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VIRTUE AND HAPPINESS IN PLATO'S *EUTHYDEMUS*

A DISSERTATION APPROVED FOR THE  
DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY

BY

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Russell Edward Jones

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## Abstract

There is perhaps no philosophical thesis that has more often been thought to be most central to or most distinctive of the philosophy of Socrates in Plato's dialogues than the thesis that virtue is sufficient for happiness. In this dissertation, I interpret the *Euthydemus* with an eye toward what it reveals about Socrates' views about the relationship between virtue and happiness. In chapter 1, I survey the state of scholarship on virtue and happiness. In chapter 2, I narrow my focus to the *Euthydemus* and offer a framework in which to place the passages I analyze in the following chapters. In chapter 3, I offer a close reading of *Euthydemus* 277-282, arguing that it supports attributing to Socrates the view that virtue is necessary for happiness, but not the view that virtue is sufficient for happiness. In chapter 4, I offer a close reading of *Euthydemus* 288-292, arguing both that it confirms the findings of chapter 3 and that Socrates conceives of virtue as a craft. In chapter 5, I consider how my interpretation of the *Euthydemus* might be applied to related issues in the Platonic corpus. In particular, I argue that Socrates, by his own lights, was neither virtuous nor happy.

## Chapter 1: Socratic Virtue and Socratic Happiness: Foundations for Interpretation

There is perhaps no philosophical thesis that has more often been thought to be most central to or most distinctive of the philosophy of Socrates in Plato's dialogues than the thesis that virtue is sufficient for happiness. This "sufficiency thesis" amounts to the claim that no matter how things go in your life, if you are virtuous – that is, for Socrates, if you are wise – then you are happy, either because being virtuous somehow infallibly gives you the resources to become happy or because happiness just amounts to being virtuous. But this is a deeply counterintuitive thesis; Aristotle famously wrote that no one would maintain it unless forced to it by his other philosophical commitments.<sup>1</sup> Given the prima facie implausibility of the sufficiency thesis, before attributing it to Socrates we should like to have both strong evidence that he endorses it and a clear sense of his motivation for doing so. The desired evidence is often sought in Plato's *Euthydemus*, which has long been thought to be the place where the sufficiency thesis is expressed most clearly and argued for most fully. Contrary to this long tradition, which stretches from the Stoics to the present, I argue that the *Euthydemus* provides no evidence for, and even some evidence against, Socrates' commitment to the sufficiency thesis.

The core of my argument is a detailed interpretation of the two main "Socratic" passages in the *Euthydemus* (277-282 and 288-292). In the first of these passages, Socrates says things that seem suggestive of the sufficiency thesis, such as "wisdom [=

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<sup>1</sup> *Nicomachean Ethics* 1095b31-1096a2.

virtue] surely is good fortune” and “wisdom is the sole good.” Statements like these understandably call to mind the sufficiency thesis. Indeed, in one of the most influential books on Plato in the last half-century, Terrence Irwin makes this passage central to his overall interpretation of Plato’s ethics<sup>2</sup>. Irwin identifies three distinct arguments for the sufficiency thesis in this short passage. I argue that in each of the three arguments, there is decisive reason to reject any interpretation on which Socrates is arguing for the sufficiency thesis. Instead, Socrates argues that virtue is of the greatest importance because it is both necessary for and conducive of happiness, though not sufficient for happiness. Socrates explicitly identifies other goods besides virtue which contribute to happiness, though these goods are genuinely good for us only in conjunction with virtue. He never argues that virtue infallibly secures these other goods (indeed, in many cases it is difficult to see how it could), and he leaves open the possibility that one who is virtuous could be so lacking in these other goods that she fails to be happy. In this passage, Socrates appears to be more Aristotelian than Stoic, maintaining that virtue is necessary for happiness but allowing that happiness requires a minimal level of external goods.

The second of these Socratic passages is often thought to mark a shift in the Platonic corpus away from the view that virtue is a craft: Socrates assumes that virtue is a craft, but the discussion ends in failure, and there are clues that Plato thinks the problem is precisely the assumption that virtue is a craft. I argue against this line of interpretation. Rather, this passage, too, casts doubt on the sufficiency thesis, this time by highlighting the incompatibility between the thesis that virtue is a craft and the

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<sup>2</sup> Irwin 1995.

sufficiency thesis, and subtly showing that the latter should be rejected, not the former. The lesson of this second passage expands on the first: The craft of virtue uses, and so relies on, the products of the other crafts to produce happiness. Just as in the first passage we learn that the virtuous person needs some external goods in addition to virtue, so in the second passage we learn that the craft of virtue requires some products of other crafts (e.g. health, the product of medicine) in order to produce happiness. But since virtue requires some things it does not itself produce or guarantee, it is not by itself sufficient for happiness.

This, at the very least, forces those who would attribute the sufficiency thesis to Socrates to look elsewhere for their primary evidence. But I believe my interpretation of the *Euthydemus* has much further reaching implications, forcing us to reevaluate the nature of and relationships between the most important concepts in Socratic ethics: virtue, wisdom, and happiness. As a first step in the direction of making these implications clear, in the final chapter of the dissertation, I apply my interpretation of the *Euthydemus* to a puzzle about Socrates' happiness. There is apparent evidence for three claims: (1) Socrates lacks virtue (moral knowledge); (2) Virtue (moral knowledge) is necessary for happiness; (3) Socrates is happy. These claims form an inconsistent triad. I argue that there is strong evidence in the *Euthydemus* and other dialogues for (1) and (2), and that the apparent evidence for (3) fails to establish (3).

In this first chapter and the next, I lay the foundation for approaching these topics in the *Euthydemus*. The task of laying such a foundation is a complex one

which must be accomplished in several steps. First, I make clear several background assumptions which will be operative throughout the dissertation. Since some of these are contentious, it is essential to be clear about them from the beginning to avoid confusion later. I then put forward two problems concerning virtue and happiness. I spend some space explicating these problems, as they are meant to provide a framework within which we can attempt to locate Socrates' positions. Once this framework is in place, I survey various texts that are relevant to determining Socrates' location within the framework, as well as various arguments scholars have given – largely on the basis of these texts – for settling on one such location or another. As we will see, there is considerable scholarly controversy and evidence that apparently pushes us in incompatible directions. This controversy provides the motivation for chapter 2, in which I offer a justification for narrowing our focus from a general account of Socrates' philosophical commitments concerning virtue and happiness, to those commitments expressed in the *Euthydemus*. Such an approach will pay the double dividend described above: It will enhance our understanding of the *Euthydemus* considered on its own terms, as well as take us a good distance upon the road to formulating a satisfactory interpretation of Socrates' cross-dialogical commitments.

### *1.1. Some interpretive assumptions*

As scholars of Plato will be quick to recognize, any investigation into what Socrates thought will require making some substantive interpretive assumptions at the outset. Here are some of mine.

First, while I believe that Plato is our best source by far for understanding the historical Socrates,<sup>3</sup> my argument does not depend on this. I intend to offer an interpretation of *Socrates as Plato presents him*. Though I suspect that this interpretation provides a more-or-less accurate view of the historical Socrates, I shall not be claiming anything so ambitious.

Second, I do not intend to offer an interpretation of Socrates as Plato presents him *in every Platonic work in which he appears*. Rather, I shall follow the majority of current scholars in calling a certain group of Plato's dialogues 'Socratic'.<sup>4</sup> These are often thought both to have been written earlier in Plato's career than most of his other dialogues and to provide a better view of the historical Socrates than the others. Again, while I believe this to be roughly right, my main argument will not depend on accepting these claims about the Socratic dialogues. I will, however, limit my interpretation primarily to this group of dialogues. That is, I intend to offer an interpretation of Socrates as Plato presents him *in the Socratic dialogues*. When I

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<sup>3</sup> Other main sources include Aristotle, Xenophon, and Aristophanes.

<sup>4</sup> By 'Socratic' dialogues I mean: *Apology, Charmides, Crito, Euthyphro, Euthydemus, Gorgias, Hippias Major, Hippias Minor, Ion, Laches, Lysis, Protagoras, and Republic I*.



refer to Socrates, in the absence of contextual cues to the contrary, it is this character of Plato's Socratic dialogues to whom I intend to refer.<sup>5</sup>

Third, I assume that the character of Plato's Socratic dialogues is a systematic theorist. Socrates is concerned to develop complete and coherent theories about the things he cares about, including, but not limited to,<sup>6</sup> theories about virtue and happiness. Anyone who rejects this will likely be unsympathetic with my approach.

Finally, I am concerned with explicating Socrates' philosophical commitments, rather than my own (i.e., rather than commitments I take to be true or plausible). Sometimes these will overlap, and I firmly believe that investigating Socrates' commitments requires doing some serious philosophical work beyond just regurgitating a bunch of texts. But ultimately both the problems and solutions should be understood as falling within the scope of Socratic philosophy.

### *1.2. Two problems about virtue and happiness*

With these assumptions on the table, then, I put forward two problems<sup>7</sup> to serve as focal points of our investigation. To suggest that the subject of the present inquiry into Socratic virtue and Socratic happiness can be summed up in just two

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<sup>5</sup> For a justification of the Socratic dialogues as a genuine class of Plato's dialogues, the inclusion of the *Euthydemus* in this class, and some specific implications of this grouping for the interpretation of the *Euthydemus*, see chapter 2, section 2.3.

<sup>6</sup> Vlastos (1991, p. 14) famously claimed that Socrates' sole concern was with ethics. The implausibility of this claim has been demonstrated by a growing body of literature on Socrates' epistemological and metaphysical concerns. Leading contributions to this literature include Benson 2000 and Prior 2004. Even if one takes the view that Socrates' epistemological and metaphysical pursuits are ultimately done in the service of ethics, it is plain that Socrates' philosophical sophistication extends well beyond ethics.

<sup>7</sup> I mean 'problems' in the Aristotelian sense of questions or puzzles to be answered.

problems would be misleading at best, and I don't mean to suggest any such thing. However, putting forward at the outset two problems about virtue and happiness will serve to focus the investigation to follow. Both problems concern Socrates' position on the connection between virtue and happiness. But, as readers of Socrates will be well aware, achieving insight into the relationship between Socratic virtue and happiness will also require investigation of the nature of virtue, and of the nature of happiness.

*1.2.1. Problem 1: Necessity and sufficiency*

The first problem can be formulated broadly as follows:

*Problem 1: Is virtue necessary and/or sufficient for happiness?*

We can offer an initial restatement of Problem 1 into two parts: (i) Is virtue always part of the explanation of happiness, whenever happiness obtains? and (ii) Is the obtaining of virtue enough to guarantee happiness? Even this is somewhat ambiguous. Most discussion of Problem 1 centers on whether, for some person, that person's being virtuous is a requirement for his being happy; and whether that person's being virtuous guarantees his being happy. That is, a central aim of our investigation will be to discover the connection between virtue and happiness *in an individual*. But even though Problem 1 is most often read in a way that restricts the scope of the relationship between virtue and happiness to its relationship within an

individual, Problem 1 can also be read in a way that does not so restrict the scope of the relationship. In the course of a thorough investigation of the problem, then, we shall also find occasion to consider the following specification of Problem 1: For some specific person, (a) is it a requirement of his being happy that someone's (not necessarily his own) virtue be operative in producing his happiness, and (b) is someone's (not necessarily his own) virtue being operative in the right sort of way sufficient for guaranteeing his happiness. There is at least one piece of evidence that such a specification of Problem 1 is worth considering. Socrates often likens virtue to a craft, and one paradigmatic example of a craft is medicine. Clearly a physician can put his knowledge to work to produce health in a patient, even if the patient is not herself a physician. Perhaps, then, virtue is like medicine in this respect, so that a virtuous person can apply his virtue in such a way as to make others happy, even if those others are not themselves virtuous.

Put more formally, we seek to determine the truth value of the following claims:

- (i) For any person  $P$ , if  $P$  is happy then  $P$  is virtuous.
- (ii) For any person  $P$ , if  $P$  is virtuous then  $P$  is happy.
- (a) For any person  $P$ , if  $P$  is happy then someone's virtue was operative in producing  $P$ 's happiness.
- (b) For any person  $P$ , if someone's virtue is operative in the right way then  $P$  is happy.

Furthermore, if we determine that any of these claims is true, then we will want to know why it is true. We will want to know, for example, whether the necessity and/or sufficiency relation is due to the very definitions of virtue and happiness (i.e., an analytic relationship), or to certain logically contingent facts about the world (i.e., a nomological relationship).

### *1.2.2. A challenge to Problem 1*

Problem 1 has been much discussed by Plato scholars. Each of the following four positions on (i) and (ii) (above) is possible, and at least three of these have been attributed to Socrates:<sup>8</sup>

- (1) Virtue is necessary but not sufficient for happiness.
- (2) Virtue is sufficient but not necessary for happiness.
- (3) Virtue is neither necessary nor sufficient for happiness.
- (4) Virtue is both necessary and sufficient for happiness.

Recently, Naomi Reshotko has offered a challenge to each of these views by arguing that the text underdetermines Socrates' commitment to either an analytical or

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<sup>8</sup> See section 1.3, below. The one that has not, to my knowledge, been attributed to Socrates is (2). But it is easy to see how it might arise in the context of a dialogue like the *Republic*. Perhaps the philosopher-kings, who are fully virtuous, are thereby guaranteed happiness. But Plato also seems at times to allow that citizens of other classes, who presumably do not fully possess virtue, might nevertheless achieve some measure of happiness.

a nomological connection as strong as necessity or sufficiency.<sup>9</sup> The text, she argues, is consistent with such a connection, but it is also consistent with the weaker notions of ‘tending to necessity’ and ‘tending to sufficiency’. If Reshotko is correct about this, then there would seem to be possible interpretations involving ‘tending to necessity’ and ‘tending to sufficiency’ parallel to the interpretations involving full necessity and sufficiency above. The notions of tending to necessity and tending to sufficiency can be defined as follows (more on this below):

(TN)  $P$  tends to necessity for  $Q$  just in case  $\Pr(P \mid Q) > \Pr(P \mid \sim Q)$ , i.e. just in case  $Q$  is positively statistically relevant to  $P$ .<sup>10</sup>

(TS)  $P$  tends to sufficiency for  $Q$  just in case  $\Pr(Q \mid P) > \Pr(Q \mid \sim P)$ , i.e. just in case  $P$  is positively statistically relevant to  $Q$ .

On these definitions, if  $P$  is fully necessary for  $Q$  (and  $P$  is not a tautology), then  $P$  tends to necessity for  $Q$ . And if  $P$  is fully sufficient for  $Q$  (and  $Q$  is not a tautology), then  $P$  tends to sufficiency for  $Q$ . To distinguish probabilistic from non-probabilistic connections, define ‘merely tending to necessity’ as tending to necessity without being fully necessary. And define ‘merely tending to sufficiency’ as tending to sufficiency

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<sup>9</sup> Reshotko 2006 pp. 135-142. It is not clear to me whether her claim is meant to be true of all the Socratic dialogues, or is rather to be restricted to the *Euthydemus*. Either way, it is worth considering, as the *Euthydemus* will be the main focus of our investigation.

<sup>10</sup> A note on notation: ‘ $\Pr(P)$ ’ is to be read as ‘the probability of  $P$ ’, and ‘ $\Pr(P \mid Q)$ ’ is to be read as ‘the probability of  $P$  given  $Q$ ’. See Skyrms 2000, pp. 134-135, for a discussion of the notions of tending to necessity and tending to sufficiency.

without being fully sufficient. Now, using all these notions, we can fill out our list as follows, replacing (1) – (3) with more detailed theses:

- (4) Virtue is fully necessary and fully sufficient for happiness.
- (5) Virtue is fully necessary but merely tends to sufficiency for happiness.
- (6) Virtue is fully necessary but does not tend to sufficiency for happiness.
- (7) Virtue merely tends to necessity but is fully sufficient for happiness.
- (8) Virtue merely tends to necessity and merely tends to sufficiency for happiness.
- (9) Virtue merely tends to necessity but does not tend to sufficiency for happiness.
- (10) Virtue does not tend to necessity but is fully sufficient for happiness.
- (11) Virtue does not tend to necessity but merely tends to sufficiency for happiness.
- (12) Virtue neither tends to necessity nor tends to sufficiency for happiness.

That leaves a total of nine possible interpretations. While Reshotko does not canvas all these possibilities, there is reason to conclude from her discussion that these exhaust the possibilities, and that we should begin an investigation with these in view. But Reshotko turns to other grounds, particularly the probability calculus, to argue that charity requires that we narrow the choices. Specifically, there is reason to reject (5), (7), (9), and (11).

Reshotko is half right on this score. The probability calculus licenses narrowing our list by excluding (9) and (11) (and, additionally, it licenses excluding (6) and (10)). But it does not license excluding (5) and (7). This is a crucial point for my interpretation, since I will argue, against Reshotko's position that the text underdetermines the attribution of any of these positions to Socrates, that the most plausible reading of the *Euthydemus* supports (5). So it would be a shame if (5) were incoherent given some basic axioms of the probability calculus. Fortunately, it is not, and though the case can be made formally, the basic point is intuitive. Oxygen is fully necessary for fire, and the presence of oxygen raises the probability of the presence of fire, but does not fully suffice for it. This is a fully coherent instance of the following schema: A is fully necessary but merely tends to sufficiency for B. Since (5) is also an instance of this schema, there is no reason to rule it out on formal grounds alone.

### *1.2.3. Problem 2: The nature of the relationship*

The second problem is related to the first:

*Problem 2:* What is the explanatory connection between virtue and happiness?

It is difficult to put the problem both clearly and succinctly, so let me elaborate. Suppose that virtue and happiness bear some explanatory relationship to one another. The relationship is usually thought of in terms of virtue factoring into the

explanation of happiness, and this will be the direction of explanation with which we will primarily be concerned. Such a relationship might take many different forms. There might be a purely instrumental relationship between them. When a teenager mows lawns all summer in order to buy a car, there is an explanatory relationship between his mowing lawns and his buying a car. Mowing lawns is an activity done for an entirely different, but explanatorily related, end: buying a car. Mowing lawns is not done for its own sake; it is done because of its instrumental value for obtaining a car.

Alternatively, virtue might be constitutive of happiness, and constitutive in one of two ways: partly or wholly. To return to the previous example, consider the explanatory relationship between mowing lawns and making money. It seems that mowing lawns is constitutive of making money. That is, at least part of the activity of making money is constituted by mowing lawns. Mowing lawns is only partly constitutive of making money since there are other ways of making money. Besides this, we might think that making money is comprised of both the work and the agreement of payment for the work, so that the agreement and the work would each be partially constitutive of making money. But a clearer example of partial constitution might be the eggs in a cake. The eggs are explanatorily related to the cake, but not in a purely instrumental way (as is the pan, for example). The eggs are part of the cake. But they only partially constitute the cake; other constituents include flour, sugar, and oil. Contrast this with H<sub>2</sub>O, which wholly constitutes water. Indeed, it is quite natural to say that water is identical to H<sub>2</sub>O.



