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AGAINST HEDONIST INTERPRETATIONS OF PLATO'S *PROTAGORAS*

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In the debate over whether Socrates endorses hedonism in Plato's *Protagoras*, each side has its standard arguments. Those who think he does (hereafter "pro-hedonists")¹ frequently argue that their view stays closer to the text. On this view, there are clear textual indications that Socrates endorses hedonism, and the hypothesis that he does best explains why he introduces the view unprompted.² Their opponents ("anti-hedonists") typically argue that attributing hedonism to Socrates makes the *Protagoras* fit poorly with other Platonic dialogues in which Socrates explicitly argues against hedonism,³ so that we should avoid attributing it to him if at all possible.

Each party also has standard responses to the other's standard arguments. Anti-hedonists argue that locutions that may look at first like Socratic endorsements of hedonism need not be read that way.⁴ As for why Socrates introduces hedonism unprompted, typically their response is that he introduces it as the view of either Protagoras or the many.⁵ Meanwhile, pro-hedonists claim either that arguments against hedonism elsewhere in Plato do not touch the particular hedonist theory actually presented in the *Protagoras* (PH),⁶ or that even if they do, Plato's views developed:⁷ earlier in life, he endorsed hedonism; later, he rejected it.⁸ In one version of this developmental story, PH is actually a natural elaboration of ethical views expressed in purportedly earlier dialogues⁹ such as the *Apology* and *Crito*.¹⁰

¹ I follow Zeyl 1980 in my names for both this camp and their opponents. (Note that these labels apply to one's interpretive stand on the *Protagoras*, not to one's own view of goodness, though doubtless there is some correlation between one's interpretive stand and whether one finds hedonism plausible.) As will become clear, my own sympathies lie with the anti-hedonists. I do not attempt a comprehensive review of the issue here, but many scholars of great learning have argued on each side. Pro-hedonist works include Grote 1888, Adam and Adam 1893, Hackforth 1928, Crombie 1962, Taylor 1991 (first ed. 1976), Irwin 1977, Gosling and Taylor 1982, Irwin 1995, and Rudebusch 1999. Anti-hedonist works include Taylor 1927, Grube 1933, Sullivan 1961, Zeyl 1980, Weiss 1990, Vlastos 1991, Hemmenway 1996, Kahn 1996, McCoy 1998, and Russell 2005. Vlastos 1969 and Nussbaum 1986 espouse differing moderate views. Taylor 2003 argues that this diversity of opinion is no accident—that Plato actually intends it to be vague who in the dialogue accepts hedonism. Annas 1999 argues that we need not suppose any character embraces hedonism, as the *Protagoras* allows theses not held by anyone present to be appropriate topics of philosophical discussion.

² There are two questions here. First, why does Socrates start talking about good and bad lives at 351b, when the immediately preceding material does not obviously lead into that topic? Second, why does Socrates introduce *this particular* theory of good and bad lives? It is the latter question that pro-hedonists frequently think most easily explained by its being Socrates' own view. In Shaw unpublished-b, I argue for a reading of the preceding discussion of courage that explains why Socrates needs to talk about good and bad lives.

³ The *Gorgias* gets the most attention in this regard (see n.8 for one reason), followed by the *Phaedo* and *Republic*; the *Philebus* and *Laws* are also potentially relevant, but less frequently mentioned.

⁴ See especially Zeyl 1980 and sympathetic engagement with that article from an erstwhile pro-hedonist in Taylor 2003. I concur with most of Zeyl's readings of the passages that allegedly compel pro-hedonism.

⁵ In Shaw unpublished-a, I argue that Socrates introduces hedonism as a view held by both the many and Protagoras—indeed, as a view held by Protagoras *because* it is held by the many. But don't both Protagoras and the many actually reject hedonism? And doesn't Protagoras despise the many (317a-b, 352e-353a)? I address such objections in that paper.

⁶ Some argue that the *Gorgias* criticizes present-aim hedonism, while the *Protagoras* endorses prudential hedonism (e.g. Gosling and Taylor 1982, Berman 1991). Rudebusch 1999 rejects this account of the difference between PH and the view Socrates refutes in the *Gorgias*, but distinguishes them on other grounds.

⁷ In this paper, I simply treat Socrates as the character who expresses Plato's views. Although this may not be quite the whole truth, for present purposes I think it is close enough.

⁸ There are various versions of such arguments, and they can be combined. For example, many pro-hedonists think there is a set of "Socratic" dialogues, including the *Protagoras* and *Gorgias*, which express a common view. Their most pressing concern is to reconcile the *Protagoras* and *Gorgias*; if arguments against hedonism elsewhere are inconsistent with PH, developmentalism may provide a sufficient explanation. Gosling and Taylor 1982, Chs. 4-6, argue that PH is consistent with both the *Gorgias* and *Phaedo*, but not with the *Republic*. Butler argues for hedonist readings of the *Republic* and *Philebus* (Butler 1999, Butler 2003), perhaps with the aim of clearing the way for a uniformly hedonist interpretation of the Platonic corpus.

⁹ I neither endorse nor reject these chronological claims here, but pro-hedonist interpreters tend to accept them. Some heterodox chronologies might allow their proponents to sidestep my argument here, but those chronologies would obviously need to be developed and defended, preferably on independent grounds.

¹⁰ See Irwin 1977, 102-110 and Irwin 1995, 87-92. The idea is that (1) in earlier dialogues, Socrates does not present an informative account of the good; (2) his comparisons of virtue with *technai* suggest that virtue produces the good; and (3) given 1 and 2, it is natural to introduce pleasure as the good virtue produces. However, Irwin 1977, 112-113 is alive to some of the potential conflicts between PH and the *Apology* and *Crito* discussed below.

In this paper, I adapt one of the pro-hedonist strategies above to anti-hedonist ends. Just as some pro-hedonists insist that Plato's arguments against hedonism elsewhere do not touch the actual theory found in the *Protagoras* (again, PH), I argue that the most natural reading of PH is inconsistent with views found in purportedly earlier dialogues (especially the *Apology* and *Crito*) as well as in purportedly later dialogues (such as the *Gorgias*, *Phaedo*, and *Republic*). In section 1, I argue that PH focuses entirely on bodily goods and bads.¹¹ Then, in section 2, I argue that this makes the relationship between virtue and bodily goods according to PH inconsistent with the relationship between them according to the *Apology* and *Crito*. In section 3, I argue that PH is unable to explain why certain actions that Plato uses to display Socrates' virtue—those in which he risks death for the sake of justice—are in fact just. These inconsistencies undermine pro-hedonists' developmentalist interpretations of the fit between PH and other dialogues.¹² The standard story would have to involve Plato utterly changing his mind on this topic not just once, but twice, with the *Protagoras* the sole outlier. However, there are other ways of understanding PH that would be consistent with these other dialogues. I explore two such proposals in section 4, and conclude that they run into serious problems, especially as interpretations of PH. So, these proposals require one to give up on the strongest initial argument for pro-hedonism: the presumption that we should take the text of the *Protagoras* at face value.¹³ Hence, pro-hedonists who want to make the *Protagoras* fit with other Platonic works *via* a developmental hypothesis must either embrace an implausible account of Plato's intellectual development or else concede that Socrates' views of goodness in the *Protagoras* cannot be easily and directly inferred from his presentation of PH.

1

PH, I have claimed, focuses entirely on goods and bads of the body¹⁴ to the exclusion of goods and bads of reputation and the soul.¹⁵ I argue for this conclusion on grounds that *every* specific good or bad thing that Socrates mentions in this passage (351b-358d) belongs to the body, including especially:

- group 1: eating, drinking, having sex (353c)¹⁶
- group 2: disease, poverty (353d-e)
- group 3: exercise, training, being burned, being cut, taking medicine, fasting (354a)
- group 4: health, physical fitness, political survival, political power, wealth (354b)

Now, at no point in this passage does Socrates explicitly distinguish bodily goods and bads from other kinds, and say that only the former are real. The claim that PH only countenances bodily goods is an inference, and not a completely obvious one. At least some group 4 goods could be thought of as goods of reputation or the soul in a way consistent with hedonism. For example, one might take pleasure in being admired for one's wealth, and one might

¹¹ This observation is not unique to me (see Vlastos 1969, 74-75; Zeyl 1980, 263; McCoy 1998, 36-37), but in section 1 I explain and defend it more extensively than have others.

