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## SOCRATES ON GOODS AND HAPPINESS

George Klosko

**T**HROUGHOUT the Socratic dialogues, Plato presents a variety of arguments concerning the relationship between virtue and happiness. In section I, I attempt to untangle and analyze two of these, which I call the “knowledge” and “absolute” arguments respectively. It will be seen that the two arguments work rather differently, and involve different conceptions of the nature of virtue and happiness. In section II, I examine the possibility of working these arguments into a consistent moral position. Finally in section III, I attempt to develop a more flexible account of the relationship between virtue and happiness that encompasses most—but not all—of the details of both arguments, and explain why the aspects this account leaves out should be regarded as inconsistent with Socrates’ basic position.<sup>1</sup>

### I

We begin with the knowledge argument. Socrates’ position here is that virtue and happiness are bound up with the proper conduct of one’s affairs, with guiding them in accordance with a certain wisdom; in other words, virtue is knowledge.

As is frequently the case, the details of Socrates’ espousal of the knowledge argument cannot be stated with assurance. But his basic position is clear. One of Socrates’ recurrent themes is that the things that people generally believe to be good are not necessarily so; in fact they can be harmful as well as beneficial. Clear arguments to this effect are found in the protreptic sections of the *Euthydemus* (278e-282d, 288c-292e) and in the *Meno* (87d-89c). In each work Socrates examines a series of things ordinarily taken to be good, such as health, wealth, physical beauty, and the qualities generally regarded as virtues, e.g., courage and prudence. But these things are not necessarily beneficial; unless they are used properly, in accordance with wisdom, they can even be harmful (*Meno* 88c; *Euthydemus* 280a-81e).<sup>2</sup> Socrates holds that what is truly good (*agathon*) must necessarily be beneficial (*ōphelimon*) (*Meno* 87e; cf. *Euthydemus* 280b-281a). Since things ordinarily believed to be good are not always beneficial, they are not truly good. Only wisdom is always beneficial and so good (esp. *Euthydemus* 281e).

We can call qualities or attributes that are always beneficial to their possessors “strong goods,” and qualities or attributes that are generally believed to be good, but are not always beneficial, “weak goods.” According to the arguments in the *Meno* and *Euthydemus*, then, only wisdom is a strong good; all other goods are weak goods.

Plato presents a related argument in the *Gorgias* (467c-468b). Socrates says that we do certain things, such as taking medicine or going on sea voyages, for the sake of (*heneka*) other things, in these cases health and wealth respectively. Socrates divides things into three classes: goods, intermediates and bads, and says that people do intermediate things—e.g., sitting, walking, running—for the sake of the goods that result. The account here can be reconciled with those in the *Meno* and *Euthydemus*. Presumably, the intermediates (and goods) described in the *Gorgias* must be used in accordance with wisdom, if they are to be beneficial.<sup>3</sup> If so, then, in this argument too wisdom is the only strong good, while intermediates, and goods, can be no more than weak goods. The *Gorgias* goes beyond the other two works in explicating connections between desire and goods. According to the *Gorgias*, we desire only goods, and so pursue things that are not good only in order to attain things that are. Presumably, Socrates’ position is that only benefit is worthy of desire. Strong goods are desirable only for the benefit they produce. Weak goods are desirable only if they are used beneficially.

The discussion in the *Gorgias* suggests another important distinction. Since we desire some things only in order to attain others, we can distinguish things good in themselves (intrinsic goods) from things desired as means to other things (instrumental goods).<sup>4</sup> It should be noted that there is nothing to prevent something intrinsically good in one respect from being instrumentally good in another.

The connection between happiness and goods is made clear in the *Euthydemus*. Socrates’ starting point is the conventional view that happiness is the possession of many goods (279a; cf. Aristotle, *EN* 1095a20-26). But as we have seen, he distinguishes different kinds of goods, with the concept of “benefit” used to differentiate weak and strong goods. Socrates’ eventual position is that happiness is the possession of much benefit, which arises from the proper use of many weak goods. The connections in his account are both linguistic or analytic and causal. Happiness is by definition a state in which one enjoys benefit. The main causal claim is that only the presence of knowledge renders weak goods necessarily beneficial.

The knowledge argument gives us “knowledge” accounts of both happiness and virtue. As we have seen, happiness is the enjoyment of the benefit that results from the proper use of weak goods, which in turn is made possibly by the employment of a certain kind of wisdom. In the *Meno* and, less explicitly in the *Euthydemus*, this wisdom is identified as virtue (*aretē*). Socrates argues that virtue must be beneficial (*Meno*

88c-d; *anankaion*, 88c5). Since the only thing that is always beneficial is wisdom, virtue must be a sort of wisdom, in whole or in part (*ētoi sumpasan ē meros ti*; 89a).<sup>5</sup> In these works, then, virtue centers upon the knowledge of how to benefit from the use of weak goods. It follows that virtue, as identified in the knowledge argument, is good instrumentally rather than intrinsically. The benefit it confers is from the proper use of weak goods.