So, if virtue and happiness are explanatorily related, they could be so related in at least three different ways: virtue could be instrumental for, partially constitutive of, or wholly constitutive of (i.e., identical to) happiness. Which of these one settles on as the correct answer to Problem 2 will partially depend on – or, more accurately, be partially interdependent with – the answer one gives to Problem 1. But there is little strict logical connection between the answers to these two problems. If one gives as an answer to Problem 2 that virtue is identical to happiness, then one is committed to giving as an answer to Problem 1 that virtue is both necessary and sufficient for happiness. But with this single exception, though some pairs of answers – one to Problem 1 and one to Problem 2 – fit more naturally together, each pair is logically consistent.

### *1.3. Texts on and interpretations of Socratic virtue and happiness*

It is undeniable that Socrates places extremely high value on virtue. Consider the following passage from Plato's *Apology*. Here Socrates is in the middle of his defense, and he tells the jurors how he would respond if they offered to acquit him on the condition that he cease to practice philosophy.

[T1]

I will certainly not cease practicing philosophy (οὐ μὴ παύσωμαι φιλοσοφῶν) and exhorting (παρακελεύομενός) you and pointing out (ἐνδεικνύμενος) to whomever among you I ever happen upon that – speaking in my usual way – “You, good man, are an Athenian, of the city that is greatest and most esteemed for wisdom and power (εἰς σοφίαν καὶ ἰσχύν). Aren't you then ashamed of your taking care to possess as much wealth as possible, as well as esteem and honor, while you take no care or thought for wisdom (φρονήσεως)

and truth and the best condition of your soul (τῆς ψυχῆς ὅπως ὡς βελτίστη ἔσται)?" And if one of you disputes this and claims to care, I will not let him go or leave him immediately, but I will question, examine, and test him (ἐρήσομαι αὐτὸν καὶ ἐξετάσω καὶ ἐλέγξω); and if it doesn't seem to me that he has acquired virtue (κεκτηῆσθαι ἀρετῆν), as he claims, I will reproach him because he treats the most valuable things as the least, and the inferior as the greater. I will do these things with whomever I happen upon, both young and old, and stranger and citizen, but more so with citizens because you are nearer relations to me. For the god commands these things – know that well – and I think there is no greater good for you (οὐδέν πω ὑμῖν μείζον ἀγαθὸν γενέσθαι) in the city than my service to the god (τὴν ἐμὴν τῷ θεῷ ὑπηρεσίαν). For I go around doing nothing other than persuading you, both young and old, to care for neither bodies nor wealth before or as zealously as for the most excellent condition of your soul (μήτε σωμαμάτων ἐπιμελείσθαι μήτε χρημάτων πρότερον μηδὲ οὕτω σφόδρα ὡς τῆς ψυχῆς ὅπως ὡς ἀρίστη ἔσται), saying, "Virtue does not come from wealth, but wealth and all the other goods for men – both private and public – come from virtue" (Οὐκ ἐκ χρημάτων ἀρετὴ γίγνεται, ἀλλ' ἐξ ἀρετῆς χρήματα καὶ τὰ ἄλλα ἀγαθὰ τοῖς ἀνθρώποις ἅπαντα καὶ ἰδίᾳ καὶ δημοσίᾳ)<sup>11</sup>. *Ap.* 29d-30b<sup>12</sup>

In this passage, Socrates makes it clear that we are to attach greater importance to virtue (the best/most excellent condition of the soul) than to wealth, esteem and honor, and the excellent condition of the body. That is to say, virtue deserves the highest place among the things we care about. Socrates is so committed to the overwhelming importance of virtue that he spends all his time going around exhorting and persuading people to care for virtue above such things as wealth. He goes so far as to claim that virtue is not only more important than wealth and other goods, but is actually the source of them, while they are not in turn a source of virtue.

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<sup>11</sup> It is also possible to render this with a somewhat different sense, as in the Grube/Cooper translation: "Wealth does not bring about virtue, but virtue makes wealth and everything else good for men, both individually and collectively."

<sup>12</sup> Translations are my own unless otherwise noted. I follow the texts of the *Oxford Classical Texts* volumes unless otherwise noted.

Dozens of passages could be marshaled from all over the Platonic corpus which reveal Socrates making similar claims on behalf of virtue, but this one suffices for now to show his commitment. Moreover, virtually all scholars agree that virtue is importantly related to happiness in Socratic philosophy. But different scholars come to very different conclusions about just what that relationship is. That is, they answer Problems 1 and 2 in a number of different ways. And they appeal to a variety of texts to support those conclusions. Here I survey some of the prominent texts and arguments. As the interpretation of the *Euthydemus* in chapters two through four is intended to shed fresh and crucially important light on these very texts and the various interpretations of them, I save the task of adjudicating between these interpretations primarily for the last chapter of the dissertation.

### *1.3.1. The necessity of virtue for happiness*

A number of texts across several dialogues suggest that Socrates thought that virtue is necessary for happiness. For the moment, an examination of two of these will suffice, though we will encounter others, some of which we will examine in detail. Consider the following passage from the *Crito*. Crito has come to persuade Socrates to escape prison, and Socrates is arguing against his assertion that they should pay attention to the opinion of the majority when deciding on the right course of action. Rather, argues Socrates, they should pay attention to the opinion of the wise.

[T2]

Socrates: So with other matters, not to enumerate them all, and certainly with actions just and unjust, shameful and beautiful, good and bad, about which we are now deliberating, should we follow the opinion of the many and fear it, or that of the one, if there is one who has knowledge of these things and before whom we feel fear and shame more than before all the others? If we do not follow his directions, we shall harm and corrupt that part of ourselves that is improved by just actions and destroyed by unjust actions. Or is there nothing in this?

Crito: I think there certainly is, Socrates.

Socrates: Come now, if we ruin that which is improved by health and corrupted by disease by not following the opinions of those who know, is life worth living for us when that is ruined? And that is the body, is it not?

Crito: Yes.

Socrates: And is life worth living with a body that is corrupted and in a bad condition?

Crito: In no way.

Socrates: And is life worth living for us with that part of us corrupted that unjust action harms and just action benefits? Or do we think that part of us, whatever it is, that is concerned with justice and injustice, is inferior to the body?

Crito: Not at all.

Socrates: It is more valuable?

Crito: Much more.

Socrates: We should not then think so much of what the majority will say about us, but what he will say who understands justice and injustice, the one, that is, and the truth itself. *Crito* 47c-48a (Grube trans.)

This passage suggests the following **Argument for the Necessity of Justice (ANJ)**:

(ANJ-1) If we fail to follow the directions of the one who knows about justice and injustice, then we will harm and corrupt that part of ourselves that is improved by just actions and destroyed by unjust actions.

(ANJ-2) If we fail to act in accordance with justice, we corrupt our soul.

(restatement of ANJ-1)

(ANJ-3) Life is not worth living for us with a corrupt soul.

(ANJ-4) So, if we fail to act in accordance with justice, then life is not worth living for us. (from ANJ-2, ANJ-3)

(ANJ-5) So, if life is worth living for us, then we act in accordance with justice. (from ANJ-4)

(ANJ-1) is supported on the basis of an analogy with health and the body. (Some of this support comes in the lines immediately preceding the text quoted in [T2]).

Following the direction of the expert on bodily health facilitates the good condition of the body, while failing to follow the expert's direction leads to the deterioration of bodily health. Just so, following the direction of the expert on justice facilitates the good condition of that part of humans which is affected by just and unjust actions, while failing to follow the expert's direction leads to the corruption of that part. While it is not explicitly stated in [T2], it is plain that the part in question is the soul. And, clearly, to follow the expert's direction is to act in accordance with justice, and to fail to follow the expert's direction is to fail to act in accordance with justice. So, (ANJ-1) can be restated more succinctly and forcefully as (ANJ-2). (ANJ-3) is also established on analogy with the body. Life with a corrupt body is not worth living. But the soul is even more important than the body. So, life with a corrupt soul must not be worth living, either. 'Worth living' is plausibly taken to be equivalent to 'happy', but we need not admit this equivalence to see the strong connection with happiness here. For it is surely true that a life that is not worth living is not a happy one, and so (ANJ-3) would entail that life is not happy with a corrupt soul. From (ANJ-2) and (ANJ-3) it

follows straightforwardly that life is not worth living for us if we fail to act in accordance with justice. (ANJ-5) is simply the contrapositive of this, but makes the necessity in question clearer: Acting in accordance with justice is a necessary condition for having a life worth living, and so is a necessary condition for happiness. Since to act in accordance with justice is to act in accordance with (at least a part of) virtue, acting in accordance with virtue is a necessary condition for happiness.

Whatever we may think about the soundness of ANJ, it certainly appears that Socrates is giving something very like this argument in [T2], and this is strong evidence that he is committed to the necessity of justice for happiness. This is not quite an explicit claim about virtue in general, but it is at least suggestive of the general claim. Other texts support the general claim about virtue. Consider the following passage, which occurs near the end of the *Charmides*.

[T3]

Socrates: All this time you've been leading me right round in a circle and concealing from me that it was not living knowledgably that was making us fare well and be happy, even if we possessed all the knowledges put together, but that we have to have this one knowledge of good and evil. Because, Critias, if you consent to take away this knowledge from the other knowledges, will medicine any the less produce health, or cobbling produce shoes, or the art of weaving produce clothes, or will the pilot's art any the less prevent us from dying at sea or the general's art in war?

Critias: They will do it just the same.

Socrates: But my dear Critias, our chance of getting any of these things well and beneficially done will have vanished if this is lacking. *Charm.* 174b-d (Sprague trans., with changes)

Here Socrates tells us that we “have to have” the knowledge of good and evil in order to “fare well and be happy”. Without it, our chance of doing things “well and

beneficially . . . will have vanished”. That the knowledge of good and evil just is virtue is clear from what Socrates says in the *Laches*:

[T4]

Socrates: And now it appears, according to your view, that courage is the knowledge not just of the fearful and the hopeful, but in your own opinion, it would be the knowledge of practically all goods and evils put together. Do you agree to this new change, Nicias, or what do you say?

Nicias: That seems right to me Socrates.

Socrates: Then does a man with this kind of knowledge seem to depart from virtue in any respect if he really knows, in the case of all goods whatsoever, what they are and will be and have been, and similarly in the case of evils? And do you regard that man as lacking in temperance or justice and holiness to whom alone belongs the ability to deal circumspectly with both gods and men with respect to both the fearful and its opposite, and to provide himself with good things through his knowledge of how to associate with them correctly?

Nicias: I think you have a point, Socrates.

Socrates: Then the thing you are now talking about, Nicias, would not be a part of virtue but rather virtue entire. *Lach.* 199c-e (Sprague trans.)

Earlier, Socrates and Nicias had agreed that courage was a proper part of virtue.

Socrates here shows Nicias that his definition of courage, which amounts to defining courage as knowledge of all goods and evils, violates their earlier agreement. For knowledge of all goods and evils is virtue as a whole, but a correct definition of courage should pick out only a part of virtue.

This makes it clear that in [T3] Socrates is making a claim about the whole of virtue. Indeed, he is explicitly making the claim that virtue is necessary for happiness. Though his commitment to this necessity claim is our primary concern right now, and though his argument in [T3] for that commitment is somewhat obscure, it is worth trying to extract that argument. This passage (along with the surrounding parts of the

*Charmides*), suggests something along the lines of the following **Argument for Necessity (AN)**:

(AN-1) With or without the *episteme* (knowledge) of virtue, the other *epistemai* (knowledges) will do their appropriate work just the same. (E.g., medicine will produce health, cobbling will produce shoes, pilots will make safe at sea, etc.)

(AN-2) Without virtue, none of the work of the other *epistemai* will be beneficial to us.

(AN-3) Without benefit, we are not happy.

(AN-4) So, without virtue, none of the work of the other *epistemai* will result in our happiness. (from AN-2 and AN-3)

(AN-5) Virtue is the *episteme* whose function is to benefit us.

(AN-6) So, without virtue, we are not benefitted. (from AN-5)

(AN-7) So, without virtue, we are not happy. (from AN-3 and AN-6)

(AN-8) So, if we are happy, then we are virtuous. (from AN-7)

Technically, the discussion of the other *epistemai* (AN-1, AN-2, and (AN-4) does no essential work in **AN**. But it does function to contrast these with virtue as the sole *episteme* whose function is to benefit, for all the other *epistemai* can perform their work without benefitting us. Again, regardless of our assessment of **AN** either with respect to our attribution of it to Socrates or with respect to its soundness, in [T3]



Socrates seems to be committed to (AN-8). [T2] and [T3], then, provide strong evidence that Socrates is committed to the necessity of virtue for happiness. In what follows, we will encounter more texts that bear on the necessity thesis.

### 1.3.2. *Brickhouse and Smith against necessity*

Most scholars accept that Socrates held to the necessity of virtue for happiness, on the above or similar grounds. However, Thomas Brickhouse and Nicholas Smith argue against this position.<sup>13</sup> It is a clear Socratic commitment that moral knowledge is necessary for virtue. But Socrates repeatedly disclaims possessing moral knowledge. It follows that Socrates himself is not virtuous. But in the *Apology* Socrates claims to be good, and suggests that his goodness is sufficient for happiness. So, Socrates is happy. But if all this is correct, it follows that virtue is not necessary for happiness.

The argument has *prima facie* plausibility. Certainly Socrates thinks that moral knowledge is necessary for virtue. Indeed, we can attribute a stronger position than that to Socrates: Virtue just is moral knowledge (of a certain sort). Evidence for that comes from all over the dialogues, where virtue itself, as well as individual virtues, is identified as knowledge of good and evil.<sup>14</sup> Most scholars take Socrates to hold to some version of the unity of virtue. Some<sup>15</sup> take him to hold a very strong version of this thesis, according to which there is only one virtue, though it is called by

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<sup>13</sup> Brickhouse and Smith 1994, 123-134.

<sup>14</sup> See e.g., *Laches* 199, *Charmides* 174, *Euthydemus* 288-292. For commentary on the *Euthydemus* passage, see chapter 4 below.

<sup>15</sup> E.g., Terry Penner 1973.

many names: i.e., virtue = wisdom = justice = courage = temperance = piety. On this view, to possess knowledge of good and evil is to possess the whole of virtue, and to possess virtue is to possess knowledge of good and evil. Others take Socrates to hold a weaker view on the unity of the virtues, such that the virtues are not identical, but one either possess all of the virtues or none of them. Evidence that Socrates is committed to at least the weaker view comes from the *Laches* and the *Gorgias*. At *Laches* 199d-e (see [T4], above), Socrates asserts that the person who has the knowledge of good and evil would have temperance, justice, piety, and courage. At *Gorgias* 507c, Socrates says that the temperate person will also be just and brave and pious, and so completely good. The implicit ground for this claim is that the virtues come as a package. Wisdom, which is left off both the *Laches* list and the *Gorgias* list, is plausibly identified with the whole of virtue. Two pieces of evidence for this identification are (i) the ready-made conceptual connection between wisdom and knowledge (whereas the connection must be argued for in the case of courage, etc.) and (ii) the easy slippage between ‘virtue’ and ‘knowledge’ in the *Euthydemus*<sup>16</sup>. Since Socrates thinks that virtue just is moral knowledge, and since he repeatedly disclaims possessing moral knowledge (e.g., *Ap.* 21b1-d7, *Euthyphro* 5a3-c7, *La.* 186b8-c5, *Gorg.* 509c4-7), it follows that he does not take himself to be virtuous.

The crux of Brickhouse and Smith’s case is to argue that the *Apology* shows that one can be good and happy without being virtuous. Despite claiming at *Ap.* 21b1-d7 that he does not possess moral knowledge, Socrates seems to take himself to be

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<sup>16</sup> See chapters 3 and 4, below.

both good and impervious to attempts to harm him. A few pages later, he tells the jury:

[T5]

“Be sure that if you kill the sort of man I say I am, you will not harm me more than yourselves. Neither Meletus nor Anytus can harm me in any way; he could not harm me, for I do not think it is permitted that a better man be harmed by a worse; certainly he might kill me, or perhaps banish or disfranchise me, which he and maybe others think to be great harm, but I do not think so. I think he is doing himself much greater harm doing what he is doing now, attempting to have a man executed unjustly.” (*Ap.* 30c-d; Grube trans.)

And at the end of his trial, after he has been sentenced to death, Socrates exhorts the jury:

[T6]

You too must be of good hope as regards death, gentlemen of the jury, and keep this one truth in mind, that a good man cannot be harmed either in life or in death, and that his affairs are not neglected by the gods. What has happened to me now has not happened of itself, but it is clear to me that it was better for me to die now and to escape from trouble. That is why my divine sign did not oppose me at any point.” (*Ap.* 41b-d; Grube trans.)

Since Socrates’ goodness seems to guarantee that he cannot be harmed, and since one who is never harmed (and generally attains what is ‘better’) is plausibly thought to be happy, Brickhouse and Smith conclude that Socrates is happy. But since Socrates’ goodness does not consist in virtue, virtue must not be necessary for happiness.

We have surveyed several texts ([T2] – [T4]) which strongly indicate that Socrates held that virtue is necessary for happiness, as well as some ([T5] and [T6])

which seem to indicate that that Socrates held that virtue is not necessary for happiness. Since one of our assumptions at the outset of this study was that the Socrates of Plato's Socratic dialogues offers a systematic and coherent philosophical system, we should attempt to reinterpret at least some of the apparently conflicting textual evidence in a way that resolves the tension. But which thesis is the Socratic one – that virtue is necessary for happiness, or that it is not – and which set of texts is the most plausible candidate for reinterpretation? I will argue in chapter two that the *Euthydemus* provides a key to answering these questions.

### *1.3.3. The sufficiency of virtue for happiness*

In the preceding sections, we have been considering various texts primarily as they bear on one part of Problem 1. That is, we have been considering the question whether virtue is necessary for happiness. But this is not to answer the question *why* virtue is (or is not) necessary for happiness. That is, it is not to provide an answer to Problem 2, which concerns the explanatory connection between virtue and happiness. If virtue is necessary for happiness, this is consistent with at least the following answers to the explanatory question.

- (i) Virtue is identical to (i.e., the sole constituent of) happiness.
- (ii) Virtue is an essential, but not the only, constituent of happiness.
- (iii) Virtue is not itself a constituent of happiness, but it provides the constituents of happiness.

These three answers to Problem 2 are also related to the sufficiency question. Generally, evidence for the sufficiency thesis is given in terms of evidence for one of these three theses. So, if we find evidence that virtue is identical to happiness, we have thereby found evidence that it is sufficient for happiness. And if we find evidence that virtue is an essential constituent of happiness, and that its contribution to happiness is sufficiently strong that it guarantees a share of happiness, then we have thereby found evidence that virtue is sufficient for happiness. And if we find evidence that virtue is not itself a constituent of happiness, but that it infallibly provides the constituents of happiness, then we have thereby found evidence that virtue is sufficient for happiness. Arguments for each of these have been given, and I will address each in turn.