¹² Cp. Kahn 1988, who argues for an early date for the *Gorgias*, making the attribution of hedonism to Socrates in the *Protagoras* less likely (as the pro-hedonist Taylor 1991, xviii admits it would). My argument shows that this attribution is already unlikely given the more widely accepted view that the *Apology* and *Crito* precede the *Protagoras*. I do not explicitly discuss here the fit between PH and the *Gorgias*, *Phaedo*, and other dialogues typically considered later than the *Protagoras*. This ground has been traveled more thoroughly, and much of what I would say should be obvious from my comparison of PH with the *Apology* and *Crito*.

¹³ Here I grant for the sake of argument that attributing hedonism to Socrates is in fact the most natural first reaction to the *Protagoras*, but not that the text positively requires such a reading (see n.4).

¹⁴ I.e., in light of hedonism, bodily pleasures and pains and things that partake of or produce these. I return to this distinction in a moment. I use the slightly infelicitous 'bads' instead of 'evils' because slight infelicity is preferable to the misleading connotations of 'evils' (cf. Penner 1991, 162-163n17—though the OED does recognize 'bad' as a count noun). I also sometimes phrase my points only in terms of pleasures and goods for purposes of brevity; where appropriate, correlative points concerning pains and bads should be understood.

¹⁵ I take this classification from the *Republic* (esp. 580d-581c), but the two-fold contrast between goods of the body and reputation and goods of the soul is also in the *Apology* (29d-30b, 34e-35b). The relationship between reputational and bodily goods is complicated in the *Phaedo*; see 68c, 82c. It is also striking that PH fails to mention friendship and enmity, but these are also omitted in the list of goods in the *Euthydemus*.

¹⁶ Socrates mentions food, drink, and sexual things (*sitōn kai potōn kai aphrodisiōn*; 353c), and these might be thought distinct from the activities of eating, drinking, and sex. However, Socrates clearly thinks of food, drink, and sexual things *as being done or used* (*auta pratein*); cf. section 4 below on Irwin.

use wealth to purchase education and its attendant pleasures.¹⁷ Even more to the point, one of the main purposes of 351b-358d is to discuss the strength of wisdom, and wisdom is surely a good of the soul if anything is.

Socrates draws a basic distinction and then employs it in a way that helps to establish that PH focuses entirely on bodily goods. The distinction is between two ways something can be pleasant: it can partake of pleasure or it can be productive of pleasure (351d-e).¹⁸ Socrates then employs this distinction (and the implicit correlative distinction between painful things that partake of pain and those productive of pain) as he argues “the many” into accepting hedonism as their only account of why some pleasures are bad and some pains good. Using the labels above, groups 1 and 3 partake of pleasure and pain, respectively, while groups 2¹⁹ and 4 are productive of pain and pleasure, respectively.²⁰

With this distinction in hand, we can rephrase the objection above: why not think that some of the things productive of pleasure are productive of reputational pleasures or pleasures of the soul? However, the only things Socrates mentions that clearly partake of pleasure are those that partake of bodily pleasure, and the only things he mentions that clearly partake of pain are those that partake of bodily pain (groups 1 and 3).²¹ The natural reading, then, is that things that are pleasant or painful by being productive of pleasures or pains produce *bodily* pleasures and pains (or better: things that partake of bodily pleasures and pains).²² Hence wealth and political power are bodily goods here, in the sense that their goodness consists entirely of being productive of bodily pleasures (cp. *R.* 580d-581a). Similarly, in presenting PH Socrates describes virtue (= wisdom) as valuable only because it produces pleasures and avoids pains; given that the only actual pleasures he mentions are bodily pleasures, the most natural reading is that wisdom is good solely because it produces bodily pleasures (cp. *R.* 553c-d).²³

Now, Plato has made the distinction between bodily pleasures and pleasures of the soul in the *Protagoras*, and he has made it available to Socrates. Prodicus distinguishes them (337c),²⁴ and Socrates alludes to his distinction

¹⁷ Obviously, in the context of the *Protagoras*, the idea of purchasing education is fraught; I am simply articulating a possible objection.

¹⁸ *Hêdea de kaleis, ên d' egô, ou ta êdonês metechonta ê poiounta hêdonên.*

¹⁹ The claim that diseases produce pain rather than partaking of pain may seem strange. However, one can be ill without yet experiencing painful symptoms of the illness.

²⁰ Socrates changes his terminology between these two passages, but it is clearly the same distinction. He asks “the many” whether they call certain pleasures bad “because each of them provides [*parechei*] pleasure in the present moment and is pleasant” (353d). (Here and throughout, I use the translations found in Cooper 1997, sometimes with slight alterations.) I read this as an epexegetis in reversed order, so that ‘provides pleasure in the present moment’ is equivalent to ‘partakes of pleasure’ and explains precisely how each ‘is pleasant’. Similarly, he asks whether they call certain pains good “because they provide [*parechei*] extreme pain and suffering in the present moment” (354b)—i.e., simply because they partake of pain. Socrates then suggests the more palatable alternative view that these same pleasures and pains are bad or good when they *produce* pains and pleasures, respectively. In the first case, the many allow that “at a later time they produce [*poiei*] disease and poverty and provide [*paraskouazei*] other such things” (353d), that “by producing disease they produce pains, and by producing poverty they produce pains” (*nosous poiounta anias poiei, kai penias poiounta anias poiei*; 353e-354a), and that this is why such pleasures are bad (354a). That is, they are painful (and so bad) when they produce pain, even though they partake of pleasure (and so are good to that extent). In the second case, the many allow that certain pains are good “because at a later time health and fitness of the body and preservation of cities and rule over others and wealth come to be [*gignontai*] from them” (354b), and that “these are good...because they result in [*apoteleuta(i)*] pleasures and removals and avoidances of pain” (354b). That is, these activities partake of pain (and so are bad to that extent), but insofar as they produce pleasures, they are good.

²¹ The introduction of things that partake of pleasures with the phrase *en toisde, hoion...* may be thought relevant here. The phrase *en toisde* suggests that an exhaustive list follows, while *hoion* suggests a more limited, possibly representative, list (see Adam and Adam 1893, 179). Either encourages the idea that only bodily pleasures are in question. However, this phrase introduces not just a list of pleasures, but a list of cases in which people experience (what they call) “being weaker than pleasure”. If people are most likely to be “overcome” by bodily pleasures, that might explain the focus of the passage without requiring that focus to be part of PH as a theory. If a pro-hedonist scholar likes this reply, I leave its development to him or her.

²² Presumably an activity or experience partakes of pleasure when pleasure is an aspect of the activity or experience itself, and a pleasure is the limit case of something that partakes of pleasure.

²³ I suppose that PH would take a similar view of nominally reputational goods—that their goodness is due entirely to their producing bodily pleasures. (In Shaw unpublished-a I suggest that reputational pleasures and pains play an important role in the dialogue’s drama, but that is different from their playing a theoretical role in PH.) However, even if PH made room for reputational pleasures as distinct from bodily pleasures, it would not drastically affect my argument in section 2, given how Socrates treats reputational goods in the *Apology* and *Crito*. The crucial claim is that Socrates excludes pleasures of the soul from PH.