Throughout the Socratic dialogues, the nature of the all important moral wisdom remains elusive. In several works, Socrates hints that it is the knowledge of good and evil and that, in accordance with the unity of the virtues, the different virtues are aspects of this.<sup>6</sup> But all Socrates' attempts at precise descriptions are unsuccessful. Thus the knowledge argument provides a clear account of central aspects of virtue and how it contributes to happiness, but we are not told exactly what this knowledge is or, because of this, exactly how it promotes happiness.

The absolute argument is presented even more sketchily, and so is more difficult to formulate. Its major claim is straightforward: virtue is not only a necessary but a sufficient condition for happiness. In the *Apology* Socrates repeatedly expresses his conviction that a good man cannot be harmed, whether by a bad man (30c), or before or after death (41c-d; also 28b, 28d; cf. 36c). Similarly in the *Crito* Socrates says that "living well" (*eu zēn*)—which is synonymous with "living happily"—"living honorably" and "living justly" are the same thing (*tauton*) (48b).<sup>7</sup>

Socrates does not present developed arguments in support of the absolute argument in the early dialogues. Occasionally he plays upon ambiguities associated with the phrase *eu prattein* and some related phrases which have prudential and moral senses to "prove" that living morally or justly (in many contexts the terms are interchangeable) insures that one lives happily.<sup>8</sup> A more substantial argument, presented in the *Crito*, relies on the effects of justice and injustice upon the soul. In general, throughout the early dialogues Socrates is not clear about whether virtue is a quality of persons or of actions. He appears to drift between these alternatives with little attention to the connections.<sup>9</sup> The core of his position is the claim that virtuous conduct leads to a virtuous soul (which in turn promotes virtuous conduct), while this psychic condition is a necessary and sufficient condition for happiness. In the *Crito*, Socrates assumes without question that the soul is improved by justice and harmed by injustice; justice is necessary for a psychic condition analogous to health in the body (47d-e).<sup>10</sup> Though Socrates does not explain exactly how this works, he insists that the soul is the most important part of a person, and so it follows that justice and injustice are of the greatest consequence (47c-48b).<sup>11</sup>

In the *Gorgias*, Socrates presents an extreme statement of the absolute position, in connection with the paradox that it is better to suffer wrong than to commit it (469b). He says that regardless of what happens to someone—with a list of possibilities presented in gruesome detail (*Grg*

473c)—he is better off, happier, than if he commits injustice. Committing injustice is the “greatest of evils (*megiston tōn kakōn*)” (469b). However, Socrates’ formal defense of this position in the *Gorgias* is unsatisfying. He establishes it through simple verbal fallacies, in the debate with Polus.<sup>12</sup> In the debate with Callicles, instead of arguing his case directly, he punctures Callicles’ position that the happy life is one of intense physical pleasure.<sup>13</sup> The beginnings of an argument connecting up virtuous conduct with a healthy balance among the parts of the soul are present in the *Gorgias*, but this represents a departure from the early dialogues. The *Gorgias* was probably written after Plato’s first visit to Syracuse in 387. It not only has much in common with the middle dialogues, but begins unmistakably to present a multipartite psychology that prefigures the *Republic*.<sup>14</sup>

Though the presentation of the absolute argument in the *Gorgias* departs from the earlier dialogues, Socrates’ commitment to the basic position is seen in the *Crito* and *Apology*, and so we need not rely heavily upon the *Gorgias*. But outside of this work, the absolute argument remains largely undeveloped in the early dialogues. A sustained defense of something akin to the absolute position is not undertaken until the *Republic*, where Plato of course argues for the need for a properly balanced or harmonious soul—a position that is incompatible with the moral psychology of the early dialogues. But even in the *Republic* Socrates is notoriously vague about the precise connections between behaving virtuously and having a virtuous soul.<sup>15</sup>