#### *1.3.3.1. The identity of virtue and happiness*

I begin with the strongest of the three theses: that virtue is identical to, or the sole constituent of, happiness. This was the position of many philosophers of the ancient world, and among these there were many who took themselves to be following Socrates on this matter. Antisthenes, an associate of Socrates, affirmed the identity of virtue and happiness and passed this view on to his philosophical descendants, the Cynics. More famously, the Stoics affirmed both the truth of the identity thesis and its status as Socratic. Anthony Long reminds us: “The Stoics’ hardest and most notorious thesis was that genuine and complete happiness requires nothing except moral virtue. And on this, above all, they looked to Socrates who had famously said at his trial: ‘No

harm can come to the good man in life or in death, and his circumstances are not ignored by the gods” (*Ap.* 41d; [T6] above).<sup>17</sup> Further evidence for the thesis comes from the *Crito*:

[T7]

Socrates: And now see whether we still hold to this, or not, that it is not living, but living well (τὸ εὖ ζῆν) which we ought to consider most important.

Crito: We do hold to it.

Socrates: And that living well and living justly are the same thing (Τὸ δὲ εὖ καὶ καλῶς καὶ δικαίως ὅτι ταῦτόν ἐστιν), do we hold to that, or not?

Crito: We do.

Socrates: Then we agree that the question is whether it is just for me to try to escape from here without the permission of the Athenians, or not just. And if it appears to be just, let us try it, and if not, let us give it up. (*Crito* 48b; Fowler trans. with changes)

In this passage, we apparently find an identification of the happy life with the just life. This is strongly suggestive of the identity thesis.

Mark McPherran notes that the *Apology* and *Crito*, important Socratic texts for the Stoics because of the exemplary way Socrates behaved in the face of death, were perhaps not even the most important Socratic sources for the Stoic identification of virtue and happiness: “[T]he *Euthydemus* began to be seen as the *locus classicus* for the sufficiency of virtue thesis beginning no later than with the Stoics, for in its key, initial protreptic section (277d-282e) they found a Socratic endorsement for their own central tenet that virtue is the only good-in-itself.”<sup>18</sup> In particular, Socrates’ claims that “wisdom is surely good fortune” (279d; Sprague trans.) and that “of the other

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<sup>17</sup> Long 2004.

<sup>18</sup> McPherran 2005, p. 49.

things [health, wealth, etc.], no one of them is either good or bad, but of these two, wisdom is good and ignorance bad” (281e; Sprague trans.) have been taken to support the Stoic position. As the *Euthydemus* is the central text of the present study, much of chapter three will bear on the question of just how closely Socratic and Stoic ethics align.

It is not only the ancient philosophers who attribute the identity thesis to Socrates. Though it is not the majority view among current scholars, Scott Senn has recently made the case for such an attribution in a particularly clear way.<sup>19</sup> Senn’s strategy is to argue that the *Apology* shows that Socrates considers virtue to be an intrinsic good, and that the *Crito* not only corroborates this, but shows that he considers virtue to be the only intrinsic good. On the plausible assumption that one is happy if and only if he possesses enough intrinsic goods, it follows that one is happy if and only if he possesses virtue. And on the plausible assumption that to be happy just is to possess intrinsic goods (of the right sort and to the right degree), it follows that to be happy just is to possess virtue. That is, the identity thesis follows.

The argument from the *Apology* rests on Socrates’ attempts to console those who care about him in the face of apparent harms. In [T5] (*Ap.* 30c-d), Socrates assures his audience that a better man cannot be harmed by a worse. According to Senn, the statement carries the fairly plain implication that he is good and his accusers are not, and so they cannot harm him whatever they may do. And in [T6] (*Ap.* 41d), after he has been sentenced, Socrates reassures his supporters that “a good man cannot be harmed either in life or in death.” Again, according to Senn, here we find the fairly

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<sup>19</sup> Senn 2005.

plain indication that Socrates takes himself to be a good man. Senn takes this to imply that Socrates thinks himself virtuous, and claims that we should conclude from these passages that Socrates thinks that “some have a happiness that cannot be taken away even if all they possess is virtue.”<sup>20</sup> Senn rejects attempts to draw contrary conclusions from these passages on the grounds that the competing interpretations are either non-literal or fail to qualify as a genuine consolation. So, Brickhouse and Smith interpret these passages as meaning that no harm can come to a good man’s soul, though there are nevertheless harms that can come to a good man.<sup>21</sup> And Vlastos interprets these passages as meaning that no great harm can come to a virtuous person, though he may suffer minor evils.<sup>22</sup> But both of these interpretations must read Socrates’ claims in a non-literal way. At face value, Socrates’ claims are categorical: *No* harm can come to *any* good person *at all*, whether while he is alive or when he is dead.<sup>23</sup> Penner, on the other hand, interprets these passages as meaning that Socrates’ accusers cannot artfully harm him because they lack knowledge, though they might act in ways that harm Socrates accidentally.<sup>24</sup> While this again seems to fail to read Socrates’ claims literally, Senn’s main complaint against this interpretation is that Socrates’ claims hardly count as offering *consolation* if they allow that Socrates’ accusers may well harm him, though if they do it will be due to chance rather than the skillful fulfillment of their intentions. Senn concludes that his own interpretation, that the *Apology* shows that Socrates considers virtue to be an intrinsic good sufficient for

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid., p. 5.

<sup>21</sup> Brickhouse and Smith 1994, pp. 135-6.

<sup>22</sup> Vlastos 1991, pp. 218-221.

<sup>23</sup> More on these competing interpretations below and in chapter 5.

<sup>24</sup> Penner 1997, p. 154.



happiness, gains the upper hand because it can read Socrates' words both literally and as a genuine consolation.

### 1.3.3.2 Vlastos on the sovereignty of virtue

Vlastos attributes to Socrates a view which he labels "the sovereignty of virtue".<sup>25</sup> His view gets its primary impetus from three passages.

[T8]

Socrates: Man, you don't speak well, if you believe that a man worth anything at all would give countervailing weight to danger of life or death, or give consideration to anything but this when he acts: whether his action is just or unjust, the action of a good or of an evil man. (*Ap.* 28b5-9; Vlastos trans.)

[T9]

Socrates: This is the truth of the matter, men of Athens: Wherever a man posts himself on his own conviction that this is best or on orders from his commander, there, I do believe, he should remain, giving no countervailing weight to death or anything else when the alternative is to act basely. (*Ap.* 28d6-10; Vlastos trans.)

[T10]

Socrates: But for us, since the argument thus compels us the only thing we should consider is . . . whether we would be acting justly . . . or, in truth, unjustly . . . And if it should become evident that this action is unjust, then the fact that by staying here I would die or suffer anything else whatever should be given no countervailing weight when the alternative is to act unjustly. (*Crito* 48c6-d5; Vlastos trans.)

The principle Vlastos identifies in these texts is this: "Whenever we must choose between exclusive and exhaustive alternatives which we have come to perceive as, respectively, just and unjust or, more generally, as virtuous and vicious, this very

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<sup>25</sup> See esp. Vlastos 1991, pp. 200-232.

perception of them should decide our choice.”<sup>26</sup> Gaining any set of non-moral goods – life, lack of suffering, etc. – cannot offset the loss of a moral good, virtue. As Vlastos puts it: “Virtue being the sovereign good in our domain of value, its claim upon us is always final.”<sup>27</sup>

So, we now have the idea that the value of virtue is always greater than the total combination of value of anything else, but we have not yet answered the question whether virtue alone is sufficient to make us happy. Indeed, we have not yet arrived at a view that is obviously different than the identity thesis, provided that we do not read too much into the idea that there are non-moral goods. (Strictly speaking, an identity theorist would not likely countenance talk of non-moral goods.) But Vlastos gives us several reasons to think that virtue is the dominating, but not the sole, constituent of happiness. There are three main sorts of reasons. First, Vlastos goes through the passages that seem to support the identity of virtue and happiness, and argues that they can all be read in a way that commits Socrates only to the mutual entailment of virtue and happiness. (It is here that Senn will object to a non-literal understanding of what Socrates says.) Second, Vlastos argues that there are philosophical reasons for rejecting the identity thesis. On the one hand, it is implausible to think that non-moral considerations have no bearing on one’s happiness. But the identity thesis implies the improbable view that, as Vlastos memorably puts it, it should make no difference to me whether the sheets I sleep on are freshly cleaned or vomit-soaked, nor should it make a difference to me whether I spend my life as an inmate of Gulag or as an inmate

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid., p. 210.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., p. 211.

of a Cambridge college. On the other hand, eudaimonism is supposed to explain all our actions in terms of their perceived contribution to happiness. But many of the choices we make in life do not involve a choice between virtue and vice. If virtue and vice are the only things that affect happiness, then we are left with no way of explaining, and no rational way of making, choices between things that do not affect virtue. Finally, there is plenty of evidence that Socrates accepts that there are non-instrumental goods other than virtue. At *Euthydemus* 279a-b, for example, Socrates identifies the following as “good for us”: wealth, health, good looks, noble birth, power, honor, self-control, justice, bravery, and wisdom. And at *Gorgias* 467e-468b he seems to imply that these are things worth choosing for their own sake, and that things that are neither good nor bad are chosen for the sake of these. But if health, wealth, and the rest are goods, it must be the case that they make some contribution to happiness. And so, virtue is not the only constituent of happiness.

So, on Vlastos’ view virtue is both necessary and sufficient for happiness. But since there is evidence that virtue is not identical to happiness, it must be the case that though virtue alone suffices for happiness, the presence or absence of other goods have at least some small effect on the degree of one’s happiness. Virtue is the dominating, but not the only, constituent of happiness.

### *1.3.3.3. Irwin’s argument for necessity, sufficiency, and instrumentality*

Irwin, like Senn and Vlastos, thinks that virtue is necessary and sufficient for happiness, but the explanatory connection he finds between virtue and happiness is

very different.<sup>28</sup> Whereas Senn and Vlastos both interpret Socrates as holding that virtue is a constituent of happiness (Senn, the only constituent; Vlastos, the dominant constituent), and so that virtue is an intrinsic good, Irwin interprets Socrates as holding that virtue is a purely instrumental good. On Irwin's view, then, virtue is an infallible and indispensable instrumental means to happiness.

Irwin's case that Socrates holds the sufficiency claim trades on considerations similar to those in Senn and Vlastos. But Irwin gives special attention to *Euthydemus* 280-281 in establishing the necessity and sufficiency theses. He takes Socrates to argue as follows:<sup>29</sup>

1. It is possible to use assets well or badly. (280b7-c3, 280d7-282a1)
2. Correct use of them is necessary and sufficient for happiness. (280d7-281e1)
3. Wisdom is necessary and sufficient for correct use. (281a1-b2)
4. Therefore, wisdom is necessary and sufficient for happiness. (281b2-4).

But, Irwin notes, the second step is open to objection, for we might lack adequate assets or be unlucky in our use of them. So, Socrates follows up with the following argument to secure the claim that wisdom is necessary and sufficient for happiness.

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<sup>28</sup> See Irwin 1995, esp. pp. 52-77.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 56-57.

1. Each recognized good is a greater evil than its contrary, if it is used without wisdom, and each is a greater good than its contrary, if it is used by wisdom. (281d6-8)
2. Therefore, each recognized good other than wisdom is in itself neither good nor evil. (281e3-4)
3. Therefore, each of them is neither good nor evil. (281e304)
4. Therefore, wisdom is the only good and folly the only evil. (281e4-5)

Irwin considers that Socrates may have a moderate view in mind: When he says that the recognized goods (health, wealth, etc.) are not goods in themselves, he means that they are not goods unless they are properly used by wisdom. When used by wisdom, though, the recognized goods really are goods. But the moderate view would not license the inference to (3) and then to (4). For that inference, we must suppose that Socrates has an extreme view in mind: When he says that the recognized goods are not goods in themselves, he means simply that they are not goods. If Socrates has the extreme view in mind, he is licensed to conclude that wisdom is the only good and folly the only evil. And if happiness is a matter of having good things, then it follows that wisdom (= virtue) is both necessary and sufficient for happiness.<sup>30</sup>

Irwin gives several arguments that virtue is purely instrumental for happiness.<sup>31</sup> Some of these involve comparing features of Socratic philosophy with certain Aristotelian motivations and distinctions. But probably the most central of

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<sup>30</sup> For more on this passage, see chapter 3.

<sup>31</sup> See Irwin 1995, pp. 65-74 for the full details.

these arguments, and certainly the one drawn most directly from the Socrates dialogues, is as follows. Irwin interprets *Lysis* 220a-b as committing Socrates to the principle that if we choose x for the sake of y, then we cannot also choose x for the sake of itself. And he interprets the *Euthydemus* as committing Socrates to the claim that we desire happiness for its own sake and everything else (including virtue) for the sake of happiness. But together, these entail that virtue is purely instrumental for happiness and not valuable for its own sake.

It might seem odd to think that virtue is sufficient for happiness, yet merely instrumental for it. What conception of happiness would make sense of such a view? Irwin attributes to Socrates an adaptive conception of happiness, not unlike Epicurus' conception of happiness. On the adaptive conception, happiness consists in having all one's desires satisfied. Virtue can guarantee happiness on such a conception because at least part of virtue's function is to regulate desire according to circumstance. So, the virtuous person limits her desires to whatever can be achieved in the circumstances. Since the virtuous person never retains desires that cannot be fulfilled, the virtuous person never has unfulfilled desires and so is never lacking in happiness.

#### *1.3.3.4 Brickhouse and Smith against sufficiency*

Senn, Vlastos, and Irwin have very different views about the relationship between virtue and happiness. Nevertheless, each thinks that, for Socrates, virtue is

sufficient for happiness. As in the case of the necessity thesis, however, we again encounter a pair of naysayers on the sufficiency thesis: Brickhouse and Smith.<sup>32</sup>

Brickhouse and Smith call attention to *Crito* 48b ([T7] above), where Socrates says that “living well and living justly are the same thing (Τὸ δὲ εὖ καὶ καλῶς καὶ δικάίως ὁτι ταῦτόν ἐστιν).” This, they think, is evidence enough that Socrates takes living justly to be a necessary and sufficient condition for living well, i.e., for happiness. But they make a distinction between living justly and being just, or more broadly, between living virtuously and being virtuous. Living virtuously is necessary and sufficient for happiness; being virtuous is neither necessary nor sufficient for happiness.

The evidence for the former claim – that living virtuously is necessary and sufficient for happiness – is much the same as the evidence given by Senn, Vlastos, and Irwin. But Brickhouse and Smith put particular emphasis on a passage from the *Gorgias* which suggests that someone is counted happy on the basis of his actions (the way he *lives*), rather than merely on the basis of the condition of his soul (the way he *is*).

[T11]

Socrates: The temperate one is not one to pursue or flee from what is not fitting, but the affairs, and men, and pleasures, and pains he ought to flee and pursue, and to endure remaining where he ought. And so it is most necessary, Callicles, that the temperate person, just as we have reported, being just and brave and pious, is completely good, *and the good person acts well and nobly in what he does, and the one who does well is blessed and happy. But the base*

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<sup>32</sup> See esp. Brickhouse and Smith 1994, pp. 112-119.

*person and the one who acts evilly is wretched. (Gorgias 507b5-c5; Brickhouse and Smith trans., emphasis theirs)*

Brickhouse and Smith take this passage to show that “what qualifies the good person as being blessed and happy is the fact that he or she succeeds in his or her actions.”<sup>33</sup> Why doesn’t this make virtue sufficient for happiness? Because even the virtuous person may find himself in situations in which it is impossible to act well. In support of this idea Brickhouse and Smith point to passages that suggest that even the virtuous person’s life might not be worth living in certain cases. At *Crito* 47e3-5, Socrates says that “life is not worth living with a diseased and corrupted body” ([T2] above). There is no qualification to suggest that this is true only of the non-virtuous, and there is no reason to think that a virtuous person would not be susceptible to disease and physical corruption. Apparently, then, even the virtuous may in certain circumstances find that their lives are not worth living, and lives that are not worth living cannot be counted happy. And Socrates makes a similar point at *Gorgias* 512a2-b2: “So [the pilot] concludes that if a man afflicted with serious incurable physical diseases did not drown, this man is miserable for not dying and has gotten no benefit from him” (Zeyl trans.). Brickhouse and Smith argue that Socrates has in mind cases where bodily disease prevents even minimally good action. And so, they conclude, it is not virtue, but virtuous action which guarantees happiness.

As with the necessity question, then, we have encountered a variety of texts and lines of arguments that support a variety of positions on the sufficiency question, as well as a variety of positions on the question of the exact nature of the relationship

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid., p. 114.



between virtue and happiness. Again, then, we are faced with the task of attempting to reinterpret some of the apparently conflicting textual evidence in a way that resolves the tension. It is time to turn to the *Euthydemus*, which, as I argue in the following chapter, provides a key to resolving these disputes.

## Chapter 2: An Overview of the *Euthydemus*

The major focus of this study is on *Euthydemus* 277d-282d and 288a-293a. These two passages together make up only about a third of the dialogue. Most of the attention given the *Euthydemus* in recent decades has focused on these two passages, and especially on the first.<sup>1</sup> Rarely are the two passages read closely together, though some have rightly read the two passages as closely connected to one another.<sup>2</sup> Even more rarely – usually only in book-length monographs – are the two passages read with much of an eye to the other two-thirds of the *Euthydemus*. Since the passages are embedded in a larger context, this chapter is devoted to giving an overview of the argument of the *Euthydemus*, and its place among the Platonic dialogues. But first I offer an apology for placing so much emphasis in the first place on the *Euthydemus* as a source for Socrates' views on virtue and happiness.

### 2.1. *The centrality of the Euthydemus to the debate*

At the beginning of chapter 1, I claimed that this dissertation offers two sorts of benefits: fresh insight into the *Euthydemus*, and fresh insight into the Socratic conception of virtue and happiness in general. Whether these benefits are delivered is a judgment best saved until the investigation is complete. And whether fresh insight

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<sup>1</sup> Though this is a reversal of the trends in the literature before about 1980. Prior to this, most of the attention given the *Euthydemus* was focused on the eristic passages. See, e.g., Sprague 1962 and Keulen 1971.

<sup>2</sup> Parry 2003 is a noteworthy example of one who reads the passages as tightly connected.

into the *Euthydemus* is achieved will largely be based on an assessment of the specific details of the interpretation I offer. But it may fairly be asked at this stage why it is worth starting an investigation of the Socratic conception of virtue and happiness with a close look at the *Euthydemus*. Why start there rather than with a close examination of the *Apology*, the *Crito*, or other dialogues in which virtue and happiness are discussed?