²⁴ Socrates may implicitly accept that there are pleasures of the soul at 313c when he says that the soul is nourished (*trephetai*) by learnings, since Plato elsewhere suggests that pleasure is being filled with what is appropriate to our nature (e.g. *R.* 585d, *L.* 733a; cf. *Pr.* 329c). It may also be significant that Socrates draws parallels between the body and the soul while conversing with

much later, only to reject it as irrelevant to the discussion (358a-b). The later passage could plausibly cut in either of two directions. Some might take Socrates' mention of Prodicus' distinction as a hint that we should generalize PH to include pleasures of the soul, or at least that it is still up in the air whether bodily pleasures are the only (or most important) pleasures admitted by PH. I would say instead that Socrates' pointed comment refuses even to consider Prodicus' distinction, and that this indicates that the theory he presents is not neutral about pleasures and pains of the soul, but rejects them. The very fact that Socrates noted Prodicus' earlier distinction, but still focuses entirely on bodily pleasures at 353-354, strongly suggests that Plato portrays him as consciously excluding pleasures of the soul from his presentation of PH.²⁵ What would the reason for this be, except that they play no part in the theory presented? Hence, rather than helping to expand possible interpretations of PH, Prodicus' earlier distinction actually heightens the need to explain Socrates' exclusive focus on bodily pleasures in presenting the theory.²⁶ One might reply that Socrates wants to pitch his view in terms of bodily pleasure because that is a more plausible picture of what the many think pleasant, and then allow for the existence of other kinds of pleasure afterward. But if so, why would he not *clearly* assert the existence of these other kinds at 358a-b?²⁷ It is more plausible to think that PH flatly identifies the good with a life of bodily pleasure and freedom from bodily pain.²⁸

2

On the reading defended in the previous section, PH states that the good life for a human being is a life with the most possible bodily pleasures and the least possible bodily pains. In this section and the next, I argue that this places PH seriously at odds with the *Apology* and *Crito*. In this section, I extract two Socratic claims about the relationship between virtue and goods of the body and reputation in the *Apology* and *Crito*, and I argue that both of these claims conflict with PH. I then strengthen these apparent conflicts by showing how the two Socratic claims are manifested in Plato's portrayal of the life of Socrates, his exemplar of human virtue. Section 3 addresses the special case of justice and death with particular attention to ways in which one might hope to dissolve the conflicts.

According to PH, virtue is valuable because it measures the long-term consequences of present action for the future possession of bodily goods such as health and wealth and the avoidance of bodily bads such as poverty

Protagoras (352a-b). Insofar as these passages do indicate that Socrates thinks there are pleasures of the soul over and above those of the body, they only heighten the need to explain why such pleasures are not explicitly included in PH, if PH is his view.

²⁵ Denyer 2008, 177 appeals to Socrates' use of *ania* and its cognates to argue that PH makes reference to pains of the soul. The linguistic claim is implausible (Taylor 1991, 138, but cf. 172, 176-177) and would also produce serious difficulties in interpreting PH. A strong linguistic distinction would require us to suppose that at 351c5-6, Socrates means *only* to refer to *ania*, and not to other sorts of pain, and that the only pains resulting from disease and poverty at 353e are *ania* in this narrow sense. It is better to allow our reading of Socrates' pain language to be constrained by the broader context in which that language occurs, and this context strongly suggests bodily pains and pleasures alone.

²⁶ Similarly, if I'm right that pleasures and pains of reputation play an important role in the drama of the *Protagoras* (see n.23), then it needs to be explained why Plato has Socrates studiously ignore these pleasures and pains, and even nominally reputational goods productive of bodily pleasures, in presenting PH. He is quite aware of the importance most people place on these in the *Apology* and *Crito* (cf. *Euthyd.* 279b).

²⁷ In interpreting Socrates' treatment of Prodicus' distinction among pleasures, one might look to a similar exchange at 358d-e for guidance. Socrates claims that whether you call it *phobos* or *deos*, fear is a *prosdokian kakou*. Prodicus demurs, saying that's true of *deos*, but not *phobos*. Socrates replies that this is irrelevant to his argument, that the things he wants to say will then be true of *deos*. But this seems immaterial, since the equation of *all* fear with a *prosdokian kakou* is a crucial step of his argument. His argument now might establish that knowledge is never weaker than *deos*, but we are left to wonder whether it might nonetheless be weaker than *phobos*. I see three ways to read the exchange. First, Socrates might be saying that Prodicus' distinction is merely verbal (cf. *Eu.* 12b10-c1). Second, he might suppose that Prodicus denies that *phobos* involves taking anything to be bad; if so, he might doubt whether *phobos* could produce action (cf. Penner 1991, 201-202n45). Third, he might suppose that Prodicus thinks *phobos* is directed at something the agent takes to be bad, but which is already present, and so not anticipated—e.g., one might *phobein* public speaking *while* speaking in public (cf. Taylor 1991, 205, but Socrates' argument at *Symp.* 200a-d could easily be adapted to place the object of fear in the future). It is unclear how any of these interpretations would help in understanding Socrates' reception of the distinction between *hêdesthai* and *euphrainesthai*.

²⁸ Socrates' presentation of a specifically somatic hedonism may be explicable if the theory is *ad hominem*, as McCoy 1998 argues. Beyond McCoy's arguments, it is notable that Protagoras reportedly believed that the soul was nothing beyond the senses (DL IX.51; Kerferd 1981, 110), and Plato regularly associates the senses with the body. Diogenes cites Plato's *Theaetetus* as a source for this report (presumably he is thinking of *Th.* 184-186), but that may not be his only source (*katha kai Platôn phêsîn en Theaitêtô[i]*). The character Protagoras' denigration of mathematics (318e) may also show that he fails to appreciate the soul's proper pleasures. It is important to notice that just as hedonism need not be somatic hedonism, neither must a somatic axiology be hedonist—one could think that health is happiness without thinking that this is so because health is more pleasant. However, Plato sometimes seems to think that the temptation to a somatic axiology is in fact due to certain features of bodily pleasures (see esp. *R.* 583b-586c).

and disease. These bodily goods are pleasant by being productive of bodily pleasures, and since virtue is productive of them, it too is pleasant by being productive of bodily pleasures. According to PH, then, not only is the pursuit of virtue compatible with the pursuit of bodily (and reputational) goods, but it is precisely the most reliable and effective way to pursue those other goods.

However, the *Apology* strongly contrasts the pursuit of goods of the soul (including especially virtue) and the pursuit of goods of the body and reputation:

“Good Sir, you are an Athenian, a citizen of the greatest city with the greatest reputation for both wisdom and power; are you not ashamed of your eagerness to have as much wealth, reputation, and honors as possible, while you do not care for nor give thought to wisdom or truth, or the best possible state of your soul?” Then, if one of you disputes this and says he does care, I shall not let him go at once or leave him, but I shall question, examine, and test him, and if I do not think he has attained the excellence he says he has, I shall reproach him because he attaches little importance to the most important things and greater importance to inferior things...I go around doing nothing but persuading both young and old among you not to care for your body or your wealth in preference to or as strongly as for the best possible state of your soul, as I say to you: “Wealth does not bring about excellence, but excellence makes wealth and everything else good for human beings, both individually and collectively.”²⁹ (*Apology* 29d-30b)

If Socrates thought that virtue were merely the knowledge that allows for the intelligent pursuit of health, wealth, reputation, and honor, he surely would not *contrast* the pursuit of virtue with the pursuit of those other goods (cf. *Ap.* 36c). Nor would he suggest that there is anything shameful about how strongly people care about (*epimeloumenos*) those other goods. Instead, he would urge people to keep caring intensely about them, but to seek wisdom as the best way to get what they already care about.³⁰ (Alternatively, we might expect Socrates to rebuke those who don’t seek wisdom with failing to care about health and wealth, since their behavior suggests that they don’t care enough about them to seek them intelligently.) So, there is a conflict between PH and the *Apology* on the practical relationship between being wise and obtaining other goods: PH recommends pursuing virtue *as a means to* bodily goods, while the *Apology* recommends pursuing virtue and other goods of the soul *in contrast to or in preference to* bodily (and reputational) goods.