Despite Socrates’ sketchiness, it is clear that his accounts of virtue and happiness in the absolute argument differ from what we have seen in the knowledge argument. Here virtue is bound up with a proper condition of the soul and, closely related to that, virtuous conduct. Because Socrates does not sort out the portions of his argument that apply to virtuous soul and virtuous conduct—and appears to move easily between the two—this conception of virtue is not easy to describe with precision.<sup>16</sup> Clearly, the virtuous state of soul is always beneficial and so a strong good. Since the virtuous soul apparently constitutes happiness, it is also intrinsically good. Applied to conduct, virtue is mainly justice, especially refraining from particular actions that are held to be unjust (see below). Because of the vagueness of Socrates’ account, it is difficult to say if virtuous conduct is intrinsically or instrumentally good. The key consideration is whether the psychic state it promotes can be described independently of it. Though Plato implies in the *Crito* that this is a healthy condition of soul (47e), little is given by way of explanation. If we exclude the portions of the *Gorgias* that explain psychic health in terms of balance and harmony between the parts of the soul because of their similarity to the middle dialogues, we are left with something akin to a tautology. The healthy condition of soul is the condition produced by virtuous conduct. According to this account, then, virtuous conduct is a strong good; it is always beneficial. It is also an intrinsic rather than an instrumental

good. It is inseparable from the psychic condition that constitutes happiness and so is not desired as a means to other goods.

The absolute argument also differs from the knowledge argument in the relationship it postulates between weak goods and happiness. If justice and injustice alone are sufficient to produce the psychic conditions that constitute happiness and unhappiness, happiness is independent of such things as health, wealth and physical beauty. Thus weak goods not only do not necessarily lead to happiness, but they are not necessary for happiness. If the just man can be called happy despite experiencing the list of evils Polus presents, then happiness is independent of the possession of other strong goods—if there are such things. The difficulty of reconciling the absolute argument with the knowledge argument should be apparent.

## II

It is not surprising that the two arguments conflict. It is widely held that Plato's early dialogues do not contain a systematic, developed moral theory. The historical Socrates probably did not produce one—as is evident in the enormous differences between the views of the so-called “Socratic” philosophical schools, all of which of course claimed descent from Socrates. To the extent that the early dialogues are historically accurate, then, they should not be expected to present a developed moral theory. Scholars who subscribe to the “unity of Plato's thought” should also not expect a distinctive moral theory in the early dialogues, as they read them as consistent with the middle and late dialogues.<sup>17</sup> In order to demonstrate the difficulty of extracting a consistent moral position from the early works, we will discuss the possibilities of constructing consistent positions around either argument.

We can examine the possibilities of the knowledge argument by looking briefly at Terence Irwin's *Plato's Moral Theory*. Irwin's account of Socratic ethics is basically an elaboration of the knowledge argument. Irwin relies heavily on the analogy with the crafts. Put roughly and simply, he says that Socrates believes that virtue is instrumental knowledge, by which Irwin means that, like crafts, virtue prescribes the means to attain a product distinct from itself. Virtue's product is happiness. The privileged status of virtue lies in its being the most efficient means for the attainment of this end. The clearest textual evidence for Irwin's position is found in the *Protagoras*, if, as Irwin does, we take Socrates to be espousing hedonism in the final argument of this work, and so contend that happiness is a maximization of pleasure. Socrates says that an art of measuring pleasures, which he identifies with virtue, would enable its possessor to attain this end (*Prt* 356c-57b).<sup>18</sup>

Despite the ambition and scope of Irwin's interpretation, he does not contend that it covers all aspects of Socrates' moral thought. He admits that it has difficulty accommodating the absolute argument—which he calls the “self-sufficiency of virtue.”<sup>19</sup> Irwin is aware that Socrates' uncon-

ditional obligation to be virtuous and his claim that virtue is sufficient for happiness are sharply at odds with the conventional conceptions of happiness that Irwin's view presupposes.<sup>20</sup> These difficulties are not to be overcome easily. As Gregory Vlastos says: "For the instrumentalist justice would have to be a mere utility; an 'absolute obligation' to a utility would be nonsense."<sup>21</sup> The fact that Irwin is not able to incorporate the absolute argument into his ambitious, philosophically sophisticated account of Socratic ethics indicates how difficult it would be for anyone working out of the knowledge argument to do so.

While it is unlikely that a consistent moral position can be constructed around the knowledge argument, the absolute argument appears to afford more hope. Through the introduction of a few simple steps, it seems possible for the absolute argument to be developed to accommodate the knowledge argument. We can call the position that results the "developed absolute position," or the "absolute position" for short. We will examine it in detail.<sup>22</sup>

The absolute position is able to encompass both arguments, because Socrates never spells out the precise nature of the knowledge that is virtue. This position is built around the contention that it is knowledge of justice. The knowledge that enables us to use weak goods properly is knowledge of how to use them justly, while the benefit that results is the virtuous condition of soul that justice promotes.<sup>23</sup> In other words, using weak goods justly makes one virtuous and so happy. But though this position appears to embrace both the knowledge and absolute arguments in an economical, attractive and consistent way, I do not believe that it should be accepted.