Many scholars working on Socrates' position on the relationship between virtue and happiness have recognized the *Euthydemus* as a central text, and even those who do not give it pride of place on this issue among the early dialogues are likely to reference it with some frequency. So, as we have seen, Vlastos marshals passages from the *Euthydemus* in support of his Sovereignty of Virtue thesis. Likewise, Brickhouse and Smith cite the *Euthydemus* to develop and defend their account of Socrates' scheme of values, as well as his commitment to the necessity and sufficiency of virtuous activity – but not virtue – for happiness.<sup>3</sup> Irwin not only makes use of the dialogue in arguing that virtue is purely an instrumental good,<sup>4</sup> but spends an entire chapter of *Plato's Ethics* on its exposition, claiming that it 'offers the clearest account of the role of happiness' in Socratic ethics.<sup>5</sup> Reshotko, too, devotes an entire chapter of her recent book on Socratic ethics to the *Euthydemus*,<sup>6</sup> as does Russell.<sup>7</sup> And McPherran goes further, noting that it is not only our contemporaries who spotlight the centrality of the *Euthydemus* for determining the relationship between virtue and

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<sup>3</sup> Brickhouse and Smith 1994, chapter 4.

<sup>4</sup> Irwin 1986.

<sup>5</sup> Irwin 1995, p. 52.

<sup>6</sup> Reshotko 2006.

<sup>7</sup> Russell 2005, chapter 1.

happiness in Socratic ethics, but also that “the *Euthydemus* began to be seen as the *locus classicus* for the sufficiency of virtue thesis beginning no later than with the Stoics, for in its key, initial protreptic section (277d-282e) they found a Socratic endorsement for their own central tenet that virtue is the only good-in-itself.”<sup>8</sup> And this is not even to mention either the commentaries<sup>9</sup> and book-length monographs<sup>10</sup> entirely devoted to the *Euthydemus*, which each have something to say about its commitments on virtue and happiness, or the articles devoted to explicating the relevant passages in the *Euthydemus*.<sup>11</sup>

An appeal to a number of scholars who think that the *Euthydemus* is a central text for Socrates on virtue and happiness is fine, as far as it goes. And the *Euthydemus* is interesting in its own right, even aside from considering its implications for an interpretation of Socratic philosophy as a whole. But we should like some interpretive principle beyond this if we are going to focus our attention primarily on the *Euthydemus*, even while affirming that our ultimate interest is not just in the philosophy of the *Euthydemus*, but on Socratic philosophy generally. What specific reasons do we have to make the *Euthydemus* our starting point, aside from some assertions of its importance by a number of scholars?

Notice that in the various arguments canvassed in §1.3, much of the textual ground for the various positions was based on a line or two – or perhaps a paragraph – from this dialogue, and a line or two from that dialogue. That is, much of the textual

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<sup>8</sup> McPherran 2005, p. 49.

<sup>9</sup> Hawtrey 1981 and Keulen 1971

<sup>10</sup> E.g. Chance 1992 and McCabe forthcoming.

<sup>11</sup> E.g. Dimas 2002, Parry 2003, McPherran 2005

evidence comes from very short bits of text that reference virtue and happiness but are located in larger passages that are not themselves explicitly concerned with the relationship between virtue and happiness. Moreover, as evidenced by the variety of conclusions reached on the basis of such texts, these texts appear to provide evidence for different and conflicting interpretations of Socrates' conception of virtue and happiness.

Given these features of many of the texts that inform interpretations of Socratic virtue and happiness – that is, given that the texts are brief and provide apparently conflicting evidence – we would do well to rethink our strategy. The *Euthydemus* offers an extended and explicit discussion of the relationship between virtue and happiness that runs to ten or more pages. I propose, then, an interpretive strategy according to which we examine the extended and explicit discussion first, and that we do so on its own terms (that is, without letting outside passages have a heavy hand in our interpretation) and in its entirety. Then, with that interpretation in hand, we can turn to the shorter and sometimes less explicit passages. When we face tough interpretive decisions regarding these, we should allow our interpretation to be guided by the interpretation we have in hand of the extended and explicit passage. At least, such a strategy will allow us to read the *Euthydemus* profitably on its own terms. And perhaps, as I think, such a strategy will reward us with a clearer way through the interpretive puzzles that arise across dialogues. Whether we can profit in this latter way will become clear only by employing this interpretive strategy and evaluating its results. To that task I now turn.

## 2.2. *The argument of the Euthydemus*

The *Euthydemus* is divided into five main episodes: the first, third, and fifth are eristic episodes governed by the brother-sophists Euthydemus and Dionysidorus, while the second and fourth are protreptic episodes governed by Socrates. These are framed by a prologue and epilogue which reveal that Socrates is reporting his conversation with the sophists to Crito the next day. This outer frame breaks into the second protreptic episode, as well.

The first eristic episode (275c-277c) gets started when Socrates asks the two sophists to demonstrate their skill by persuading young Clinias to pursue wisdom. The sophists demonstrate their abilities, to be sure, but do not offer the sort of persuasive argument Socrates wants. Instead, they offer two pairs of arguments, yielding the following conclusions, respectively: It is the ignorant, but not the wise, who learn; it is the wise, but not the ignorant, who learn; one learns what one knows, but not what one doesn't know; one learns what one doesn't know, but not what one knows. These arguments are carefully crafted to refute Clinias no matter what answer he gives when asked whether it is the wise or the ignorant who learn, and whether they learn what they know or what they do not know. Throughout, the arguments trade on the ambiguity of *μανθάνειν*, which can mean either 'to come to know' or 'to understand'.

Socrates accuses the sophists of not taking him seriously and engaging in mere play with words. He opens the second episode, the first protreptic, by offering to provide an example of the sort of demonstration he wants from the brothers. Socrates

begins his demonstration of persuasion to wisdom by asking Clinias whether everyone desires to do well (εὖ πράττειν) and, receiving an affirmative answer, whether the way to do well is to have many good things. Clinias agrees, and they produce a list of such goods, which I will refer to as ‘conventional goods’: wealth, health, good looks, a supply of things needed by the body, self-control, justice, courage, wisdom, and (the greatest of all) good luck (278e-279c). But then Socrates reconsiders and argues that the last item, good luck, is redundant because wisdom is already on the list.

Socrates goes on to reconsider their earlier statements. Earlier they had said that the way to do well is to have many good things such as those enumerated, but this is now questioned. First, it is agreed that having good things would make us happy only if they were beneficial to us. Good things are not beneficial to us unless we not only have them, but use them. Furthermore, having and using good things is not sufficient for benefit; the goods must be used rightly. Indeed, if these goods are used wrongly, more harm will result than if they were never used at all (280e). Since only knowledge produces benefit, only use of the goods which is guided by knowledge will result in their really being good. If guided by ignorance, they will be bad. So, Clinias should seek wisdom, the only thing good in itself, and eschew ignorance, the only thing bad in itself. Only if he possesses wisdom will the things normally called good, the conventional goods, really be good for him. Since rightly using conventional goods is necessary for happiness, and since wisdom is necessary for rightly using conventional goods, it is clear that wisdom is necessary for happiness.

Having shown the sort of thing he wants to hear from the sophists, he hands the conversation back to them, inviting them either to give a better version of the argument he has just given, or to pick up where he has left off and show what kind of knowledge must be acquired in order to attain wisdom. They are happy to resume control of the discussion, but fail to comply with his request. Instead, in this second eristic episode (282d-288a) they produce a number of additional arguments of the same sort they produced in the first episode. It is sufficient for our purposes at this stage to recognize that the arguments of the second eristic episode center on the impossibility of false speech or contradiction. Some conclusions in the episode are: Nobody speaks what is not; it is impossible to contradict; there are no ignorant men. Socrates highlights the fact that if these conclusions are true, then it is impossible for the sophists to refute him, for he cannot speak falsely and they cannot contradict. He then takes control of the discussion again for a second protreptic episode.

Socrates takes up the discussion at the point at which the first protreptic ended. That is, it has already been decided that it is necessary to love wisdom, and it remains to discover what sort of knowledge one must acquire to gain this wisdom. It is agreed that the love of wisdom is the acquisition of knowledge, and that the sort of knowledge that must be acquired is a beneficial sort. Knowing how to acquire gold would not be beneficial, for it does not entail knowing how to use gold. And it is the same with other sorts of knowledge: finance, medicine, and even the (hypothetical) knowledge of how to make men immortal. Unless we know how to use the products of these correctly, they will not be beneficial. So what we need, Socrates declares



with Clinias' consent, is a kind of knowledge that combines making and knowing how to use the thing it makes (288d-289b).

So we need not become lyre makers or flute makers, since the crafts of making these instruments are different from the crafts of playing them. The former crafts produce the instruments, the latter use them. It is the same with the craft of writing speeches: Some know how to write speeches but not how to use them, and some know how to use them but not how to write them. So concerning speeches, the crafts of producing and using seem to be distinct (289c-290a). Then Socrates hits upon what he says is likely the correct answer: the craft of generalship. But Clinias is skeptical. Generalship, he says, is a kind of man-hunting, and no craft of hunting goes beyond pursuing and capturing. Fishermen hand their game over to cooks, quail hunters hand their game over to quail keepers, and even geometers, astronomers, and calculators, who hunt down diagrams, hand over their game to be used by dialecticians. Likewise generals hand over their spoils to the statesmen, who use the spoils. So for hunting crafts generally, and generalship specifically, the craft of producing is distinct from the craft of using (290a-d).

The dialogue is now carried on with Crito, though it is strongly implied that this exchange between Socrates and Crito closely tracks the exchange between Socrates and Clinias the previous day. Socrates reports that each of the crafts they examined failed to be the one they sought. Finally, they came to the kingly craft. Before going through the discussion, he warns that there he and Clinias fell into a sort of labyrinth, so that just when they thought they were approaching the end of their

search, they found that they had really made no progress at all (291b). The following points are agreed upon: The statesman's craft and the kingly craft are the same; it is to this craft that generalship and other crafts hand over their products; and it is this craft that rules over the state, making all things useful (291c-d).

Trouble arises, though, when they try to identify the product of the kingly craft. Socrates reminds Crito that if the kingly craft is the one they are seeking, it must be something useful and provide us with something good. But earlier it was agreed that nothing is good except some sort of knowledge. So, while one might be tempted to name such things as making the citizens rich and free and unified as the products of this craft, this cannot be correct. For all these things are neither good nor bad, but if the kingly craft is the one that constitutes wisdom, then its product must produce something good, namely, some knowledge. But it will not produce just any sort of knowledge, such as shoemaking or carpentry. Rather, if it produces something that is good, it must produce none other than itself. But now it becomes next to impossible to say just what this knowledge is and how we are to use it. (Recall that one requirement of the craft they are seeking is that it use what it makes.) Socrates suggests that it is that by which we make others good. But then the question recurs: How will these others be good and useful? The only available answer seems to be that they will make still others good, and these still others, and so on. But then any specification of what this good is and how it is used just keeps receding before us, like a lark in a field. And so, professing to be at a loss as to what sort of knowledge will make us happy,

Socrates implores the sophists to make plain the answer (292a-293a). So begins the third and final eristic episode, in which the brothers do nothing of the sort.

Rather than complying with Socrates' request, Euthydemus and Dionysodorus launch into a series of ever more ridiculous arguments. Ctessipus, who is enamored with Clinias and has already been offended by some of the things the sophistic brothers have said about Clinias, quickly picks up on the brothers method of arguing and turns it back on them. Here we see most vividly that the sophistic concern is for verbal victory and not for concluding what is true. A sampling of two arguments in this section will suffice to give the flavor. At 298d7-e5, Dionysodorus argues, addressing Ctessipus, that since this dog is both yours and a father, the dog is your father. And at 301c6-d8, Dionysodorus again argues that since chopping up and skinning and cooking is appropriate for the cook, it is appropriate to chop up and skin and cook the cook. The latter argument plays on the fact that nouns in the accusative case can serve as either the subject or object of an infinitive. The third eristic episode is full of such arguments.

Socrates concludes by telling Crito how the crowd went wild for Euthydemus and Dionysodorus, and he encourages Crito to attend the brothers' classes with him. Crito reveals that the previous day, shortly after the conversation Socrates has just reported, someone who had heard it approached him and disparaged philosophy and philosophers. How is he to persuade his sons to pursue education and philosophy, if the educators and philosophers are like Euthydemus and Dionysodorus? Socrates answers him, and closes the dialogue, with these words:

Pay no attention to the practitioners of philosophy, whether good or bad. Rather give serious consideration to the thing itself: if it seems to you negligible, then turn everyone from it, not just your sons. But if it seems to you to be what I think it is, then take heart, pursue it, practice it, both you and yours, as the proverb says. (307b6-c4; Sprague trans.)

### 2.3. *The date of the Euthydemus*

The absolute dating of the *Euthydemus* has little bearing for its interpretation. As its authenticity has not been seriously questioned, it must of course be dated sometime within Plato's adult life. Ryle has dated it to the late 370s;<sup>12</sup> Hawtrey tentatively prefers sometime from 387-380.<sup>13</sup> But this is a dating game that is hard to play, and I neither want nor need to make a commitment to any particular date.

The dramatic date of the dialogue is also of little importance for its interpretation. Hawtrey plausibly suggests a dramatic date between 420 and 404, since there is evidence that Protagoras is dead (286c2), which sets the early limit, and evidence that Alcibiades is alive (275b1), which sets the late limit. Some evidence for an even earlier date comes from Xenophon's *Symposium*, the dramatic date of which is 422. There, Critobolus is old enough to attend the symposium and to be quite taken with Clinias. In the *Euthydemus*, Critobolus is still young enough for Crito to be concerned about how to arrange for his education.<sup>14</sup> I see no clear way in which a

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<sup>12</sup> See Ryle 1966, pp. 217ff (as reported by Hawtrey 1981, p. 4).

<sup>13</sup> Hawtrey 1981, p. 10.

<sup>14</sup> On the absolute dating of the *Euthydemus*, see Hawtrey 1981, p. 10. Ausland 2000 provides a summary of nineteenth century views on both absolute and relative dating.

more precise conjecture of the dramatic date will significantly affect the interpretation of the dialogue.

More important is the relative date of the *Euthydemus* – relative, that is, to Plato’s other dialogues. It has been common to place the *Euthydemus* in a group of so-called ‘Socratic dialogues’, a list which often additionally includes the following: *Apology, Charmides, Crito, Euthyphro, Gorgias, Hippias Major, Hippias Minor, Ion, Laches, Lysis, Protagoras, and Republic I*. These dialogues are often thought to have been written earlier than the ‘middle’ dialogues like the *Republic, Phaedo, and Symposium*, which in turn were written earlier than ‘late’ dialogues such as the *Laws*. It has also been common, following Vlastos, to date the *Euthydemus, Lysis*, and *Gorgias* as the last in the early Socratic group, written near the time of the transitional *Meno*.<sup>15</sup>

There are three primary ways of establishing the relative dating of the dialogues. References or clear allusions to historical events or, more importantly, to other dialogues,<sup>16</sup> are rare, and there is none that bears directly on the *Euthydemus*.<sup>17</sup> Stylometric analysis is widely acknowledged to mark off a relatively small set of late dialogues – *Sophist, Statesman, Philebus, Timaeus, Critias, Laws* – of which the *Euthydemus* is not a member. Many take stylometric evidence to mark off a second

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<sup>15</sup> Vlastos 1991, pp. 46-7.

<sup>16</sup> The apparent allusion at *Phaedo* 72e-73b to the *Meno* is one such case.

<sup>17</sup> There is one possible exception to this claim, though it is not a particularly clear one. At *Lysis* 211b-c Socrates says that Ctesippus teaches eristic. Yet in the *Euthydemus*, Ctesippus appears to learn eristic. This is perhaps some evidence that the dramatic date and date of composition of the *Euthydemus* is earlier than the *Lysis*.

‘middle’ group: *Republic*, *Parmenides*, *Phaedrus*, *Theaetetus*.<sup>18</sup> That would leave the earlier list of Socratic dialogues, plus *Meno*, *Symposium*, *Phaedo*, and *Cratylus*, as a third group, often thought to be earliest. But stylometric analysis makes little clear headway in ordering the dialogues within each group relative to one another. Establishing the relative dating of the *Euthydemus*, then, depends mostly on the third way: analysing the philosophical content and fitting it into a plausible developmental story. Where the *Euthydemus* is thought to fit into such a story may make a difference to its interpretation. For example, it may determine whether Plato already has, and perhaps is even pointing to, an answer to the puzzles that arise in the second protreptic episode.

Evidence that the *Euthydemus* belongs to the Socratic dialogues can be approached in several ways, but one way is through Aristotle. Aristotle seems to distinguish between views of Socrates the historical figure and Socrates the character of Plato’s dialogues; references to the character (e.g., *Generation and Corruption* 335b10, *Politics* 1342a32-33), but not the historical figure (e.g., *Topics* 183b7-8, *Metaphysics* 987b1-2), are typically preceded by a definite article. On the basis of Aristotle’s remarks about the historical Socrates, Terrence Irwin picks out six characteristics of Socratic dialogues:<sup>19</sup>

- (1) Their concerns are entirely or predominantly ethical.
- (2) Socrates disavows knowledge.

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<sup>18</sup> See esp. Brandwood 1990, both his analysis of the history of scholarship on this matter and his own conclusions at pp. 250-251. See also Kahn 1996, pp. 42-48.

<sup>19</sup> Irwin 1995, p. 10 (see pp. 8-11 for the fuller discussion).

- (3) He looks for definitions and does not find them; the conclusion is often aporetic.
- (4) They are characteristically exploratory rather than dogmatic or expository.
- (5) They express Socratic [as opposed to Platonic] views about virtue and knowledge.
- (6) They do not contain the doctrines that Aristotle connects with the belief in non-sensible Forms.

Irwin picks out the following dialogues as having these six characteristics: *Laches*, *Charmides*, *Euthyphro*, *Lysis*, *Hippias Minor*, *Euthydemus*, and *Ion*. The *Protagoras* and *Gorgias* also have these characteristics, except that they are more ‘elaborately constructive’ than the others. And the *Apology* and *Crito* have all the characteristics except for (3). Add to Irwin’s list *Republic* 1, which is only part of a dialogue, and *Hippias Major*, which has more of these characteristics than most of the dialogues not on Irwin’s list, and we have the standard set of dialogues listed above as Socratic.

The *Euthydemus* plainly shares many of these six characteristics, though it is premature at this stage to count the fifth characteristic among them, since the views about virtue and knowledge expressed in the *Euthydemus* are the subject of the present study. Furthermore, in the *Eudemian Ethics* Aristotle, speaking of the Socrates the historical figure rather than Socrates the character of the dialogues (Σωκράτης rather than ὁ Σωκράτης), apparently alludes to a view Socrates expresses at *Euthydemus* 279c-280a:

But when the same event follows from indefinite and undetermined antecedents, it will be good or evil, but there will not be the science that comes by experience of it, since otherwise some would have learned to be lucky (ἐπει ἐμάνθανον ἂν τινες εὐτυχεῖς), or even – as Socrates said – all the sciences would have been kinds of good luck (ἢ καὶ πᾶσαι ἂν αἱ ἐπιστήμαι, ὥσπερ ἔφη Σωκράτης, εὐτυχίαι ἦσαν). (*Eudemian Ethics* 1247b11-15; Solomon trans.)