Socrates’ reasons for this practical advice reveal a second, related conflict between PH and the *Apology* and *Crito*, this one concerning the comparative worth of goods of the soul and goods of the body and reputation. In the passage above, he advises people to pursue goods of the soul rather than bodily and reputational goods *because* the former are superior goods and the latter inferior. There are at least three ways to understand this:

1. Both are in fact goods, and the goodness of virtue is commensurate with, but superior in magnitude to, that of the other goods.
2. Both are in fact goods, but the goodness of virtue is greater in kind than that of bodily and reputational goods (so not commensurate with them).
3. The superior goods such as virtue are actually good, while the inferior “goods” are not in fact good at all.³¹

Which of these does Socrates assert in the *Apology*, and which of them would be consistent with PH?

²⁹ I follow Burnet 1924 *ad* 30b3 in taking *agatha* to be predicate. Just as PH fits poorly with the rest of this passage, so too would the last sentence fit poorly if *agatha* were the subject of *gignetai* (understood in the second clause). Grube’s translation has the virtue of capturing both possibilities. For objections to Burnet on syntactic grounds, see deStrycker 1994 (ed. Slings), 138-140, 334. Burnyeat 1971 suggests (vaguely) that this passage is best understood by expanding the meaning of *chrēmata*, but it is not clear what translation could simultaneously contrast strongly with *aretê* as an object of pursuit and yet be unobjectionable as something that *aretê* brings about. Cf. Brickhouse and Smith 1994, 107-108n10 on Burnyeat.

³⁰ See previous note on *Ap.* 30b2-4.

³¹ Annas 1993 and Brown unpublished read *Euthyd.* 281e3-5 this way. I disagree, and follow most scholars in reading that passage as asserting that goods other than virtue are only conditionally good (the “conditionality thesis”). The conditionality thesis is in principle compatible with either 1 or 2 on this list, but I argue in section 4 (against Irwin) that a literal reading of PH actually rules out the conditionality thesis. I attribute to Plato the conjunction of 2 with the conditionality thesis. That is, goods of the soul are superior in kind to other goods, and are also necessary for reliably realizing the inferior goodness of the other goods without simultaneously realizing other, greater goods.

I might be consistent with PH, even as that theory was interpreted in the previous section. If virtue reliably provides bodily goods and bads, while the bodily goods and bads themselves do not guarantee their own (continued) provision, then virtue could be superior to the other goods, even though it is only good insofar as it produces those other goods. Hence, passages in the *Protagoras* in which Socrates commits himself to the greater importance of the soul and its goods than the body and its goods (309c, 313-314, 345b) do not necessarily produce a conflict with PH internal to the dialogue; these passages can be read as making a comparison between commensurate goods.

However, as a reading of the *Apology* and *Crito*, 1 is ruled out when Socrates urges people not even to take into account (*hupologizesthai*; *Ap.* 28b7, *Cr.* 48d4, *G.* 480c7-8) the value of goods of the body and reputation as compared to virtue.³² It would make no sense to say that certain goods should not even be taken into account relative to other goods with which they are commensurate. Hence, 1 is ruled out and these passages require one of the other interpretations. 3 would obviously be inconsistent with PH, but 3 can also be ruled out as an interpretation of the *Apology* by direct textual evidence (*Ap.* 37b-c). That leaves 2 as the best interpretation of the *Apology* and *Crito*, and the question of whether PH is consistent with 2. It is not. PH says that virtue is good *entirely* because it makes possible the optimal acquisition of those other goods; hence it cannot have a value superior in kind to those other goods. If X gets its goodness solely by producing Y, then no matter the amount of Y that X produces, X cannot have a goodness superior in kind to Y. Had Socrates merely meant to assert 1, then he could have said something different at *Ap.* 29d-30b, such as “Naturally, you want goods of the body and reputation, but look: the way to get the most of those is to become wise—and more such goods are surely better than fewer!” But that is not what he says. So the *Apology* is inconsistent with PH in a second way.

These interpretive judgments are borne out by how Plato has Socrates describe his life and death. Socrates emphasizes that he “ignored [*amelêsas*; cp. *epimeloumenos* at 29d] what the many care for—money, running the household, military or political or other leadership, or the political clubs or factions in the city...” (*Ap.* 36b; cf. *G.* 526d5-6). Plato considers Socrates a good person, and this is revealed in part by Socrates’ advertisements of his own goodness. But this seems impossible on PH, since he makes no effort to obtain wealth and honor and the pleasures of body and reputation that come from these.³³ So, in practical contexts, Socrates really is committed to pursuing goods of the soul *rather than* goods of the body and reputation, not to pursuing goods of the soul *for the sake of* goods of the body and reputation.

Similarly, Socrates claims that it is “not allowed for a better man to be harmed by a worse” (30d; cf. *G.* 527c6-d2). This strongly suggests that the goods of the soul that make him a good man cannot possibly be outweighed by any amount of bodily and reputational harm that someone else might force upon him. The practical efficacy of this conviction is on display in his attitude throughout the *Apology*. Since Meletus was able to persuade Socrates’ jury to impose a penalty of death, he could surely have persuaded them to impose other harsh penalties. In the *Apology* and *Crito*, this vulnerability does not cast doubt on Socrates’ goodness. According to PH, though, one of virtue’s main functions is the avoidance of such bads of the body and reputation. On PH, Socrates’ exposure to suffering such bads when he need not (*Ap.* 38d-e;³⁴ cf. *G.* 522d) demonstrates his lack of virtue.³⁵ In the *Apology*, though, Socrates remains steadfast; this bears out in deeds his commitment to the view that goods of the soul are superior in kind to goods of the body and reputation.

To sum up section 2: PH recommends virtue solely for the sake of bodily goods. But if X is worth pursuing solely for the sake of Y, then it makes no sense to say either (a) that people would do well to pursue or care about X *rather than* or *in preference to* Y; or (b) that X has a value *superior in kind* to Y. However, Socrates asserts both (a) and (b) in the *Apology* and *Crito*, and his actions bear out his commitment to both (a) and (b). Hence, these dialogues conflict with PH on central points. The most charitable reading of these dialogues, then, commits Plato to the denial of theories like PH at the time he wrote them.

3

I now consider a special case of the relationship between virtue and other goods that is worth addressing in addition: Socrates’ willingness to die rather than act unjustly. Examples include his refusal to allow the generals at

³² Here I follow Vlastos 1991, Ch. 8. The *Apology* passage specifically denies that *death* should have any weight as against justice (see next section), but the *Crito* generalizes somewhat, saying that one should be willing to suffer *anything* else before acting unjustly.

³³ See again Burnet 1924 *ad* 30b3, who cites *Ap.* 31c as evidence that Socrates cannot be thinking that money comes from virtue; he might also have mentioned 23b-c.

³⁴ It is also worth considering Socrates’ remarks here to the effect that he would have been ashamed to say what was required to avoid a conviction in light of an argument about shame I offer in the next section.

³⁵ How can Socrates have virtue and be good, given that he sincerely disavows wisdom (which just is virtue or human goodness)? I propose an answer in Shaw forthcoming, §3.

Arginusae to be tried collectively (*Ap.* 32a-c), his refusal to retrieve Leon (*Ap.* 32c-e), his refusal to pander to the jury in order to gain acquittal (*Ap.* 17b-18a, 34c-35d, 38d-39a; cf. *G.* 522c-e), and his refusal to run away from Athens to avoid death (*Crito*; cf. *Phd.* 98d-99a). Below, I sometimes refer to these collectively as “Socrates’ actions”. Such actions seem to be Plato’s main way of substantiating Socrates’ justice.³⁶

This special case gets somewhat more complicated than the considerations raised in section 2, and it may be less central to determining the coherence (or lack of it) between PH and the *Apology* and *Crito*. However, similar issues have received significant attention in the literature,³⁷ and exploring the special case helps to provide a more complete picture.