The major shortcomings of the absolute position are seen by examining the extent to which it is able to encompass the knowledge argument's emphasis on the importance of knowledge. The absolute position pays relatively little attention to knowledge. In those contexts in the early dialogues in which the absolute argument is presented, the virtuous conduct referred to is mainly justice, behaving in accordance with proper moral standards. This is justice in the conventional sense, as it is described, for example, by Glaucon and Adeimantus in *Republic* II. In the *Apology* Socrates' claims concerning the self-sufficiency of virtue are made in connection with his resolve not to behave in defiance of the gods (29b-30c). In the *Crito* Socrates asserts the position in connection with his resolve not to escape from prison if it is wrong to do so (esp. 48a). Similarly, in the *Gorgias* Socrates' strongest claims regarding the self-sufficiency of virtue are made in regard to the paradox that it is better to suffer wrong (*adikeisthai*) than to commit it (*adikein*). Thus in the absolute position virtue is concerned mainly with justice, while knowledge appears to come in, if at all, mainly in regard to knowing how to behave justly.

This position has problems dealing with Socrates' view that knowledge is both intrinsically and instrumentally beneficial. Socrates' belief in the

intrinsic value of knowledge, an element of his views we have not touched on yet, is particularly difficult to accommodate. To some extent the absolute position could be said to recognize the importance of moral knowledge. Moral knowledge is a necessary constituent of the virtuous life, if only because one must know what justice is in order to be just. Since Socrates subscribes to psychological egoism, his view also entails that individuals must know that justice pays before they will behave justly. But Socrates' view of knowledge embraces more than this. He is concerned with knowledge of the self and of one's soul; he holds that caring for one's soul is intimately bound up with the pursuit of knowledge. If the unexamined life "is not suitable for human beings" (*ou biōtos anthrōpō*, *Ap* 38a), wisdom in this wider sense is intrinsically good and also a necessary condition for happiness. It is not clear how the avoidance of injustice enables individuals to attain this crucial knowledge.<sup>24</sup> There appears to be no easy way for the absolute position to encompass this central aspect of Socrates' view. A satisfactory reconciliation is not to be found in the unity of virtue. Regardless of how we construe the unity of virtue (above, note 6), Socrates believes that an individual with the psychic condition that guarantees happiness must possess the requisite wisdom as well. But, before we would accept this as a satisfactory response, we would want to know exactly how just conduct produces knowledge—and the other constituents of virtue. On such matters there is no hint in the early dialogues. Because Socrates has so little to say along these lines, further inquiry does not appear to be fruitful. Accordingly, the unresolved status of intrinsically valuable moral knowledge must be viewed as a major gap in the absolute position.

Socrates of course believes that wisdom is also an instrumental good. Serious problems for the absolute position are encountered here as well. According to the knowledge argument, we recall, happiness is the possession of benefit derived from the correct use of weak goods. This implies that weak goods are necessary for happiness. But, as we have seen, this need not be inconsistent with the absolute argument. Knowledge of use can be construed as knowledge of how to use weak goods justly, while the benefit derived is the virtuous soul.

At first sight this response does not appear to be adequate. According to this response, weak goods can contribute to happiness insofar as they are used *justly*. The position maintained in the knowledge argument is that they contribute insofar as *they* are used properly. In order for wisdom to produce benefit, it must have specific weak goods to employ, and the benefit derived from their use is particular to them. In Book I of the *Ethics* Aristotle says that happiness is not independent of "external goods" (*tōn ektos agathōn*)—which generally correspond to weak goods—as these furnish the equipment of virtue: "For many noble actions require instruments for their performance..." (*EN* 1099a33-b1; 1099a33-b9). According to the knowledge argument too, weak goods are necessary instruments of virtue. Though they are only instrumentally good, the intrinsically



good benefit must be derived from their use.

This fortified knowledge argument is difficult to deal with. The proponent of the absolute position could respond that happiness is independent of the benefit derived from the employment of weak goods. To defend his claim, he could present a compelling example: What if a virtuous man were tried on some trumped up charge, convicted and unjustly put to death? Would this prevent him from being happy? If the benefit derived from weak goods is necessary for happiness, anyone treated in this way could not be happy.

It seems to me that the absolute argument was probably developed in response to this sort of circumstances. Plato believed that Socrates must be judged happy despite what happened to him. However, even if the absolute position might seem to hold up when the question is put this way, the question is not always put this way—nor should it be. Portions of Socrates' moral view cannot be subordinated to this extreme case.