This is some evidence that Aristotle took at least some of the views Socrates expresses in the *Euthydemus* to express those of the historical Socrates, and this adds to the case for classifying the *Euthydemus* as a Socratic dialogue.

There are two primary pieces of evidence that the *Euthydemus* is among the latest of the Socratic dialogues. First, at 300e-301c there is an argument that seems to discuss the nature of the participation relation between forms and ordinary objects. But such a discussion would be more in keeping with dialogues in which Plato develops a robust theory of forms. Those dialogues are generally thought to include none from the ‘Socratic’ and some from the ‘middle’ and ‘late’ lists, above, and so are thought to postdate the Socratic dialogues. This suggests that the *Euthydemus* was written near the time when we see the introduction of Plato’s mature theory of forms.

Second, there is a passage in the second protreptic that seems strongly to prefigure *Republic 7*, and so it is thought that it must not have been written too long before the *Republic*. At *Republic 7* we find an educational system where calculation, geometry, solid geometry, astronomy, and harmonics are propaedeutic for dialectic. And at *Euthydemus* 290b-c Clinias says:



And again, geometers and astronomers and calculators (who are hunters too, in a way, for none of these make their diagrams; they simply discover those which already exist), since they themselves have no idea of how to use their prey but only how to hunt it, hand over the task of using their discoveries to the dialecticians – at least, those of them do so who are not completely senseless. (290b-c; Sprague trans.)

That this apparent connection to the *Republic* may affect our interpretation of the *Euthydemus* is evident from what Hawtrey writes about the passage:

“If . . . 290b-c contains a demonstrable reference to the higher education program sketched in *Republic* 7, including a subject “dialectic” that studies first principles, then it may be considered likely that Plato was already at the time of the composition of the *Euthydemus* considerably advanced towards the theory of the Form of the Good, and this supposition has interesting implications for our assessment of his purpose in writing the earlier dialogue, with its apparent failure to come to a satisfactory conclusion.”<sup>20</sup>

Because the *Gorgias* is often taken to be one of the latest of the Socratic dialogues as well, and the *Meno* is sometimes taken to be transitional between the Socratic and middle dialogues, one disputed question involves the relative dating of the *Euthydemus*, *Gorgias*, and *Meno*. As we will see, there are many characteristics that the *Euthydemus* shares with one or both of these dialogues. However, it does not seem to me that there is much to be gained interpretively by deciding this issue, and the arguments for various orderings of the three are largely tenuous, speculative, and based on the smallest of details. Hawtrey gives a fine overview and discussion, suggesting that the *Gorgias* probably predates both the *Euthydemus* and the *Meno*, and that the evidence for and against the priority of the *Euthydemus* over the *Meno* is

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<sup>20</sup> Hawtrey 1981, p. 120.

evenly balanced.<sup>21</sup> But even with this relative caution, Hawtrey is a good example of the tendency to let small details and large speculations carry great weight. In a footnote, he goes so far as to speculate as follows: “On a more frivolous note I mention the question of the quails. They occur at *Lysis* 211e and 212d, and also at *Euthyd.* 290d and *Hip. Ma.* 295d; nowhere else, as far as I know, in Plato. Did Plato go through a period when he was particularly fond of quails?”<sup>22</sup> Fortunately, we need wade no further into this debate. Suffice it to say that the *Euthydemus* is often placed among the later of the Socratic dialogues.

Since Vlastos argued for a detailed developmental account of Plato’s dialogues which gave a fairly definite relative order for the dialogues, there has been a strong reaction against developmental accounts of the dialogues, along with the detailed dating schemes that tend to accompany them. So, for instance, John Cooper, Debra Nails, and Charles Kahn have each expressed serious doubts about the project of ordering the dialogues chronologically, at least beyond identifying a group of six ‘late’ dialogues. Challenges to the chronological project might be thought to cast doubt on the more general project of identifying the philosophy of the so-called Socratic dialogues. But, as Brickhouse and Smith have argued, they do not undermine the general project.<sup>23</sup> Despite their scepticism concerning chronology, each identifies a group of dialogues that pretty closely matches the list of Socratic dialogues above. So Cooper identifies a group that we may call “the Socratic dialogues – provided that the term is understood to make no chronological claims, but rather simply to indicate

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<sup>21</sup> Irwin (1995, p. 362 n.1) gives priority to the *Euthydemus*.

<sup>22</sup> See Hawtrey 1981, pp. 4-10.

<sup>23</sup> Brickhouse and Smith forthcoming, chapter 1.

certain broad thematic affinities.” The Socratic dialogues form a group because “the topics and manner of the conversation conform to what we have reason to think, both from Plato’s own representations in the *Apology* and from other contemporary literary evidence, principally that of the writer Xenophon, was characteristic of the historical Socrates’ own philosophical conversations.”<sup>24</sup> Cooper goes on to say that “in these dialogues Plato intends not to depart, as he does elsewhere, from Socratic methods of reasoning or from the topic to which Socrates devoted his attention.”<sup>25</sup>

Nails, likewise, is sceptical of robust chronological claims, and argues that we can group the dialogues in two groups: one in which Socrates has conversations in the *agora*, and one in which the style of conversation is more like we might expect to find in Plato’s Academy. But the former group of dialogues is nearly coextensive with our above list of Socratic dialogues.<sup>26</sup>

Kahn, too, proposes a method of grouping the dialogues, though he is sceptical of most chronological claims. He identifies a group of dialogues that are proleptic, or introductory, for the classical Platonism of the *Republic*. This group is pretty much the same as the Socratic dialogues above (but including the *Meno*), except for the notable addition of the *Symposium*, *Phaedo*, and *Cratylus*. This addition is not surprising giving that stylometric analysis has been thought to group these three with our Socratic dialogues. Even here, though, Kahn marks off on the basis of their content the *Symposium*, *Phaedo*, and *Cratylus* as the last of this large group of

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<sup>24</sup> Cooper 1997, p. xv.

<sup>25</sup> Cooper 1997, p. xvi.

<sup>26</sup> Nails 1995, p. 203. The differences are the inclusion of *Alcibiades I*, *Meno*, *Phaedo*, and *Theaetetus* as ‘Socratic’, and the identification of the *Apology* as ‘mixed’ (that is, mixed between ‘Socratic’ and ‘didactic’).

dialogues to be read before the *Republic*. So, even on Kahn's view, our standard list of Socratic dialogues forms a coherent grouping, and the *Symposium*, *Phaedo*, and *Cratylus* form the final bridge to the *Republic*.<sup>27</sup>

The lesson in all this is that we need not subscribe to a particular detailed chronological account to think that there is a group of Socratic dialogues the philosophy of which is worth investigating. Nor need we be sceptical of chronology to do so.<sup>28</sup> Whatever we think about chronology and developmentalism, we are likely to find the dialogues naturally falling into various groupings, and one of those groupings is likely to largely coincide with our initial list of Socratic dialogues. Whether on Irwin's view, or on Cooper's, Nails', or Kahn's, the *Euthydemus* fits into that group. If we are interested in the philosophy of the Socratic dialogues, the *Euthydemus* is one of the places we should look, and, as I argued in §2.1, if we are interested in the relationship between virtue and happiness in the Socratic dialogues, the *Euthydemus* is one of the first places we should look. So, to the text.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> For an overview on Kahn's position on this issue, see his 1996, pp. 42-48.

<sup>28</sup> So, even though I cannot affirm it on exactly the grounds that he does, I am in at least partial agreement with Ausland's (2000, p. 20) stated thesis, which is "not that the *Euthydemus* is of any particular date or period in Plato's life, but that making this question prerequisite to understanding Plato's dialogues is mistaken and perhaps itself becoming rather dated."

<sup>29</sup> For a thorough and, in my judgment, successful defense of the project of studying the philosophy of the Socratic dialogues, see Brickhouse and Smith forthcoming, chapter 1. They discuss Cooper, Nails, Kahn, and a variety of other arguments and positions, and both the discussion above and my own views on the matter have been significantly influenced by them.

## Chapter 3: Wisdom and Happiness in *Euthydemus* 277-282

### 3.1. Introduction

Plato's *Euthydemus* garners far less attention than it deserves among non-specialists, but for scholars of Platonic ethics it has long been a focal point due to its extended discussion of the connection between wisdom and happiness. For example, Terence Irwin, in one of the most influential and provocative works on Platonic ethics in recent decades,<sup>1</sup> relies primarily on *Euthydemus* 277-282 to establish the following claims, all of which are both central to his interpretation and points of controversy among scholars: Every action performed by some human is aimed at promoting her own happiness (often called *psychological eudaimonism*); Wisdom is purely instrumental for, rather than partially or wholly constitutive of, happiness; Wisdom is necessary for happiness; Wisdom is sufficient for happiness.

I want to focus on the last of these claims, that wisdom is sufficient for happiness (henceforth *the sufficiency thesis*), for three reasons. The first is that Irwin is merely one of a number of prominent scholars who have turned to the *Euthydemus* to establish the sufficiency thesis.<sup>2</sup> Indeed, Mark McPherran reminds us just how far back the impressive pedigree of the view stretches:

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<sup>1</sup> Irwin 1995, esp. chapters 4-5.

<sup>2</sup> See, e.g., Annas 1999, ch. 2; Panos Dimas 2002; Hawtrey 1981; Kraut 1984, pp. 211-212; McPherran 2005; Russell 2005, ch. 1; Vlastos 1991, pp. 227-231.

[T]he *Euthydemus* began to be seen as the *locus classicus* for the sufficiency of virtue thesis beginning no later than with the Stoics, for in its key, initial protreptic section (277d-282e) they found a Socratic endorsement for their own central tenet that virtue is the only good-in-itself. Stoics were attracted, in particular, to the protreptic's condensed and, consequently, intriguingly problematic argument for the thesis that the possession of wisdom guarantees *eudaimonia* for its possessor no matter how much apparent bad luck that person might encounter (280a6-8).<sup>3</sup>

The second reason to focus on this claim is that there is perhaps no philosophical thesis that has more often been thought to be most central to or most distinctive of the philosophy of Socrates in Plato's dialogues<sup>4</sup> than the thesis that wisdom is sufficient for happiness. The sufficiency thesis amounts to the claim that no matter how things go in your life, if you are wise then you are happy, either because being wise somehow infallibly gives you the resources to become happy or because happiness just amounts to being wise. Hence its centrality for Socrates: The sufficiency thesis explains why Socrates is so interested in wisdom (which is the same as being interested in virtue, according to Socrates), and why he is always trying to acquire it and always trying to persuade others to acquire it, too. But the sufficiency thesis is a deeply counterintuitive one. Aristotle famously wrote that no one would maintain it unless forced to it by his other philosophical commitments. Hence its distinctiveness for Socrates: Few others have been willing to go so far.

The facts that a topic is central to and distinctive of Socratic philosophy and has attracted the attention of many scholars are not sufficient to motivate a fresh paper

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<sup>3</sup> McPherran 2005, p. 49.

<sup>4</sup> And this is the philosophy I am interested in here, the philosophy expressed by the character named Socrates who appears in Plato's *Euthydemus*.

on it. But they are sufficient when conjoined with the third reason to focus on the sufficiency thesis: Socrates does not hold it. The standard interpretation, central to many accounts of the philosophy of Socrates, is false. Or so I suspect. Here I will argue for a somewhat more modest thesis, but one that still poses a significant challenge to standard interpretations: The so-called *locus classicus* for the sufficiency thesis, *Euthydemus* 277-282, provides no evidence for, and even some evidence against, Socrates' commitment to the sufficiency thesis. This, at the very least, forces those who would attribute the sufficiency thesis to Socrates to look elsewhere for their primary evidence. But my interpretation of the *Euthydemus* potentially has much further reaching implications as the first step in a reevaluation of the nature of and relationships between the most important concepts in Socratic philosophy: *wisdom* and *happiness*.

### 3.2. Alleged arguments for the sufficiency thesis in *Euthydemus* 277-282

On the standard reading, Socrates argues for the sufficiency thesis in *Euthydemus* 277-282. Irwin nicely illustrates this way of reading the passage:

Socrates takes it to be generally agreed that we achieve happiness by gaining many goods (279a1-4), but he argues that the only good we need is wisdom. He argues in three stages: (1) Happiness does not require good fortune added to wisdom (279c4-280a8). (2) Wisdom is necessary and sufficient for the correct and successful use of other goods (280b1-281b4). (3) Wisdom is the only good (281b4-e5). From this Socrates concludes that if we want to secure happiness, we need not acquire many goods; we need only acquire wisdom (282a1-d3).<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Irwin 1995, p. 55.

In support of this reading, Irwin identifies three arguments, one for each of the three stages. First, Socrates argues:

- (1) In each case the wise person has better fortune than the unwise (280a4-5).
- (2) Genuine wisdom can never go wrong, but must always succeed (280a7-8).
- (3) Therefore, wisdom always makes us fortunate (280a6).<sup>6</sup>

Socrates is arguing, then, that “wisdom guarantees success whatever the circumstances.”<sup>7</sup> But if wisdom alone is sufficient for success no matter what one’s situation, then wisdom must be sufficient for happiness no matter what one’s situation.

In the second stage, Irwin reconstructs Socrates’ argument as follows:

- (1) It is possible to use assets well or badly (280b7-c3), 280d7-281a1).
- (2) Correct use of them is necessary and sufficient for happiness (280d7-281e1).
- (3) Wisdom is necessary and sufficient for correct use (281a1-b2).
- (4) Therefore, wisdom is necessary and sufficient for happiness (281b2-4).<sup>8</sup>

Socrates final argument “is meant to secure Socrates’ previous claim that wisdom is necessary and sufficient for happiness, for it claims to show that wisdom is

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid., p. 55

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., p. 56.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., p. 56



the only good, and it has been agreed that happiness requires the presence of all the appropriate goods.”<sup>9</sup> Irwin reconstructs the argument as follows:

- (1) Each recognized good [e.g., health, wealth] is a greater evil than its contrary, if it is used without wisdom, and each is a greater good than its contrary, if it is used by wisdom (281d6-8).
- (2) Therefore, each recognized good other than wisdom is in itself (*auto kath’ hauto*) neither good nor evil (281e3-4).
- (3) Therefore, each of them is neither good nor evil (281e3-4).
- (4) Therefore, wisdom is the only good and folly the only evil.<sup>10</sup>

There are, then, no fewer than three arguments that are purported to demonstrate the necessity and sufficiency of wisdom for happiness. Contrary to Irwin’s interpretation, and others that may differ in detail but endorse the general point that Socrates argues for the sufficiency thesis,<sup>11</sup> I will argue that Socrates in no way demonstrates or attempts to demonstrate the sufficiency of wisdom for happiness. I agree with Irwin that the passage divides naturally into three stages and I will treat each in turn, devoting the most space to the more problematical first stage.

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid., p. 57.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., p. 57

<sup>11</sup> I have in mind those interpretations on which some part or all of *Euthydemus* 277-282 is meant to support the sufficiency thesis. See note 2.

### 3.3. Stage 1: “Wisdom is good fortune.” (*Euthydemus* 279c-280b)

At *Euthydemus* 279d6-7, Socrates makes a shocking claim, saying, “Wisdom (σοφία) surely is good fortune (εὐτυχία); even a child would know that.” Two related interpretive issues immediately arise. First, are we to take this as a serious identity claim, that wisdom and good fortune just are the very same thing? This certainly does not seem like something even a child would know, but it is the natural way to read Socrates’ claim. And second, what exactly does ‘good fortune’ mean? Is it some kind of success we might achieve, as when we wish someone good luck before some event in which they must use their skills to try to achieve a certain outcome? If so, then it is the sort of thing we wish a physician before surgery when we say, “Good luck,” or an actor before a performance when we say, “Break a leg.” Or is good fortune rather a matter of having things outside of our control work out in our favor, as when we say that someone was lucky to have won the lottery or that it was fortunate that no one was in the building when the faulty wiring started the fire. I leave this second interpretive issue, the meaning of “good fortune”, for the next section. Here I will argue that “Wisdom is good fortune” is not an identity claim.

Certainly the most natural way to read the claim that wisdom is good fortune is, at least in isolation, as an identity claim. And Socrates makes the claim in the context of giving a list of goods the possession of which will make us happy. He lists various goods of the body (health, wealth, good looks, and a sufficient supply of things the body needs), then goods had in relation to others (noble birth, power, and honor among one’s countrymen), and finally goods of the soul (temperance, justice,

courage, and wisdom). But, just when it looks like they have completed the list, Socrates exclaims that they have left off the most important item, “good fortune (εὐτυχία), which everyone, even the lowliest, says is the greatest of the goods” (270c7-8). Having put the last two goods, wisdom and good fortune, on the list with his young interlocutor Clinias’ consent, Socrates reconsiders:

And reconsidering the matter I said, “You and I have nearly become ridiculous in front of the strangers, son of Axiochus.”  
“How so?” he asked.  
“Because by putting good fortune in the previous list, we have said the same thing again.”  
“How is this?”  
“It is most ridiculous to add again what was already mentioned, and to say the same things twice.”  
“What do you mean?”  
“Wisdom surely is good fortune,” I said. “Even a child would know that.”  
And he was surprised, for he is still so young and naïve. (279c9-d8)<sup>12</sup>

So, not only is it most natural to read the claim that wisdom is good fortune as an identity claim, the immediate context of the claim also suggests that it is an identity claim. To add good fortune to a list that already includes wisdom is to “say the same thing again” and to “add again what was already mentioned and to say the same things twice.”

But the argument that follows in this passage shows decisively that Socrates does not intend to put forward an identity claim. Here is the argument in full:

And recognizing that he was surprised, I said, “Clinias, don’t you know, then, that flautists have the best fortune (εὐτυχέστατοί εἰσιν) concerning playing flutes well?”  
He agreed.

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<sup>12</sup> Translations are my own throughout the chapter. I follow Burnet’s text.

“And,” I said, “don’t grammarians have the best fortune concerning the writing and reading of letters?”

“Very much so.”

“Well then, with respect to the dangers of the sea, do you think that anyone has better fortune (εὐτυχεστέρους) than the wise pilots, for the most part?”

“Clearly not.”

“Well then, would you prefer when campaigning to share the danger and the luck with a wise general or with an ignorant one?”

“With the wise one.”

“Well then, with whom would you rather risk danger when sick, with the wise physician or the ignorant one?”

“The wise.”

“So then,” I said, “you think that it is more fortunate (εὐτυχέστερον) to do things with a wise person than with an ignorant person?”

He agreed.

“Then wisdom makes people fortunate (εὐτυχεῖν ποιεῖ τοὺς ἀνθρώπους) in every case. For wisdom would never err, but necessarily does rightly and is fortunate (ἀνάγκη ὀρθῶς πράττειν καὶ τυγχάνειν); for otherwise it would no longer be wisdom.”

