates’ next move is essentially to press him with more specificity on the same point, asking whether Protarchus really holds that he would have no need of any goods of the mind – i.e. knowledge, intelligence, and so forth – precisely the ‘goods’ that have been stipulated to be excluded from such a life.\footnote{Cf. 20e4-21a2, where the criterion of comprehensiveness seems to be foremost on Socrates’ mind as he delineates the two lives under consideration.} Protarchus’ response seems likewise simply to be an intensified repetition of his former answer. He seems in effect to be saying, ‘I’ve already told you that I’d have all of the goods that could conceivably contribute to my happiness if I enjoyed the greatest pleasures, Socrates, so clearly I wouldn’t miss any ‘goods’ of the mind if I were living the mindless life.’

If this interpretation of Protarchus’ praise is along the right lines, and he is indeed focusing on the mindless life’s status as τέλεον in the sense of ‘comprehensive,’ then this seems strongly to decide our reading of ἱκανὸν in favour of the second reading as ‘independent.’ Why? For the simple reason that if we are to take τέλεον to point to ‘comprehensiveness,’ and hence to something that excludes no goods at all, then a distinct criterion of sufficiency in the first sense of ‘enough’ seems superfluous. Protarchus has just claimed that the mindless life contains every conceivable good that necessarily contributes to one’s maximum happiness and so the additional point that it also contains enough goods to make one happy hardly seems to be worth making.
On the other hand, that the mindless life satisfies the criterion of comprehensiveness in no way renders superfluous an additional point about that life’s *independence*. Recall that on our reading of ἵκανὸν as ‘independence,’ this referred roughly to intrinsic value: a good is independent in this sense if its contribution to one’s happiness, i.e. its goodness, does not depend in any way on its relation to other things or states of affairs. And *this* point about the mindless life hardly seems to follow from the point about completeness. The mindless life may well contain every sort of good that contributes to one’s happiness, and yet many of these goods may well depend on the existence or condition of other things or states of affairs. Note that this does *not* imply that these other things or states of affairs are *themselves* goods. It follows rather that they stand in a certain *relation* to genuine goods, such that the *goodness* of these genuine goods depends on them. In short, on a construal of ἵκανὸν as ‘independence,’ i.e. as a notion of intrinsic value, τέλεον and ἵκανὸν answer to distinct, philosophically interesting criteria for the good, and hence for the status of the mindless life as a desirable one.

Here I reconstruct the argument I have just given in support of construing ἵκανὸν as ‘having intrinsic value’:

1. In CL, ἵκανὸν either means ‘enough’ or ‘independence/having intrinsic value.’
2. In CL, τέλεον means ‘comprehensive.’
3. In CL, if τέλεον means ‘comprehensive,’ then ἵκανὸν does not mean ‘enough.’

C1: In CL, ἵκανὸν means ‘independence/having intrinsic value.’ (1,2,3)

Of course, this argument’s soundness depends on the truth of its three premises. I have given textual support for 2, and I have given an interpretive reason to accept 3: that is, if Socrates begins by saying that the good is comprehensive, meaning that it contains everything that can contribute to happiness, then it hardly seems worth mentioning that it has enough goods to
contribute to happiness. Construing ἰκανὸν as ‘independence/having intrinsic value’ makes more sense. Of course, the truth of 1 depends on the legitimacy of construing ἰκανὸν in this sense, and on the view that 1 expresses the only two legitimate ways of construing ἰκανὸν. I can see no plausible alternative to these two senses. Let this suffice as our discussion of the criteria of the good in

4.5: Protarchus’ Rejection of the Mindless Life in CL

So if Protarchus’ sole concern in his praise is the criterion of comprehensiveness, and if this decides the question of the meaning of the second criterion, ἰκανὸν, in favour of ‘independence,’ then where is the concern with this second criterion ever picked up? To see this, let us pick up where we left off in our passage. Protarchus has just claimed that if he had great pleasure in his life, then he would have “all in all,” even if he possessed no goods of the mind. To which Socrates replies:

Soc: And living like that you could enjoy the greatest pleasures throughout your life?
Prot: Why should I not?
Soc: Since you would not be in possession of either reason, memory, knowledge, or true opinion, must you not be in ignorance, first of all, about this very question, whether you are enjoying yourself or not, given that you were devoid of any kind of intelligence? \[νοῦν δὲ γε καὶ μνήμην καὶ ἐπιστήμην καὶ δόξαν μὴ κεκτημένος ἄληθῆ, πρῶτον μὲν τοῦτο αὐτό, εἰ χαίρεις ἢ μὴ χαίρεις, ἀνάγκη δήπου σε ἀγνοεῖν, κενὸν γε ὄντα πάσης φρονήσεως;\] (21b3-9)\(^{123}\)

Here we seem to get the beginning of Socrates’ objection to the mindless life Protarchus has just praised. The precise character of Socrates’ objection has been the subject of considerable controversy. On one interpretation, Socrates’ objection to the mindless life is that it excludes another, distinct good, namely thinking, which makes its own distinctive contribution to the

\(^{123}\) This is Frede’s (1997) translation.
happy life.\textsuperscript{124} In other words, on this interpretation (henceforth, the pluralist interpretation’) the nature of Socrates’ objection is to dispute Protarchus’ claim about comprehensiveness; on this view, Socrates denies that the mindless life contains all of the goods that contribute to happiness. On a second interpretation (henceforth, ‘the livability interpretation’), Socrates’ objection to the mindless life has nothing to do with its lack of comprehensiveness. Rather, Socrates’ objection to this life is that it is not livable for a human being, and so Protarchus ought to reject it.\textsuperscript{125}

Now, if we attend to the passage above, it seems that it provides little support for the pluralist interpretation. For the opening question in Socrates’ objection is clearly not what we ought to expect if he means to dispute the mindless life’s satisfaction of the criterion of ‘comprehensiveness.’ His point is plainly not that while the mindless life offers an abundance of one species of good, i.e. pleasure, it is nonetheless devoid of the distinct goods of thinking and is thus undesirable. Rather, Socrates’ opening question calls into question whether the life Protarchus has just praised is indeed to be called a life of enjoying the greatest pleasures.

We then get the basis for Socrates’ doubts. In praising the mindless life, Protarchus has failed to remain loyal to the thorough separation of pleasure and thinking that was to inform the present thought experiment. When Protarchus imagines the life of great enjoyment, he is unconsciously helping himself to certain mental activities as well. Socrates means to set

\textsuperscript{124} See, for example, Cooper (1999), pp. 150-164; Irwin (1995), pp. 332-338; Carone (2000); and Cooper (2004), pp. 270-308. It should be noted that this camp also takes Socrates to object to the pleasureless life – that is, a life full of goods of the mind but devoid of pleasure – on the ground this life too fails to satisfy the criterion of comprehensiveness, in that it misses out on the distinct good of pleasure. So on this view both Socrates and Protarchus convert to pleasure-inclusive pluralism.

\textsuperscript{125} My representative for this camp is Matthew Evans (2007); other dissenters from the first camp include Gosling (1975) pp. 181-185; Bobonich (1995); Richardson Lear (2005), pp. 53-59; and Russell (2005), pp. 168-171, although their interpretations deviate from Evans’ in various ways.
Protarchus straight by purging the mindless life of all thinking, to see if Protarchus wants to maintain that such a life is really supremely pleasant.

Socrates’ first step in this purge is to point out that in a life truly devoid of thinking in all its forms, Protarchus would be ignorant about whether he is enjoying himself or not. This failure of awareness about one’s own pleasures is picked up again in the bit just beyond our passage, where Socrates tells Protarchus, “not possessing right judgment, you would not realize that you are enjoying yourself even while you do [δόξαν δ’ αὖ μὴ κεκτημένον ἀληθῆ μὴ δοξάζειν χαίρειν χαίροντα]” (21c4-5).

It is not at all clear what precisely Socrates means by these remarks, nor what specific concerns of Protarchus’ they are meant to address. But a plausible reconstruction runs as follows. When Socrates separated pleasure and intelligence earlier and invited Protarchus to consider the merits of their corresponding lives, ‘pleasure’ was to be understood as the having of certain ‘pleasant feelings’, period. Swept over into the pleasureless (that is, Socrates’ favoured) life was anything that could be considered a mental attitude: reason, memory, knowledge, and true opinion. So when Protarchus is imagining the mindless life, he must imagine the life of a creature that may experience supremely pleasant feelings, but which can take no attitudes towards these feelings. This absence of any intentional attitudes in the mindless life is taken by Socrates (and, it seems, by Protarchus, once the point is made to him) to preclude any awareness on the part of the creature about the very sensations it is experiencing. Socrates further strips this creature of two temporally-based attitudes, eliminating memory [μνήμην] and calculation [λογισμοῦ] as well (21c1-8).126

126 There is a certain puzzling asymmetry in Socrates’ treatment of what I call the two temporally-based attitudes. In the case of memory, Socrates’ point is clearly that without it, a creature cannot remember pleasant experiences and so cannot enjoy any sensation once it has ceased. The natural, future-based counterpart for this deficiency is not the
The notorious model Socrates proposes for a creature devoid of attitudes appears as the culmination of the objection, where he compares the mindless life to that of a mollusk or other shellfish (21c7-8). It is, I think, a plausible characterization of such creatures (or, at any rate, of Plato’s view of such creatures) that they may experience certain ‘pleasant feelings’ – those connected with nourishment or changes in body temperature, for example – and yet they can take no attitudes towards these feelings. Socrates’ point is that a life filled with the sorts of ‘pleasant feelings’ a mollusk may experience but devoid of such attitudes is not to be counted as a very pleasant life for a human being.

It seems we are in a position to see why both of the leading accounts of Socrates’ rejection of the mindless life fit uneasily with the text. As we have already noted, the text does not support the pluralist interpretation’s view that Socrates rejects the mindless life on the ground that it misses out on a distinct good, namely thinking. Rather, Socrates is proposing that such a life, if it is really devoid of all thinking, and especially of intentional attitudes, isn’t very pleasant after all. But if this is correct, then the livability interpretation seems to miss the mark as well, albeit more subtly. For Socrates’ objection is not quite that the mindless life isn’t livable for a human being like Protarchus, as this interpretation claims – although Socrates may well take this to be true.127 Again, as the opening question of Socrates’ objection makes plain, his point is that even if Protarchus could live such a life, he would not find it to be supremely pleasant.

On the interpretation I am proposing, Socrates’ purge of the mindless life Protarchus has just praised isolates ‘pleasant feelings’ – that is, the sorts of feelings experienced by a mollusk when its body is suitably stimulated, but without any intentional attitudes – and establishes these absence of calculation, which Socrates characterizes as the ability to plan so as to bring about pleasant sensations in the future, but anticipation, which of course takes centre-stage later in the dialogue.

127 Again, this is how Evans (2007) interprets CL.
*ex hypothesi* as the basic hedonic phenomena for the purposes of the present debate. That is to say, Socrates is stipulating that if Protarchus wants to praise the mindless life for the great pleasures it contains, then these pleasures must be considered to be relatively raw bodily feelings without any concomitant attitudes. This move on Socrates’ part demonstrates to Protarchus an important point about these ‘pleasant feelings’.

It impresses on Protarchus that *if* these are all that pleasure amounts to, then a life full of pleasure doesn’t deserve high praise. When *Protarchus* was praising the pleasures of the mindless life, this life included some of the raw feelings that could be felt by an oyster, but it obviously also included at least some of the attitudes Socrates stripped away; take away these attitudes, and suddenly Protarchus wishes to retract his praise. In pressing Protarchus to, as it were, re-imagine the mindless life he has just praised, Socrates appears to be homing in on the fact that the value of that life depends a great deal on a distinct state of affairs obtaining; that is, on the compresence of certain attitudes. Socrates recognizes that Protarchus is helping himself to certain intentional attitudes in conceiving of the life he is praising, and so he presses Protarchus to re-conceive of that life without the attitudes. By leading Protarchus to retract his praise for the ‘pleasant feelings’ of the (truly) mindless life, Socrates shows that the value Protarchus took these raw feelings to have is not intrinsic. Rather, their value is dramatically affected by the presence or absence of distinct mental attitudes.

And this is what we ought to expect if we read the second criterion for the good, ἰκανὸν, as referring to intrinsic value. On my reading, Socrates at 21a7-22b2 first presses Protarchus on the comprehensiveness of the mindless life, and when Protarchus insists that such a life indeed lacks no goods, Socrates moves on and sets his sights on the second criterion of sufficiency as he purges the mindless life of all attitudes.
Protarchus’ *revised* view – that is, on Protarchus’ view about what happiness consists in in the aftermath of CL – a life consisting of a great many ‘pleasant feelings’ along with some attitudes *towards those very feelings* is choiceworthy – this explains his praise for the mindless life before Socrates purged it of all attitudes. But a life consisting of a great many ‘pleasant feelings’ *without* such attitudes is not choiceworthy. Moreover, the latter life fails to be choiceworthy because it fails to be very pleasant.

The second outcome is Protarchus’ concession that the mixed life, i.e. a life said to consist of pleasure and thinking, is preferable to the mindless life replete with ‘‘pleasant feelings’.’ It is not yet clear whether Protarchus’ newly preferred ‘mixed life’ consists only of ‘pleasant feelings’ and attitudes taken by the subject towards those feelings, or whether he means to admit a broader menu of intellectual activities.

Taken together, do these concessions amount to a rejection of hedonism on Protarchus’ part? This is certainly true on the pluralist interpretation of CL. Moreover, Protarchus’ comments may seem to support this verdict:

> By now indeed it seems to me that pleasure has been defeated as if knocked down by your present arguments, Socrates. In her fight for victory, she has fallen. And as for reason, we may say that it wisely did not compete for first prize, for it would have suffered the same fate. But if pleasure were also deprived of second prize, she would definitely be somewhat dishonoured in the eyes of her own lovers, nor would she seem as fair to them as before. (22e5-23a5)

On the standard picture – that is, on what I have been calling the ‘pluralist interpretation’ of CL – Protarchus here renounces hedonism, the view that pleasure alone is the good, in favour of pleasure-inclusive pluralism, the view that pleasure is one good among others (specifically, thinking). But this interpretation has its problems. For it implies that Protarchus’ hedonist
position lasts for less than half the dialogue, and meets defeat thanks to a single thought experiment: that of the mollusk experiencing abundant pleasure. But Protarchus has already shown himself to be a worthy defender of hedonism, and so this abrupt surrender seems entirely out of character. Indeed, he will continue to defend pleasure with great gusto, and Socrates continues to refer to him as a “spirited” defender of pleasure (38a4-5). What continues to be at stake for Protarchus if he has already given up on hedonism? And if pleasure has already been demoted from the sole good to one of the goods, as the pluralist interpretation claims, then why towards the end of our passage does Protarchus suggest that pleasure’s failure to secure second prize would hurt her appeal for her lovers – presumably, hedonists – such that she would be less lovely than “before” – presumably, before CL? Has the decisive blow to hedonism not already come?

Against the pluralist reading of CL, I want to propose that we are in a position to understand the result of CL in a way that does not require that Protarchus becomes a pluralist as a result of CL. As we have seen, Protarchus rejects the pure life of pleasure in favour of the mixed life. But this does not force the reading that he has come to recognize thinking as a distinct, non-hedonic good. For as we have seen, Protarchus rejected the pure life of pleasure on the ground that it lacked intrinsic value, one of the three criteria for the good. Since the good must have intrinsic value, Protarchus may continue to defend the claim that pleasure, understood now as something which involves both pleasant feelings and certain mental attitudes taken by the subject towards those feelings, is identical with the good. On this new picture, Protarchus holds that pleasure so construed is identical with the good, and so a ‘mixed’ life consisting of these two elements is at once supremely pleasant and supremely happy. In short, Protarchus need not be

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128 Protarchus claims he is only repeating what he hears, but this seems to be mere modesty on his part.
taken to have discovered the distinct good of thinking. He may simply have revised his
conception of pleasure to include certain mental attitudes. On this reading, ‘pleasure’ has fallen
in the sense that Philebus’ pre-CL conception of pleasure has bitten the dust. But Protarchus may
simply represent a hedonist defending a distinct, more sophisticated conception of pleasure; one
that is perfectly consistent with the view that a mixed life is best.

Socrates makes two corresponding concessions at the end of CL. What we get appears to
be the counterpart to the thought experiment that led Protarchus to reject the mindless life.

Socrates asks Protarchus…

> Whether any one of us would choose to live in possession of every
kind of intelligence, reason, knowledge, and memory of all things,
while having no part, neither large nor small, of pleasure or pain,
living in total insensitivity [παράπαν ἀπαθής] of anything of that
kind. (21d9-e2)

The life being imagined is meant as a simple tit-for-tat for the thought experiment that
Protarchus just entertained. It is replete with all the things Socrates purged from the mindless
life: reason, memory, etc. Taken away this time is even the faintest feeling of pleasure. That
‘pleasant feelings’ are precisely what Socrates means to purge from the life on offer is
underscored by his characterization of it as ἀπαθής.129 Before Protarchus was offered a life full
of ‘pleasant feelings’ but with no mental attitudes. Now he is being offered a life full of mental
attitudes, but which is entirely numb.130

129 Consider in particular the second and third entries in LSJ:

II. without passion or feeling, insensible, free from emotion, Arist.Top. 125b23, cf. Rh.1378a5, 1383a28, Stoic.3.109,
al., Pers.Stoic.1.99; [...] III. exciting no feeling, Arist.Po.1453b39; “τὰ ἀπαθῆ” unemotional topics, Id.Fr.134.

130 Socrates also withholds pain from the pleasureless life, and so a characterization of this life as numb seems
appropriate. Take this as more confirmation that feeling was central to the mindless life being offered to Protarchus,
since the two lives are clearly being presented as mirror images of each other. Just as the mindless life was full of
The grounds on either side of the debate for the rejection of this pleasureless life are not made explicit. That Protarchus rejects such a life is unsurprising. Sworn as he is to defend hedonism, Protarchus simply cannot without abandoning that position concede that a life devoid of pleasure is a happy one, no matter what other adornments it is taken to have.