### III

Several considerations tell against interpreting all of Socratic ethics according to extreme circumstances. According to the absolute position, the *only* factor to be considered in choosing a course of action is whether or not it is right. Other goods do not contribute to happiness and are not to be considered. Now, though Socrates unmistakably makes statements along these lines several times in the early dialogues, he also says rather different things. Socrates appears to drift between the absolute position and a wider account of happiness according to which other goods contribute. For ease of reference we will refer to the view I will present here as the “wider” view.

The basic contention of the wider view is that happiness is a complex state, a composite of different elements. The most prominent component is a virtuous condition of soul, which is brought about by virtuous conduct. Clearly, virtue is a necessary condition for happiness; injustice, the greatest of evils, unfailingly brings unhappiness. But according to this view, happiness also requires additional components. These include knowledge, especially knowledge of one's soul, and an unspecified amount of the benefit that derives from the proper use of weak goods. It is not possible to say exactly how Socrates believes that these other elements are necessary for happiness, because his position is presented spottily and this specific point is not addressed.<sup>25</sup> But he clearly believes that wisdom is intrinsically good, while having these other goods is better than not having them. Wisdom and these other goods are components of the good life, and should be considered in planning such a life. According to the wider position, then, Socrates' moral message is that people should order their priorities, and pay more attention to what is more important, rather than the Cynic pronouncement that only goodness is good.<sup>26</sup>

It seems to me that, throughout the early dialogues Socrates espouses

both positions without attempting to reconcile them. The absolute view is emphasized when questions of life and death are under consideration, while less urgent discussions tend to be couched in terms of the wider view. Thus it is not surprising that the bulk of Socrates' moral arguments accord with the wider view, while only in the *Apology*, *Crito* and *Gorgias*, when Socrates is confronted with his death, do we encounter the absolute view. In these works the absolute view is so clearly and dramatically affirmed that Socrates' commitment to it cannot be doubted. But even in these works Socrates drifts into the wider view on occasion.<sup>27</sup>

It is interesting to note that various scholars also drift between the two views. Irwin couches his discussion of the self-sufficiency of virtue in terms of the absolute view. In his review of Irwin, Vlastos apparently unconsciously translates this into the wider view.<sup>28</sup>

Decisive evidence that Socrates does not *always* regard virtue as a sufficient condition for happiness is found in the *Crito*. Socrates says here that there is something in us that is harmed by the unjust and benefited by the just, obviously the soul (above, note 10). Since this is more important than the body, and because life is not worth living when the body is "worthless and ruined," we must avoid injustice at all costs. The crucial premise is that life is not worth living (*biōton*) if the body is ruined. This is unassailable evidence that virtue alone is not sufficient for happiness.<sup>29</sup>

Additional support is found in the *Lysis*, in an important discussion of the relationships between different kinds of goods. Socrates' argument here employs the premise that certain things are desirable only as means to others.<sup>30</sup> If these others in turn are desired as means to still others, we are faced with an infinite regress, unless we can posit something desired in itself. This is the *proton philon*. This sentence is Irwin's single strongest piece of textual evidence for the claim that Socrates believes in the existence of only one thing that is intrinsically good, for the sake of which all other goods are chosen.<sup>31</sup> If we were to identify this final good with virtue, this sentence would strongly support the absolute position. But Socrates' language tells against such a construal. The relevant passages cannot be examined here in great detail, but this is to some extent unnecessary, as I have examined them previously.<sup>32</sup> The sentence that most concerns us should be translated as follows:<sup>33</sup>

In speaking of all the things that are friends to us for the sake of some other friend, we find ourselves uttering a mere phrase; it seems that (in each particular case) the real friend is that in which these so-called friendships terminate. (220a7-b3)

The translation here is difficult. We should note that there is a shift in the sentence from the indefinite *philou tinos heterou* ("some other friend") in 220a7-b1 to the definite *ekeino auto* ("that") in 220b2. This shift must be taken into account in construing the sentence; thus the translation presented here. Had Socrates wished to indicate that there is only one thing that is intrinsically good, he surely would have used the definite

*ekainou* instead of *tinou* in 220b1. The fact that he does not make this point in his discussion of the *proton philon* strongly suggests that he believes that a plurality of things are intrinsically good. An instance of what appears to be an intrinsic good other than virtue is seen in one of his examples: a son, who is prized by his father above all things (219d-e).<sup>34</sup>

Additional support for Socrates' commitment to the wider view is provided by the knowledge argument as a whole and its emphasis upon the proper use of weak goods. We have seen that it is possible to render this argument consistent with the absolute argument. But such a construal goes against the most natural reading of the knowledge argument. If we combine this consideration with the amount of emphasis Socrates places upon the intrinsic value of knowledge, and the textual evidence that we have just considered, we can conclude that the absolute position is not able completely to encompass the knowledge argument.