We agreed finally – I don’t know how – that in sum things were like this: When wisdom is present, in whom it is present, there is no need of good fortune (εὐτυχίας) in addition. (279d8-280b3)

When Socrates sums up the results of his argument at 280b1-3, he puts it in a way that is not, at least in isolation, naturally read as an identity claim: “When wisdom is present, in whom it is present, there is no need of good fortune in addition.” A few lines earlier (280a6) he had drawn the conclusion that “wisdom makes people fortunate”. At 281b2-4 he again recalls this conclusion and says that wisdom provides men with good fortune. Again at 282a4-5 he recalls this conclusion and says that wisdom is the source of good fortune.<sup>13</sup> At 282c8-9 Socrates again says that wisdom is the only existing thing that makes a person fortunate.

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<sup>13</sup> Strictly speaking, at 281b2-4 and 282a4-5 Socrates uses the term ‘knowledge’ (ἐπιστήμη) rather than ‘wisdom’ (σοφία). But it is plain that ‘wisdom’ and ‘knowledge’ are being used equivalently. Socrates

These summations of the conclusion of the argument for the claim that wisdom is good fortune are not naturally read as identity claims. Nevertheless, they are not strictly inconsistent with the claim that wisdom is identical to good fortune. Assuming the identity of wisdom and good fortune, the conclusion at 280b1-3 seems to follow: When wisdom [= good fortune] is present, in whom it is present, there is no need of good fortune [= wisdom] in addition. But, of course, as it is formulated in the text (without the bracketed bits), 280b1-3 does not entail the identity claim.

Likewise the other three formulations, which seem to amount to variations of the claim that *wisdom makes people fortunate*, are consistent with, but weaker than, the identity claim. Given the identity claim, we should read the three later summations as claims that *wisdom makes people wise*, or alternatively that *fortune makes people fortunate*. This sounds Platonic; think of the famous passage at *Phaedo* 100d where Socrates says that all beautiful things are beautiful by the beautiful. But it seems to miss the point here. After all, at 281b2-4 and 282a4-5 Socrates says that wisdom is the source not only of good fortune but also of correct use, but there is no hint that correct use is identical to wisdom. Indeed, correct use and good fortune seem to have the same relation to wisdom in this passage and they seem to be distinct from

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is plainly summing up again the results of the argument at 279d-280b, which concerns wisdom and good fortune. Were 'wisdom' and 'knowledge' being used to refer to distinct things, this summation would misrepresent the earlier argument. But there is no hint in the text that any conflict arises. And at 282a1-6, Socrates easily slides between 'wisdom' and 'knowledge' in summing up the results of the entire passage:

“Then let us consider the consequence of this. Since we all want to be happy, and since we appear to become happy by using things and using them correctly, and since it is knowledge that provides the correctness and good fortune, it is necessary, it seems, for all men to prepare themselves in every way for this: how they will become as wise as possible.” (282a1-6)

one another. But if wisdom is identical to good fortune, we would expect it to be identical to correct use as well, and so good fortune and correct use would be identical.

Regardless of whether we can force these various expressions of the conclusion of the argument into the identity mold, there is a more telling feature of the argument that counts against taking the claim that wisdom is good fortune to be an identity claim. Socrates begins the argument by claiming that various experts – flautists, grammarians, and pilots – have the best fortune when it comes to matters in their field of expertise, and generalizes from these examples to the claim that experts quite generally have the best fortune concerning matters in their field of expertise. Their expertise is clearly meant to count as a kind of wisdom, and so some connection between wisdom and good fortune is established.

But then Socrates adds to his list of examples that it is preferable to act with a wise general or physician rather than an ignorant one. He generalizes from the choice to act with the wise general and physician: “So then, you think that it is more fortunate to do things with a wise person than with an ignorant person?” The proposition is that it is more fortunate *for you* to do things with a wise person. It is more fortunate *for you* to be under the command of a wise general, or under the care of a wise physician. That is why *you* should choose it. But it is not you who is acting wisely in the situation; it is the general or the physician. So your good fortune is a result of someone else’s wisdom being operative. The important point here is that the wisdom is the physician’s (but not yours) and the good fortune is yours (but not the

physician's)<sup>14</sup>. But this means that wisdom and good fortune are not identical, for you can have one without the other. The point Socrates is making is that the wise physician causes your good fortune, whereas the ignorant physician will likely not bring you good fortune. But this very point entails that the identity claim cannot be true.

Not only that, but even in the experts wisdom and good fortune sometimes come apart. Notice that Socrates qualifies his claims when talking about pilots. Expert pilots have better fortune at sea than non-experts, *for the most part* (ὥς ἐπὶ πᾶν εἰπεῖν). To say that experts have better fortune than non-experts *for the most part* is to imply that sometimes they do not. Success for a pilot consists in, roughly, getting one's ship safely to the desired port. Skilled pilots will generally have the most success at getting ships safely to their destinations. But in the case of pilots, the possibility that a non-pilot might have greater success than a pilot becomes more salient. In the case of flautists and grammarians, there are not many obvious external influences on their success. A good flautist plays her flute and beautiful music comes out. A good grammarian reads accurately and writes effectively. But for pilots, one external influence looms particularly large: the weather. Imagine that I, whose information about piloting is gleaned only from a few movies that are set on ships, am to pilot a ship from Port A to Port B. At the same time, a skilled pilot is to pilot a ship from Port B to Port C. It is easy to imagine a case where I have more success than the

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<sup>14</sup>Though the physician might be said to have good fortune, too. Nevertheless, it is not identical to your good fortune, and even if it were, that you can possess good fortune without possessing wisdom is enough to make the point.

skilled captain. Suppose that I set sail with my crew from Port A, with fair skies and friendly winds. This fair weather continues as I follow the coastline for some days and finally dock successfully at Port B. The skilled captain leaves Port B at the same time, sailing toward Port C with equally fair skies and friendly winds. However, midway to Port C, he encounters an unpredictable and fierce storm. Despite the best efforts of this expert pilot and his crew, the ship is tossed around by the severe wind and waves and finally capsizes. I, unskilled though I am, have successfully guided my ship to the desired port, while the skilled captain has failed to achieve this.

Socrates recognizes that these scenarios become salient in the case of pilots, and he qualifies his question in their case: “Well then, with respect to the dangers of the sea, do you think that anyone has better fortune than the wise pilots, for the most part (ὡς ἐπὶ πᾶν εἰπεῖν)?” Socrates is not asking whether in every case pilots have better fortune than non-pilots when it comes to sailing. Rather, he is asking whether, taking all the cases together, pilots have the best fortune at sailing. This allows that there could be infrequent cases of non-pilots having better fortune than pilots, so long as pilots have the most fortune most of the time. And this is a perfectly sensible position, to which Clinias finds it easy to add his consent.

The consequence of all this for the claim that wisdom is good fortune is to add another reason it cannot be an identity claim, for wise pilots retain their wisdom, even in cases where they fail to have good fortune. Sometimes they possess wisdom but not good fortune, and so wisdom cannot be identical to good fortune. Add to this the fact that I can be fortunate though it is not I but my physician who is wise, and we



begin to see why Socrates repeatedly – at 280a6, 280b1-3, 281b2-4, 282a4-5, and 282c8-9 – expresses his conclusion in ways that are not naturally taken as identity claims. He is not arguing that wisdom is identical to good fortune, but rather that wisdom produces good fortune.

### 3.4. *Good fortune and outcome-success*

I now turn to the second interpretive issue concerning the claim that wisdom is good fortune: the meaning of the term ‘good fortune’. As noted above, ‘good fortune’ is ambiguous between at least two senses: things that happen to us that are largely out of our control, and things we achieve.<sup>15</sup> The former could be described as having favorable circumstances in which to live one’s life. Being born into a wealthy family, living in a stable political climate, and winning the lottery all fall into this category. Call this sort of good fortune *antecedent good luck*.

This cannot be the sort of good fortune at issue in this passage for a number of reasons.<sup>16</sup> First, and most obviously, antecedent good luck is not the sort of thing one pursues, for it is by definition outside of one’s control. It happens to one; it constitutes the circumstances in which one has to act; but it is not itself an object of pursuit. One does not try to be born into a wealthy family or a stable political climate, or try to

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<sup>15</sup> I do not mean to suggest that it is only the English ‘good fortune’ that is ambiguous in this way. On the contrary, the Greek ‘εὐτυχία’ is ambiguous in the same way.

<sup>16</sup> That is not to say that Clinias might not hear Socrates’ initial claim that wisdom is good fortune as the claim that wisdom is antecedent good luck. Perhaps that partially explains his surprise at the claim. But the argument that follows makes clear that Socrates does not have antecedent good luck in mind when he makes the claim.

make one's lottery numbers come up. Insofar as one could make one's family wealthy, one's city political stable, and one's lottery ticket a winner, this would amount to the other kind of good fortune; it would be an achievement or success rather than an antecedent condition outside of one's control. But Socrates makes this claim in the context of a protreptic argument, or an argument aimed at persuasion to action. Socrates is attempting to persuade Clinias that he ought to pursue wisdom. A primary reason to pursue wisdom is that it enables its possessor reliably to have good fortune. But then good fortune is something largely within the control of the wise person.

A second reason to think that antecedent good luck is not the sort of good fortune at issue is Socrates' heavy reliance on the idea that experts have better fortune (at least for the most part) than non-experts. It would be strange to think that experts generally have better antecedent luck than non-experts. Wise and ignorant pilots sail the same seas in the same types of ships. Wise and ignorant physicians treat the same sorts of diseases with the same sorts of medicine at their disposal. What distinguishes them is not the antecedent circumstances in which they act, but their level of success when they act in those circumstances. Suppose, though, that wise pilots encounter fewer serious storms per trip than ignorant pilots encounter. Even this would not show that wise pilots have better antecedent luck than ignorant pilots, for the different rates of storms encountered can be attributed to the skill of the wise pilots. Part of their skill is the ability to avoid serious storms unless it is absolutely necessary to go through them. Avoiding storms is to be credited to wise pilots as a success, and so does not count as antecedent good luck.

It is clear, too, that when Socrates asks us to compare actions taken with the wise and unwise general or physician, he is asking us to make this judgment on the assumption that the antecedent fortune is the same for both the wise and the unwise. Consider how hesitant Clinias and Socrates should have been to agree on the point, if the question included instances like the following two: Would you rather risk danger with an ignorant general who commands an army 100 times larger than his enemy, or with a wise general who commands an army  $1/100^{\text{th}}$  the size of his enemy? Would you rather risk danger with an ignorant physician when you have a common cold, or with a wise physician when you have lung cancer? In each case, not only would we not give an immediate answer in favor of acting with the wise person, but I, at least, find it obvious that it is better to act with the ignorant. But Socrates and Clinias immediately agree in favor of acting with the wise, so this must not be the sort of question they are considering. The difference in the two questions I provided was that each involved a significant difference in the antecedent fortune between the wise and the ignorant. Socrates and Clinias, though, are considering cases where the antecedent fortune is the same for the wise and the ignorant. So, rather than asking questions like, “Would you rather risk danger with an ignorant physician when you have a common cold, or with a wise physician when you have lung cancer?” Socrates is asking questions like, “Would you rather risk danger with an ignorant or a wise physician, when you have a common cold?” and “Would you rather risk danger with an ignorant or a wise physician, when you have lung cancer?” In these cases, we would immediately choose to act with the wise.

If, then, by ‘good fortune’ Socrates means ‘antecedent good luck’, it is difficult to explain why he and Clinias so readily agree that experts have the best fortune concerning matters within their field of expertise. This claim lacks obvious plausibility; at best it requires extended argument, but all we get is a series of examples that are readily accepted as supporting the claim. It is also difficult to explain, on this view, why Socrates encourages Clinias to pursue something that is outside of his control. Rather, Socrates must mean to be talking about a kind of achievement or success.

But concluding that Socrates is talking about a kind of success does not yet settle the matter. Some scholars<sup>17</sup> have argued that good fortune is a sort of success that amounts to acting well, rather than achieving a certain result. This sort of success is different from, say, breaking 80 in a round of golf or saving enough to retire; these are cases of achieving a certain successful result. Playing golf with a high degree of focus, an adequate understanding of the game, and a practiced swing, or being disciplined at saving money and investing with an adequate understanding of various investment vehicles are cases of achieving success at acting well: acting as the skilled golfer or investor would act. One may act well in these ways without achieving the desired result: the ball may take an unexpected bounce off an ill-placed sprinkler head, or the stock market may crash and the local bank fail. Call this sort of success – the success that is a matter of how one plays the game rather than what the final score is –

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<sup>17</sup> See Russell 2005, ch. 1, for an especially clear articulation of the view; see also Dimas 2002.

*internal-success*. Call the sort of success that amounts to achieving certain results *outcome-success*.

The appeal of taking Socrates to be talking about internal-success rather than outcome-success results mainly from taking Socrates' claim that wisdom is good fortune to be an identity claim. Given that wisdom is neither omniscience nor omnipotence, the wise will not always achieve the results at which they aim. But, plausibly, they can always act well in the pursuit of these results. And so Socrates is taken to be arguing that wisdom guarantees internal-success, and that internal-success is the important kind to achieve.

Insofar as this line of interpretation depends on taking Socrates' claim that wisdom is good fortune to be an identity claim, it is undermined by the argument of the previous section. Additionally, and relatedly, it fails to make sense of Socrates' qualification that the wise have better fortune than the ignorant *for the most part*. To say that experts have better fortune than non-experts *for the most part* is to imply that sometimes they do not. But internal-success is always available to the wise. They can always control the way they act when they act. It is the outcomes of their actions that they may not be able to control. And non-experts will never act well in this internal sense to the degree that the wise do, for they will never act out of understanding. They may try hard; they may choose correctly; they may achieve their aims. But they will not act well in the same internal sense as the wise. "For the most part" makes no sense if good fortune is internal-success.

Taking good fortune to be outcome-success, however, allows us to make excellent sense of this qualification. Socrates recognizes that external factors may hinder success, preventing even the wise pilot from reaching port safely. The wise pilot is neither omniscient nor omnipotent, and must deal with the circumstances in which he finds himself. Sometimes these circumstances include unpredictable weather patterns or unexpected problems with crew or ship. Even while never failing to act as a skilled pilot would act, the wise pilot may fail to achieve the result of getting to port safely. But in general wise pilots do get to port safely more often than ignorant pilots, for the wise are best able to deal with the circumstances in which they find themselves.

To sum up the results so far, Socrates, when he uses the term ‘good fortune’, has in mind outcome-success, rather than antecedent good luck or internal-success, but he does not mean to identify wisdom and good fortune. We are now in a position to see exactly what he is arguing. Wisdom produces good fortune. This is established by appeal to the examples of the experts, who produce better fortune than non-experts. But the wise do not infallibly produce good fortune, for external factors (antecedent luck, both good and bad) influence the degree of success agents have. Both wisdom and antecedent fortune affect outcome-success. Even the wise pilot may encounter storms that cannot be weathered. But the wise pilot will handle each situation as well as it can be handled. The wise pilot will have the best outcomes possible given the antecedent conditions. And this is due entirely to his wisdom, the only thing that differentiates him from the ignorant pilot who will have worse outcomes on the whole

given the same antecedent conditions. So, wisdom is the cause of the greater outcome-success. Socrates claims that “wisdom would never err” (280a7). In every circumstance, wisdom produces the greatest outcome-success possible given that circumstance. So, wisdom entails all the possible outcome-success in every situation. Since Socrates just means outcome-success by ‘good fortune’, wisdom entails all the good fortune possible in any circumstance. So, to put good fortune on the list below wisdom is to add something that is already there implicitly. Socrates sums up the argument by making just this point: “We agreed finally – I don’t know how – that in sum things were like this: When wisdom is present, in whom it is present, there is no need of good fortune in addition.” Wisdom is good fortune in the sense that it provides whatever good fortune is possible given the circumstances. But it is neither identical to good fortune, nor can it provide good fortune that goes beyond what is practically possible given the circumstances. Here is a reconstruction of the basic argument that wisdom produces good fortune (WPF):

(WPF-1) Experts usually have the best fortune when it comes to matters in their field of expertise.

(WPF-2) Nevertheless, experts can fail to have good fortune and non-experts can accidentally have good fortune.

(WPF-3) So, wisdom is neither necessary nor sufficient for good fortune.

(WPF-4) Wisdom never errs.

(WPF-5) So, wisdom produces whatever good fortune is possible in the circumstances.

Notice that this account requires that we read two lines in a way that may have initially seemed implausible. The easier case is Socrates' summation: "When wisdom is present, in whom it is present, there is no need of good fortune in addition." We might have been tempted to read this as the claim that wisdom entails good fortune, but the argument that leads to this summation does not warrant that reading. Instead, we must read this summation in its protreptic context. Socrates is trying to show Clinias what he should pursue, and what he has argued is that the only thing under Clinias' control that will contribute reliably to good fortune is wisdom. Good fortune is not something separate to be pursued, some additional item to be put on the list behind wisdom, for good fortune is properly pursued *only* through the pursuit of wisdom. This is not to say that antecedent luck plays no role, but only that antecedent luck is not something to be pursued.

The more difficult line is the surprising statement that started the argument: "Wisdom surely is good fortune; even a child would know that." This certainly looks like an identity claim when read in isolation. But the argument that follows does not allow that reading, and so we must conclude that it is an attention-grabbing and as yet unqualified claim to the effect that good fortune duplicates something already on the list – wisdom – in the sense that pursuing wisdom amounts to doing everything one can properly do to pursue good fortune. So wisdom is not identical to good fortune nor does wisdom entail good fortune, but the pursuit of wisdom exhausts the ways one can properly pursue good fortune.



### *3.5. Stage 1 and the sufficiency thesis*

Earlier I emphasized that it is common to read this passage as an argument for the sufficiency thesis. I see two different lines such an argument might take. First, if good fortune is, as Socrates calls it, “the greatest of the goods,” then good fortune might be good enough to suffice for happiness all by itself. But then if wisdom is identical to or entails good fortune, wisdom suffices for happiness. Good fortune might even itself entail the other goods like health and wealth, provided it is not simply internal-success. Second, the highest sort of good fortune might be thought to be the achievement of success in one’s life as a whole. But achieving success in one’s life as a whole just is happiness. So, if wisdom is identical to or entails good fortune, then wisdom suffices for happiness.

The problem with each of these lines of argument, if my interpretation of the passage is correct, is that Socrates is not committed to the crucial premise, in each version, that wisdom is identical to or entails good fortune. So we are left without an argument that wisdom suffices for happiness. Indeed, though Socrates does not give it and so I forward it tentatively, there are resources to construct an argument that wisdom does not suffice for happiness. For surely some success at achieving one’s aims is necessary for happiness. This, after all, is identified as the greatest of the goods. Further evidence that achieving one’s aims is of great importance is that one of the main reasons Socrates gives Clinias for pursuing wisdom is that wisdom is conducive to achieving one’s aims. But wisdom is not sufficient for success at achieving one’s aims. Even the wise may be frustrated in their endeavors. But if

wisdom is not sufficient for a necessary condition of happiness, then it is not sufficient for happiness.