But Socrates’ swift rejection of the pleasureless life is indeed puzzling. He seems all too willing to go along with his hedonist adversary in rejecting that life, remarking simply that if the pleasureless life were the best one then it would be independent (ικανὸς), complete (τέλεος), and choiceworthy (αἱρετός) for any creature capable of attaining it (22b4-5). The clear implication is that the pleasureless life fails one or more of these criteria, and yet Socrates never bothers to explain which one(s). I shall have more to say about this later.¹³¹ For now, suffice to say that CL has yielded three important and related conclusions, all of which both Socrates and Protarchus accept:

1. That the mindless life, a life consisting only of ‘pleasant feelings’, is not best; specifically, when certain mental attitudes are absent from such a life, then it fails the criterion of independence. In other words, its value is shown not to be intrinsic.

¹³¹ As we will see in Chapter 5, on my interpretation Socrates supplies the real reason for rejecting the pure life of thinking in his discussion of false pleasures. Pleasure post-CL comes to be understood on both sides to involve certain mental attitudes taken towards certain states of affairs, including pleasant feelings occurring in the subject’s body. In a life consisting purely of thought, memory, and the like, it seems we have a life replete with mental attitudes, but it is not at all clear what these mental activities take as their object; or, indeed, whether any such object even exists. What is it that we are thinking about or remembering in the pure life of thinking? The importance of some distinct state of affairs, toward which our attitudes are directed, comes into focus in Socrates’ discussion of false pleasures.
2. That the pleasureless life, a life consisting of certain mental attitudes but devoid of all feeling, is not best either; although in this case the grounds are unclear.

3. That the mixed life, a life containing both pleasure and thinking, is preferable to either of the pure lives.

With CL behind us, as it were, we may return to the question with which we began way back in Section 1: What is pleasure? Specifically, what does Protarchus, in his search for a conception of pleasure adequate to support hedonism, now take pleasure to be? As we have seen, one important conclusion Protarchus seems to draw as a result of CL is that if ‘pleasure’ is taken to refer to ‘pleasant feelings’, then this does not furnish him with a suitable candidate for the good. This is because ‘pleasant feelings’ fail the criterion of independence.

In conceding that the mixed life is preferable to the mindless life, has Protarchus abandoned his hedonism? The answer is yes on the pluralist interpretation, for on this view Protarchus rejects the mindless life on the ground that it misses out on the distinct, non-hedonic goods of thinking: thus CL transforms Protarchus from a hedonist to a pluralist. More precisely, Protarchus is now a pluralist who recognizes two basic genres of goods: pleasure and thinking. The rest of the debate in the Philebus is, presumably, one being carried out between two pluralists about which of these goods is responsible for the superiority of the mixed life.

But as we have seen, the pluralist interpretation misunderstands Protarchus’ ground for rejecting the mindless life. Protarchus rejects that life not because it misses out on the distinct goods of thinking, but because in the absence of certain mental attitudes a life consisting of ‘pleasant feelings’ is not very pleasant. CL has simply revealed that a certain life, when understood properly, is to be rejected on hedonistic grounds. Still Having said this, CL does seem to force Protarchus to rethink his hedonism. How? Recall the dialectical position I attributed to
him in Section 1. Protarchus has two key commitments that, as far as I can see at any rate, he retains in the wake of CL. Foremost is his commitment to hedonism: thus Protarchus’ main task in the dialogue is to arrive at an account of pleasure that furnishes him with a plausible candidate for the good. Protarchus’ second commitment is to the unity of pleasure. Whatever ‘pleasure’ turns out to be, Protarchus needs to claim that all of it is good.

Placed as he is in this dialectical position, CL impresses on Protarchus that a life consisting of only ‘pleasant feelings’ will not do the trick. If Protarchus’ ethical claim is to be persuasive, then he needs to come up with a more serviceable account of pleasure. And CL has given him a clue about where to look. When Protarchus initially praised the mindless life, what exactly was he praising? On the interpretation I have proposed, Protarchus was unwittingly praising a life consisting of certain ‘pleasant feelings’ and certain mental attitudes about those feelings. Once Socrates purges this life of these mental attitudes, Protarchus withdraws his praise. The lesson for Protarchus is that what he really takes to be intrinsically valuable – and thus what he really ought to take ‘pleasure’ to be – is:

i) Certain ‘pleasant feelings’ in conjunction with certain mental attitudes about those feelings.

Since it seems that this is the life Protarchus initially meant to praise, it provides us with a rough outline for a more serviceable account of pleasure. In the next section I will undertake to fill in this rough outline, drawing on an influential contemporary account of pleasure by Fred Feldman. I will propose that this is the sort of account Protarchus ought to endorse if he wishes to retain a) his hedonism; and b) his claim that pleasure is uniform. In Chapter 5 I examine Protarchus’ debate with Socrates about false pleasures, and argue that this discussion marks Protarchus’ full
conversion to i) as his account of pleasure. In preparation for Chapter 5, in the next section I delineate this conception of pleasure.

4.6: Attitudinal Pleasure (AP)

This section turns to an alternative account of pleasure available to Protarchus. It is a distinct way of conceiving of what I call the ‘basic hedonic phenomenon’: the basic item of pleasure the hedonist takes to be intrinsically valuable. As we have already seen, pre-CL Protarchus, perhaps following Philebus, seems to conceive of the basic hedonic phenomenon as a pleasant feeling: the sort of feeling we experience when we eat, drink, have sexual intercourse, or when some other part of the body is suitably stimulated. But as we have also seen, CL exposes the inadequacy of this conception by Protarchus' own lights. So Protarchus’ new task in the dialogue is to find an account of the basic hedonic phenomenon that is worthy of the hedonist’s praise – one that meets the criteria of the good outlined at 20d1-10, in particular the requirement that it be ‘sufficient’ or intrinsically valuable.

This new account of pleasure is only fully delineated after CL, in the debate about false pleasures (35c-41b), and even further in Socrates’ tally of the goods to be included in the happy life (66a4-c6). But it will be easier to first spell out the view in outline. I turn to Protarchus’ full conversion to this view in Chapter 5. Call this conception of pleasure Attitudinal Pleasure (henceforth AP). It incorporates the two elements Protarchus envisioned in his initial praise for (what he took to be) the mindless life, namely ‘pleasant feelings’ and mental attitudes about those feelings. That is to say, on AP the basic hedonic phenomenon consists of two elements:

i) Some state of affairs, $S$; this may (but need not) refer to the event of a pleasant feeling occurring in a subject’s body.

ii) The subject’s taking a certain mental attitude $A$ towards $S$. 
The mental attitude in question is the sort of attitude we adopt when we ‘take pleasure in’ or ‘are pleased by’ a given state of affairs $S$. It may be cashed out in various ways which (I hope) avoid the charge of circularity. We ‘take pleasure in’ $S$ when we “welcome” it, or we “wish that it would continue,” or we “would intervene to ensure that it doesn’t stop,” etc. The advantages or disadvantages of one formulation or another need not detain us here. Let us simply gloss this attitude as one of suitably “liking” or “enjoying” some state of affairs.

Fred Feldman distinguishes between two ways of taking attitudinal pleasure in a given state of affairs. When we take pleasure in a state of affairs for its own sake, apart from any consequence or other relation it has to other things, then we take *intrinsic* attitudinal pleasure in that state of affairs. On the other hand, when we take pleasure in a given state of affairs because of its consequences, or for any property that isn’t among the intrinsic properties for that state of affairs, then we take *extrinsic* attitudinal pleasure in that state of affairs.\(^{133}\)

With this much established, Feldman identifies the basic hedonic phenomenon as follows, using the example of Jeremy’s enjoyment of the taste of cold beer. Let the taste of cold beer be represented by $B$. A basic hedonic phenomenon is:

$$J1: \text{Jeremy taking intrinsic pleasure to degree } +3 \text{ at } t \text{ in the fact that he himself is experiencing } B \text{ at } t.\(^{134}\)$$

The crucial elements of this state of affairs are: 1) A specific individual (i.e. Jeremy); 2) a specific intensity of intrinsic attitudinal pleasure (i.e. +3); 3) a specific time (represented by $t$), and 4) a specific object: in this case, the specific object is Jeremy’s experiencing $B$ at $t$. But notice that to be counted among the essential elements of a basic hedonic phenomenon, the

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\(^{133}\) Feldman, pp. 142-143.

\(^{134}\) Feldman, p. 144.
object need not be an experience or feeling. Another example of a basic hedonic phenomenon would be the following. Let \( W \) represent the fact that the war in Bosnia has ended:

\[ J2: \text{Jeremy taking intrinsic pleasure to degree } +3 \text{ at } t \text{ in } W. \]

On Feldman’s view, complex states of affairs such as \( J1 \) and \( J2 \) are basic hedonic phenomena. This view thus reformulates the hedonist’s thesis as the claim that ‘pleasures’ such as \( J1 \) and \( J2 \) are unique bearers of intrinsic value.

What AP offers Protarchus, it should be noted, is an account of distinctively human pleasures. (This will become more complicated in the next chapter, however, since we will argue there that Plato also admits AP-pleasures into the lives of the gods.)\(^{135}\) But for now, to clarify where Protarchus stands on the question of what pleasure is, let us return to the example that seemed to jolt Protarchus from his hazy praise for ‘pleasant feelings’ in CL and pressed him to refine his conception of pleasure in the first place: namely, the image of an exceedingly pleased mollusk. If Protarchus has now fastened onto AP-pleasure as the basic hedonic phenomenon he wishes to defend as identical to the good, then what is the status of those ‘pleasures’ that the mollusk is experiencing?

We may fear that Protarchus finds himself in a conceptual bind. On the one hand, CL has revealed that a hedonist – again, one who by Protarchus’ own lights claims that all pleasure is good – is saddled with an implausible position if he takes pleasure to refer to ‘pleasant feelings.’ The hedonist is in a much more defensible position if he claims that AP-pleasure is identical to the good. But on the other hand, this seems to entail that Protarchus must withhold the term ‘pleasure’ from what the mollusk experiences, since these clearly involve no intentional attitudes.

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\(^{135}\) As we shall see in more detail in the next chapter, in the Timaeus Plato also seems to admit pleasures into the divine life when has the title character claim that the divine craftsman “rejoices” at, and is “well-pleased” by, the cosmos he has just set into motion \([\text{ἡγάσθη τὲ καὶ ἐὐφρανθεὶς}] \) (37c6).
and thus cannot be counted as AP-pleasures. This is not only a rather extremely reversal of his earlier conception, it seems to involve counterintuitive implications of its own: must Protarchus now deny that any non-rational animals can experience pleasure at all?

I think there’s a way out of this bind for Protarchus. That is, he can continue to grant that what the mollusk is experiencing is indeed pleasure, with the important caveat that this is pleasure for a mollusk. This way he need not oppose commonsense views about animal psychology. All he needs to stipulate, I think, is that whereas the raw ‘pleasant feelings’ being experienced by the mollusk are indeed ‘mollusk pleasures’ – hedonically speaking, this the best that a mollusk can do, after all – those same ‘pleasant feelings’ are not to be counted as human pleasures. For humans, and indeed for all creatures capable of adopting intentional attitudes, ‘pleasure’ refers to AP-pleasure. So Protarchus has not altogether abandoned the pre-CL conception of pleasure as ‘pleasant feelings.’ This conception still holds for all non-rational animals. Post-CL, he has simply clarified that the pleasures involved in human happiness require thought, and the taking of intentional attitudes in particular.\(^{136}\)

There is one last point worth taking up before moving on to our general conclusions. Recall that in the introduction to this chapter I called attention to a dialectical feature of the Philebus that seems to set it apart from Socrates’ more combative showdown with the hedonist Callicles in the Gorgias. That is, in the Philebus it seems we are being set up for a synthesis of the views of Socrates and Protarchus, with Plato’s own view lying somewhere in between. With

\(^{136}\) The inclusion of animal pleasure in his hedonist position seems to be something Protarchus inherits from Philebus. In the dialogue’s opening remarks, Socrates attributes to Philebus the view that pleasure and related phenomena are good for “all living beings” \([\pi\acute{a}n\,\zeta\phi\omicron\omicron]\) (11b4-5). Socrates’ articulation of his own case suggests that its scope is more restricted. He champions “wisdom and thought and memory and their kindred, right opinion and true reasonings \([\tau\omicron\phi\omicron\nu\epsilon\omicron\nu\,\tau\omicron\nu\omicron\nu\epsilon\omicron\nu\,\kappa\alpha\iota\,m\acute{e}\mu\i\nu\nu\acute{\eta}\omicron\nu\,\kappa\alpha\,\tau\omicron\omicron\omicron\omicron\omicron\iota\nu\alpha\omicron\iota\varsigma,\,\acute{\omicron}\rho\omicron\theta\omicron\nu\,\kappa\alpha\iota\,\acute{\omicron}\nu\eta\beta\epsilon\varsigma\,\lambda\omicron\gamma\iota\omicron\sigma\omicron\omicron\omicron\omicron]\) […] for all who are capable of taking part in them \([\acute{\omicron}\nu\kappa\alpha\iota\nu\epsilon\omicron\nu\,\upsilon\omicron\nu\epsilon\omicron\nu\,\delta\nu\iota\alpha\iota\iota\alpha\iota\omicron\acute{\omicron}\nu\tau\omicron\omicron\omicron\omicron\omicron\acute{\omicron}\nu\,\delta\nu\iota\alpha\iota\iota\omicron\tilde{\omicron}\alpha\iota\omicron\acute{\omicron}\nu\kappa\alpha\iota\,\acute{\omicron}\nu\kappa\alpha\iota\,\acute{\omicron}\nu\eta\beta\epsilon\varsigma\,\delta\acute{\epsilon}\,\mu\acute{\epsilon}\tau\acute{\alpha}\acute{\sigma} \acute{\omicron} \tilde{\omicron} \nu]\). Unless Socrates holds that non-rational animals can take part in ‘true reasonings’ and the like, it seems that he and Protarchus begin the debate with conceptions of happiness that range over distinct sets of creatures.
some of the details of AP now spelled out, we are in a position to see more concretely how this is so.

The *Philebus* begins as a contest of lives, with each of its two main interlocutors championing a pure life as a candidate for happiness. But at the same time, Plato develops the dialectic in such a way that the ‘contest’ metaphor no longer seems appropriate. As Socrates and Protarchus each abandon the hardline view that the happy life could consist only of thinking or of pleasure, their debate morphs into something more co-operative as each side finds itself to be engaged in the more nuanced project of figuring out how precisely these two elements are to be combined in the happy life. In other words, Plato seems to construct the dialogue in such a way as to alert the reader that the initial contest of ‘pleasure vs. thought’ is too stark.

If Plato himself accepts AP, as I will argue in the next chapter, then he has good reason to point out that the dialogue’s initial ‘contest of lives’ needs to be corrected by some sort of synthesis. From the point of view of someone who accepts AP, the contest of lives is a false choice. This is clear if one stops to consider on which side of the ‘pleasure vs. thought’ contest AP-pleasures belong. Though we have been treating AP-pleasures as a refinement of Protarchus’ account of pleasure, it seems they straddle the two sides of the debate. AP-pleasures fall squarely within the ambit of hedonic phenomena – it would be odd indeed to deny that the ‘pleasure’ I take in the war’s end counts as a pleasure. And yet it also seems odd to deny their status as acts of the intellect, since they involve the taking of intentional attitudes. To anticipate a bit, we will see in the next chapter that this is precisely why Socrates argues that pleasures can be false in much the same sense that beliefs and statements can be false. It is also why he goes on to characterize pleasure as knowledge-dependent. In short, in AP-pleasures the intellectual and
hedonic elements seem to be two sides of the same coin. What once seemed to be incompatible positions now seem to be two different ways of describing the same happy life.

4.7: Conclusions

The next chapter will support the view that Plato accepts AP by outlining three advantages of this view. In short, this view helps to make sense of three interpretive puzzles in the *Philebus*. These are:

1. Socrates’ practice in the discussion of false pleasures (35c-41b) of appealing to (at least) two distinct senses of falsehood in making the case that there are false pleasures.
2. Socrates’ claim (40b2-4) in the same discussion that only the good man’s pleasures tend to be true.
3. The agreement between Protarchus and Socrates that the “most godlike” of lives is a life of pure thinking (33b6-7).

On the interpretation I will develop in Chapter 5, 1-3 cease to present serious interpretive problems once we take the view that Plato accepts AP. These readings add up to substantial, albeit indirect, evidence that both of Plato’s representatives, and hence also Plato himself, adopt the AP conception of pleasure in the aftermath of the discussion of false pleasures. In outlining the first and second puzzles I will also refine Plato’s version of AP and explain and defend Plato’s rather extreme view that the happy man’s pleasures entail knowledge.

I will then move on to our ultimate question: whether the *Philebus* in the end furnishes the Socrates of the *Protagoras* with a conception of pleasure such that his commitments to TV and to the benefits of the measuring art may be defended. I will argue that AP does indeed provide an account of pleasure such that it reliably tracks goodness or happiness, and that therefore AP is a suitable candidate to fill the gap identified in our account of the *Protagoras*:
that is, it provides an account of pleasure on which TV and the recommendation of the measuring art are defensible. As we will see, Plato’s view at the close of the *Philebus* – what I call pleasure-inclusive pluralism – supports the *Protagoras*’ key claims, and so there is no need to take the Socrates of the *Protagoras* to be a hedonist.
Chapter 5: The New Conception of Pleasure: Implications and Results

5.1: Introduction

The last chapter proposed that Protarchus plays a constructive dialectical role in the dialogue. Specifically, Protarchus’ main task in the dialogue is to arrive at an account of pleasure such that the thesis he inherits from Philebus – that pleasure is the good – seems plausible. We also saw in the last chapter that, as a result of CL, Protarchus comes to reject a life replete with ‘pleasant feelings’ if certain attitudes towards those feelings are missing. Most commentators interpret this development as Protarchus’ conversion to pleasure-inclusive pluralism – and, specifically, to the view that thinking constitutes a distinct good. On this picture, Protarchus’ hedonism vanishes early on in the dialogue, and his dialectical position morphs to that of arguing against a fellow pluralist that pleasure (rather than thinking) plays a leading role in the mixed life. In the last chapter I argued for another interpretation of Protarchus’ response to CL. In short, instead of rejecting hedonism in favour of pluralism, Protarchus may simply now hold that pleasure itself, if it is to turn out to be the same as the good, must be taken to include not only pleasant feelings but mental attitudes towards those feelings. On this picture, Protarchus remains a staunch defender of hedonism: CL has simply illuminated an account of pleasure on which his hedonist thesis looks more plausible.