And so it appears that Socrates does not present a consistent account of the relationship between goods and virtues and happiness. The absolute argument and the knowledge argument are not easily reconciled, while even our wider view cannot embrace all of the textual evidence. Most important, Socrates does not have one consistent position concerning the contribution that goods other than virtue make to happiness.

In closing, I will comment briefly on why we should not be surprised to find Socrates holding an inconsistent position. It seems to me that he espouses the two positions in reaction to different kinds of moral circumstances. He espouses the wider position when his concern is with ethical matters in general, excluding matters of life and death. He is able to maintain this position only as long as he does not force it to its logical conclusion. Presumably, he avoids taking things to extremes because of the obvious advantages of presenting a doctrine that is more flexible and more in keeping with common sense than the absolute view. Although, when he is forced to confront the question whether virtue alone is sufficient for happiness, his answer is clearly affirmative, on the whole he prefers to discuss moral questions from a more pragmatic point of view. He is content to occupy a position that falls somewhere between the Cynics' rejection of everything but virtue and Aristotle's position that external goods are necessary for happiness.<sup>35</sup>

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## NOTES

1. I assume the conventional division into early, middle and late dialogues, and that the early works, the "Socratic dialogues," are largely devoted to portrayals of the "historical Socrates" (as Plato understood him). See W.K.C. Guthrie, *A History of Greek Philosophy*,

6 Vols. (Cambridge, 1962-81), for discussion of the chronology of the dialogues (esp. Vol. 4, 41-56, and discussions of the separate dialogues in Vols. 4 and 5) and the "Socratic problem" (Vol. 3), which probably represents the most commonly accepted positions on both questions. Also see G. Klosko, *The Development of Plato's Political Theory* (New York, 1986), ch. 2.

For the purposes of this paper, I regard portions of the *Meno*, *Euthydemus* and *Gorgias* as "Socratic," despite the "transitional" nature of these works. H. Von Arnim says of the protreptic in the *Euthydemus*: "Dieser einfache Gedankengang ist rein sokratisch;..." (*Platos Jugenddialoge und die Entstehungszeit des "Phaidros"* [Leipzig, 1914], p. 66); this is true of the portions of these other works as well. Compare, e.g., Xenophon *Mem.*, 4.2.31 ff.; see Guthrie, *History*, Vol. 3 pp. 362-67. Many scholars treat the evidence similarly. See D. Zeyl, "Socratic Virtue and Happiness," *Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie*, Vol. 64 (1982), p. 226 n.7; T. Irwin repeatedly cites the relevant portions of the *Meno* and *Euthydemus* as Socratic (*Plato's Moral Theory* [Oxford, 1977], pp. 33, 35); he treats the *Gorgias* similarly—despite what he says on p. 291), cf. the position of D. Devereux, "Courage and Wisdom in Plato's *Laches*," *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, Vol. 15 (1977).

2. In these passages Plato uses a variety of terms for knowledge—*epistēmē*, *phronēsis*, *nous*—apparently interchangeably; my usage is similarly flexible.

3. Compare *Euthyd* 280e-81a, esp. 280e6-81a1 and *Gorgias* 467e-68a, esp. 467e1-3

4. More precisely, the distinction is as follows: If *X* is instrumentally good, *X* is a means to some other good, *Y*, which is independent of *X*. (If *Y* is independent of *X*, *Y* can be defined independently of *X*.) If *X* is intrinsically good, *X* is good in itself; or if *X* is a means to some other good *Y*, *Y* is not independent of *X* (*Y* cannot be defined independently of *X*). Cf. Irwin's account of instrumental and component means. (*op. cit.*, p. 300 n. 53).

5. In both the *Meno* and *Euthydemus* Socrates drifts between qualified and unqualified language in discussing knowledge. Thus: *epistēmēs*, *Euthyd* 288d8; *tinōs...epistēmēs*, 289b8. Similarly, in the *Meno*: *epistēmē tis*, 87d6, d7; *phronēsin*, 88c5; *phronēsin...tin*, 88d3; *phronēsis an eiē to ophelimon*, 89a1-2; similarly, at 88d6 Socrates discusses the guidance of *phronēsis*, rather than of a sort of wisdom. But at 89a3-4 virtue is said to be "either wholly or partly wisdom."

The qualifications are not clearly explicated in either dialogue. It appears, however, that they are of little significance. Plato apparently drifts between using the word (words) "knowledge" in accordance with common usage and honorifically. Accordingly, when he employs common usage, the cognitive entity that interests him is only a specific kind or part of knowledge. This is especially clear in the language used before and after *Euthyd* 288d9, where Socrates asks, "What knowledge (*tina...epistēmēn*) should we acquire...?" The answer is the knowledge that combines making and knowing how to use things that are made (289b).