I make two assumptions in addressing this topic, one about justice and the other about death. The assumption about justice is that it and the “other” virtues, including wisdom, are actually all the same condition of the soul. Socrates embraces this position in the *Protagoras*;³⁸ he says nothing explicit to that effect in the *Apology* or *Crito*, but this assumption is surely permissible when asking whether the *Protagoras* (understood as endorsing PH) can be reconciled with those other dialogues. The assumption about death is that it is a bad of the body, while life and its preservation are goods of the body.³⁹

Given these two assumptions, this really is a special case of the more general case presented in section 2 about the relationship between virtue (= wisdom = justice) and bodily goods (including life). According to PH, justice (since it *is* virtue) is valuable solely for the sake of bodily goods. This makes it hard to see why Socrates faces forced choices between justice and those other goods (collectively) or how justice could be more valuable in kind than those other goods. On PH, acting justly should preserve life and other bodily goods, but in the *Apology* Socrates suggests the opposite about life (31e-32a; cf. n.32). Also, according to PH, being productive of such goods exhausts justice’s value, so it could not be more valuable in kind than bodily goods, including survival. Again in this specific case, this is not how Socrates sees matters (*Ap.* 28b-c, 35b-d; *Cr.* 48c-d). This is mostly old news.

What is novel in the particular case is that there are specific positive proposals to consider as to how these manifestations of Socrates’ concern for justice can be reconciled with PH.⁴⁰ The question is: why would virtue, as understood by PH, lead one to face likely or certain death? In general terms, the answer is obvious: in order for PH to explain why Socrates’ actions are just and virtuous, those actions must be likely to produce the greatest balance of pleasure over pain.⁴¹ I see three proposals on offer (though they are related; see below): his actions might allow him

³⁶ *Ap.* 17c, 18a, 32a-33a, 35c-d, 39b; *Cr. passim*; *G.* 521c9-d3, 522b9-c1; *Phd.* 118a. Cf. n.35 on Socratic virtue.

³⁷ Especially in Gosling and Taylor 1982, 62-65; they talk about courage and death, but given the unity of virtue (see below) the two issues are either readily adaptable to each other, or even mere notational variants. At the very least, acting justly in these cases requires that one not have an excessive (cowardly) fear of death.

³⁸ Here I side with Penner 1973 against his critics, at least as a simplifying assumption; most of the subtle distinctions among accounts of the unity of virtue are irrelevant to my main line of inquiry (but see n.60).

³⁹ The meaning of *sôtêria* and forms of *sô(i)zein* after 351b is contested; do they refer to the preservation of life or the salvation of life in some grander sense? McCoy 1998 draws on the Great Speech to argue that in the final section of the *Protagoras*, these words refer to survival. However, in the first instance Socrates calls measurement a *sôtêria tou biou* not because it provides survival, but because it makes our lives go *well* and saves us from living *badly* (*ei oun en toutô[i] hêmin ên to eu prattein...tis an hêmin sôtêria ephanê tou biou*; 356d, cf. *Pr.* 352c, *Cr.* 48b). Vlastos 1991, 301 warns against a “lofty” reading of such words on grounds that Socrates elsewhere uses *sô(i)zein* in its everyday sense (*G.* 511c-512e; he could also have mentioned *Pr.* 354b). This is not strong evidence; Plato is unconcerned to always use one word for one thing (cf. *Th.* 184c and nn.20, 25, 27 above). Despite all this, and though life is not on the list of bodily goods at 354b (“group 4” above), it would be surprising if Socrates excluded it (military training is surely meant to preserve cities, and this in turn prevents both enslavement and death of citizens). At 351b, *teleutêseien* may have connotations of having lived a full life (cf. Denyer 2008 *ad* 351b10-11), which would make the preservation of one’s life important to the function of wisdom as understood by PH (to live well, one must live!). On this last point, the Epicureans have a different view; they think that a longer pleasant life is not, by virtue of being longer, more pleasant (*KD* 19). To my knowledge, Plato never considers such a view, and in some places he seems committed to saying that duration is relevant to overall pleasantness (*R.* 585b-e).

⁴⁰ One might ask whether Plato would have considered this at all. I find it incredible to suppose that Plato endorses a substantive theory of virtue in the *Protagoras*, and presents it through Socrates, his exemplar of human virtue, but never considers whether that theory can account for Socrates’ own virtue.

⁴¹ Epicureans think it is always most pleasant to act justly, where this includes many actions generally considered just. (In *De Fin.* II, Cicero argues—unsuccessfully, I would say—that this makes their view unstable.) However, this Epicurean view depends on further claims about pleasures of the soul (*DL* X.37) and the fear of retaliation (*KD* 34, *SV* 7). PH, far from adopting the Epicurean view of pleasures of the soul, does not include them at all (or so I have argued—but see *metamelein* at 356d), and Socrates in the *Crito* distances himself from the view that one should be just so as to avoid retaliation (see below in the main text)—or, presumably, fear of retaliation for injustice (which, on the Epicurean view, the just person cannot avoid and which is worse than actual retaliation; *KD* 34-35).

to avoid retaliation, to avoid feeling shame, or to have a more pleasant afterlife. I consider each of these proposals in turn.⁴²

First, Socrates could be trying to avoid retaliation that he would face if he failed to resist the Thirty in the case of Leon, or if he failed to stand up for the laws in opposition to popular opinion in the case of the generals at Arginusae.⁴³ Substantial risk of death might be the best hedonic strategy in such a case.⁴⁴ It is unclear how this view can be reconciled with Socrates' general attitude not only about not taking retaliation into account (*Cr.* 46c) but also about never returning an injury for an injury (49c-d);⁴⁵ leave that aside. Further, in describing both of these cases, Socrates emphasizes that he faced possible retaliation for acting as he did (32b7-c3, d7-8)—this is how he is risking death!—but he does not mention any possible retaliation for acting other than as he did. Leave this aside as well; maybe he mentions retaliations that would speak against his actions according to PH and simply fails to mention those that justify his actions. Even if this could be made to sound plausible, the proposed explanation needs yet more: the likely retaliations for acting other than he did must be more painful than the likely retaliations for acting as he did. In these two cases, there is no reason to suppose this. Any given form of retaliation is surely equally likely coming from either party that Socrates might anger, and the probability of retaliation seems higher if he acts as he does. So, the expected hedonic value of retrieving Leon, say, is higher than that of what Socrates actually did (according to PH as understood above). The cases of pandering to the jury and running away from the death penalty are dissimilar in that Socrates already knows the likely or definite retaliatory measure he faces, death. Other retaliations or other outcomes may be worse than death.⁴⁶ So, these cases are easier for the retaliation theorist to explain; even so, the harder cases seem intractable.

Second, perhaps Socrates would have been ashamed to act other than as he did. Shame is a painful emotion, so this could potentially make it better to die than to live in shame.⁴⁷ However, either this shame would be in response to something genuinely shameful, or it would not. If not, then it would be irrational shame—the sort of emotion to which the virtuous are, presumably, not subject (cp. *Pr.* 360a). If this shame responds to something genuinely shameful, then we face another choice. Either it is shameful precisely because it causes the painful emotion of shame, or for some independent reason. If the former, then we are stuck in an explanatory circle; the act is shameful because it would cause shame, and it causes shame because it is shameful. If it would be shameful for some independent reason, then this would be so either because of some independent painfulness of the action, or because of some other independent feature of the action. If the former, then we require a further account of *that* painfulness—one that is, thus far, not on offer. If the latter, then we have something shameful on grounds independent of its painfulness. This PH does not allow (359e-360b). Nor is this merely an incidental feature of PH; Protagoras' objection to the identification of pleasure and the good at 351c was that only pleasures taken in noble things were good (understand: while pleasures taken in shameful things are not). If there are criteria of the *kalon* and the *aischron* independent of pleasure and pain, then Protagoras would be able to sustain this move; after all, everything *kalon* is good and everything *aischron* bad (358b, 359e). But while presenting PH, Socrates insists quite emphatically that the many (and, it seems, Protagoras himself) have no other criterion by which to judge pleasures bad or pains good except other pains and pleasures, respectively, of which they are productive (353c-355a).⁴⁸

⁴² This part of the argument may not depend as narrowly on the bodily focus of PH argued for above (see n.53 below). However, neither is it insensitive to the details of the hedonism in question (see references to Epicureanism in nn.39, 41 above).