By adding mental attitudes to pleasant feelings, has Protarchus arrived at AP as his account of pleasure? Not yet. AP involves both a state of affairs $S$ and a mental attitude $A$ taken by the subject toward $S$, and yet CL has impressed upon Protarchus only the value of $A$. Protarchus now knows that a serviceable account of pleasure must include certain mental attitudes, but he may not be sure about the precise range of possible states of affairs to be included in his developing account of pleasure. In particular, Protarchus may now be wondering
what position to take on cases in which the relevant $A$ is taken towards an $S$ that fails to obtain at all.

So Protarchus’ account of pleasure seems to be a work in progress in the wake of CL. Socrates will raise precisely the issue of non-obtaining states of affairs when he turns to the question of false pleasures. To anticipate a bit, false pleasures are cases in which $A$ somehow fails to get $S$ right. Thus the *Philebus*’ discussion of false pleasures serves as a dialectical counter-weight to CL in the development of AP as an account of pleasure for the hedonist: CL revealed the importance of $A$, and now the discussion of false pleasures will reveal the importance of $S$ for the hedonist.

To make the case that Plato is in fact committed to AP, in this chapter I will argue that this commitment accounts for three otherwise very puzzling features of the text. First, Socrates’ discussion of ‘false’ pleasures seems to conflate two quite distinct (and apparently incompatible) senses of falsity. This invites the charge that Socrates is equivocating when he argues that pleasures may be false. Second, Socrates (Plato’s other quasi-representative in the dialogue) claims in the same discussion that only a good man’s pleasures tend to be true. His official reason for this is that god men receive divine favour, and yet, if sincere, this raises important questions about happiness that are raised neither before nor after this curious remark. Third, Socrates gets Protarchus to agree that the “most godlike” of lives is free from both pleasure and pain. This seems plainly inconsistent with CL’s verdict – that is, that the mixed life is preferable to either of the pure lives.

I discuss the first puzzle in Sections 2-3. There I argue that Socrates’ use of two distinct senses of falsity becomes defensible if we take him to be working with the AP account of
pleasure. I then argue in Section 4 that Socrates’ discussion of false pleasures suggests a further refinement of ‘pleasure’ as a kind. For the purposes of the *Philebus*’ final analysis of the happy life, ‘pleasure’ is restricted only to those pleasures that are related to knowledge in the right way. That is to say, for a putative case of pleasure to qualify as a pleasure to be included in the happy life, ‘Subject X is pleased that S’ entails that ‘X knows that S’. With this much in place, I argue that once we recognize that AP-pleasures accompany knowledge in this way for Plato, his genuine reason for claiming that only the good man’s pleasures tend to be true becomes clear.

Section 5 then focuses on the third and final puzzle, arguing that if we suppose that Socrates and Protarchus are assuming the AP account of pleasure, then their view about the nature of the most godlike of lives is consistent with CL’s verdict. Finally, Section 6 explains the relationship between pleasure and happiness as Socrates and Protarchus (and hence Plato) come see it at the dialogue’s conclusion. I argue that Plato’s considered position is a form of pleasure-inclusive pluralism, the view that pleasure is to be counted among distinct goods contributing to happiness. But pleasure also plays a unique role within this pluralist framework. Because it depends causally and conceptually on the other goods within the whole, pleasure is a reliable tracker of the whole; that is to say, the presence of pleasure (on Plato’s conception) in a life entails that the other goods are also present in that life. I conclude by considering whether AP serves as a suitable conception of pleasure for Socrates’ purposes in the *Protagoras*. I conclude that the *Philebus* finally furnishes a conception of pleasure that supports both TV and the measuring art.
5.2: False Pleasures in the Philebus

Protarchus is understandably puzzled when Socrates begins to speak of false pleasures. Many interpreters share Protarchus’ puzzlement, in part because the notion of falsity Socrates uses seems to morph over the course of the discussion. And this is putting it mildly: for example, Dorothea Frede identifies at least four different senses in which Socrates uses the term ‘false.’ While there seems to be broad agreement that Socrates uses more than one sense of falsity in connection with pleasure, commentators are divided about whether this is a serious problem for Socrates’ (and perhaps Plato’s) position. On one side is J. Gosling, who condemns Plato for “rank equivocation.” But other commentators have challenged the assumption that Socrates’ talk of falsity must be univocal for his argument to work. Frede herself glosses all four of Socrates’ senses of ‘false’ as “ways in which something can go wrong with processes of restoration.” Jennifer Whiting proposes in a similar spirit that Socrates “employs a core notion of falsity departures from which are justified in their respective contexts and contribute to the argument as a whole.”

While I think Frede and Whiting are right to challenge the view that Socrates’ talk of ‘falsity’ must be univocal to be consistent, I also think that Socrates’ practice in the Philebus is

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140 This is connected to Frede’s view that the Philebus presents a unified account of pleasure as a restoration. As ought to be clear from my discussion of AP I disagree with Frede on this point, though I do not offer arguments against her view here.

141 J. Whiting, p. 3.
more troubling than either would have us believe. For while Socrates may be perfectly explicit that he is using a broad sense of falsity which includes a variety of ‘ways of going wrong,’ Protarchus is equally explicit that his concern is about one specific sense of falsity in question.

To soften the immediate resistance from Protarchus, Socrates defends his talk of false pleasures by appeal to other items which, he thinks, may be thought uncontroversially to be the sorts of things to which ‘falsity’ may be applied: fears, expectations, judgments. Socrates thought wrong: Protarchus accepts talk of falsity in the case of judgments, but not for the others (36c6-d2). Realizing that he is “stirring up a weighty controversy,” Socrates tries again. What follows is one of the more comical exchanges in the dialogue. Socrates appears to be making great progress as he secures easy agreements from Protarchus that pleasure is like judgment in many ways: that it is about something; that it can ‘go wrong’ or err with respect to its object; that we withhold praise from pleasure when it involves some such error. With capitulation from Protarchus apparently within reach, Socrates pushes on to the claim that pleasures often seem to depend on a false judgment, only this time Protarchus’ spine stiffens: “Of course. But what we call false in this case at that point is the judgment, Socrates; nobody would dream of calling the pleasure itself false” (38a1-4). Protarchus had no reservations in granting that pleasure can err or go wrong, because he holds that nothing follows from these claims about the propriety of calling certain pleasures ‘false.’ In other words, Protarchus is perfectly happy to grant all sorts of ways that pleasures may ‘go wrong,’ or err. He simply denies that these ways of erring should be conflated with falsity, a term which applies only to judgments. Protarchus remains true to this position later when he again resists Socrates’ characterization of bad pleasures as false ones:

What you say is the opposite of the truth, Socrates! It is not at all because they are false that we regard pleasures or pains as bad, but because there is some other grave and wide-ranging kind of badness involved. (41a1-4)
In short, Protarchus grants a wide-ranging conception of errant pleasures, but he excludes falsity – specifically, the falsity associated with judgments – from this conception. Once we appreciate the precise nature of Protarchus’ resistance, worries re-emerge about the propriety of Socrates’ equivocal uses of the term ‘false.’ Since Protarchus has made his precise reservations about this term perfectly clear, it is hard to see how Socrates’ more varied and flexible usage is helpful at all.

To further motivate this worry, allow me to identify two senses of ‘false’ assumed in Socrates’ discussion of false pleasures. When Protarchus first wonders how exactly pleasures can be true or false, Socrates responds with a rhetorical question: “But, Protarchus, how can there be true and false fears, or true and false expectations, or true and false opinions?” (36c11-13). Protarchus insists that of these only opinions may be true or false. This brings us to the first sense in which pleasures may be false: they may be false in the same way that opinions, or, to put matters more generally, statements and other things of a suitably propositional form, may be true or false. That Protarchus disputes the claim that pleasures may be false in this sense shows that Plato is alive to the counterintuitive nature of this claim that pleasures can be false; presumably he takes his account of pleasure to have resources which nonetheless can ground it. Call this the propositional sense of falsity.

So if pleasures are being claimed by Socrates to be false in the propositional sense, then it seems we must give some deeper account of what this type of falsity amounts to. Items that admit of falsity in the propositional sense are thought to come in two basic ‘flavours,’ namely true and false (I ignore here the worry that some propositions may be neither true nor false). Most important for our purposes, when an item is false in the propositional sense it is no less a specimen of its kind on account of being false. A statement or an opinion is no less a statement
or an opinion on account of being false; if a pleasure is false in this sense, then it is still a full-blown pleasure, albeit a false one.

In other parts of the discussion, however, when Socrates claims that some pleasures are false, he may be using ‘false’ as what is sometimes called an alienans term, i.e. an adjective that functions either to deny or render questionable the application of the word it precedes. Examples include ‘fake’ and ‘alleged.’ In the description ‘fake beard’ the term ‘fake’ serves either to render questionable or to deny outright that the item in question is in fact a beard. Similarly, in the description ‘alleged murderer’ the term ‘alleged’ seems at least to leave as an open question whether the person being picked out is in fact the murderer.

When used as an alienans term, ‘false’ serves to qualify or deny the application of the description it precedes. Examples abound in the English language. Thus false teeth are either not teeth at all or less so than real teeth. Similarly, a false friend is typically taken to be no friend at all. Moreover, ‘false’ often precedes attitudes or emotions as an alienans term. Thus false modesty is either not modesty at all or less so than the genuine article, and similarly with false courage. But one must be careful. In other cases of attitudes or emotions, the term ‘false’ functions in the propositional sense and not in the alienans sense. Consider the cases Socrates mentions in his rhetorical question quoted above. A false fear is typically not taken to be a non-fear or a fear of questionable status, but rather a full-blown fear, albeit a groundless one; likewise with false expectations and hopes.

Without wanting to insist that Greek linguistic practices match our own on a case-by-case basis, ‘false’ (ψευδεῖς) has both propositional and alienans uses in Greek as well as in English.\(^2\)

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142 For example, while in many of the LSJ entries for ψευδεῖς it is applied to statements and, especially, testimony, and is therefore being used in the propositional sense, there are also entries in which it means ‘unreal’, e.g. “ἲδε ἦ ὁ ψ. υἱὸς αὐτὸς τὸ ἄνθρωπον unαl Real Being (sc. the world of sense), Plot.5.8.9,” and in which it means counterfeit, e.g. “ψευδεῖν δικαιοθείαν ἄνθρωπον, in Hp. Epid. 3.1. [...] said to be a name of the monkey-market, perhaps as being villainous counterfeit of
More importantly, the two senses seem to be incompatible. It is one thing to say that \( x \) is false in the sense that \( x \) is a *full-blown* opinion or statement that is false, and quite another to claim that \( x \) is false in the sense that it is either a non-specimen or inferior specimen of the relevant kind. If pleasure \( p \) is false in the propositional sense, then it is every bit as much a pleasure as a true one, which ought to rule out characterizations of \( p \) as somehow an inferior specimen of pleasure, as it would be if it were false in the *alienans* sense.

In the course of arguing that some pleasures are ‘false’ Socrates seems to use the term in both the *propositional* and *alienans* senses. The evidence for this is abundant. Let us begin with some more evidence of his use of the *propositional* sense. In the following passage, Socrates takes himself to have shown what I take to be equivalent to the propositional sense of falsity, as the assimilation to opinions ought to make clear:

\[
\text{Soc: We saw, you remember, that he who had an opinion at all really had an opinion, but it was sometimes not based upon realities, whether present, past, our future.}
\]
\[
\text{Pro: Certainly.}
\]
\[
\text{Soc: And this it was, I believe, which created false opinion and the holding of false opinions, was it not?}
\]
\[
\text{Pro: Yes.}
\]
\[
\text{Soc: Very well, must we not also grant that pleasure and pain stand in the same relation to realities?}
\]
\[
\text{Pro: How so?}
\]
\[
\text{Soc: I mean that he who feels pleasure at all in any way or manner always really feels pleasure, but it is sometimes not based upon realities, whether present or past, and often, perhaps most frequently, upon things which will never even be realities in the future.}
\]

*humanity.*” Despite the appearance of incompatibility, both senses are often in view in different ways when something is said to be ‘false.’ For example, uses of the *alienans* sense often carry with them some thought of the propositional sense as well, since of course part of what it means for \( x \) to be a *deceptively* inferior specimen or non-specimen of \( y \) is for \( x \)’s outward appearance to promote or encourage *false beliefs* that \( x \) is (straightforwardly) \( y \). For example, another LSJ entry notes that it is used in connection with logical fallacies (see, for example, Aristotle, *Topics* 162b3). Presumably, logical fallacies *look like* valid inferences though they are not, and in virtue of appearing valid they promote false beliefs (i.e. either about the truth of whatever is inferred or about the validity of the inference itself).
Pro: This also, Socrates, must inevitably be the case. (40c9-e2)

One who falsely opines really opines nonetheless. Similarly one who is pleased really feels pleasure, even when that pleasure is false in the very same way that opinions are false, namely that it is “not based upon realities.” And from the claim that one who is pleased falsely nonetheless really feels pleasure, it is (I hope) but a short and uncontroversial step to the claim that the pleasure itself in this case is really a pleasure, albeit a false one.

Let this suffice as evidence for the propositional sense of ‘false.’ Now let us turn to Socrates’ use of ‘false’ in the alienans sense. For a pleasure to be false in this sense would mean that it is either not really a pleasure at all or at any rate inferior to other, truer pleasures. Socrates indeed seems to speak this way of false pleasures as well.

After dwelling on his famous images of the scribe and painter within the soul, and asserting a puzzling contrast between the ways these function for good and bad men, Socrates takes stock of what he has established: “From what has now been said, it follows that there are false pleasures in human souls that are quite ridiculous imitations of true ones, and also such pains (40c4-6).” My reason for italicizing these six words ought by now to be clear. What Socrates takes himself to have established here, it seems, is the existence of certain pleasures in human souls that imitate ‘true pleasures’ in a ridiculous way, and that this is the ground for calling them false. As is the rule in Plato’s talk of images, the claim that these false pleasures are imitations of true ones (and ridiculous ones at that!) implies that they are somehow derivative of true pleasures, inferior to them and thus mere quasi-specimens of pleasures. To claim that this

143 Socrates’ talk here of false pleasures being ridiculous imitations of true ones seems to undermine precisely the sort of parallel between beliefs and pleasures he insisted upon earlier in arguing on behalf of false pleasures in the propositional sense. See esp. 37a2-b4. If Socrates has the propositional sense of falsity in view, then his characterization of false pleasures as inferior imitations of true pleasures seems inappropriate.
is what it means for pleasures to be false is of course to use ‘false’ as an alienans term. The term ‘false’ is this time meant to express that the pleasures in question are inferior specimens of pleasure, in much the same way that we might say that a false beard is a ridiculous imitation of a real beard.

To this it may be objected that I am construing the second ‘that’ clause in the quotation as epexegetical for the term ‘false.’ Thus I am construing the quotation as follows: “From what has now been said, it follows that there are false pleasures in human souls – that is, that there are pleasures that are quite ridiculous imitations of true ones, and that this is what it means for them to be false. Similarly with pains…” But, our objector might argue, this is not the only way to take Socrates’ point. This is indeed how I construe the line; for unless we do this we must take Socrates to be making a claim of questionable relevance, given the character of the debate up until now. For without something like an epexegetical construal it seems we must interpret Socrates’ point along the following lines: ‘From what has now been said, it follows that there are false pleasures in human souls, and that on top of being false these pleasures are also quite ridiculous imitations of true ones, and also such pains.’ This is an odd claim for Socrates to be making because the matter in dispute continues to be, I take it, whether there are false pleasures. This is what Protarchus denies, and what they have been debating for several pages now. So once Socrates shows that it follows from their discussion that there are indeed false pleasures in human souls, he seems to have no reason to make what on the rival interpretation is a distinct point about how these false pleasures stand to true ones. On my reading Socrates’ point fits the dialectical context like a glove. He asserts that their discussion has established the existence of false pleasures in human souls, and then explains the ground on which he calls them false.
So far we have seen evidence that in contending that certain pleasures are ‘false’ Socrates means for the falsity to be taken in both the *propositional* and *alienans* senses. The damning verdict suggested by all this is that Plato is simply equivocating between two distinct senses of ‘false.’ But in the next section I want to propose that if we take seriously my proposal that Plato in the *Philebus* accepts AP as the best unified account of pleasure, then this offers a way of avoiding this damning verdict. For on this picture it seems that when so-called ‘pleasures’ are false in the *propositional* sense, then they are necessarily false in the *alienans* sense as well; or so I will argue in the next section.

5.3: False Pleasures in the *Philebus* on AP

To recap, on the view I call AP a pleasure consists of two distinct elements. These are $S$ and $A$ respectively:

a) Some state of affairs, $S$; this may or may not refer to the event of a pleasant feeling occurring in a subject’s body.

b) The subject’s taking a certain mental attitude $A$ towards $S$.

As I suggested in Chapter 4, Socrates’ proposed life of a mollusk presents Protarchus with a case in which $A$ fails to obtain. That is to say, in the case of pleasure as enjoyed by a mollusk the relevant state of affairs $S$ does indeed obtain; the mollusk is experiencing some pleasant feeling in its body, which for it is all that pleasure can amount to. However, the realization that no $A$ obtains leads Protarchus to reject this as a conception of pleasure as experienced by humans, able to ground his hedonism.