The argument in both the *Meno* and *Euthydemus* demonstrates that wisdom is a necessary condition for virtue; in neither passage is it shown that wisdom is a sufficient condition. Cf. R.E. Allen, *Plato's Euthyphro and the Earlier Theory of Forms* (New York, 1970), p. 99; Irwin also sees the argument as entailing that knowledge is a sufficient condition for virtue (*op. cit.*, p. 301n.57).

6. For the knowledge of good and evil, see sep. *Charm* 174a-176a; *Lach* 198b-199e; different accounts of the unity of the virtues are given by G. Vlastos, "The Unity of the

Virtues in the *Protagoras*, in *Platonic Studies* (Princeton, 1973); and T. Penner, "The Unity of Virtue," *Philosophical Review*, Vol. 82 (1973). Because of the argument in Klosko, "Toward a Consistent Interpretation of the *Protagoras*," *Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie*, Vol. 61 (1979), I do not believe that it is possible conclusively to decide between the two positions.

7. Though in this remark Socrates presents an exaggerated statement of the absolute argument—the *identity* of living virtuously and living happily—we will focus on the weaker position that virtue is a necessary and sufficient condition for happiness.

8. E.g., *Rep* 354a; *Charm* 172a; also see below, n. 12.

9. Esp. Penner, *op. cit.*, p. 48n.17; note the passages from the *Euthyphro* he cites; cf. M. Burnyeat, "Virtues in Action," in G. Vlastos, (ed.), *The Philosophy of Socrates* (Garden City, New York, 1971).

10. The soul is not directly mentioned here; see J. Burnet, "The Socratic Doctrine of the Soul," *Proceedings of the British Academy*, Vol. 7 (1915-16), pp. 252 ff.

11. See Guthrie, *op. cit.*, Vol. 4, p. 91.

12. See esp. E.R. Dodds, *Plato: Gorgias* (Oxford, 1959), pp. 249, 252. Cf. G. Santas, *Socrates: Philosophy in Plato's Early Dialogues* (London, 1979), pp. 218-53.

13. That Callicles' position is carefully constructed to contain glaring weaknesses is argued in Klosko, "The Refutation of Callicles in Plato's *Gorgias*," *Greece and Rome*, Vol. 31 (1984).

14. For additional discussion, see below, n. 24. Irwin is good on the complexity of the psyche in the *Gorgias*; see *Plato: Gorgias* (Oxford, 1979), on 491d4, 493a, 499e-500a, 505b-c, 507a-b; for dating this work, see Dodds, *op. cit.*, pp. 18-30; Guthrie, *op. cit.*, Vol. 4, pp. 284-85; Irwin, *Gorgias*, *op. cit.*, pp. 5-8.

15. Esp. D. Sachs, "A Fallacy in Plato's *Republic*," in Vlastos, (ed.), *Plato II* (Garden City, N.Y., 1971).

16. When I discuss "virtue" below, without specifying either virtuous conduct or a virtuous state of soul, I mean a combination of the two.

17. Esp. P. Shorey, *The Unity of Plato's Thought* (Chicago, 1903), ch. 1.

18. Irwin, *Plato's Moral Theory*, *op. cit.*, chs. 3-4; on Socrates' hedonism in this work, see below, n. 34.

19. *Ibid.*, pp. 58, 101, 281. Irwin makes relatively little of this conflict in his book, for which he is criticized in Vlastos' review of his work in *Times Literary Supplement*, February 24, 1978. In the subsequent correspondence (March 17; April 21; May 5; June 9; June 16; July 14; August 4), he apparently alters his position to uphold consistency; To my mind, Vlastos' objections are compelling.

20. *Plato's Moral Theory*, *op. cit.*, pp. 82-6.

21. Vlastos, letter in *TLS*, June 9, 1978, p. 642.

22. In constructing this position, I am aided by the important article of Zeyl, "Socratic Virtue and Happiness," *op. cit.* Because the questions that interest Zeyl are somewhat different from those examined in this paper, I will not be concerned with certain subtleties of his argument.

23. Cf. Zeyl: "If the function of the human soul is to manage, rule and deliberate, and the appropriate *aretē* of that soul is justice, then that soul lives or does well if it manages, rules, or deliberates justly." (*op. cit.*, p. 236) Zeyl's position is anticipated in Vlastos' review of Irwin (reference above, n.19).

24. In describing his mission in the *Apology*, Socrates concentrates on his attempts to induce his fellow citizens to seek wisdom (29d-e, 30a-b); cf. 36c7, where the end is perfection in virtue *and* wisdom); also note *Grg* 470e11, where Socrates discusses the centrality of justice *and* education to happiness.