⁴³ Cf. Reshotko 2006, 65-72, 174. To be clear, Reshotko does not attempt to show how her account of Socrates' view of justice and its benefits to the just person can account for the actions considered here.

⁴⁴ The fact that Socrates was already 70 could play into this judgment; see *Ap.* 38c, *Cr.* 53d-e, and cf. n.39.

⁴⁵ If injustice harms the unjust only because others will harm them in retaliation, there seems no way out of a vicious circle of retaliation except to admit that injustice sometimes prospers.

⁴⁶ See *Cr.* 47e3-5 on bodily fates worse than death, though at 46c Socrates does not distinguish degrees of unconcern one should have for various retaliatory measures; for "other outcomes", see *Ap.* 37c-e, *Cr.* 53c-e.

⁴⁷ Cf. Gosling and Taylor 1982, 63: "...the stock hedonistic reply is that a courageous death is preferable, on hedonistic grounds, to a subsequent life of shame, disgrace, slavery, etc." (they may have in mind *Ap.* 28d). Insofar as our best Platonic account of shame is fear for one's own reputation (*Eu.* 12b-c, [*Def.*] 416), accounts in terms of shame are closely related to those in terms of fear of retribution from other humans, and these are also structurally similar to accounts in terms of retribution by the gods (see below).

⁴⁸ Some (e.g. Irwin 1977, 112; Denyer 2008 *ad* 354a5) might think otherwise on grounds that Socrates' argument for the pleasantness of going to war (*Pr.* 360a) is only convincing to someone who already believes independently that such an action is noble. Others argue that Socrates' claim that war is pleasant must be ironic, which shows that he is not committed to hedonism or the particular version of it he presents (e.g. Cronquist 1980, 64n4). Both of these views are mistaken; Socrates suggests that warfare is pleasant because it saves the city and gives power over others (354a-c—but see Adam and Adam 1893, 181). Going to war is immediately painful, or course, but focusing on how warfare partakes of pain at the moment rather misses the point of Socrates' earlier argument about the measuring craft (cf. Taylor 1991, 209).

So, when one attempts to explain the excellence of Socrates' actions in accordance with PH by reference to avoiding shame, we find the following exhaustive set of choices: either (1) the shame he would feel would not be due to any real shamefulfulness of the action, so that Socrates would not be virtuous; (2) the shame would be due to some shamefulfulness, but the shamefulfulness would also be due to the shame—a vicious explanatory circle; (3) we would need some other, prior explanation of the painfulness of the actions Socrates refused to do, so that the explanation in terms of shame would not be the primary one; or (4) we would have to reject hedonism as a complete account of good and bad.

Third, Socrates might think that even if the actions described above provide bad hedonic prospects during this life, they provide the best hedonic prospects after death.⁴⁹ Of course, in the *Apology* Socrates claims not to know what happens after death (28d), but he eventually concludes that it must be one of two things: annihilation or relocation to Hades (40c-41b).⁵⁰ He seems to think (puzzlingly) that annihilation would be pleasant,⁵¹ and presumably this would be true regardless of how one behaved during life.⁵² But if the story about Hades were true, and if one's treatment there depended on one's behavior while alive, there might be room for a post-mortem hedonist explanation of the excellence of Socrates' actions.⁵³

The first question about this last-ditch effort is whether there is positive evidence in the relevant dialogues to support the claim that the gods reward or punish us in the afterlife. This probably is Socrates' view, but the point is controversial. Socrates does not actually say in his own voice that how one is treated in Hades would depend on how one acts during life. When he mentions Hades and its judges in the *Apology* (41a), these judges may be merely adjudicating conflicts among the dead, not judging their lives.⁵⁴ Socrates has the laws of Athens make such a claim at *Crito* 54b-c,⁵⁵ but there are good reasons to distinguish at least some of the laws' arguments from Socrates' own, especially once they start appealing to considerations that Socrates has told Crito to disregard (53a; cp. 46c).⁵⁶ In my view, the best evidence that Socrates holds such a view in these dialogues is in the *Apology*: “[a good man's] affairs are not neglected by the gods” (41d). The gods may attend to a good man's affairs in this life, of course, but if death is relocation to Hades, it is hard to see why they would start neglecting his affairs then. Taking the context into account—Socrates has just said that a worse man cannot harm a better *in life or in death*—it seems almost certain. Still, someone arguing that the excellence of Socrates' actions can be made consistent with PH by reference to post-mortem rewards and punishments might hope for a clearer expression of the claim that there are such rewards and punishments (of the sort found in the *Gorgias* or *Phaedo*). However, for now I simply grant the point.

I find it tempting to reply that concern for one's reputation among the gods and for ensuing post-mortem rewards or punishments differs only immaterially from concern for one's reputation among other human beings and for ensuing this-worldly rewards or punishments (roughly, the first of three proposals in this section). I find this reply even more tempting because Plato treats these two kinds of rewards and reputation in parallel in the *Republic* (358-367, 612-621). However, in this dialectical context, my argument must proceed from material in dialogues accepted by my opponents as contemporaneous with or prior to the *Protagoras*. So, I argue in a different way against attempts to explain the excellence of Socrates' actions by reference to divine rewards and punishments: I

⁴⁹ Again, Gosling and Taylor 1982, 63 suggest this: “a hedonist who believes in an afterlife and in posthumous rewards and punishments need have no trouble in explaining on hedonistic grounds why one ought to endure death rather than do things which will attract punishment after death.”

⁵⁰ For a recent plausible account of how to reconcile these two passages, see Austin forthcoming.

⁵¹ But see Austin forthcoming for an argument that his view is merely that annihilation is more *advantageous* than continued life. Rudebusch 1999 heroically suggests that annihilation could be a modal pleasure, but this fails to make the pleasantness of non-existence less puzzling (see Austin for a more complete reply).

⁵² There is some reason to think otherwise; Socrates explains the pleasantness of annihilation in terms of a contrast with life's bothers (*Ap.* 40d-e; contrast *Republic* 583b-585a), so annihilation's pleasantness might vary depending on the antecedent painfulness of one's life. Insofar as the painfulness of life depends on one's wisdom or foolishness, annihilation might be *more* pleasant for the foolish than for the wise (cp. *Phd.* 107c)! So, the annihilation possibility is at best useless in explaining Socrates' willingness to face death in the situations above (since everyone will ultimately be annihilated, whatever they do) and may even make such explanation *more* difficult (since annihilation may be more pleasant for the foolish and vicious).

⁵³ Insofar as PH focuses entirely on bodily pleasures and pains (section 1), and death is the separation of the soul from the body (*Phd.* 64c, 67d), such an account would have to make reference to pleasures and pains of the soul by itself (assuming that the body, at least after death, has no pleasures and pains just by itself).

⁵⁴ Cf. Burnet 1924 *ad* 41a3.

⁵⁵ Cf. Burnet 1924 *ad* 40c7, Gosling and Taylor 1982, 63.