Now I want to propose that on a fairly straightforward case of a false pleasure, we are presented with the other side of the coin, so to speak, where $A$ obtains but $S$ does not.\textsuperscript{144} Suppose,  

\textsuperscript{144} There is an important interpretive debate about the precise nature of the ‘falsehood’ in the *Philebus’* account of false pleasures, between members of what Evans (2008) calls the ‘Old School’ (which includes J. C. B. Gosling
for example, that I am under the false impression that my wife is currently being faithful to me. Suppose also that I take the relevant attitude toward this, such that I am also pleased that my wife is being faithful to me. In this case $A$ obtains but $S$ does not; there simply is no state of affairs answering to the state of affairs in which I am taking pleasure.

In this case, it seems clear that my pleasure is false in the *propositional* sense. I have a false belief in the straightforward sense that I take a certain state of affairs to obtain, represented by the proposition ‘My wife is being faithful to me right now,’ and yet it does not obtain. But I am also taking pleasure in that same state of affairs that fails to obtain, and Plato is clearly prepared to argue that, given this relation to that state of affairs, the pleasure should likewise be construed as a propositional attitude admitting of propositional truth and falsity.

So, why suppose that Plato would be right in characterizing this as a case of a false pleasure in the *alienans* sense as well? For the simple reason that if AP gives us the strict conditions for a full-blown pleasure, then the pleasure I take in my wife’s fidelity satisfies only half of these conditions. Plato can reasonably take this as a case for applying an *alienans* term, since the failure to satisfy $S$ means that there is a relevant defect such that we ought to withhold the unqualified use of the term ‘pleasure.’

So while the propositional and *alienans* senses are quite distinct, I propose that Socrates combines them in a kind of dialectical two-step. That is, he asks us to consider ‘pleasures’ that are false in the propositional sense, and then once this sense of falsity is spelled out in their case, he proceeds to show the reason for the scare quotes – namely, that propositionally false

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(1959), T. Penner (1970), and S. Delcomminette (2003), and what he calls the ‘New School,’ which includes R. Hackforth (1972), V. Harte (2004), and D. Russell (2005), pp. 176-82. Evans sides with the Old School. In short, the disagreement is about what mistake is involved when a pleasure is false. According to the Old School, that a subject takes false pleasure in $S$ means that $S$ fails to obtain. According to the New School, that a subject takes false pleasure in $S$ means that $S$ fails to be good. In my Conclusion I propose that both sides of this debate are correct: AP pleasure requires not only that the pleasure’s object ($S$) obtain, but that it is also good.
‘pleasures,’ since they are essentially attitudes directed towards some state of affairs that doesn’t obtain, are not really pleasures according to AP after all, and so ‘pleasures’ that are false in the propositional sense are therefore also false in the alienans sense.

By the same token, as is ordinarily the case with alienans terms, here too the pseudo-specimen’s resemblance to a full-blooded specimen means that it is not utterly unrelated to the genuine article. The false beard one wears on Halloween looks like a real beard. If it did not, then we would not treat it as though it had anything to do with beards. Similarly, I propose, since the false pleasure I take in my wife’s fidelity satisfies one of the two conditions for genuine pleasure (as defined by AP), Plato may be defended for treating it as though it resembles the genuine article, and for characterizing such pleasures as ‘false’ in the alienans sense. If this is persuasive, then one advantage of supposing that Plato accepts AP is that it provides us with the resources to defend him against the charge that he is being either sly or obtuse in characterizing certain pleasures as false in both senses.\(^{145}\)

Thus what the phenomenon of false pleasure presents for Protarchus is the other side of the coin, as it were, of the argument of CL. If we imagine a life full of false pleasures, then this is

\(^{145}\)On this picture a true (in both senses) pleasure I take in my wife’s fidelity is subjectively indistinguishable from a false (also in both senses) pleasure taken in my wife’s fidelity. Plato’s externalism concerning pleasure on the AP-model amounts to the view that whether or not a subject is indeed experiencing pleasure is not to be solely determined subjectively. In this sense, pleasure is knowledge-like rather than belief-like: whether we indeed know something is likewise to be determined by states of affairs external to the knowing subject.

Plato may endorse a disjunctivist position concerning pleasure – roughly, a position that rejects a characterization of a (propositionally) true pleasure as one that is subjectively indistinguishable from a (propositionally) false pleasure, but which is generated in an inappropriate way and is for that reason is false. Part of Plato’s externalism is the view that a true pleasure ought to be characterized as an instance of a subject’s correct interaction with the world, so that built into the account of the subject’s experience is the fact that the subject is apprehending a given state of affairs correctly. I will have more to say later about this element of Plato’s conception of pleasure. For versions of disjunctivism in various contexts, cf. J. Hinton (1967), P. Snowdon (1981), and A. Haddock and F. MacPherson (2008).
a life full of A but devoid of the relevant S. CL has made it abundantly clear to Protarchus that if pleasure is indeed the good as he claims, then the pleasant life must involve more than ‘pleasant feelings’. It must also contain the right attitudes. But Protarchus may well wonder at this point whether pleasure, and thus the pleasant life, doesn’t consist solely of attitudes. What’s missing in a life filled simply with A? The later discussion of false pleasures answers this question: such a life, it seems, would not be worth the hedonist’s praise either, since its ‘pleasures’ would be false in both senses.

While all of this suggests an important interpretive advantage recommending the view that Plato accepts AP, one might object that this saddles Plato with an oddly externalist and heretofore undefended account of pleasure – one on which whether the subject is in fact experiencing a pleasure depends on certain facts outside the agent altogether. One way of putting the point is that it follows from Plato’s account of pleasure that a person can be wrong about whether they are in fact experiencing an AP-pleasure. To return to an earlier example, in the case in which I am falsely pleased that my wife is being faithful to me, this experience is presumably subjectively indistinguishable from a case of being truly pleased by my wife’s fidelity. What seems to distinguish the two cases is a fact out in the world, as it were: that is, my wife’s fidelity. So whereas Plato wishes to characterize these two cases as a quasi-specimen and a genuine specimen of pleasure respectively, we would find it far more natural to claim that these are two \textit{bona fide} cases of pleasure. Plato’s externalist picture of pleasure requires some sort of defence.

The next section defends this externalist picture. I argue that Plato’s externalism is grounded in a claim about pleasure he makes only in the final tally of the happy life and the sorts of pleasures to be included therein. It is the claim that ‘pleasure’ for the purposes of the happy
life should be taken to include only those pleasures that ‘accompany knowledge.’ I explain that this claim commits Plato to the view that a genuine case of ‘being pleased that $S$’ entails ‘knowledge of $S$’ on the part of the pleased subject. What emerges is an account of pleasure such that whether or not one is really pleased that $S$ depends on whether one knows that $S$. And that one knows that $S$ depends straightforwardly on facts outside the agent, most importantly that $S$ obtains. Not only does this vindicate Plato’s externalism about pleasure, but it gives content to the *Philebus*’ conclusion that knowledge takes priority over pleasure in the happy life. It also locates Protarchus’ conversion from hedonism to pleasure-inclusive pluralism.

**Section 5.4: Pleasure and Knowledge on AP**

At 66c4-6, in the *Philebus*’ final declaration of the sorts of pleasure to be admitted into the happy life, Plato claims that these pleasures must “accompany knowledge.” Assuming that Plato means to claim that these pleasures are *necessarily connected* to knowledge, it is an odd claim. For it seems to amount to the claim that if the happy subject is pleased that $S$, then the happy subject must *know that $S$*. And this seems an odd requirement. Notice that as it stands, this understanding of the sorts of pleasures allowed into the happy life is more restrictive than the discussion of false pleasures may have suggested. On that view, it is necessary that any true pleasure, and hence any pleasure eligible for inclusion in the happy life, consist both of a certain

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146 Plato’s fuller view in the passage is that the happy man’s pleasures “accompany knowledge and, sometimes, perceptions” [ὤς ἡδονάς ἔθεμεν ὀλύμπους ὀρισόμενοι, καθαράς ἐπιστομάσαντες τῆς ψυχῆς αὐτῆς ἐπιστήμαις, τοις ἐν αἰσθήσεσιν ἐπομένας] (66c5-6). This addition of perception-accompanying pleasures raises a number of questions, among them whether Plato means by this i) pleasures which accompany perceptions *but not* knowledge; or ii) pleasures which accompany both perceptions *and* knowledge. Delving into this and related issues would take me too far afield. Suffice it to say that I take perception to entail states of affairs in much the same way that knowledge does, such that ‘$X$ perceives that $S’ entails that $S$ obtains and is affecting $X$ in the right way. And so I take much of what I have to say in the section to go for the happy man’s perception-accompanying pleasures as well.
state of affairs and of an attitude taken by the subject toward that state of affairs. This implies that

i) If a subject $X$ is truly pleased that $S$, then $S$ obtains.

As we saw in Socrates’ discussion of false pleasures, a case in which $S$ fails to obtain is a false pleasure in the propositional, and hence also alienans, senses of falsity. But here Plato is committed to the following:

ii) If a subject $X$ is truly pleased that $S$, then $X$ knows that $S$, and $X$’s being pleased is related to $X$’s knowledge that $S$ in the right way.

Since a subject’s knowledge that $S$ entails $S$, ii) is stronger than i) in the sense that ii) entails i) but not vice-versa.

So in Plato’s final tally of the pleasures to be admitted into the happy life he seems to commit himself to a stronger version of externalism than we have considered so far. On Plato’s picture, if subject $X$ is happy and $X$ is pleased that $S$, then this entails that $X$ knows that $S$, which in turn entails that $S$ is the case. Call this Plato’s knowledge requirement. We are at last in sight of the precise way that Plato seems to hold that pleasure is a reliable tracker of happiness; or what seems to amount to much the same thing, that pleasure reliably tracks those states of affairs on which happiness is based.

But what is it about the sorts of pleasures to be admitted to the happy life that ensures that they will reliably “accompany knowledge,” such that they track states of affairs in the way Plato has in mind? We got a glimpse of this view in Plato’s discussion of false pleasures, wherein
‘true’ pleasures seemed to be those based on true beliefs. A puzzling feature of Plato’s knowledge requirement is that it appears to be unnecessary if Plato’s sole concern is to establish a reliable tracking relationship between pleasure and happiness.

Let me explain. The discussion of false pleasures (and, in particular, Plato’s images of the scribe and the painter at 38e9-39e2) seemed to establish that pleasures are minimally belief-dependent in the sense that $X$’s being pleased that $S$ depends on her belief that $S$. And in his inventory of the goods the happy man will possess, Plato stipulates that the happy man will have true (and presumably only true) beliefs $[\delta\dot{\omega}ας \dot{ο}ρθάς]$ (66b6). If we put these views together, it is not hard to see that Plato already has the resources to generate a truth-guaranteeing account of pleasure; at least in the case of the happy man. And yet Plato does not settle for the more modest and equally truth-guaranteeing claim that the happy subject $X$’s being pleased that $S$ entails that $X$ believes truly that $S$, and reaches instead for the claim that $X$’s being pleased that $S$ entails that $X$ knows that $S$. Why?

This section will attempt to reconstruct Plato’s reasons for adopting the knowledge requirement. I will begin by considering a distinction between a pleasure’s source and its object. I will then turn to some test-cases to illustrate a problem that arises when we take the view that ‘$X$ is pleased that $S$’ entails merely that ‘$X$ believes that $S$.’ I will argue that pleasures sourced in beliefs – whether these beliefs are true or false – represent a kind of deviant causal chain for Plato. However, when a pleasure follows from knowledge, its source and its object turn out to be numerically identical, which Plato holds to be necessary for genuine cases of being pleased that $S$. On this ground I defend Plato’s knowledge requirement. I then argue that the knowledge
requirement provides the real reason for Socrates’ curious claim that only a good man’s pleasures tend to be true. Count this as another interpretive advantage of attributing AP to Plato.

First, let us return to an important development in Plato’s discussion of pleasure in the *Philebus*. A crucial turn came in the discussion of false pleasures, when Socrates secures Protarchus’ agreement that pleasure, like belief, is *about* something, or has an intentional object (37a8-9). Let us call this the pleasure’s *object*. Of course, not all of the things we ordinarily call pleasures have intentional objects, but with this concession from Protarchus Plato narrows the field to pleasures with this structure.

A key consequence of this feature of pleasure is that it seems to impose a certain logic onto our attributions of pleasure. Specifically, for X to be pleased that S, it is necessary that X is *somehow aware of S*. For example, if X is utterly unaware that her friend has inherited a large sum of money, then it seems that X cannot be *pleased* that her friend has inherited a large sum of money. If one is to take pleasure in a certain object, then, then one must be minimally aware of that same object.

Another key feature of pleasures of all kinds is that they have sources. Protarchus reminds us of this early on in his first real show of fortitude in response to a challenge from Socrates. When Socrates worries that pleasures are radically unlike because, for example, the temperate and intemperate activities that give rise to certain pleasures are radically unlike, Protarchus avails himself of a distinction between a pleasure and its source: though temperance and intemperance are radically unlike *sources* of pleasure, it does not follow that the pleasures to which they give rise are themselves radically unlike (12d5-6). For the pleasures Plato has in
To further illustrate the distinction between a pleasure’s *source* and its *object*, consider three cases:

Case 1: Sam hears a trumpet playing below her balcony. Upon further inspection she realizes that the person playing the trumpet is the one and only Miles Davis. Sam is then pleased that Miles Davis is playing trumpet below her balcony. In Case 1, both the *source* and the *object* of Sam’s pleasure is one and the same state of affairs, namely the fact that Miles Davis is playing below her balcony.

Case 2: Sam hears a trumpet playing below her balcony. This time she does not investigate, and so she never learns that the one playing the trumpet music is the one and only Miles Davis. In this case, it seems that the pleasure Sam enjoyed in Case 1 is unavailable to her. Sam cannot be pleased that Miles Davis is playing below her balcony; she has no idea that he is the one playing the trumpet. While the fact that Miles Davis is playing the trumpet below her balcony is the *source* of Sam’s pleasure, it cannot be the *object* of her pleasure. So Sam’s pleasure is to be characterized differently. Sam is pleased simply that a trumpet is playing below her balcony.

Case 3: This time Sam is not in her apartment, but in a laboratory, hooked up to a Nozickean experience machine. Suppose Sam believes she is listening to Miles Davis playing below her balcony. In Case 3, Sam believes that Miles Davis is playing below her balcony; let us postpone

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147 While I use the term *source* rather than *cause*, I understand *source* in such a way that it is I suppose at bottom a causal notion. To claim (as Protarchus does) that temperance is a source of a temperate man’s pleasures is to nominate temperance as the thing responsible for his pleasures in an efficient-causal way.
judgment about the precise object of her pleasure in this case. But this is clearly not the source of her pleasure: presumably the state of affairs in which she takes pleasure does not obtain at all.\textsuperscript{148} The source of her pleasure is the experience machine; or to put perhaps a finer point on it, the source is Sam’s experience machine-generated belief that Miles Davis is playing below her balcony.\textsuperscript{149}

In Case 1, the source and the object of Sam’s pleasure are one and the same, namely the fact that Miles Davis is playing below her balcony, and so it represents as it were a standard case of being pleased that $S$, either because Sam’s pleasure that $S$ rests either on a true belief that $S$ or because it rests on knowledge that $S$. Cases 2 and 3 illuminate different ways that a pleasure’s source and its object can come apart, and so it seems there is at least a worry in these cases that Sam fails to be pleased that $S$. This is clearest in Case 2: Sam’s failure even to be aware that it is Miles Davis playing below her balcony seems to rule this out as a pleasure Sam can enjoy. In Case 2 we deny that Sam is pleased \textit{that Miles Davis is playing below her balcony}. Sam has no belief that this is the case, and so she also does not know that this is the case, and so we deny that Sam is so pleased, either \textit{because} she fails to believe or \textit{because} she fails to know that Miles Davis is playing below her balcony.

Case 3 is perhaps less clear. While in the experience machine, Sam believes falsely that Miles Davis is playing below her balcony, and is pleased. Is she pleased \textit{that Miles Davis is}

\textsuperscript{148} Even if the state of affairs \textit{does} obtain – that is, even if while Sam is in a laboratory hooked up to the experience machine, Miles Davis is across town playing the trumpet below her balcony, I think we would deny that Sam is pleased \textit{that} Miles Davis is playing trumpet below her balcony. This will be an important point later on, and so I will have more to say about it.

\textsuperscript{149} Throughout I am assuming that the experience machine operates in such a way that one’s simulated experience $E$ ordinarily involves the formation of various false beliefs, without serious objection I hope.
playing below her balcony? Is this the right way to characterize her case? While intuitions may differ, two related features of Case 3 seem to generate a worry about straightforwardly attributing to Sam the condition of ‘being pleased that Miles Davis is playing below her window.’

The first concerns the object of her pleasure. In Case 3, there really is no state of affairs answering to the object of her pleasure. And yet it seems wrong to characterize her pleasure as about nothing at all.\(^{150}\) Perhaps we may want to fix this by claiming that the object of her pleasure is her false belief that Miles Davis is playing below her window. But this seems to mischaracterize Sam’s pleasure: what Sam is taking pleasure in is not a belief she has – much less is it a false belief she has – but rather a certain state of affairs out in the world (albeit one that fails to obtain). So the first worry about characterizing Sam’s pleasure as a straightforward case of ‘being pleased that S’ is that profound questions arise about the precise identity of the S in question. The second worry follows from the first. Since the object of Sam’s pleasure does not obtain, it cannot be the source of her pleasure either, for the simple reason that a non-obtaining state of affairs cannot be the source of anything at all. In Case 3 the real source of Sam’s pleasure would again seem to be her false belief about Miles Davis. But what this reveals, I think, is that in ordinary cases of attributing ‘being pleased that S’ to a subject, an appeal to a belief, either as

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\(^{150}\) On this point Plato’s worry about false pleasure mirrors similar worries of his, aired in many places throughout the Platonic corpus, about the statuses of false beliefs and false statements. In short, where the object of a statement or belief fails to obtain, the status of the statement or belief itself becomes dubious. This is of course a long-standing and complex issue in Plato’s thought, one as central to his overall project as the question of pleasure’s relationship to happiness. Cf. Euthydemus 283e6-284c8; Cratylus 429b3-430a5; Republic 476e4-478e6; Theaetetus 187d1-189b4, 199e1-201d3; Sophist 261a4-264d9. In briefly outlining a similar issue for pleasure in the Philebus, I do not mean to defend Plato’s approach to the issue of falsity in general. I take it to be enough to show that once pleasures are shown in the Philebus to be intensional in roughly the way that beliefs and statements are intensional, then this raises similar worries for Plato. Cf. B. A. O. Williams (1959).
its object or as its source, represents a kind of deviant causal chain, one in which the pleasure’s object and its source fail to be numerically identical.