25. For a similar issue in Aristotle's *Ethics*, where, it should be noted, the dominant good is theoretical contemplation, see W.F.R. Hardie, "The Final Good is Aristotle's *Ethics*," reprinted in J. Moravcsik, (ed.), *Aristotle: A Collection of Critical Essays* (London, 1968), esp. 299-300; in regard to later Greek thought, see J.M. Rist, *Stoic Philosophy* (Cambridge, 1968), chs. I, IV.

26. Esp. *Ap* 29d-e, 30a-b, 36c; cf. *Grg* 481c.

27 See *Ap* 30a-b; *Crito* 54b2-5, cited by Vlastos (*TLS*, June 9, 1978, p. 642) and Irwin (*Plato's Moral Theory*, *op. cit.*, p. 58), is also compatible with the wider position. The *Gorgias* generally supports the absolute view, as Vlastos indicates in his correspondence with Irwin (above, note 19). But even here we find traces of the wider view at 469c1-2, and at 470e11 (on this see above, note 24). *Protagoras* 313e-14b, where Socrates says that the soul is "most precious (*philtatois*)" to the individual, inclines towards the wider position. The comparative adjective implies that it is not the only thing that is precious. In this context, moreover, the danger is that the soul might be harmed by incorrect doctrines, not by non-virtuous behavior.

Cf. Aristotle's wavering between "inclusive" and "dominant" views of happiness in the *Ethics*, as discussed by Hardie ("Final Good", *op. cit.*) and subsequent scholars.

28. Irwin: "the extreme view which writes off all the alleged components of happiness which are not guaranteed by virtue" (*Plato's Moral Theory*, *op. cit.*, p. 100); "the final good has no components which are not infallibly secured by virtue" (*ibid.*, p. 101); Vlastos: "[according to Socrates] virtue [is] implicitly construed as no mere means to happiness, but as a component of it, indeed as its supreme component, sufficient in and of itself to outweigh all possible advantages an unjust act could bag for the wrongdoer, all possible evils it could cause its innocent victim" (*TLS*, February 24, 1978, p. 231). Vlastos, thus, declares that virtue is a necessary condition for happiness, but in contrast to Irwin, does not insist that it is a sufficient condition.

29. Socrates' argument here bears at least two possible construals: (a) physical health is necessary, as a component of happiness; (b) physical health is necessary for the attainment of virtue, which is still the only component of happiness. However, even (b) is in conflict with the absolute position, as stated most clearly in the *Gorgias*.

30. The "only" here is not clearly established; see Klosko, "The Technical Conception of Virtue," *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, Vol. 19 (1981), p. 99.

31. Irwin, *Plato's Moral Theory*, *op. cit.*, p. 85. For Irwin, this supreme good is happiness.

32. Klosko, "Technical Conception of Virtue," *op. cit.*, p. 99.

33. ὅσα γὰρ φαμεν φίλα εἶναι ἡμῖν ἕνεκα φίλου τινὸς ἑτέρου, ῥήματι φαινόμεθα λέγοντες αὐτὸ φίλον δὲ τῷ ὄντι κινδυνεύει ἐκείνο αὐτὸ εἶναι, εἰς ὃ πάσαι αὐται αἱ λεγόμεναι φιλῖαι τελευτῶσιν. For the translation, see *ibid.*, p. 100. Note also that the phrase, ἃ εἴπομεν ἐκείνου ἕνεκα φίλα εἶναι, in 219d3, should be read as a *restrictive* modifier of τὰ ἄλλα πάντα, rather than the *unrestrictive* modifier given in Lamb's Loeb translation. The danger is that "all the other things *that we called friends* for the sake of that one friend may be deceiving us," not "all the other things, which we called friends for the sake of that one friend." Difficulties with other language in the *Lysis* are discussed in *ibid.*; see also L.

Versenyi, Plato's *Lysis*," *Phronesis*, vol. 20 (1975), pp. 193-94.

34. The final argument in the *Protagoras* affords additional evidence (see above). According to the ethical hedonism presented in this work, happiness is the enjoyment of pleasure derived from an art of measuring pleasures and pains. Irwin makes much of this (*Plato's Moral Theory, op. cit.*, ch. 4), but because it is unlikely that Socrates's espousal of hedonism is seriously intended, I do not place any weight on it here. On Socrates' hedonism in the *Protagoras*, see esp. Zeyl, "Socrates and Hedonism: *Protagoras* 351b-358d," *Phronesis*, Vol. 25 (1980).

35. Cf. the problem in Aristotle's *Ethics* mentioned above in note 27.

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