⁵⁶ Cf. Weiss 1998, Harte 1999.

argue that such attempts (assuming PH, and perhaps any form of hedonism that could plausibly be attributed to Plato) run afoul of the *Euthyphro*.⁵⁷

The proposal, again, is that the gods will reward Socrates for the actions described above (here I tentatively agree) and that this can be what makes the actions described above excellent and just because they are most pleasant for him (here I disagree). My argument starts by asking *why* the gods would reward Socrates' actions. When Euthyphro first states that piety is what is dear to the gods (6e-7a), Socrates suggests in his reply that the gods love whatever they consider good, admirable, or just (7e-8a; cf. *R.* 334c), so I start from those possible reasons for rewarding his actions.⁵⁸ The easy case is if we suppose that the gods reward Socrates' actions because they consider them just. We seek an explanation for the excellence and justice of Socrates' actions, so this line of argument is either circular (his actions are just because the gods reward them, and the gods reward them because they are just) or requires a prior explanation of the justice of his actions. In the latter case, the gods' rewards might conceivably make his action more just than it otherwise would have been, but they cannot be the primary explanation of the justice of his actions.

But that's not all. Later, Socrates gets Euthyphro to agree that (1) the pious is loved by the gods because it is pious, and (2) that the pious is not pious because it is loved by the gods (10d). Granted a suitably generalized version of these claims,⁵⁹ or even just an extension to the case of justice,⁶⁰ we can conclude that Socrates' actions are not just because the gods love them (and so reward them). For it would follow that (1') the gods love just actions because they are just, but more importantly that (2') just actions are not just because the gods love them. (2') is all we need here; if actions are not just because the gods love them, then in general they are not just because they gods love them on grounds *G*, *no matter what G is* (that is, no matter whether or not [1'] is true). Hence we do not have to worry whether Socrates' list of possible grounds for divine love (7e-8a) was exhaustive. Whatever grounds the gods' love, their love cannot explain the justice of Socrates' actions, and so neither can the rewards that their love would explain.⁶¹

So, existing proposals to explain the excellence of Socrates' actions consistently with PH all fail.⁶² Indeed, pending my argument in the next section against Rudebusch's hedonist interpretation, these considerations may go a

⁵⁷ Gosling and Taylor 1982, 66, at least, place the *Euthyphro* at roughly the same time as *Protagoras*, which suggests that they may be committed to allowing evidence from the *Euthyphro* to inform their reading of the *Protagoras*. Many others are committed to reconciling the *Protagoras*, *Euthyphro*, *Apology*, and *Crito* because of their broader interpretive commitments (see n.8). Gosling and Taylor 1982, 63 admit that "[i]t is...doubtful if hedonism can account for the alleged fact that the gods punish such acts as cowardice", but they hold that "that is a question of what is ultimately defensible, not of what is immediately obvious"—this after they say that a hedonist need have "no trouble" in making this explanatory move! Whether or not the difficulty is immediately obvious, there is good reason to think Plato would be sensitive to it (as I now argue).

⁵⁸ This is in the context of gods who purportedly disagree with one another, but that does not affect the claim that these are the features of an action that the gods might admire. (The thought that the gods might love an action on grounds other than these three is addressed below in the main text.) It does affect the question of whether the gods must be right, but Socrates clearly rejects the stories about disagreement (5e-6c), so I assume that Socrates will in general assume that the gods are free of false belief.

⁵⁹ These claims cannot be perfectly generalized; most obviously, they cannot be extended to the property of being god-loved, on pain of vitiating Socrates' argument for the non-identity of the pious and the god-loved.

⁶⁰ One justification for the needed generalization would be a strong version of the unity thesis, but some (e.g. Vlastos 1981) have thought that the strong version is ruled out by *Euthyphro* 12c-d and *Laches* 198a.

⁶¹ A generalized version of (2) is widely assumed, especially in popular discussions of the "Euthyphro dilemma", but some might worry whether such generalized versions are warranted, either in fact or as interpretation of Plato. If someone had good reasons to doubt the extension to 2', then the next step would be to look more substantially at other possible grounds on which the gods might love Socrates' actions, especially their being *agathon* or *kalon*. In this context, these both reduce to the pleasant. Then the question is: pleasant for whom? If for Socrates, we are again either stuck with an explanatory circle or are still in need of a prior explanation for why these actions were pleasant for him. If for the gods, it seems hard to get around Socrates' rejection of piety as an exchange of pleasures between humans and gods (*Eu.* 14b-15b). This leaves one last possibility worth considering: Socrates' actions are pleasant for other humans, the gods love his actions for that reason, and they reward him in the afterlife, which makes his actions excellent and just. I doubt anyone will want to mount a positive defense of this line of argument.

⁶² Gosling and Taylor 1982, 63-65 make three further points. First, Socrates sometimes speaks of injustice as a sickness of the soul, as he does in the *Crito*. They think this suggests hedonism, since we may be expected to understand that pain makes bodily sickness bad (cf. *Pr.* 353d-354a). However, the idea of justice as a sickness of the soul extends into non-hedonist contexts in Plato. Second, they argue that a hedonist can justify the acquisition of a courageous disposition that may lead to sacrificing one's life, even if he would sometimes benefit from cowardice. This destroys the connection between virtue and benefit central to Socrates' account; the *Protagoras* positively rules out the idea that beneficial retreat is cowardly. They provide no textual evidence to defuse this problem; instead, they cite Mill. Third, they say it is not obvious that PH, or Platonic ethics generally, is egoist (see also Taylor 1991, 175, Denyer 2008 *ad* 354b4). Many people, they say, think it "obvious that no egoist can

long way towards showing that no broadly Platonic version of hedonism could explain the excellence of Socrates' actions.

4

Finally, I consider two ways of avoiding the inconsistencies above by reading PH differently than I did in section 1.⁶³

First, Irwin suggests that Socrates in the *Protagoras* may think that bodily goods are only conditionally good, in accordance with passages elsewhere (esp. *Euthyd.* 280c-282b). On this view, Socrates thinks that getting pleasure rather than pain from such goods requires using them properly, and that that requires wisdom. Additionally, perhaps he thinks wisdom allows us to adapt our preferences to our circumstances, so that external misfortunes will not make us live painfully.⁶⁴ On such a view, no amount of bodily and reputational goods is preferable to wisdom. If someone foolish had those goods, then her use of them would actually cause her pain rather than pleasure—indeed, more pain than if she were poor and ill. Moreover, if someone had wisdom without those goods, or with any sort of external bads, then she could adapt her preferences and still live pleasantly and well. So, it is best to stop aiming at goods of the body and reputation until one is wise. This would explain why Socrates does not seek bodily and reputational goods, as well as why he is so calm in the face of his prosecution and punishment.

These attempts to explain Socrates' various actions in terms of Irwin's theory seem actually to be in tension. If Socrates can adapt his preferences to fit the circumstances, this suggests that he is closer to wisdom than foolishness, but if he still feels constrained not to pursue bodily and reputational goods for fear that he will misuse them, that suggests that he is closer to foolishness than to wisdom.⁶⁵

More importantly, though, Irwin's reading is flatly contradicted by a literal reading of the *Protagoras*. In presenting PH, Socrates implicitly characterizes the relationship between bodily goods such as health and wealth and the pleasures of which they are productive, and bodily bads such as disease and poverty and the pains of which they are productive. He asks: "in bringing about diseases and poverty do they [bad pleasures] bring about pain?"⁶⁶ and "these things [health, fitness, etc.] are good because they result in pleasure and in the relief and avoidance of pain?"⁶⁷ (353e, 354b). PH countenances no additional capacity needed to get pleasure and freedom from pain out of bodily goods, and positively suggests that there is none. PH also posits no additional capacity that would allow someone with bodily bads to avoid bodily pains. Irwin's article ("Socrates the Epicurean?") is well titled; the idea presumably is not that someone sick and poor could avoid bodily pains, but that by adapting their preferences they could avoid additional pains of the soul due to frustrated preferences. These considerations are foreign to the surface text of *Protagoras* 351b ff., which only considers bodily pains. Turning PH into an Epicurean theory might resolve many of the problems that haunt pro-hedonist interpreters, but PH is not an Epicurean theory.