In other words, on Plato’s view we are making a certain claim about a pleasure when we characterize someone as being *pleased that S*. That is to say, when we attribute some such pleasure to a subject, we are claiming not only that the pleasure is *about* a certain state of affairs, but also that this state of affairs stands in the right way as a source of the pleasure in question. In genuine cases of *being pleased that S*, the pleasure’s source and its object must be one and the same state of affairs, namely *S*. Of course, ordinary talk does seem occasionally to treat pleasures such as the one in Case 3 as cases of *being pleased that S*. For example, we may say of a mental patient that ‘He is pleased that he is communicating with Martians.’ But such statements ordinarily function as shorthand for ‘He is pleased because he *believes* he is communicating with Martians.’ As in Case 3, here the pleasure’s source is a false belief, and its object is mysterious.

With his knowledge requirement, Plato is setting aside cases in which the proximate source of the pleasure is a false belief. That the happy life contains both knowledge and true beliefs seems to rule out the possibility that it contains false beliefs in any case, and so no false pleasures can be admitted into the happy life. But as we have already mentioned, Plato’s knowledge requirement goes a step further, for it also seems to rule out those pleasures based on true beliefs rather than on knowledge. As we have also already seen, this seems to be unnecessary – why not simply settle for the requirement that the pleasures being admitted into the happy life be based *either* on true belief *or* on knowledge? After all, a true belief requirement would generate correct verdicts for Cases 1-3. In Case 1, Sam has a true belief that *S* and so case 1 is a genuine case of being pleased that *S*. In case 2, Sam has no belief that *S*, and so her
pleasure fails the ‘true belief’ requirement. And in Case 3, Sam’s pleasure is based on a false belief, and so her pleasure fails to be a genuine case, as it should for Plato. What then is wrong with allowing pleasures whose source is a true belief, in Plato’s view?

We can answer this question by modifying Case 3. Recall that in Case 3 the experience machine had Sam believing that Miles Davis was playing below her balcony. So far we have been assuming that this belief is false. But now suppose this belief is true. That is, while Sam is in a laboratory hooked up to the experience machine, Miles Davis is in fact across town playing below her balcony. In this case, the source of Sam’s being pleased that $S$ is her true belief that $S$. And yet it seems odd to suppose that states of affairs obtaining miles from Sam and the laboratory could promote Case 3 from a non-case of being pleased that $S$ to a genuine case. Whatever is going on below Sam’s balcony, it plays no causal role in her awareness that $S$; as before, the proximate source of her being pleased that $S$ has instead to do with the experience machine and the way it generates certain beliefs. In short, even in the case where Sam’s being pleased that $S$ is based on a true belief, the source of her pleasure fails to be $S$. This is why Plato pushes for the knowledge requirement rather than settling for the true belief requirement.

What this picture suggests, then, is that Plato takes pleasures sourced in beliefs – whether true or false – to represent a kind of deviant causality, one admitting of cases in which a pleasure’s source and its object fail to be numerically identical. On the other hand, since on the knowledge requirement Sam’s being pleased that $S$ entails her knowledge that $S$, and since Sam’s knowledge that $S$ entails $S$, Plato’s insistence on the knowledge requirement effectively rules out these deviant causal chains. Plato requires that the happy man’s pleasures be based in
knowledge because only in this way can he ensure that the happy man’s being pleased that S is caused by S in the right way.  

If this reconstruction is along the right lines, then it suggests an important interpretive point about Plato’s discussion of false pleasures. In a key but curious passage (40b2-4), Socrates applies what he has said about true and false pleasures to the lives of good and bad men. Socrates imagines a case in which a good man and a bad man are each expecting to come into the possession of an abundance of gold, and are pleased about it. Though the pleasures these men experience are ostensibly ‘the same,’ Socrates wants to insist that they are different, for the good man’s pleasure is true, while the bad man’s pleasure is false. How can Socrates be so sure? His official ground for this claim is that the good alone are “friends to the gods” [θεοφιλεῖς]. This seems to be a rather ad-hoc way of guaranteeing the truth of the good man’s pleasures, given that the role played by divine favour in generating happiness has gone effectively unexplored until now. Moreover, it is not clear why this does not provoke a worry from either Socrates or Protarchus that divine favour stands as an additional competitor (along with pleasure and knowledge) as the chief cause of happiness.

In any case, Plato’s knowledge requirement reveals that this is not the real reason why he holds that the good man’s pleasures will tend to be true. For on the fairly safe assumption that the happy man and the good man are one and the same for Plato, the good man’s pleasure that S will follow from his knowledge that S, which entails S. If the good/happy man takes anticipatory pleasure in, say, the fact that he will inherit a large sum of money, then this is because he knows

that he will inherit the large sum, and that he knows it entails that the inheritance will come to pass. Likewise, assuming that the bad man is unhappy on Plato’s view, the bad/unhappy man’s ‘pleasures’ are based on mere beliefs, either true or false. Even where his belief about a future state of affairs turns out to be true, Plato denies that the bad man is genuinely pleased *that he will inherit a large sum*, since the proximate cause of the bad man’s pleasure is a belief rather than knowledge.

I can see two possible reasons why Socrates suppresses the real explanation for the reliability of the god man’s pleasures. First, to do so would be premature and provocative, given that his debate with Protarchus is not over. That the real reason for the truth of the good man’s pleasures is knowledge would in effect decide the entire debate about whether knowledge or pleasure deserve pride of place in the mixed life. Once Protarchus grants this picture of the mixed life, it is clear that he has lost.

Second, and less cynically, the subject of pleasures taken in future states of affairs raises thorny issues for Socrates’ final account of pleasure. Recall that on the account I am attributing to Socrates, true pleasure that *S* accompanies knowledge that *S*, which entails *S*. When *S* refers to some future state of affairs, it seems that recognizing genuine cases of being pleased that *S* commits Plato to the view that a future state of affairs can be the source of things that predate it. For example, on this picture the state of affairs five years from now consisting in the happy man’s inheriting a large sum must be supposed to reach backwards in time, as it were, so as to cause his present state of knowledge that he will inherit a large sum, which in turn causes his now being pleased that he will inherit a large sum. Obviously this is metaphysically odd. However, the problem has little to do with Plato’s account of pleasure, specifically. It is a
problem for any *causal* account of ‘S knows that $P$’ where $P$ is a future state of affairs; that the happy man’s *present* knowledge that $S$ causes his *presently* being pleased that $S$ is not problematic in the same way. Plato must either explain how a causal account of knowledge accommodates knowledge of future states of affairs, or else his real view may be that the future is inherently uncertain or unreal and hence future states of affairs cannot be known.

Assuming that Plato takes the view that future states of affairs can indeed be known, the difference between the good man’s pleasures and those of the bad man turns out to be more radical than it may appear. Not only is the one set of pleasures true and the others false, but only the bad man’s pleasures turn out actually to be *hopes*. This is because hope seems to be what is sometimes referred to as a ‘knowledge-precluding emotion.’ That is to say, S’s *hoping* that $P$ is incompatible with S’s simultaneous *knowing* that $P$. We cannot really hope for things we *know* will come to pass – while I may hope that the Toronto Blue Jays will win the World Series next year, I cannot hope that the sun will rise tomorrow (assuming this is something I genuinely know). While this may seem to be a point about hope’s future-directedness, this is a mistake in my view. One can coherently have *hopes* about present or past states of affairs, as when I, stuck in traffic on my way to an important business meeting, hope that the client’s train has arrived late. That the hoped-for state of affairs lies in the past does not render this a deviant case of hope. What *does* seem to rule out my hoping that the client’s train has arrived late is if I know that the train did in fact arrive late (or indeed that it did not). If we connect this with Plato’s knowledge requirement for the happy man’s pleasures, then it is clear that none of the happy man’s pleasures is a hope. If the happy man is *pleased* that he will inherit a large sum, then this is only
because he knows that he will; in which case his pleasure is incompatible with a simultaneous hope that he will inherit a large sum.\footnote{Count this as further defence for Plato’s knowledge requirement. If being pleased that $S$ did not entail knowledge that $S$, then it would not be at all clear why “I am pleased that the next two American Presidents will be Democrats” is an odd thing to say. It is odd because ordinarily we take this to be the sort of thing a subject cannot now know. A natural response is, “What you mean to say is that you hope the next two American Presidents will be Democrats.” Cf. Wayne Davis (1981) for this point and example.}

This feature of pleasure (so understood) may seem odd, but in fact this simply places pleasure alongside a number of other knowledge-requiring emotional and cognitive attitudes: one can only be ashamed or indignant that $S$ if one knows that $S$, and likewise acknowledging or remembering that $S$ entails that one knows that $S$. As a knowledge-requiring state, being pleased that $S$ is incompatible not only with hoping that $P$, but also with other knowledge-precluding states such as fearing that $S$ or suspecting that $S$.

Let us take stock of the interpretive advantages of taking Plato to be committed to the AP account of pleasure in the \textit{Philebus}. First, on this view Socrates’ use of two distinct senses of falsity in the discussion of false pleasures becomes defensible. A consequence of Socrates’ talk of false pleasure, however, is the odd view that false pleasures – those which involve the relevant attitude but no corresponding state of affairs – are not really pleasures. But if we connect AP to Plato’s knowledge requirement, then the result is a strongly externalist account of pleasure; one on which a pleasure only counts as a genuine case of \textit{being pleased that} $S$ if it entails \textit{knowledge that} $S$, which in turn entails that $S$. Pleasure, then, much like its rival in the \textit{Philebus}, knowledge, is for Plato necessarily a case of being affected by states of affairs in the right way. Two further advantages flow from this interpretation. First, it allows us to provide the genuine reason for Socrates’ curious claim that only the good man’s pleasures tend to be true. This is because these
pleasures alone are based on knowledge, which guarantees that the states of affairs in which the happy man takes pleasure will in fact obtain. Second, it allows us to see the precise reason for knowledge’s priority over pleasure in the happy life; that is, where (true) pleasure exists it is caused by knowledge, and so ‘pleasure’ in the absence of knowledge turns out not to be the genuine article. Naturally, knowledge shows no such dependence on pleasure.

The next section identifies one last interpretive advantage of attributing AP to Plato. This is the puzzle generated by Socrates’ curious claim that a pleasureless life of pure thinking is “most godlike.” As we will see, this remark is difficult to reconcile with CL’s verdict. However, if we take Plato to be committed to AP, then we are in a position to show that Socrates’ remark is indeed consistent with CL’s verdict; or so I will argue in the next section.

Section 5.5: Divine Pleasures?

Another textual puzzle confronting any interpretation of CL in the Philebus is Socrates’ and Protarchus’ curious agreement that the most divine of lives is a pleasureless (and painless) life of pure thinking. On the reasonable assumption that Socrates and Protarchus take the most godlike life to be the best life, it seems to follow that this commits them to the view that the best life is a pleasureless (and painless) life of pure thinking. On the equally reasonable assumption that the best life is preferable to all others, this seems to commit Protarchus and Socrates to the view that a god’s life of pleasureless (and painless) thinking is preferable to the mixed life. And this is plainly inconsistent with CL’s verdict that the mixed life is preferable to the pleasureless life.

One might suppose that there is no real textual problem here. Perhaps Socrates and Protarchus are convinced by CL, but by the time they get to 33b6-7 they have simply changed
their minds, perhaps owing to later developments in the dialogue? Unfortunately, matters are not so simple. Such a move seems to be positively ruled out by the recapitulation of CL at 60d3-61b7, where Plato in the following exchange seems to stress that the commitment to CL’s verdict has been steadfast:

Soc: And if we made any mistake at that time, let any one now take up the question again. Assuming that memory, wisdom, knowledge, and true opinion belong to the same class, let him ask whether anyone would wish to have or acquire anything whatsoever without these not to speak of pleasure, be it never so abundant or intense, if he could have no true opinion that he is pleased, no knowledge whatsoever of what he has felt, and not even the slightest memory of the feeling. And let him ask in the same way about wisdom, whether anyone would wish to have wisdom without any, even the slightest, pleasure rather than with some pleasures, or all pleasures without wisdom rather than with some wisdom.

Pro: That is impossible, Socrates; it is useless to ask the same question over and over again.

[…] Soc: And just now we received an indication, as we did in the beginning, that we must seek the good, not in the unmixed, but in the mixed life.

Pro: Certainly. (60d3-61b7. Perseus)

Protarchus actually seems to find it tedious to go over these points again, since they were so well-established earlier on. So what we have in the *Philebus* are two endorsements of CL’s verdict, one on either side of the curious remark about the most godlike of lives, with no suggestion of any wavering between the first endorsement and the second. So it seems implausible that Socrates and Protarchus change their minds about CL when they are discussing the most godlike of lives (or anywhere else in the dialogue for that matter). We need some other way of reconciling the inconsistency.
As I mentioned earlier, this is a serious textual challenge for any interpretation. But I think attributing AP to Plato offers a possible way out of the inconsistency. First, however, I want to consider an alternative solution to the problem. As we have already seen in the last chapter, this puzzling feature of the dialogue has led Matthew Evans to claim that Plato’s view must be that the life of the gods, while devoid of pleasure and on that account superior to a human life, is nevertheless to be rejected by human beings on the ground that it isn’t livable by us. On this view the inconsistency vanishes between CL’s verdict and the claim that the most godlike of lives is without pleasure and pain. Plato can go ahead and praise the most godlike of lives all he likes without undermining CL, because CL’s concern is restricted to the question of what sort of life that is livable by humans is best.

But there are textual reasons to doubt Evans’ solution. For with its claim that the pure lives are to be rejected in CL on ‘liveability’ grounds rather than ‘desirability’ grounds, Evans seems to restrict the scope of CL to the lives of humans. Clearly, on Evans’ picture a god would follow the reasoning in CL to a different conclusion than Protarchus does. Why is this a problem? One of the striking features of the starting dialectical positions of Protarchus and Socrates is their breadth of scope. Socrates expresses Protarchus’ starting dialectical position as one about what is good for “all living beings” \( \pi\alpha\sigma\iota \zeta\omicron\omicron\omicron\varsigma \); meanwhile Socrates claims his own position concerns all beings “capable of taking part in” \( \delta\nu\nu\nu\alpha\tau\alpha \mu\epsilon\tau\alpha\lambda\alpha\beta\varepsilon\iota\nu \) reason in various forms (11b4). That Plato holds that the gods fall within the scope of Socrates’ position is clear. If the most godlike of lives involves pure thinking, then the gods are presumably to be included among those beings capable of taking part in reason. In short, Socrates must at the dialogue’s beginning hold that his own position covers the gods as well as humans, and so the restriction of

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scope Evans finds in his position seems to be a sudden and utterly unacknowledged development.\footnote{While it may be less clear whether Plato includes the gods among ‘living things,’ and thus takes them to fall within the scope of Protarchus’ starting position, this is strongly suggested by his reasoning in the *Timaeus* that since reason cannot belong to any [thing] apart from soul [νοῦς δ’ αὐτῷ γνῶσις γνωρίζει ἄρχειν ἀδύνατον παραξενύεσθαι τῷ], and since the cosmos must be rational if it is to be as good as possible, it follows that the cosmos must be understood to be an ensouled rational animal (30a6-c1).} We are reminded again about the breadth of scope of Socrates’ position in the discussion of the criteria for the good – essentially the first step in CL – where, as we have already seen in the last chapter, the third criterion for the good is that it is a unique object of pursuit for “all who apprehend it” [πᾶν τὸ γνῶσιν οὕτω] (20d6).\footnote{This is my translation.} What this seems to imply is that if a human being is able to apprehend that the divine life is where the good resides, then that human being ought to – or in any case will – strive to possess it. And yet the moral of CL on Evans’ view is that humans should resign themselves to a human life and to the human good, even when they are aware of something better.\footnote{Evans’ view that Plato holds that a divine life of pure thinking is best but nonetheless not preferable for a human is also difficult to square with the account of philosophy presented in the *Phaedo*. Cf. 61c5-63c7. It also clashes potentially with Aristotle’s exhortation to humans in *EN X.7* to “strain every nerve” to shed their mortality and live like the gods (1177b31-1178a5), although any interpretation of these remarks is controversial.}

Fortunately, there is an alternative solution to our puzzle. As Carone (2000) argues, the claim about the most godlike life appears in the context of a discussion about a certain account of pleasure. This is the so-called ‘replenishment’ or ‘restorative’ account of pleasure, the view that pleasure is the restoration of a painful deficiency. It is in this context that Socrates and Protarchus have the exchange generating our puzzle:

\begin{quote}
Soc: Yes, for it was said, you know, in our comparison of the lives that he who chose the life of mind and wisdom was to have no
\end{quote}
feeling of pleasure, great or small [μηδὲν δὲ ἢ μὴ τε μέγα μὴ τε σμικρόν χαίρειν].

Prot: Yes, surely, that was said.

Soc: Such a man, then, would have such a life; and perhaps it is not unreasonable, if that is the most divine of lives.

Pro: Certainly it is not likely that gods feel either joy or its opposite.