### *3.6. Stage 2: Wisdom and correct use (Euthydemus 280b-281d)*

The first stage of the argument fails to demonstrate, or even to attempt to demonstrate, that wisdom is sufficient for happiness. Indeed, the first stage gives us reason to doubt the sufficiency thesis. But what of the second stage? Does it justify the standard view that the passage as a whole constitutes a ringing endorsement of the sufficiency thesis? I will argue that it does not, but rather provides an argument only for the necessity of wisdom for happiness.

Initially, Socrates and Clinias agreed on some basic assumptions: Everyone wants to be happy; happiness comes from having many good things; things like health, honor, courage, wisdom and good fortune are good things. Having already reconsidered the last of these assumptions by arguing that good fortune need not be added to a list which already includes wisdom, Socrates now revisits the second of these assumptions, that happiness comes from having many good things. He argues that happiness requires not only the possession of good things, but that these goods be used as well.

“We agreed, I said, that if we possessed many good things, we would be happy and do well.”

He agreed.

“Then would we be happy through possessing good things if they didn’t benefit us, or if they did benefit us?”

“If they benefitted us,” he said.

“Then would they provide some benefit, if we only had them, but did not use them? For example, if we had much food, but didn’t eat any, or drink, but didn’t drink any, would we benefit from these things?”

“Clearly not,” he said.

“Well then, if every craftsman had all the requisite provisions for his own work, but never used them, would they do well through the possession, because they possessed everything which a craftsman needs to possess? For example, if a carpenter were provided with all the tools and enough wood, but never built anything, would he benefit from the possession?”

“In no way,” he said.

“Well then, if someone possessed wealth and all the good things we just said, but did not use them, would he be happy through the possession of these good things?”

“Clearly not, Socrates.”

“Then it seems,” I said, “that the one who is going to be happy must not only possess such goods, but also use them. Otherwise, there is no benefit from the possession.”

“That’s true.” (280b5-d7)

The passage licenses two principles. First, things contribute to our happiness just in case they provide some benefit to us. That this is a biconditional is a fairly clear implication of 280b7-8: If things benefit us they make us happy, and if they do not benefit us they do not make us happy. Second, things provide some benefit to us only if we not only possess them, but also use them. From these two principles we can infer a necessary condition for things that contribute to our happiness: Things contribute to our happiness only if we not only possess them, but also use them. But this condition is still too weak, and Socrates strengthens it.

“So then, Clinias, is this now sufficient to make someone happy, to possess good things and to use them?”

“It seems so to me.”

“If,” I said, “he uses them correctly, or if not?”

“If he uses them correctly.”

“Well said. For I think it is a greater harm, if someone uses something incorrectly than if he leaves it alone. For in the former case there is evil, but in the latter cases there is neither evil nor good. Or don't we say this?”

He agreed. (280d7-281a1)

Now our second principle has been modified: Things provide some benefit to us only if we not only possess them, but also use them correctly. That correctness is part of the consequent is demonstrated by considering the consequences when correctness is lacking. When correctness is lacking, harm results rather than benefit. So, correctness is required for benefit. And the necessary condition for things that contribute to happiness has thereby been strengthened: Things contribute to our happiness only if we not only possess them, but also use them correctly.

Two other advances are made at 280d7-281a1. Socrates introduces the idea that in cases where something is used incorrectly, it would have been better had it not been used at all. This will become a key point in the argument momentarily, and we can set it aside until then. More importantly, up until 280d7 we had no explicit indication that Socrates was looking for necessary and sufficient conditions for something's contributing to our happiness. Indeed, to this point we had arrived only at severally necessary conditions. But here he makes it clear that he is after jointly sufficient (*ικανόν*) conditions as well. So, our strengthened necessary condition for things that contribute to our happiness can now be strengthened even further, this time by making it a biconditional: Things contribute to our happiness just in case we not only possess them, but also use them correctly.

Socrates goes on to consider what provides for correct use. Just as he argued that wisdom provides good fortune, he now argues that wisdom provides correct use.<sup>18</sup>

“Well then, in working and using things concerning wood, surely there is nothing else that produces correct use than knowledge of carpentry?”

“Clearly not,” he said.

“And also in work concerning utensils the producer of the correctness is knowledge.”

He agreed.

“Then,” I said, “also concerning the use of the first of the goods we spoke of – wealth and health and beauty – was it knowledge which directed and made our action correct with respect to using all such things correctly, or something else?”

“Knowledge,” he said.

“It seems then that knowledge provides men not only with good fortune but also with well-doing, in all possession and action.”

He agreed. (281a1-b4)

Socrates again begins by considering craftsmen, and proceeds by induction to a general conclusion. When it comes to using correctly the materials of carpentry, it is the expertise of the carpenter that produces correct use. The carpenter’s expertise allows him to make proper use of each tool and material. A non-expert, one who does not understand the carpenter’s craft, will not be able to make correct use of each tool and material. Likewise for the expert-maker of utensils. The point is perfectly parallel to the argument that wisdom provides good fortune, and so we should still have in mind that it is the expert pilot (or general, or physician) who makes correct use of ships (or troops, or medicine). In every case, it is knowledge that provides both success and correct use.

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<sup>18</sup> The shift from speaking of wisdom (σοφία) to knowledge (ἐπιστήμη) is unproblematic; see note 13.

Socrates then generalises the claim for all the goods on the initial list. It is knowledge that provides for the correct use of goods such as wealth and health and beauty – and so, too, we should infer, with goods like power and honor and bravery. Knowledge provides men with correct use “in all possession and action.” It is difficult to determine strictly from the passage at 281a1-b4 whether this is meant to be a necessary condition, a sufficient condition, or both. But if we recall from 280a7-8 the principle that “wisdom would never err, but necessarily does rightly” we can see that it must at least be a sufficient condition. Knowledge, whenever present, guarantees correct use of whatever falls under its domain. The next part of the argument confirms that this is also meant to be a necessary condition: Correct use is provided for just in case knowledge is present.<sup>19</sup>

“Then, by Zeus,” I said, “is there any benefit from other possessions without intelligence and wisdom? Would a man benefit more from possessing many things and doing many things without sense, or from possessing and doing little with sense? Examine it this way. Doing less, wouldn’t he err less? And erring less, wouldn’t he do less badly? And doing less badly wouldn’t he be less miserable?”

“Certainly,” he said.

“Then would someone do less if he were poor, or wealthy?”

“Poor,” he said.

“And if weak or strong?”

“Weak.”

“And if honored or dishonored?”

“Dishonored.”

“And would he do less if courageous and temperate or cowardly?”

“Cowardly.”

“So then also if he were lazy rather than hard-working?”

He agreed.

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<sup>19</sup> (Again, it is clear that the words I am translating as ‘wisdom’ (σοφία), ‘knowledge’ (ἐπιστήμη), ‘intelligence’ (φρόνησις), and ‘sense’ (νοῦς) are being used interchangeably throughout. Otherwise, Socrates would be giving a bizarre argument. Outside of the translation, I shall use them interchangeably.)

“And if slow rather than fast, and dull of sight and hearing rather than sharp?”

With all such things we agreed with one another. (281b4-d2)

For the person without knowledge, doing less means erring less. In other words, without knowledge, a person will not correctly use their possessions. The main point of this passage is that there is no benefit in possessions apart from knowledge. Knowledge, then, is both necessary and sufficient for correct use. Indeed, one who lacks wisdom would be better off the less he has, and the wise will always be better off than the ignorant. Having reached this conclusion, we are now in a position to sum up the argument of this second stage of the first protreptic – the argument that wisdom provides correct use (AWC).

(AWC-1) Our possessions (broadly construed to include all such things as those on the initial list of goods) contribute to our happiness just in case they provide some benefit to us. (280b7-8)

(AWC-2) Our possessions provide some benefit to us just in case they are used correctly. (280b5-281a1)

(AWC-3) So, our possessions contribute to our happiness just in case they are used correctly.

(AWC-4) Correct use of possessions is provided for just in case knowledge is present. (281a1-d2)

(AWC-5) If possessions are not used correctly, positive harm (and not simply lack of benefit) results. (281b4-d2)

(AWC-6) So, wisdom guarantees that one's possessions contribute to one's happiness, and ignorance guarantees that one's possession fail to contribute (and, if used, even detract from) one's happiness.

AWC-6 remains implicit at this stage, but it is entailed by the explicit claims that are defended. But notice that AWC-6 does not entail that wisdom suffices for happiness. Rather, it entails that any possessions (broadly construed to include all such things as those on the initial list of goods) we have, provided that we are wise, will contribute to our happiness. But this is just a conditional statement: For anything on our list of goods, if we possess it, then it will contribute to our happiness. There are two problems with thinking that this conditional expresses the sufficiency of wisdom for happiness. First, there is little reason to think that, if something contributes to my happiness, it follows that I am happy. For example, I have a one-dollar bill on my desk. It seems true to say that this one-dollar bill contributes to my wealth. But it does not follow that I am wealthy. Its contribution hardly suffices to make me wealthy. Likewise, even if something contributes to my happiness, it may leave me far short of being happy. So, even if wisdom did guarantee contributions to happiness, it would not follow that it guarantees happiness.

Second, there is no claim anywhere in the first protreptic that wisdom guarantees the satisfaction of the antecedent of this conditional. That is, nowhere is it



suggested that wisdom guarantees the possession of the things on our list of goods.<sup>20</sup> Given that we possess them, wisdom guarantees their correct use. But there is no evidence that wisdom guarantees their possession. And if wisdom does not guarantee their possession, then wisdom does not even guarantee contributions to happiness.

Perhaps, though, wisdom does guarantee the possession of the things on our list of goods. Thomas Brickhouse and Nicholas Smith<sup>21</sup> have argued that wisdom not only confers on things their goodness (which, as we will see, is the main point of the next stage of the protreptic), but also is productive of some good things. An example they give is temperance being productive of health, when temperance leads you to stay out late less often and to drink less, and so to get enough sleep and have fewer headaches. Indeed, this may be exactly the sort of cure Socrates recommends for Charmides' headaches. And we have already seen that Socrates thinks that wisdom will bring about, or produce, whatever good fortune is possible in the circumstances. So, perhaps wisdom can produce all the items on our list of goods.<sup>22</sup>

Brickhouse and Smith do not make their case in order to argue for the sufficiency of virtue for happiness. Rather, they interpret the *Euthydemus* in light of their general argument against the sufficiency thesis.<sup>23</sup> But whether we accept their general argument against the sufficiency thesis or not, there are at least four reasons why their claim that wisdom can produce goods should not lead us to think that

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<sup>20</sup> One exception is discussed above in section 3.3: Socrates claims that wisdom produces *eutuchia*, and *eutuchia* is on the list of goods.

<sup>21</sup> Brickhouse and Smith 2000.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> For the general argument, see Brickhouse and Smith, *Plato's Socrates*, (Oxford: 1994), ch. 4. Brickhouse and Smith are rare defenders of the view that Socrates denied both the necessity and the sufficiency of wisdom for happiness.

Socrates endorses the sufficiency thesis.<sup>24</sup> First, as I noted above, even if wisdom could guarantee a variety of contributions to happiness, it would not follow that it guarantees happiness. Second, good fortune is unique among the listed goods in being singled out as guaranteed or produced by wisdom. This, I suggest, is because good fortune has to do with the outcomes of action, while wealth, health, honor, etc. are conceived of as part of the circumstances in which one acts. Wealth and the others are materials for action, things to be used correctly, whereas it is difficult to conceive of good fortune (understood as outcome-success) as a material to be used correctly, except insofar as it simply amounts to acquiring useful materials (as, for example, success with a physician amounts to acquiring health). Third, even if we accept the Charmides case as showing that virtue can produce good things, this production appears to be quite limited. It is because of Charmides' vice that he has headaches. So, removing the vice – the cause of the headaches – and replacing it with virtue should eliminate the headaches. Likewise, if a man is poor precisely because he is profligate, then replacing this vice with virtue should alleviate his poverty. Perhaps this licenses the general principle that harms directly caused and sustained<sup>25</sup> by vice are eliminated when vice is replaced by virtue. But it does not license the general principle that virtue can make one healthy (or wealthy, or honored) when the cause of one's illness (or poverty, or dishonor) is not vice. So, virtue will not produce health if

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<sup>24</sup> To emphasize the point, I am not giving an argument against Brickhouse and Smith. Indeed, they explicitly endorse at least the fourth point that follows.

<sup>25</sup> The 'and sustained' is necessary because some harms simply caused by vice cannot be eliminated by replacing vice with virtue. Think of an intemperant drunk who injures himself badly in an accident, or a promiscuous womanizer who contracts an incurable sexually transmitted disease.

you have contracted the plague, or been seriously wounded on the front lines of the battle. The virtuous, then, still run the risk of lacking the various goods, though they may run less of a risk than the vicious because they will not have frequent hangovers and the like. Fourth, there are some listed goods that virtue does not seem capable of producing at all. For example, it is difficult to see how virtue could produce good looks or noble birth.

The second stage of the protreptic clearly supports the necessity of wisdom for happiness. If wisdom is necessary for correct use, and correct use is necessary for benefit, and benefit is necessary for happiness, then wisdom is necessary for happiness. However, as in the first stage, nowhere in the second stage do we find support for the sufficiency of wisdom for happiness. To be sure, we do not find an explicit argument against the sufficiency thesis, but we do not find support for the sufficiency thesis either.

### 3.7. Stage 3: *Wisdom as the sole good (Euthydemus 281d-e)*

We have seen that the first and second stages of the first protreptic do not constitute an argument for the sufficiency thesis, though the second stage is meant to secure the necessity thesis. But the third and final stage has sometimes been taken to be a nearly explicit endorsement of the sufficiency thesis. For happiness requires good things, and Socrates says at 281e3-5 that wisdom is the sole good and ignorance the sole bad. From this it appears to follow that wisdom is necessary and sufficient for happiness. Here is this short but important passage in its entirety, which follows

immediately the examples meant to prove that one does more if one has the listed goods, and so these goods are actually harmful for the ignorant.

“In sum, Clinias,” I said, “it is likely that concerning all the things that we first called goods, the account of them is not that they are goods in themselves by nature, but rather it seems to be this: If ignorance leads them, they are greater evils than their opposites, insofar as they are better able to serve the evil master; but if intelligence and wisdom lead them, they are greater goods, though in themselves neither sort is of any value.”

He said, “Apparently, it seems to be just as you say.”

“Then what follows from the things we’ve said? Is it anything other than that none of the other things is either good or evil, but of these two, wisdom is good, and ignorance is evil?”

He agreed. (281d2-e5)

Irwin reconstructs the argument as follows:

- (1) Each recognized good [e.g., health, wealth] is a greater evil than its contrary, if it is used without wisdom, and each is a greater good than its contrary, if it is used by wisdom (281d6-8).
- (2) Therefore, each recognized good other than wisdom is in itself (*auto kath’hauto*) neither good nor evil (281d3-5, d8-e1)<sup>26</sup>.
- (3) Therefore, each of them is neither good nor evil (281e3-4).
- (4) Therefore, wisdom is the only good and folly the only evil (281e4-5).<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Irwin’s argument cites 281e3-4 as evidence for premise (2). I think he must mean to refer to 281d3-5 or 281d8-e1 instead, but if the reader has doubts about this she can judge for herself by examining Irwin’s text and the relevant passages in the *Euthydemus*.

<sup>27</sup> Irwin 1995, p. 57.

Irwin distinguishes two views we might attribute to Socrates from this passage:

*The Moderate View:* “When Socrates says that the recognized goods are not goods ‘in themselves’, he means that they are not goods when they are divorced from wisdom. When he concludes that wisdom is the only good, he means simply that only wisdom is good all by itself, apart from any combination with other things.”

*The Extreme View:* “When Socrates says that the recognized goods are not goods ‘in themselves’, he means that they are not goods; any goodness belongs to the wise use of them, not to the recognized goods themselves. When Socrates concludes that wisdom is the only good, he means that nothing else is good.”<sup>28</sup>

Commentators have divided over these two readings. Recent commentators who accept The Moderate View include Brickhouse and Smith, Reshotko, and Vlastos. Recent commentators who accept The Extreme View include Annas, McPherran, and Russell.<sup>29</sup> Irwin argues for The Extreme View on the grounds that The Moderate View cannot explain the inference to (3) and (4). After all, The Moderate View licenses calling the recognized goods ‘goods’ when they are conjoined with wisdom. But (3) and (4) rule out calling the recognized goods ‘goods’. So, Socrates must have in mind The Extreme View rather than The Moderate View.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid., p. 57

<sup>29</sup> See Brickhouse and Smith 2000; Reshotko 2006, pp. 98-103; Vlastos 1991, pp. 227-231; Annas 1999, ch. 2; McPherran 2005; and Russell 2005, ch. 1.

<sup>30</sup> The Stoics also interpreted Socrates as expressing The Extreme View, and so took this passage to be evidence for the Socratic origin of their view that wisdom is the only good. Even within the Stoic school, however, there was room for disagreement about what the passage implies. Orthodox Stoics would have found in the passage room for a doctrine of preferred indifferents, according to which the conventional goods (health, wealth, etc.) are *valuables* but not *goods*. Aristo, on the other hand, would

Contrary to Irwin, I believe Socrates is expressing The Moderate View here. I agree that the inference to (3) and (4) is illicit on The Moderate View. But we can solve this problem by reinterpreting (3) and (4) in light of the whole passage. At the same time, we can avoid a problem for The Extreme View. The problem is that if we suppose that in (3) and (4) Socrates is telling us that the recognized goods are in no way goods at all, then he directly contradicts what he has just said in (1), that the recognized goods can be ‘greater goods’ than their opposites. But if Socrates is telling us in the same argument that the same things are both greater goods and not goods at all, then the argument appears to be incoherent. We can avoid this problem by supposing that in (3), Socrates is not drawing an inference but rather restating (2). ‘Neither good nor evil’ in (3) is then to be read, in light of (2), as a contraction of ‘in itself neither good nor evil’.<sup>31</sup> (4), in turn, should be read as, ‘Wisdom is the only good in itself and folly the only evil in itself.’ Not only does this avoid the apparent contradiction, but it prevents us from being confronted with a claim for which the argument to this point has not prepared us, that the recognized goods are neither good nor evil in any way. This claim, the extreme one, does not follow at all from what has come before. But if (3) is a restatement of (2), and (4) just takes the conclusion a step

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have found support for the view that nothing but wisdom is good or valuable at all, and nothing but ignorance is bad or disvaluable at all. For a useful discussion, see Long 1986, esp. pp. 164ff.