Second, following Rudebusch, perhaps we should attribute to Socrates a different or additional view about the relationship between virtue and pleasure. Rudebusch agrees that according to PH, virtue (the condition of the soul) is only instrumentally valuable—that is, that it is only pleasant by being productive of pleasures.⁶⁸ However, one thing virtue produces is virtuous activity, and Rudebusch argues that virtuous activities could themselves partake of pleasure—indeed, that they *are* pleasures. If virtuous activities are themselves pleasures, then the inconsistencies presented in section 2 might be resolved without using any of the strategies rejected in section 3.

consistently advocate the pursuit of other-regarding virtues at the expense of diminution of one's welfare, and it is clear that Plato wishes to advocate the pursuit of justice" (64-65). However, there is no evidence that PH recommends benefiting another unless doing so provides pleasure *for the agent*. Moreover, where Plato advocates justice, he does so precisely by reconceiving human welfare. (It is informative to compare this quote from Gosling and Taylor with Glaucon's speech in *Republic* II.) They are also wrong to say that egoist interpretations of Plato cannot account for the rule of the philosophers in the *Republic*; see esp. Brown 2000. Finally, Plato is not ambiguous about goodness, as they charge; he consistently says that an individual human being's good = her possession of [the highest] human goods = her being a good human.

⁶³ The first is drawn from Irwin 1992, and the second from Rudebusch 1999. See also Denyer 2008 *ad* 354c8, who seems to think that a focus on bodily pleasures would be a "familiar idea" added to the theory as presented, rather than a feature already present in the text.

⁶⁴ The *Protagoras* mentions the role of external circumstances in being happy (344-345; cf. *Euthyd.* 279c-280b), but the context makes it difficult to see exactly what Socrates wants to say on this topic.

⁶⁵ In fact, Plato sometimes characterizes Socrates as being between ignorance and wisdom, and it is hard to see what ramifications this has for him within an Irwin-style interpretation. The *Charmides* is surely relevant here, but seeing how would require untangling the web of argument found in that dialogue.

⁶⁶ *Oukoun nosouta poiounta anias poiei, kai penias poiounta anias poiei?*

⁶⁷ *Tauta de agatha esti di' allo ti, e hoti eis hedonas apoteleuta[i] kai lupôn apallagas te kat apotropas?*

⁶⁸ Rudebusch 1999, 145n2.

However, this view seems viciously circular: it has Socrates defining virtue in terms of pleasure, and then defining (certain) pleasures in terms of virtue. If we asked why a certain activity was virtuous, the answer would have to be that it produces the most pleasure. But now, suppose that we ask whether the pleasures that virtue seeks include actions in accordance with virtue. If Rudebusch says “yes”, then there is an explanatory circle: this is an action in accordance with virtue because it is most pleasant, and it is most pleasant (in part) because it is in accordance with virtue.⁶⁹ On the other hand, if he answers “no”, then either (i) human excellence does not measure all the pleasures and pains relevant to living well, or (ii) activities in accordance with human excellence are not themselves pleasures. Neither conclusion would be acceptable to Rudebusch.⁷⁰

One possible response would be to say that the pleasures of virtuous activity come out in the wash.⁷¹ Virtue does not have to measure virtuous activities in deliberation, because it is strong and invariably produces activities in agreement with itself. So, in deliberation, virtue only has to measure pleasures *other than* virtuous activities and act based on those measurements. The ensuing activities will then always be virtuous and so will always themselves be pleasures. This is true even when the best options are merely pain-minimizing (in respect of the pleasures and pains other than virtuous activity).⁷² This last fact may go some distance towards reconciling hedonism with the Socratic claim that a good man cannot be harmed, assuming that virtuous activities are always greater pleasures than the other pleasures and pains involved. However, it is hard to see why lesser pains would not still count as harms, even if they are lesser harms.⁷³

This proposal on Rudebusch’s behalf also faces a more serious problem. For it suggests that what qualifies an action as virtuous (and so as being itself a pleasure) is its being maximally productive of pleasures other than virtuous activities. That is, this response still requires that Socrates’ actions be the most pleasant available abstracting away from the fact that those actions are themselves pleasures. That is, Rudebusch would still need a response to the puzzle posed in section 3. If he took this line of response to my objection above, though, then he would be immune to the objections raised in section 2.

Both of these proposals require that we understand Socrates’ view by abstracting away from what he actually says in the *Protagoras*.⁷⁴ Irwin has to suppose that Socrates’ way of talking about the goodness of things productive of pleasure is an oversimplification. Both Irwin and Rudebusch have to suppose that Socrates’ exclusive focus on bodily pleasures is an oversimplification.⁷⁵ One could argue that Socrates is driven to one or both of these oversimplifications by the dramatic conceit that he is addressing the many.⁷⁶ But once pro-hedonists say such things,

⁶⁹ In reply to an earlier version of this objection, Rudebusch suggested that while it would be circular to define virtue in terms of pleasure and pleasure in terms of virtue, his claim is not circular because it asserts an identity claim, not a causal-explanatory or more broadly definitional claim. (His comparison, paraphrased: “Socrates defines wisdom in terms of temperance and temperance in terms of wisdom, but this is circular.” Not so, if Socrates asserts their identity!) But Rudebusch’s view cannot be that virtuous activity is identical pleasure, full stop, because virtuous activities are not the only pleasures. He does not deny that eating, drinking, and sex are also pleasures. While such activities are sometimes virtuous, they need not be, and even when they are virtuous, their pleasure is surely not exhausted by being virtuous activities. In the next paragraph, I attempt to reply to myself on Rudebusch’s behalf while respecting this distinction.

⁷⁰ As it happens, I agree with Rudebusch that on Plato’s view, excellent activities are constitutive of human happiness. However, such views do not have to run into the problems I raise here; if virtue is knowledge of the Forms, for example, and virtuous activities are wise actions (actions in agreement with that knowledge), then the objects concerning which one must deliberate are distinct from those in accordance with which one must deliberate. (I don’t claim that this is the only option; Aristotle and the Stoics each have different ways of dealing with the relationship between the objects of deliberation and the objects of knowledge.)

⁷¹ I should say that I don’t know whether Rudebusch would want to take this tack.

⁷² Of course, virtue will still *grasp* the pleasures that are its own proper activities, and these may even figure into certain calculations involving death.

⁷³ As I argued above, Irwin’s adaptive-preferences view also does not accomplish this. The comparison with Epicureanism is really apt here; even though the Epicureans say that the sage will be happy on the rack (DL X.118), it is hard to see how she isn’t *less* happy than she otherwise would be.

⁷⁴ To some extent, of course, this is an unavoidable feature of interpreting written works.

⁷⁵ This is true of Irwin’s view because the frustrations or satisfactions of preferences are not pleasures or pains of the body, so his adaptationist account must also abstract away from the bodily focus of PH.

⁷⁶ See Adam and Adam 1893, xxxiii and Cronquist 1980, 64n4. Rudebusch also offered this explanation in personal communication: *Protagoras* 353-354 concerns “what the many call good. And, unlike hedonism, Socrates never argues for the conventional doctrine about goods.” However, this stretch of text is the only *argument* for hedonism to be found in the dialogue, making it difficult to tease these apart and say that the argument for hedonism belongs properly to the theory presented, but that the particular goods and pleasures mentioned in arguing for hedonism are not representative. Against the view that Socrates merely takes on some views of the many for argumentative purposes, Russell 2000, 329-333 argues that the protreptic ambitions of the hedonism require that it be high-minded enough to accommodate conventionally noble and virtuous actions by explaining

they have given up their main advantage over anti-hedonists—namely, that they do not have to explain how to distinguish what Socrates really means from what he just says. The anti-hedonist is on equally good grounds supposing that Socrates suggests a hedonist theory of goodness because he is (notionally) addressing the many (cf. *Republic* 505b). The best interpretation will then have to be decided on other grounds, and the other grounds look promising for the anti-hedonist.⁷⁷

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the goodness of those actions. In considering all such claims, it is worth recalling that Socrates is not actually addressing the many (this dialogue does not take place in the Assembly!); rather, he is notionally addressing the many in front of the elite.

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