Soc: No, it is very unlikely; for either is unseemly for them. (33b2-10)

As Carone has argued, that these remarks appear in the context of a discussion of the restorative model of pleasure suggests that what is being denied is strictly that the gods experience restorative pleasures. Indeed, immediately following these remarks Socrates and Protarchus consider a distinct set of pleasures, the sort of pleasure that is “an affair of the soul alone [ὁ τῆς ψυχῆς ἀυτῆς ἐφαμεν εἶναι].” So Carone’s claim that the denial of pleasure to the gods is restricted to a certain species of pleasure is persuasive.¹⁵⁷

But even if we agree with Carone on this point, the question remains: What sorts of pleasures, if any, are available to the gods on Protarchus’ view? For if the gods enjoy some species of non-restorative pleasures, then are these the same sorts of pleasures in the mixed life CL recommends? If the answer is no, then it seems the mixed life and the most godlike life remain distinct, and we are left with roughly the same inconsistency between CL and 33b6-7. If

¹⁵⁷ At 32b5 Socrates presents the restorative account as merely “one form of pleasure and pain” [Ἕν ἅδος τιθώμεθα λύπης τε καὶ ἡδονῆς]. Then at 32d1-2, after the restorative pleasures and pains have been compared with anticipatory pleasures and pains, Socrates raises the question of pleasure’s unity as a kind; whether the whole of pleasure is desirable or rather some other class already mentioned [περὶ τῆν ἡδονήν, πότερον ὅλον ἔστι τὸ γένος ἄσπαστον, ἢ τοῦτο μὲν ἀπερὶ τῶν προειρημένων δοτέον ἡμῖν γενόν]. With this question left open, it seems premature to attribute to Socrates a unified view of pleasure, restorative or otherwise. Rather, he appears to be canvassing different sorts of pleasure in part to underscore the disunity in the kind as it stands.
the life of the gods is best, then why isn’t this the life CL recommends? But how can the mixed life, a life consisting of thinking and certain pleasures, be attributed to the gods?

Before we answer this question, it is worth reviewing what I think is the main reason Plato might want to deny that the gods experience any pleasure – or pain, for that matter. Plato’s view, aired in the Phaedo and elsewhere, is that the moral ideal for any creature able to attain it is to free itself from bodily experiences. That the gods are perfect beings means for Plato that they are not subject to the sorts of defects that seem to be required for restorative pleasures and pains.

But this same reasoning seems to rule out any ‘pleasant feeling’ as defined and discussed in the previous chapter: namely, as the welcome feeling a subject experiences when a part of that subject’s body is suitably stimulated. Stimulation itself seems to involve some bodily defect in the case of ordinary biological organisms. The pleasant feeling of warming, for example, involves the restoration of the organism’s body from the defects brought on by cold; the pleasant feelings of eating and drinking require the corresponding deficiencies of hunger and thirst; and so on. In short, being the sort of body that can be stimulated in the relevant ways requires the very bodily deficiencies that a divine body cannot suffer. So in withholding the restorative

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158 Again, Cf. Phaedo. 61c5-63c7.

159 Consider the Timaeus, where from the fact that the cosmic god is “self-sufficient” [αὐταρκεῖς] and “blessed” [εὐδαιμονε] it follows that its body is without any of the organs associated with sense perception, respiration, nourishment, and locomotion (33c1-33d7). If this account serves as a guide to Plato’s view as to the life of a god, then whatever pleasures a god may be supposed to enjoy, it seems they cannot involve any of these activities.
pleasures from the divine life in the *Philebus*, Plato seems effectively to be withholding ‘pleasant feelings’ as well.\(^{160}\)

But as we have seen, Protarchus and Socrates later converge on a very different account of pleasure, AP. On AP, pleasure consists roughly of some state of affairs \(S\) and a certain attitude \(A\) taken towards \(S\). Thus the basic hedonic phenomena *do not necessarily involve ‘feelings’ of any kind at all*. When \(S\) consists in a pleasant feeling, then in those cases pleasure involves pleasant feelings. But \(S\) may also consist in states of affairs that are not feelings at all. Discussing what I have termed \(A\), the mental attitude taken towards \(S\), Fred Feldman explains:

> Propositional [aka attitudinal] pleasure \([A]\) is not a feeling. To take pleasure in a fact is not necessarily to have any sensory feelings. A person could take pleasure in various facts even if he were anesthetized. I may, for example, take pleasure in the fact that the war in Bosnia has at least temporarily stopped. I might do this even though I am not feeling any sensory pleasure. I might be feeling no sensations at all. So, from the fact that someone is taking propositional pleasure in some fact, it does not follow that he is experiencing any pleasant feelings.\(^{161}\)

So a subject adopting the attitude of being ‘pleased at’ or ‘pleased by’ some state of affairs may be taking pleasure in states of affairs that have nothing to do with feelings of any kind.

Therefore nothing prevents perfect, disembodied gods from experiencing what Feldman refers to as “propositional pleasure.” Without bodily deficiencies, and without experiencing any

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\(^{160}\) At *Republic* IX 584b6-8 Socrates focuses on the pleasures of smell as those that are unconnected with pain. And in the *Philebus* itself at 51b2-6 he characterizes pleasures arising from colours, forms, odours, and sounds as being “unmixed with pain” [ἀλυποῦς]: later at 51e1-4 he curiously devalues *Republic* IX’s pleasures of smell to a “less divine class” [ὑπὸ τοῦ μὲν […]θαν διάνειος] although they are mixed with no “necessary pains” [ἀναγκαίους λύπας]. But as *Timaeus* 65a2-7 makes clear, the absence of bodily pain does not show an absence of bodily deficiency: in these cases the preceding deficiency simply goes unfelt. So if the gods are free from bodily deficiency, then they are free from even the pleasant feelings that involve unfelt deficiencies.

of the feelings that ordinarily come with having those deficiencies, a god can be pleased that the Trojan War has ended, for example. Plato furnishes us with another example in the *Timaeus*, when the divine craftsman “rejoices” at, and is “well-pleased” by, the cosmos he has just set into motion \([\text{ἡγάσθῃ τε καὶ εὖφρανθείς}] (37c6)\). Although Plato clearly holds (for reasons already discussed) that the gods – including the divine craftsman, who creates the lesser gods – are free from bodily deficiencies, he is perfectly comfortable describing the father of the cosmos as one who rejoices *in* and is well-pleased *by* those states of affairs that do not implicate him in anthropocentric embodiment.

If we apply the same reasoning in the *Philebus*, then it seems the question of whether the gods can experience a certain species of pleasure is largely to be decided by the question of whether that pleasure implies anthropocentric embodiment. If the question being posed is whether the gods can experience the sorts of restorative pleasures that seem to require a body subject to hunger, thirst, and the like, then Plato has Socrates and Protarchus withhold *that* sort of pleasure from the gods in no uncertain terms. But in the case of attitudinal pleasure, the pious reason to withhold it from the gods is not in play. And this suggests a way out of the inconsistency at hand – that is, that AP provides a way of identifying the mixed life with the most godlike of lives. For suppose the mixed life is one consisting only of attitudinal pleasure. Such a life need not involve pleasant feelings at all. Insofar as the subject’s attitudinal pleasures are directed towards pleasant feelings of one kind or another, then to that extent the life in question involves pleasant feelings. For example, Jeremy may be experiencing the pleasant

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162 Cf. Carone (2000) fn. 12 and fn. 14. The use of *ἡγάσθῃ* appears to be a play on *ἀγάλμα* (glory or statue) appearing a line before. It is also worth noting that the passive form of *εὖφρανθείς* is often used to capture that the subject is taking pleasure *in or at* something. Socrates uses the word *χαίρειν* at 33b3 when he denies that the gods experience pleasures.
feeling of eating when he is hungry ($S$), and he may also take pleasure in the fact that he is experiencing that feeling ($A$). This, I think, characterizes the sort of life Protarchus meant to praise when he praised the mindless life. As we have seen, the effect of Socrates’ purge was to show that such a life, if it is truly mindless, can consist of $S$ only, without $A$. Protarchus then rejected that life on the ground that it ran afoul of the criterion of independence or intrinsic value.

But in a life full of AP-type pleasures, Protarchus seems to get everything he meant to praise. Since on AP pleasure consists both of $S$ and $A$, a life consisting of pleasures on the AP model seems to fill the void left by Socrates’ purge. That is, on this model Protarchus gets a life of abundant pleasures that involve both pleasant feelings (although these no longer count as pleasures for human beings) and certain mental attitudes towards those pleasant feelings. Such a life satisfies the criterion of independence and is genuinely pleasant, since the pleasant feelings are now accompanied by the relevant attitudes. When Protarchus agrees toward the end of CL that the mixed life is superior to the mindless life, what he means to endorse is a life of this kind: a life consisting of ‘pleasant feelings’, on the one hand, and attitudes towards those feelings, on the other.

Nevertheless, how can this life be identified with the most godlike of lives? After all, non-anthropocentric gods can experience no ‘pleasant feelings’, and so whatever attitudes their lives may be thought to contain, these cannot be attitudes towards ‘pleasant feelings’.

There are two ways that a human life consisting only of AP-type pleasures can be identified with the most godlike life of pure thinking. First, we have already seen that Plato can hold without fear of impiety that the gods can experience attitudinal pleasure towards states of affairs that do not involve attributing ‘pleasant feelings’ to the divine. A god can take pleasure in
the cosmos he has just set in motion, or in the fact that the Trojan War has ended. A human life involving no pleasant feelings can consist of the same sorts of attitudinal pleasures. Plato may well doubt that a life consisting of no pleasant feelings is possible for a human being. Nevertheless, insofar as pleasant feelings can be eliminated from human life in Plato’s view, to that extent we are capable of approximating the lives of the gods. And as we have already seen, the sorts of pleasures enjoyed by a happy human being involve knowledge-entailing intentional attitudes. So insofar as it is possible to live a life consisting only of attitudinal pleasures taken towards states of affairs that are not the subject’s own pleasant feelings, this is a life that is at once a life of pure pleasure and a life of pure thinking; at least, it seems, on CL’s terms.\textsuperscript{163}

But there is another way in which the most godlike of lives can be identified with the mixed life. Recall that I suggested that a creature that was in a state of neither pleasant nor painful feelings could take attitudinal pleasure in the fact that it was in that very state. For a god, who is presumably always in such a state, it is possible to live a life taking perpetual attitudinal pleasure in the fact that it is in that very state. Humans will perhaps experience only an intermittent version of such a life. But again, insofar as Plato holds that humans are capable of attaining a state involving neither pleasant nor painful feelings, to that extent they can take pleasure in the fact that they are in that very state. So on this picture for either a god or a human being, a happy life would consist of pleasures of the following composition:

\[ S: \text{The state of subject } x \text{ experiencing neither pleasant nor painful feelings at time } t. \]

\textsuperscript{163} Notice that divine disembodiment requires that for any AP-pleasure \( S \) cannot refer to the subject’s own pleasant feelings. Nothing rules out AP-pleasures in which \( S \) refers to the pleasant feelings of another subject. A disembodied god can take pleasure in the fact that I am experiencing certain pleasant feelings, for example.
A: \( x \) taking pleasure in \( S \) at \( t \).

To sum up, if we take Socrates and Protarchus at 33b6-7 to be withholding *restorative pleasures only* from the most godlike of lives, then we need not follow Evans’ solution. AP supplies us with a range of pleasures that can be attributed to the gods without entailing that the gods are anthropocentrically embodied, and which fit perfectly well with Plato’s view, aired in the *Philebus* and elsewhere, that the life of the gods is one of pure thinking. One advantage to our solution is that it goes well beyond rendering consistent CL’s verdict and the remark about the most godlike of lives at 33b6-7. Indeed, if this solution is on the right track, then we are in a position to see how the mixed life recommended in CL and the most godlike of lives actually turn out to be the same, in a way. As we saw in the last chapter, AP seems to blur the line between each of the pure lives in the following sense: while AP-pleasures clearly ought to be considered pleasures, they are also clearly species of intentional attitudes, and hence of intellection. If we imagine a subject experiencing only AP-pleasures, and only those AP-pleasures for which \( S \) represents something other than pleasant feelings, then we are imagining a subject who seems to be living *at once* a pure life of pleasure and a pure life of thinking. That is to say, a life consisting only of certain AP-pleasures *is* one way of construing the mixed life – not because it blends pleasure and reason in some sort of mish-mash, but because those AP-pleasures are both experiences of pleasure and acts of thinking. Seen in this way, the mixed life recommended in CL and the most godlike of lives turn out to be much more similar than we may have supposed.

Let this suffice as a discussion of the interpretive advantages of taking AP to represent Plato’s considered view about the nature of pleasure. The worry, raised early on, that pleasure does not represent a genuine kind, is largely overturned by the dialogue’s end. What began as a
vast and undifferentiated field has been refined into something fairly specific. Pleasure turns out to consist of certain states of affairs, along with a knowledge-based attitude taken by the subject towards those states of affairs. This, at any rate, is the sort of pleasure to be admitted into the happy life, and so it stands as the product of the debate between Socrates and Protarchus. The statuses of other cases of putative pleasure – the lowly mollusk’s good feelings; the bad man’s false pleasures – are left rather obscure.

The next section considers the implication of this interpretation for the question of pleasure’s relationship to happiness. Its focus will be the dialogue’s closing section, in which the goods to be included in the happy life are enumerated. I will argue that this final section marks Protarchus’ conversion to pleasure-inclusive pluralism: the view that pleasure is to be counted among the goods that contribute to happiness. However, pleasure is as a unique good as well: not only does it contribute to happiness itself, but it stands as a reliable tracker of the other, non-hedonic goods with which it must share space in a happy life. After outlining these conclusions, I will briefly consider their implications for the question of hedonism in the Protagoras.

5.6: Pluralism in the Philebus

In the closing section of the Philebus, Socrates and Protarchus take stock of their account of the best life in light of the preceding conversation. This section of the dialogue (60d3-f.) is exceedingly opaque, and so any reconstruction is bound to be speculative. One of its puzzling features is that Socrates and Protarchus appear to be of two minds as to pleasure’s inclusion in the happy life. At one point, Protarchus himself, once the champion of the life of pure pleasure, now refers to pleasure as “the greatest of impostors” [ἀπάντον ἀλαζονίστατον] and compares even the greatest of pleasures to “children utterly devoid of sense” [παίδων τῶν ἕδονῶν νοὸν
οὐδὲ] (65c4-5; 65d1-2). Later he mocks those who enjoy “even the greatest pleasures” [ἡδονάς
dὲ γέ ποι, καὶ ταῦτα σχεδὸν τὰς μεγίστας] (65e8). On the other hand, in the final ranking the
pure pleasures manage to place, albeit fifth and last. The ranking appears as follows:

1. measure, moderation, fitness
2. proportion, beauty, perfection, sufficiency
3. mind
4. sciences, arts, and true opinions
5. some pleasures – “those pleasures which we separated and classed as
painless, which we called pure pleasures of the soul itself, those which
accompany knowledge and, sometimes, perceptions.” [ἂς ἡδονὰς ἔθεμεν ἀλύπους ἀριστίμνου, καθαρὰς ἐπονομάζαντες τῆς ψυχῆς αὐτῆς, ἐπιστήματι, τὰς δὲ αἰσθήσαιν ἐπομένας] (66c4-6)

So on the one hand we have remarks that seem to rule out pleasure’s – even the greatest
pleasure’s – status as a good, and yet pleasure appears fifth on Plato’s list, narrowly trailing the
sorts of things Plato clearly considers to be great goods: moderation, beauty, perfection, and
mind. Pleasure, that “greatest of impostors” finds itself in surprisingly good company by the end
of the dialogue.

Protarchus’ sudden shabby treatment of pleasure marks a dramatic change in his outlook;
it is without precedent in the dialogue. Hence it seems likely that it is here, with these remarks,
that Plato signals the character’s final capitulation to pluralism. Pleasure is not the good, as
Protarchus had sworn to establish on Philebus’ behalf. Nor is it even to be credited as the chief
good in the happy life: four lines of items outranked it. If Protarchus’ remarks about pleasure seem
overly harsh given this respectable showing, it is because he has become vividly aware that the
final tally of goods makes official his defeat in jockeying for second place. Pleasure is inferior to Socrates’ candidates of knowledge (i.e. science, art) and mind.¹⁶⁴

As the discussion of AP ought to make clear, the structure of true pleasure itself explains pleasure’s subordination to the other items on the list. Pleasure is subordinate to knowledge because knowledge is prior, both conceptually and causally, to pleasure. One way of putting the point is that on Plato’s conception of pleasure the pure life initially championed by Socrates – that is, a life consisting of knowledge (and of other intellectual activities) – is conceivable if not altogether desirable. Not so with pleasure. As we have seen, on Plato’s view ‘X is truly pleased that S’ entails ‘X knows that S.’ Hence once Plato’s account of pleasure is established, Protarchus’ pure life of mindless pleasures turns out not only to be undesirable, but unthinkable.

For similar reasons, I propose, knowledge is subordinate to the items listed in lines 1 and 2. Let me explain. If the purpose of this list is indeed to provide the final list of goods that make up the happy life, and if sufficiency continues to be a mark of the good itself, then it seems natural enough to take this as an exhaustive list of the components of happiness; provided one’s life contains all of these goods in decent supply, then one can be counted as happy, however one stands in relation to items not on this list. So if we wonder what states of affairs the happy man’s knowledge is about, the natural place to look is lines 1 and 2. On this view the happy life contains three levels of goods. First, it contains instances of measure, moderation, fitness, proportion, beauty, perfection, and sufficiency. Second, it contains the subject’s knowledge of

¹⁶⁴ Here I am taking Plato’s list to be a list of goods to be included in the happy life. Not all commentators agree on this point. For example, K. Vogt (2007) notes that Socrates nowhere refers to the items on this list as ‘goods.’ Vogt also notes that none of the divine goods mentioned in Laws I 631b3-d2 make it onto the Philebus’ list, nor do any of the virtues. On Vogt’s view, some of the items on the Philebus’ list are not goods per se, but stand in a sort of relation to the good. I do not here offer any arguments against this intriguing suggestion.
these states of affairs. Finally, it contains instances of the subject’s taking pleasure in these states of affairs. As the objects of the happy man’s knowledge, the states of affairs listed in lines 1 and 2 take causal and conceptual priority to knowledge itself.

While pleasure’s conceptual and causal dependence on knowledge, and hence its dependence in turn on certain states of affairs, explains its last-place finish in Plato’s tally of goods, this same dependence generates a unique epistemic role relative to the other goods. Since the happy man’s taking pleasure in measure, moderation, etc. entails knowledge of them, and since knowledge of them entails the states of affairs themselves, ‘pleasure’ (once properly understood) does indeed license the inference from a life’s superiority in pleasure to its superiority in happiness. In other words, AP-pleasures turn out to guarantee happiness in precisely the way the ‘tracking view’ (TV) required in the Protagoras. On this interpretation, Socrates may hold consistently that a measuring art would save our lives, on the one hand, and yet deny that pleasure is the good, on the other. The measuring art would save our lives because the inference from pleasure to happiness holds. But the reason why this inference holds is not that pleasure is identical with the good, as the hedonist claims. Rather, it is because pleasure is a special kind of good, one that reliably tracks the presence of the other goods.

So Plato is not a hedonist but rather a pleasure-inclusive pluralist who holds that pleasure reliably tracks the goodness of a life as a whole. To illuminate pleasure’s relationship to happiness, I propose the following economic analogy. Transportation may be considered a sector of a nation’s economy, to be included alongside manufacturing, agriculture, service, etc. as a sphere of activity contributing to the economic health of the whole. But an economist might also discover that transportation reliably tracks the economy’s health as a whole, in the sense that any
growth in the economy is reflected in commensurate growth in the transportation sector, so that growth in transportation reliably tracks broader economic growth. On this picture the transportation sector would play an invaluable role in assessing overall economic health. But it would clearly be a mistake to infer from this that stimulating transportation directly is the most effective way to stimulate the broader economy; transportation grows only when other sectors grow.\textsuperscript{165}

On Plato’s view, pleasure tracks pleasure in roughly the same way that the transportation sector tracks economic health. It makes its own contribution to happiness, and so it belongs on the list of goods comprising the happy life. But it also plays a unique epistemic role in tracking happiness as a whole. This unique epistemic function explains what hedonism gets right about happiness, and what it gets wrong. Hedonism rightly denies that any life that fails to be pleasant is happy, and it rightly characterizes happiness as a life replete with pleasures.\textsuperscript{166} However, hedonism goes awry in crediting pleasure as \textit{the} cause of happiness; pleasure rather reliably tracks the antecedent goods of knowledge and other happy-making states of affairs in a life. The practical significance of this insight is that, as we saw with the transportation sector, the hedonist’s plan to bring about happiness through the direct pursuit of pleasure is doomed to fail. Happiness only comes when a life is suitably furnished with measure, proportion, beauty, and the

\textsuperscript{165} My thanks to Rachel Barney for suggesting this example.

\textsuperscript{166} This is of course not to deny that Plato rejects many species of hedonism on the ground that they fail to understand what true pleasure is. For example, Callicles in the \textit{Gorgias} is working with an untenable conception of pleasure, on Plato’s view; Calliclean ‘pleasures’ of perpetual replenishment are not pleasures at all. My point here is simply that once the conceptual problems about pleasure are sorted out, hedonism faces new problems, according to Plato: its claim that pleasure is identical with the good becomes incoherent, and its practical program of attaining happiness through the direct pursuit of pleasure becomes untenable.
rest, along with the knowledge of these states of affairs. True pleasure flows from these antecedent goods, in Plato’s view.\textsuperscript{167}

\textsuperscript{167} Without ignoring important differences, Aristotle’s conception of pleasure as something that “accompanies the activity” [ἔπεται γὰρ τῇ ἐνεργείᾳ] suggests a similar relationship between pleasure and happiness (1175a3-4). Consider also Sidgwick’s famous ‘paradox of hedonism’ (The Methods of Ethics, 7\textsuperscript{th} ed., Chicago, 1907, pp. 136-137).
Chapter 6: Conclusion

6.1: What in the End is the Relationship Between Pleasure and Happiness, on Plato’s View?

Let us return to the interpretive puzzle with which we began. In the Protagoras, Socrates seems to hold that the pleasantest life is happiest. On this ground he recommends the art of measurement as our salvation in practical life: an art of measuring pleasures and pains. Maximize the pleasures and minimize the pains, Socrates proposes, and the result is the happiest life available to the agent.

Similarly, Socrates in Republic IX sets out to prove with three arguments that the just life is happiest. But that the just life is happiest is the explicit conclusion of the first argument only. The explicit conclusions of the second and third arguments (the so-called ‘pleasure arguments’) is that the just life is pleasantest. And yet Socrates clearly takes these three arguments to be making the same case. He seems to take the connection between pleasure and happiness to be so straightforward and reliable that proving that the just life is pleasantest is just as good as showing that it is happiest, so to speak. And the most natural way to make sense of this slide, it seems, is to suppose that Socrates just thinks that the pleasantest life is the happiest life.

As we have seen, the dominant worry among interpreters about these passages is that they seem to commit Socrates to some version of hedonism. As we have also seen, hedonism (within the eudaemonist framework at any rate) is the view that pleasure alone is what makes a happy life happy. The problem with attributing this view to Socrates is that in other dialogues such as the Gorgias, Phaedo, other parts of the Republic, and Philebus he seems to air serious

\[\text{In my discussions of exclusivism, pluralism, and hedonism I take ‘good’ to be equivalent to ‘contributor to happiness, having final and intrinsic value.’}\]
objections to hedonism, and at times appears to reject hedonism outright. There is a number of ways to interpret this evidence: perhaps Socrates rejects hedonism on the ground that pleasure is not good, in which case he subscribes to one of the ‘exclusive’ positions concerning pleasure. But interpreters who are not willing to go this far may take Socrates to reject hedonism in favour of pluralism, the view that pleasure is a good but not the only one. In other words, Socrates’ consistent objection to hedonism is that it confuses a good and thus part of the happy life with the whole thing. But however we interpret the anti-hedonist evidence, it seems clearly to rule out that Socrates is a hedonist. This exposes an inconsistency between the ‘hedonist’ Socrates of the Protagoras and Republic IX, on the one hand, and the ‘anti-hedonist’ Socrates of the Gorgias, Phaedo, the rest of the Republic, and Philebus, on the other. How is this inconsistency to be resolved? Those interpreters who take the anti-hedonist Socrates to represent Plato’s considered view (however this is cashed out) need to massage or re-interpret the pro-hedonist evidence so that it harmonizes with Socrates’ anti-hedonism.

The way most interpreters typically accomplish this is by offering a dialectical or ad hominem interpretation of the akrasia argument in the Protagoras, such that Socrates’ appeal to hedonism is simply a move he expects his interlocutors – that is, ‘the many,’ perhaps along with Protagoras and the other sophists in attendance – will accept. Similarly, interpreters sequester Republic IX’s ‘pleasure arguments,’ arguing that these arguments fall outside the Republic’s

169 See, for example, As G.M.A. Grube (1958), who interprets the Protagoras as a whole as “an attack upon the sophists as represented by Protagoras, the greatest of them” (p. 203); G. Vlastos (1969), who characterizes Socrates’ hedonistic premise as a “theoretical cover […] he foists upon the ‘multitude’” (p. 75); G. Klosko (1980), who claims “that the discussion in the Protagoras is meant to be read as an eristic debate” (p.126); D. Zeyl (1980), who argues that “Socrates will be less concerned to defend positions (which all agree are recognisably his own) with arguments which represent his own reasons for holding these positions, than to attack the contradictories of those positions as these are maintained by his opponents, and to do so by using the most effective means his offensive purpose and the conventions of eristic debate will allow” (p. 258); and R. Weiss (1990), who takes Socrates’ endorsement of hedonism to be “ironic” (p. 17).
proper argumentative scope, and reduce them to auxiliary arguments meant to quell residual worries once the official case for the just life is complete.\(^{170}\)

### 6.2: Proposed Alternative Solution to the Problem

Along with the textual and philosophical objections to the *ad hominem* and *dialectical* interpretations of the *Protagoras*, we may add a broader objection. For on most interpretations along these lines, it is only Socrates’ *case* that needs to be explained away in one way or another. The conclusions *themselves* – that akrasia is impossible, and that a form of knowledge would save our lives – are consistently held to be core doctrines of Socratic intellectualism, on which many other arguments depend in other dialogues.\(^{171}\) In other words, Plato desperately needs to establish these conclusions. And yet in the *Protagoras*, which appears to be the principal place Plato defends these doctrines, their only support turns out to be sophistical. Why? As far as I know, no such interpretation has provided a satisfying answer to this question.

My own proposed solution to the interpretive puzzle challenges both sides of the dilemma. That is to say, it challenges the assumption shared by both sides of the prohedonist/antihedonist debate that the akrasia argument depends in some sense on hedonism. On the view I develop here, the Socrates of the *Protagoras* is neither a committed hedonist nor a dialectical one. Rather, the akrasia argument goes through on a less determinate position I call ‘the tracking view’ (TV) the view that pleasure reliably tracks the good, such that if a certain life is most pleasant, then it is also happiest, and vice-versa. I call TV ‘less determinate’ than

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\(^{170}\) I take as my representative for this view R. Kraut (1992). See also N. P. White (1979); J. Annas (1981) for interpretations that seek to weaken the apparent connection between pleasure and happiness in Book IX. For interpreters who hold that Socrates recognizes an important connection between pleasure and happiness, and who are nevertheless frustrated by the slide from ‘most happy’ to ‘most pleasant’ in IX, see Gosling and Taylor (1982).

\(^{171}\) An exception is R. Weiss (1990).
hedonism because TV is compatible with hedonism without requiring hedonism. That is to say, TV certainly follows if hedonism is true – if pleasure alone is identical with the good as the hedonist’s ‘uniqueness requirement’ requires – then the pleasantest life must indeed be happiest as the hedonist claims. By the same token, pleasure may track goodness (as TV requires) without being identical with goodness (as hedonism requires). Likewise, since TV licenses the inference in Republic IX from ‘pleasantest’ to ‘happiest’, Socrates can argue from one to the other without being a hedonist.

I have also set my sights on some passages that may seem to support the picture of an anti-pleasure Socrates: passages that would seem to support either an Antisthenean position or, more plausibly, a pluralist opposition which regards pleasure as a good but nevertheless takes the pursuit of pleasure as such to be ruinous. This evidence presents a challenge not only for a hedonist reading of the Protagoras and Republic IX, but also for the view I develop here, that Socrates subscribes to TV. That is to say, if Socrates subscribes to the view that pleasure reliably tracks the good, then it is difficult to see how he could also hold that the pursuit of pleasure is necessarily ruinous.

Much of this evidence appears in Socrates’ debate with hedonist opponent Callicles in the Gorgias. I have argued that Socrates’ target in this debate is not hedonism, nor the pursuit of pleasure per se, but rather a particular conception of pleasure. Socrates’ various claims in his objections to Calliclean hedonism do not rule out the possibility that pleasure – properly

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172 Hedonism seems to comprise three distinct elements for Plato: i) an account of what pleasure is; ii) an account of what the good is; iii) a defence of the claim that pleasure and the good are the same. Technically, this is true. However, in the passages with which I am concerned in this dissertation, I do not find much disagreement about the nature of the good, although such disagreements may lurk in the background. Rather, as I explain in the Introduction, the dialectic between Socrates and his ‘hedonist’ interlocutors (namely, Callicles and Protarchus) focuses on the interlocutor’s conception of pleasure, and whether so-conceived pleasure can plausibly be thought to be the same as the good, on some relatively uncontested conception of the good (at a certain level of generality, at any rate).
conceived -- is the same as the good, nor that it reliably tracks the good. Rather, Socrates’ point is that *on the conception of pleasure in question*, Callicles fails in establishing that pleasure is the same as the good. But this of course leaves open the prospect that pleasure on some other conception might well turn out to be the same as the good, and so Socrates has not defeated hedonism *per se*. The so-called ‘anti-pleasure’ evidence of the *Gorgias* is compatible with better versions of hedonism, and so it is also compatible with TV.

Two of my five chapters have taken the *Philebus* as their focus. This is because the *Philebus* appears to provide Plato’s most considered and final answers to the conceptual question about what pleasure is, as well as the ethical question about its contribution to happiness. As in the *Gorgias*, the pitting of Socrates against a hedonist interlocutor seems to support the view that the *Philebus* sets out to defeat hedonism. Here we get the life of thinking competing in stark terms with the life of pleasure, and so the very dialectical framework of the dialogue seems to support the view that the *Philebus* is in some sense hostile, not only to hedonism but to pleasure’s status as a good.\(^{173}\)

However, the *Philebus* generates a more complicated dialectical picture than this suggests. For the result of the dialogue’s ‘Choice of Lives’ argument (‘CL’: 22a1-b8; 60d3-e5) seems to be agreement between Socrates and Protarchus that happiness includes both thinking and pleasure. Indeed, since both Protarchus and Socrates are forced to revise their own positions and admit their opponent’s good into the best life, it seems that Plato takes the result of this synthesis to be superior to either interlocutor’s starting position. For this reason I propose in Chapter 4 that Protarchus represents part of Plato’s own view. As Protarchus’ views evolve on

\(^{173}\) For an interpretation along these lines, see Matthew Evans, ‘Plato’s Anti-Hedonism’ *Proceedings of the Boston Area Colloquium in Ancient Philosophy* 22 (2007): 121-45.
the nature of pleasure and its contribution to happiness, Plato is revealing his own considered views on these matters as well.

Now, it is at CL’s conclusion that leading interpretations locate the hedonist Protarchus’ conversion to pluralism, with intellectualist Socrates not far behind, as he too rejects a life of pure thinking in favour of the mixed life. But I think the framework I propose for understanding Plato’s conception of hedonism suggests a different way of interpreting Protarchus’ rejection of the life of pure pleasure. I argue in Chapter 4 is instead that the result of CL is that Protarchus retains the hedonist view that pleasure is the same as the good (on a shared conception of the good) and rethinks his conception of pleasure. So if Protarchus represents part of Plato’s own position, as I have proposed, then CL does not signal Plato’s endorsement of pluralism. On my own view, Protarchus’ conversion to pluralism comes much later in the dialogue, as a result of distinct considerations raised by the discussion of false pleasures (35c-41b).

As I also argued in Chapter 4, in CL Protarchus’ reflection as to what is missing in the mollusc’s pleasures pushes him toward a very different conception of pleasure. In Chapters 4 and 5 I called this conception of pleasure ‘AP’ for ‘Attitudinal Pleasure.’ On this conception, pleasure consists of two distinct elements:

A) Some state of affairs, S; this may or may not refer to the event of a pleasant feeling occurring in a subject’s body.

B) The subject’s taking a certain mental attitude A towards S.

Socrates’ proposal in the ‘Choice of Lives’ argument that Protarchus’ preferred life of pure pleasure is the life of a mollusc pushes Protarchus towards this conception, I maintain, because

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what Protarchus immediately sees in the life of a mollusc is a life abundant with certain instances of $S$, namely pleasant feelings, but it contains no $A$, or attitudes towards those feelings. For reasons I spell out in Chapter 4, Protarchus fears (reasonably) that on this conception of pleasure, pleasure has no hope of being the same as the good.

I think a great deal recommends this interpretation. Most importantly, it furnishes Protarchus with a remarkably subtle and sophisticated conception of pleasure for his hedonism. If hedonism is indeed Plato’s target in the *Philebus*, then we ought to expect the variety of hedonism being challenged to be worth taking seriously. By contrast, on the leading interpretations that take the result of the ‘Choice of Lives’ argument to be Protarchus’ conversion to pluralism, the hedonism on offer is remarkably short-lived. And with good reason: on this interpretation, Protarchus unwittingly recommends the life of a mollusc, this is then made painfully clear to him, and as a result hedonism leaves the stage. But on this picture it is not at all clear why Plato thinks that version of hedonism is worth taking seriously in the first place.\(^{175}\)

I also think attributing this conception of pleasure to Plato helps to iron out some troubling inconsistencies between the ‘Choice of Lives’ argument and some of Protarchus’ later remarks. I discuss these inconsistencies in Chapter 5. One such puzzle appears in connection with remarks from Protarchus and Socrates concerning the divine life (32e-33b), where Socrates and Protarchus seem to hold that this life consists of pure thinking. On some uncontroversial assumptions about the value of the divine life, this remark appears to be inconsistent with CL’s verdict that the mixed life is preferable to either of the pure lives. However, I argue that this remark may be rendered consistent with CL’s verdict if we take Plato to accept the AP account of pleasure. Another advantage of attributing AP to Plato concerns a second important episode in

\(^{175}\) Incidentally, it is along similar lines that I argue in Chapter 2 that hedonism is not Plato’s target in the Gorgias, given the primitiveness of Calliclean hedonism.
the dialogue, namely Socrates’ contention that some pleasures are ‘false [ψευδες].’ Socrates’ proposal raises a great number of issues. Among these is the worry that there are two incompatible interpretations as to what ‘false’ in this context might mean: a propositional sense and an alienans sense. As we have seen in Chapter 5, on AP Socrates’ uses of both senses turn out not only to be compatible, but complementary: where a pleasure is false in the propositional sense, it also consists of only one of the two elements of AP-pleasure, and so it is also false in the alienans sense. In any case, we may add this to the advantages of my proposal that Plato in the Philebus takes AP to represent an attractive conception of pleasure: it provides the resources we need to make sense of some puzzling features of the dialogue’s discussion of false pleasures.

6.3: Some Closing Remarks About AP

For the remainder of this conclusion, I would like to provide a more detailed account of AP. As we have seen, pleasure is remarkably difficult to define. This is an especially pressing problem for the hedonist, since she not only owes us a thorough account of pleasure’s nature, but also a defence of her claim that pleasure so conceived is the same as the good. In our discussion of AP and the philosophical work it appears to do in the Philebus, two distinct pitfalls for the hedonist’s project present themselves. First, one may conceive of pleasure as a raw feeling, as I think Protarchus does going into the ‘Choice of Lives’ argument. The problem with this way of understanding pleasure for the hedonist is that on this conception, the enjoyment of pleasure no longer appears to be distinctively, or even sufficiently, human. By this I do not have in mind merely the familiar, vaguely elitist-sounding objection (as we find it at times in Plato and Aristotle) that a life characterized by such raw feels renders happy humans indistinguishable

from animals.\textsuperscript{177} Rather, as I think we see in the case of Protarchus, such pleasures simply do not seem to involve the thinking subject in the right sort of way. Just as Plato appeals to molluscs, and Aristotle appeals to grazing animals, so we might appeal to zombies to make the same point.

On the other hand, we may want to define pleasure as strictly a certain kind of intentional attitude. This seems to correct the mistake of the former account, but at a cost. For now it looks as though the hedonist’s recommendation to pursue pleasure is unconcerned with whether these pleasures are in touch with the reality to which they have this internal relation. This provokes the well-worn (and powerful) objection that the hedonist is committed to the view that the pleased dupe or brainwashing victim is happy, just so long as he never learns the truth about his life.

In AP we find an account that seems to be tailor-made to avoid these twin pitfalls of hedonism. By insisting on $A$, it ensures that the alert participation of the conscious human being is essential in the hedonist’s account of happiness; zombies need not apply. By the same token, in insisting on $S$ as a condition for 'true' (and hence genuine) pleasure, it also seems to rescue the hedonist’s account of happiness from an unpalatable subjectivism.

But let us now make AP more specific by focusing on the two elements of AP-pleasures. As we have seen, AP-pleasure preserves the idea that pleasure is sort of thing experienced by a subject. There is no sense, it seems, in which a pleasure can exist independently of a subject experiencing it. This is a welcome feature of AP-pleasure, I take it. That a pleasure is the sort of thing that can simply exist ‘out there’ in the way that planets, rocks, and trees do seems a radical deviation from our ordinary views about what pleasure is.

On AP, a subject experiences a pleasure when two related elements are in play: $S$ and $A$. In some cases, $S$ can be a pleasant feeling undergone by the. Occasions on which a subject is

\textsuperscript{177} For Aristotle’s remarks along these lines, see \textit{EN} 1095b20-1).
warmed, or nourished, or engages in sex can all be accommodated by AP – with the important caveat that it is not these sensations themselves that are to count as pleasure, but rather the complex of one of these sensations and the taking of the relevant attitude by the subject toward those sensations.

In other cases, S may not be a sensation at all. That the war in Bosnia has ended; or that an acre of rainforest on a distant planet has been rescued from greedy developers; or, even, that the subject in question is experiencing no sensations whatever – all of these count as states of affairs as far as I can see. My use of the term ‘state of affairs’ in defining AP is meant to be exceedingly broad, in that it is meant to encompass just about anything toward which one can take the relevant attitude. I take this to be a virtue of AP, as it seems to be in line with the ordinary view that pleasure is an immensely rich and varied category, which comes in a wide range shapes and sizes, and that one can take pleasure in all sorts of different activities, experiences, and facts about the world. This is not quite the complete story, since we have not yet discussed the second element of AP-pleasure: the attitude, A. We will see that that this second element imposes certain constraints on the first. So let us turn now to the attitude.

What sort of attitude is A in AP-pleasures? So far we have not spelled out in much detail what this attitude consists in, and so by characterizing it simply as ‘an attitude’ it has served largely as a place-holder. In the remaining discussion, we will not be able to give a full account of the attitude in question. Nonetheless, I think we can identify some key elements of the attitude AP partly consists in. The first thing to note is that A is an intentional attitude. It is an attitude we take toward or about something, its object. In all cases of AP-pleasures, A must be such an attitude, and its object must be S. If the attitude in question cannot be conceived as intentional – if it is not the sort of attitude that is about something -- then it cannot fulfil the role of A in an
AP-pleasure. So attitudes that are simply not directed at an object – forms of unfocused malaise or anger, ennui, apathy, or general indifference, for example – may rightly be counted as attitudes, but they may not be intentional.

Clearly it is not enough simply to note that $A$ in an AP-pleasure is an intentional attitude. Along with being about something, $A$ must also take its object to be the case. Moreover, it is a feature of pleasures of the attitudinal variety that the recognition that they are ‘false’ in the propositional sense – that their objects do not obtain – spoils the pleasure. That is, ordinarily the pleasure taken in $S$ vanishes with the conviction that $S$ does not obtain. Where the pleasure persists, there is presumably some more complicated story to tell.\footnote{For some discussion of the relationship between beliefs and conative attitudes, see B. A. O. Williams, ‘Consistency and Realism,’ \textit{Aristotelian Society Supplementary Volume} 40, 1966; J. Wallace, ‘Propositional Attitudes and Identity,’ \textit{Journal of Philosophy} \textit{xvi}, 6 (1969), pp. 145-152; D. Davidson, ‘Actions, Reasons, and Causes,’ reprinted in Davidson (1980), pp. 21-42; R. De Sousa ‘The Good and the True,’ \textit{Mind} 83(1974), pp. 534-51; M. Stocker, ‘Desiring the Bad: An Essay in Moral Psychology,’ \textit{Journal of Philosophy} 76.12 (1979), pp. 738-753; D. Lewis, ‘Desire as Belief,’ \textit{Mind} 97 (1988), pp. 323-42; D. Velleman, ‘The Guise of the Good,’ \textit{Nous} 26.1, 1992, pp. 3-26; P. Pettit and M. Smith, ‘Freedom in Belief and Desire,’ \textit{Journal of Philosophy} 93.9 (1996), pp. 429-449; P. Thagard, ‘Desires Are Not Propositional Attitudes,’ \textit{Dialogue} 45 (2006), pp. 151-56; R. Weintraub, ‘Desire as Belief, Lewis Notwithstanding,’ \textit{Analysis} 67 (2007), pp. 116-22; N. Zangwill, ‘Desires and the Motivation Debate,’ \textit{Theoria} 74 (2008), pp. 50-59.} In this respect AP-pleasure resembles beliefs: since a belief is essentially a taking of something to be the case, the recognition that its object fails to obtain, i.e. that the belief is false, is \textit{all there is} to giving it up. To those who are willing to accept that pleasure is broadly intentional in the way AP requires, this is (I presume) relatively straightforward. If I am taking pleasure in my friend’s good news, then ordinarily I must take the news to be true.

However, as we have also already seen in Chapter 5, Plato’s version of AP goes a good deal further than this. That is to say, even in cases in which we are deceived that $S$ obtains, we are not really experiencing an AP-pleasure. This is perhaps the most shocking and strange feature of the view. On this point, we may suppose, AP really does deviate dramatically from our
ordinary views about pleasure. And in this respect, AP-pleasures are not belief-like, but rather knowledge-like. Indeed, I have argued in Chapter 5 that only with Socrates’ important eleventh-hour ‘knowledge requirement’ that the happy man’s pleasure’s must ‘accompany knowledge’ does the conversion of Protarchus and himself to pluralism become complete. Since a subject’s taking AP-pleasure in S entails that the subject knows that S, and since this knowledge that S entails S, an AP-pleasure can never be false in the way assumed by the second of our standard objections to hedonism.

The picture here is an undeniably ‘externalist’ one as this term is used in epistemological matters: to determine whether a subject is in fact experiencing an AP-pleasure, it is not enough to examine that subject’s state of mind or attitudes. Whatever that subject is experiencing only counts as a pleasure if some further fact obtains, namely the object of the attitude. This means that ‘pleasure,’ like ‘knowledge,’ is a success term.

I suspect that for most this is the hardest pill to swallow in accepting AP. Intuitively, pleasure is not only the sort of thing that necessarily involves the experience of a subject, but this ought to be, as it were, the whole story. For example, you and I each believe that we are going to get the same promotion. You were told truthfully that you will get the promotion, whereas I am the victim of a sick joke courtesy of one of my co-workers. As you and I drive into work, we may suppose, you and I are going through identical experiences. Whatever feelings of joy, anticipation, pride, etc. that you are feeling, I too am feeling. How then can it make sense to say

that you alone are experiencing pleasure, whereas I am not experiencing pleasure, but something else?

Here the full extent of Plato’s synthesis between the Socratic and Protarchean positions comes into sharper relief. Pleasure, which seemed at the beginning of the dialogue to represent an utterly distinct competitor to knowledge, turns out by the dialogue’s end not only to ‘accompany’ knowledge but to be strangely knowledge-like, for knowledge operates in precisely the same way. That your knowing something and my not-knowing-but-thinking-I-do seem to be identical ‘on the inside’ is no reason to call what I have knowledge. Pleasure is similarly constituted on AP. Moreover, from the position of a hedonist, a defender of the tracking view, or of anyone else who wants to defend a reliable connection between pleasure and happiness, an internalist (or, at any rate, non-externalist) conception of pleasure is subject to the standard objection noted earlier, from cases of deception or illusion. The objections write themselves: tell a story in which the subject experiences internal bliss, but is deceived. But one who is deceived is not happy (at least not in the standard sense in play for eudaemonists). This proves that a life of pleasure and a life of happiness can come apart, and so they are not the same. Therefore there is no reliable connection between pleasure and happiness. To block this conclusion, it seems, one must be an externalist about pleasure.

Whatever our own philosophical reservations about AP’s externalism, we should not be surprised that Plato’s view of pleasure is strangely externalist. Indeed, this seems to follow a very deep pattern in his thought. To commit oneself to intellectualism as Plato clearly does is to hold in some sense that the intellect provides the model for understanding what might have seemed to be the distinct spheres of our conative and practical lives. One key feature of the intellect is that in its case externalism seems to be well-established: few people in Plato’s world
are willing to assert that one can know or understand something no matter how the world stands. \(^{180}\) Intellectual activity is a fertile source of success terms, in Plato’s view: in knowing or understanding something we necessarily acquire a correct grasp of reality, even if it is the mundane matter of how to build a table.

When Plato takes the intellect as his model for human emotion and conation, and for human happiness generally, this is one of the features he wants to carry over. One clear example appears in his account of desire in the Gorgias in Socrates’ refutation of Polus’ assertion that tyrants and orators have great power (466b9-468e7). At the risk of oversimplifying this complex argument, Socrates shows himself to be an externalist about desire: all desire is for benefit, and we can only know if an agent is really being benefited by examining the world as well as the agent. So if an agent is doing something that actually confers no benefit to herself, then whatever she is doing, and however she feels about it, she isn’t doing what she wants. In the very same episode (466e4) Socrates is so bold as to be an externalist also about belief, as he proceeds to tell Polus what it is he believes, no matter what Polus has to say about it. And quite generally, Socrates’ standard strategy against his most formidable interlocutors is to appeal to their own externalism about happiness. No one – from Polus to Thrasymachus to Callicles to Protarchus – wants to defend the life of a fool or a madman, no matter how good it may feel ‘on the inside.’ AP simply extends Plato’s consistent externalist campaign into the conception of pleasure. If the best life involves pleasure, as Plato consistently holds, then pleasure, like anything else that life involves, must be the sort of thing that ‘gets things right’ as externalism requires.

As I noted in Chapter 4, in Plato’s earlier works, from the Protagoras to the Gorgias (as I interpret it in Chapter 2) to Republic IX, the general picture was that the lives of pleasure and

\(^{180}\) One possible exception is the ‘man is the measure’ doctrine attributed to Protagoras in the Theaetetus (152a3-5).
thought converge. But the development of AP in the *Philebus* reveals a closer connection than mere convergence: the activity which gives value to a life is a fusion of the hedonic and cognitive. So AP on closer examination supports not only TV but a kind of a blurring of the whole dilemma framing the *Philebus* between competing pure lives.

But even if Plato concludes that the line between the cognitive and the hedonic is blurry in the way I have described, one may wonder whether there is any difference at all on AP, then, between knowing S and taking pleasure in S. That this is a pressing question for a defender of AP illustrates just how closely the lives of pleasure and thinking come together on this view. On any plausible account of A in AP, it seems to me, A must do more than apprehend veridically that some state of affairs obtains. Built into the attitude, so to speak, must also be the apprehension of the state of affairs as good. If we may speak of the attitude as representing its object to the subject, then it is a requirement for any attitudinal pleasure that it represent its object as not only true or real, but as good as well. As with the recognition that what one is taking pleasure in does not obtain, so too the recognition that the state of affairs is not good seems to eliminate the pleasure. For example, if I am taking pleasure in the fact that a war has ended, then my pleasure ought to evaporate the moment I learn that the war only ended because the unjust and brutal side won. But beyond this, Plato’s clear goal of insulating the happy man’s life – including his hedonic life – from error seems to require that the knowledge leading his pleasures must not only be of certain states of affairs, but must include knowledge that these states of affairs are good. Without this, it is hard to see how the *Philebus*’ happy life couldn’t turn out to be much the same as the misguided tyrants and orators of the *Gorgias*.181

181 This relates to an important interpretive debate about the precise nature of the ‘falsehood’ in the *Philebus* account of false pleasures, between members of what Evans (2008) calls the ‘Old School’ (which includes J. C. B. Gosling (1959), T. Penner (1970), and S. Delcomminette (2003), and what he calls the ‘New School,’ which includes R. Hackforth (1972), V. Harte (2004), and D. Russell (2005), pp. 176-82. In short, the disagreement is
So in Plato’s account of pleasure and its role in the happy life, we find three key views, each following conceptually from the last: i) that pleasure (on AP) includes a propositional attitude, which means roughly that pleasure is always directed towards some state of affairs in the world, and necessarily involves a commitment that this state of affairs obtains, and is good; ii) since pleasure has this form, it is subject to a kind of externalism: whether or not we are indeed experiencing genuine pleasure is to be determined partly by facts outside and beyond the subject. Specifically, it depends on whether the object of the pleasure obtains, and is in fact good. So from the fact that a subject is experiencing genuine pleasure it follows that a good state of affairs obtains; iii) for this reason, pleasure reliably tracks goodness. Just as my knowing that \( S \) requires that \( S \) obtains, so my taking AP-pleasure in \( S \) requires that \( S \) obtains, and is good. In other words, accepting AP supports an externalist picture of pleasure, which in turn supports TV, the view that pleasure reliably tracks goodness.

This set of views about pleasure supplies Plato with a complex version of pluralism as we have defined it, i.e. the view that pleasure is one of multiple goods that contribute to the happy life. As I explain in Chapter 5, pleasure does a certain ‘double duty’ in the happy life. First, it is itself a good, and contributes to happiness by virtue of its presence in that life. But it also tracks the whole, such that if life A exceeds life B in goodness then life A must also exceed life B in pleasure. This generates a complex version of pluralism in part because since pleasure is itself of good, its status as a tracker of goodness entails that it tracks itself. This may seem metaphysically odd, to be sure, but in Chapter 5 I tried to show by analogy that Plato’s view is coherent, at any

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about what mistake is involved when a pleasure is false. According to the Old School, that a subject takes false pleasure in \( S \) means that \( S \) fails to obtain. According to the New School, that a subject takes false pleasure in \( S \) means that \( S \) fails to be good. While I indicated in Chapter 5 (fn. 9, p. 12) that I was assuming the ‘Old School’ interpretation in developing AP, my considered view is that both views must be broadly correct. That is to say, \( S \) must obtain and be good if it is to figure in an AP-pleasure, on Plato’s view.
rate: the transportation sector may be part of the economy in that it contributes to a jurisdiction’s overall wealth, and at the same time economists may regard that transportation sector as a reliable tracker of the overall wealth of the economy in which it is a part. In this case, the transportation sector is indeed tracking itself, just as pleasure does on Plato’s version of pluralism. Or, to use a simpler example, a climatologist may use an iceberg’s tip to track the size of the iceberg as a whole, of which the tip is of course itself a part.

An important moral follows from these examples: A’s tracking of B is easily confused with A’s causing B, even though the direction of causation is quite the reverse. It would be a mistake, albeit an understandable one, to conclude on the basis of the evidence that the most effective way to stimulate the broader economy is to invest in transportation, or that the most direct way to affect an iceberg’s overall size is to manipulate its tip. Seen in this way, Plato’s analogous account of pleasure not only stands as a rival to hedonism’s account of pleasure’s role in the happy life, but also generates a kind of diagnosis as to where precisely the hedonist goes wrong. The hedonist is confused about causation, too: pleasure is essentially the awareness that one’s life is going well; it is not a cause of one’s life going well. Plato’s endorsement of TV in the Protagoras is therefore not an endorsement of hedonism, or indeed of a life aiming at pleasure for its own sake; far from it.

While AP is a bold and – in some ways, at any rate – unusual account of pleasure, it has the virtue of supplying Plato with a non-hedonistic defence for the basic intuition that there is a strong connection between pleasure and happiness. Those of us who aren’t followers of Antisthenes think that pleasure and happiness should somehow ‘go together’, and yet we don’t know what connects them. Both hedonism and pluralism appear to be attempts to accommodate this vague intuition of ours. The hedonist guarantees their coincidence by simply identifying
them, whereas the pluralist tries to account for the connection by conceiving of pleasure as an ingredient in the happy life – not the same as happiness, to be sure, but something whose presence makes a life better and whose absence makes it worse.

It is my view that Plato’s endorsement of TV in the *Protagoras* establishes the convergence of pleasure and happiness, with the *Gorgias* and *Republic* representing attempts to think through the details of this convergence. Since TV leaves open the correctness of pluralism and hedonism, it is only in the *Philebus* that Plato decisively rules out hedonism in favour of his particular version of pluralism. AP, Plato’s considered view on the nature of pleasure, constitutes the last and heretofore missing piece of the puzzle. As we have seen in great detail, this distinctive solution of his comes at the cost of some conceptual oddness. In particular, Plato’s externalism about pleasure is certainly a questionable (albeit philosophically intriguing) view. My aim here of course has not been to defend this externalism about pleasure, but rather the more modest one of showing that it is in keeping with Plato’s broad externalism about all things epistemic and ethical.
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