Diogenes Laertius (2.31) clearly has this passage in mind when he attributes The Extreme View to Socrates: “There is, [Socrates] said, only one good, that is, knowledge, and only one evil, that is ignorance.” It is, of course, a point of debate whether this is the correct view to attribute to Socrates. But Diogenes Laertius plainly misinterprets Socrates when he immediately goes on to write, “Wealth and good birth bring their possessor no dignity, but on the contrary evil.” (Hicks trans.) (ἔλεγε δὲ καὶ ἐν μόνον ἀγαθὸν εἶναι, τὴν ἐπιστήμην, καὶ ἐν μόνον κακόν, τὴν ἀμαθίαν· πλοῦτον δὲ καὶ εὐγένειαν οὐδὲν σεμνὸν ἔχειν· πᾶν δὲ τοῦναντίον κακόν.)

<sup>31</sup> See Vlastos 1991, pp. 229-230, for a defense of reading ‘neither good nor evil’ as a contracted form of ‘in itself neither good nor evil’.

further, then we have a perfectly reasonable explication of the text on which Socrates holds The Moderate View.

Perhaps someone would object that (3) and (4) are introduced with an inference-term, συμβαίνει, and so must be inferences rather than restatements.<sup>32</sup> This is a fair observation, but it should be noted that what follows is, strictly speaking, not two inferences given separately, but a conjunction in which the conjuncts are being contrasted with one another by use of a μὲν . . . δὲ construction. If someone insists that we read (3) and (4) as inferences, defenders of The Moderate View can insist back that (3) and (4) must be read rather as *an* inference. On this understanding, the conclusion of the argument is a conjunction: “None of the other things is either good or bad, but of these two, wisdom is good, and ignorance is bad.” Granted, the first conjunct has already been made explicit in its uncontracted form, but it is restated in order to contrast it with the second conjunct, which is here made explicit for the first time. The Moderate View makes sense of the entire passage, while The Extreme View cannot.

If The Moderate View provides the most plausible reading of the text, then we can see that it reinforces the necessity thesis. If the goodness of all other things requires wisdom, and if happiness requires goodness, then happiness requires wisdom. But the sufficiency thesis does not seem to be in view here.<sup>33</sup> Again, wisdom confers

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<sup>32</sup> Long (1988, p. 167 n. 62) objects on similar grounds: “In 281d3-5, Socrates has already asserted that ‘the things we first said were good are not good just by themselves.’ If this is all that he is asserting in the first part of his conclusion, ‘none of these other things is either good or bad’, his ostensible conclusion is reduced to a summary, which contributes nothing new.”

<sup>33</sup> *Contra* Zeyl 1982, p. 231, who takes Socrates to be expressing the Moderate View – “all of the candidate goods but wisdom are demoted from the status of being goods ‘in their own right’ to being

goodness on whatever so-called ‘recognized goods’ like health and honor we possess. But nowhere in this third stage is it suggested that wisdom guarantees the possession of the recognized goods. The focus is entirely on necessity rather than sufficiency.

We are now in a position to sum up the argument that wisdom is the only good (WOG):

(WOG-1) Each recognized good [e.g., health, wealth] is a greater evil than its contrary, if it is used without wisdom, and each is a greater good than its contrary, if it is used by wisdom.

(WOG-2) So, each recognized good other than wisdom is in itself neither good nor evil.

(WOG-3) So, wisdom is the only good in itself and folly the only evil in itself.

### 3.8. Conclusion

Together, the arguments in the first stage that wisdom provides good fortune (WPF), in the second stage that wisdom provides correct use (AWC), and in the third stage that wisdom is the only good (WOG) present a potent protreptic for wisdom.

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neither good nor bad in themselves, but good, bad or indifferent only under the direction of knowledge, ignorance or the absence of any such direction” – yet concludes, “Wisdom alone survives as the only good whose mere possession guarantees its usefulness: it is thus the possession of wisdom which constitutes happiness.” But this is a *non sequiter* for at least two reasons. First, nothing in the passage decides the issue whether wisdom *constitutes* happiness or contributes to it in some other way. Second, by “it is thus the possession of wisdom which constitutes happiness”, Zeyl clearly means to express the sufficiency thesis. But, for the reasons expressed above, the sufficiency thesis does not follow from the Moderate View endorsed by Zeyl. Were Socrates expressing the Extreme View, the sufficiency thesis would seem to be in play, for happiness consists in having (or correctly using) good things, and wisdom would be the only good thing. Thus, to have wisdom would be to have everything required for happiness. We should, then, for the reasons I have given in the main text, go along with Zeyl in endorsing the Moderate View, though we should not follow him in nevertheless drawing conclusions that can at best be drawn only from the Extreme View.



Clinias should pursue wisdom because with it he will have a good chance of being happy, while without it he will have no chance at all. Since Clinias shares with all of us the single dominant goal in life of attaining happiness, this conclusion is all Socrates requires to accomplish his protreptic aim.<sup>34</sup> Contrary to a long and dominant interpretive tradition, I have argued that this conclusion is all that Socrates aims to establish. Specifically, I have argued that Socrates is not making the case for the sufficiency of wisdom for happiness. Wisdom is necessary for and conducive to happiness, but nowhere in this passage does Socrates claim or reveal that he is committed to the sufficiency of wisdom for happiness. Indeed, what he says about wisdom and good fortune is suggestive against the sufficiency thesis. The summation of the passage reinforces this interpretation, as it appeals only to the necessity, but not the sufficiency, of wisdom for happiness:

Then let us consider the consequence of this. Since we all want to be happy, and since we appear to become happy by using things and using them correctly, and since it is knowledge that provides the correctness and good fortune, it is necessary, it seems, for all men to prepare themselves in every way for this: how they will become as wise as possible. (282a1-6)

So much for what I take myself to have established. It is equally important to be clear about what I do not take myself to have established. While *Euthydemus* 277-282 does not provide evidence that Socrates endorses the sufficiency thesis, I do not take myself to have demonstrated that what Socrates says in this passage is flatly

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<sup>34</sup> Or, at least, it is all the rational argument he requires. The question whether Clinias' acceptance of this conclusion is sufficient, in Socrates' view, to cause him to pursue wisdom goes beyond the scope of this dissertation.

inconsistent with the sufficiency thesis. Certainly, some of what he says here will be difficult to reconcile with the sufficiency thesis, but I make no claim that, with enough philosophical ingenuity, it cannot be done. Furthermore, I do not take myself to have shown that Socrates nowhere endorses the sufficiency thesis. Perhaps there is strong evidence in other passages that he does endorse this thesis. My claim is only that such a case will have to find its impetus in passages other than *Euthydemus* 277-82.

Champions of the sufficiency thesis will need a new *locus classicus*, for the old one will no longer serve.

## Chapter 4: Wisdom As a Craft in *Euthydemus* 288-292

In my explication of the first protreptic of the *Euthydemus*, I argued that the thesis that virtue<sup>1</sup> is sufficient for happiness was nowhere to be found, despite the fact that this thesis is commonly attributed to Socrates and is often thought to be most clearly and forcefully expressed in the first protreptic. In this chapter, I examine the aporetic second protreptic section, in which we find Socrates making much of another thesis that is commonly attributed to Socrates, that virtue is, or is very much like, a craft (*techne*). This thesis is thought to be so central to Socratic philosophy and has been so discussed by scholars that it has developed a standard name: the *craft analogy* (or, sometimes, *techne analogy*). According to the craft analogy, virtue shares at least most of the central and common features of, among others, cobblery, medicine, and generalship. If the craft analogy is correct, then it makes sense to think about the characteristics of cobblery, medicine, and generalship in the hope of learning something about virtue.

These two theses, the sufficiency thesis and the craft-analogy, have been the focus of the great majority of scholarship on the protreptic sections of the *Euthydemus*. With respect to the sufficiency thesis, most commentators have taken the character Socrates to have endorsed it in the *Euthydemus* (particularly in the first protreptic), and insofar as they have speculated on the matter they have generally supposed that

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<sup>1</sup> Recall that ‘virtue’ and ‘wisdom’ are equivalent in the *Euthydemus*. See chapters 2 and 3. Recall also that various knowledge words including σοφία, ἐπιστήμη, φρόνησις, and νοῦς (which I have translated as ‘wisdom’, ‘knowledge’, ‘intelligence’, and ‘sense’, respectively) are used equivalently in these passages. See chapter 3, section 3.3.

the author Plato means to endorse it as well. I have argued against this prevailing view. But with respect to the craft analogy, there is little doubt that Socrates makes heavy use of it, and so seems to endorse it, in the second protreptic. Unlike with the sufficiency thesis, however, commentators have tended to suppose that Plato, as author, has different motivations for giving the craft analogy such prominence than does the character Socrates who propounds it. Indeed, it has become common to read Plato as having crafted the second protreptic for the very purpose of criticizing the craft analogy, much as it has become common to read the *Meno* as Plato's criticism of the limitations of the Socratic *elenchos* with respect to inquiry.<sup>2</sup> This reading of the second protreptic fits naturally with a developmentalist account of the Platonic corpus, the broad outlines of which involve Plato initially endorsing and then gradually moving away from some of the distinctive commitments of his teacher. The *Euthydemus*, on this view, is the point where we see Plato reject, or perhaps radically revise, the craft-analogy prevalent in the Socratic dialogues. While the view that Plato crafted the second protreptic in order to criticize the craft analogy fits nicely with such a developmentalist view, it is not essentially tied to a particular strain of developmentalism, or even to developmentalism generally. Perhaps Plato is

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<sup>2</sup> This is not the only way in which the *Euthydemus* has been thought to represent a departure from the philosophy of the historical Socrates or the Socrates of the so-called "elenctic dialogues". Consider the following claims of Vlastos 1991, pp. 116-7:

The change is no less marked in the *Euthydemus*. . . . Here for the first time in Plato's corpus we see Socrates unloading his philosophizing on an interlocutor in the form of protreptic discourse expounded in flagrantly non-elenctic fashion as a virtual monologue. . . . So here, as in the *Lysis* and the *Hippias Major* the elenchus has been jettisoned. Moral doctrine of the highest import – the core of Socrates' moral philosophy – is propounded in the *Lysis* and the *Euthydemus* unchallenged by an opponent. I submit that to make sense of so drastic a departure from what Plato had put into his portrayals of Socrates from the *Apology* to the *Gorgias*, we must hypothesize a profound change in Plato himself.

clarifying, or exploring, or suggesting a deeper explanation of his view of the craft analogy, without changing his position on it.

As in the case of the sufficiency thesis, I will argue that this standard interpretation is incorrect.<sup>3</sup> But unlike the sufficiency thesis, for which I argue the *Euthydemus* offers little support, with respect to the craft analogy I will argue that not only does the character Socrates endorse it, but we have little reason to think that Plato rejects or radically revises it. Indeed, the two theses are connected. I will offer a fresh interpretation of the second protreptic according to which the passage provides additional support for the craft analogy, and additional evidence against the sufficiency thesis. Specifically, I argue that the second protreptic is a *reductio* of the conjunction of a specific principle and the craft analogy, that rejecting the principle and retaining the craft analogy is the best way to avoid the *reductio*, and that the offending principle is closely tied to the sufficiency thesis.

#### 4.1. Socrates' appeals to the craft analogy in the *Euthydemus*

That Socrates appeals to the craft analogy in the *Euthydemus* is in little doubt. Consider the first protreptic, where Socrates justifies the claim that wisdom is good fortune by appealing to the fortune of various experts: flute players, writing masters,

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<sup>3</sup> By “standard interpretation” I mean the view that Plato is sharply criticizing the craft analogy. I mean my argument against the standard interpretation, on the one hand, to apply equally to both developmentalist and non-developmental accounts of this alleged criticism of the craft analogy, and I mean my own positive interpretation, on the other hand, to be neutral between developmentalist and non-developmental accounts of the Platonic corpus as a whole.

pilots, generals, and physicians.<sup>4</sup> Each of these has mastered a craft, and it is by virtue of this mastery that they are considered wise (σόφος) with respect to their field of expertise.<sup>5</sup> Since it is the wise who have the best fortune, it appears that someone who wants to have good fortune should seek wisdom. In the following section, Socrates appeals to craftsmen (δημιουργοί) generally, and carpenters and makers of utensils specifically, to show that it is knowledge that provides not only good fortune, but also correct use.<sup>6</sup> Again, since it is knowledge of a craft that produces correct use, and since correct use is necessary for benefit, we should seek knowledge. It is on precisely this basis that Socrates sums up the results of the first protreptic:

Then let us consider the consequence of this. Since we all want to be happy, and since we appear to become happy by using things and using them correctly, and since it is knowledge that provides the correctness and good fortune, it is necessary, it seems, for all men to prepare themselves in every way for this: how they will become as wise as possible. (282a1-6)

Whatever this wisdom that we should seek is, the first protreptic seems to indicate that it is the same kind of thing that constitutes the carpenter's or pilot's or physician's mastery of his particular field. But while the first protreptic does not tell

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<sup>4</sup> These are, to some degree, stock examples for Socrates. See, e.g., *Republic* I.341c-d, where Socrates uses physicians and pilots as examples. See also *Gorgias* 491a1-3, where an exasperated Callicles exclaims to Socrates: "By the gods! You simply don't let up on your continual talk of shoemakers and cleaners, cooks and doctors, as if our discussion were about them!" (Zeyl trans.)

<sup>5</sup> In the case of generals and physicians, Socrates explicitly distinguishes between wise and ignorant ones to highlight the distinction between those who merely profess to have mastered a craft, and those who really have it. Only the wise physician actually has the craft of medicine; the ignorant "physician" is no real physician at all. In the other cases (flute players, writing masters, and pilots), it is simply assumed that we are talking about genuine experts. In the following discussion, I mean to refer to genuine physicians, generals, etc., rather than to anyone who professes to be a genuine expert.

<sup>6</sup> The appeal to the carpenter (τέκτων) and to knowledge of carpentry (ἐπιστήμη ἢ τεκτονική) is interesting, if only because it harkens back to the roots of the term τέχνη. See Roochnik 1996, pp. 19-21 for a discussion of the etymology. [See also *Philebus* 56b.]

us exactly what this wisdom is, we can infer something it cannot be. It cannot be simply the knowledge of carpentry, or the knowledge of medicine, or the knowledge of any of the other of the crafts mentioned. For carpentry produces things like beds and houses, and medicine produces health, but a central lesson of the first protreptic was that things like beds, houses, and health make us worse off unless we know how to use them correctly. We need a craft that goes beyond the ability to make these things to the ability to know whether to pursue them at all and how to use them correctly when we have attained them.

The second protreptic, as we will see, picks up the question of identifying the wisdom we should seek. The important point at the moment is that Socrates and Clinias proceed by laying down constraints on the nature of this wisdom, and then investigating many different crafts to see whether they meet these constraints. So they consider some hypothetical crafts (knowledge of how to discover where the greatest quantities of gold are buried, alchemy, knowledge of how to make men immortal), as well as a great variety of actual crafts (money-making, medicine, lyre-making, lyre-playing, flute-making, speech-writing, speech-giving, enchanting (snakes and the like), generalship, hunting, fishing, cooking, geometry, astronomy, calculation, dialectic, statesmanship, quail-hunting, quail-keeping, and ruling). None of these meet the constraints they have laid down, and they can think of no alternative craft that would meet their constraints. Because of this, the passage ends unsuccessfully, with Clinias and Socrates apparently no closer to identifying the wisdom they seek than they were at the beginning.

Because of this lack of success, some commentators have thought that Plato means to repudiate the craft analogy by showing how fruitless it is. Wisdom must be of a certain character, and no craft could have that character. I shall set that issue aside for now. Instead of speculating about Plato's intentions, here I want to be clear about what *Socrates* is doing. Socrates is plainly relying on the craft analogy throughout both the first and the second protreptic passages. He makes his central points about wisdom in the first protreptic by appealing to crafts, and in the second protreptic when he seeks to identify that wisdom, he looks for it among the crafts. When he fails to find it, he has no back-up plan. He does not say, "Perhaps, Clinias, we were wrong to look for wisdom among the crafts. Where else should we search for it?" Instead he throws up his hands and professes to be at a loss. Clearly, then, unless Socrates is being extremely disingenuous throughout, he is committed to the craft analogy. To flesh out the analogy a bit, he is committed to the claim that wisdom is (or is very much like) a craft, where a craft has at least the following features:

1. *Crafts are kinds of knowledge.* For example, carpentry is (roughly) *knowledge* of how to make things with wood; medicine is (roughly) *knowledge* of how to maintain or restore health.
2. *Crafts have a specified domain.* For example, carpentry is knowledge of *how to make things with wood*; medicine is knowledge of *how to maintain or restore health*. Building houses does not fall under the physician's domain, nor does restoring health fall under the carpenter's domain.



3. *Crafts have one or more specified products.* For example, carpentry produces a variety of products like beds and houses; medicine produces health.
4. *Crafts tend to be arranged in hierarchies.* For example, a smith produces horseshoes for the horse trainer; the horse trainer trains horses for the cavalry leader; the cavalry leader trains and deploys his cavalry for the general; and the general deploys his forces for the ruler. In this case, smithery is for the sake of horse training, which is for the sake of cavalry strategy, which is for the sake of strategy in general, which is for the sake of ruling (expanding or defending a kingdom).
5. *A craft is value-neutral in the sense that it does not itself guarantee that its product will be used correctly and so produce benefit.* For example, the smith may produce horseshoes, which are ultimately used by a general for the sake of winning a war. But whether they are used in a just war, using effective military strategy, for the sake of producing actual benefits for the kingdom, is up to the general and/or the ruler, not the smith. A physician may produce health in a patient, but whether the patient uses his health to produce good or evil is not up to the physician. Similarly, a physician herself may use her skill to produce disease rather than health. So, the craft itself guarantees neither that the craftsman will produce something good rather than something bad, nor that even if the craftsman produces something good, that good will be used appropriately.

6. *A craft is teachable.* For example, a carpenter or a physician can take on an apprentice, and thereby pass on his mastery of his craft.

Each of these features of crafts finds support in the *Euthydemus*.

1. That crafts are a kind of knowledge is evident from the fact that Socrates calls genuine experts “wise” (279e-280a); that knowledge of carpentry (ἐπιστήμη ἢ τεκτονική) or of other crafts produces correct use (281a-b); that clear examples of crafts like money-making (χρηματιστικῆς) and medicine (ἰατρικῆς) are explicitly called knowledge (289a), as are cobblery (σκυτοτομικήν) and carpentry (292c); that the kingly craft (ἡ βασιλικὴ τέχνη) conveys a knowledge which is none other than itself (292d); and many similar passages. Note, too, the easy movement between ἐπιστήμη and τέχνη at 289c1-2, 289d9-e1, 291a8-b5, and 291c7-9.
2. That crafts have a specified domain is evident from that fact that flute players are concerned with flute music, writing masters with reading and writing, pilots with the sea, generals with campaigns, physicians with the sick (279e-280a), and carpenters with working wood (280c, 281a). Medicine rules over a certain domain (πάντων ἄρχουσα ἢ ἰατρικὴ ὧν ἄρχει), as do Crito’s own craft of farming (ἡ ὑμέτερα τέχνη ἢ γεωργία) and (by induction from these cases) the kingly craft (291e-292a).

3. That crafts have one or more specified products is especially clear at 291e-292a, where Socrates presses Crito to name the product of the kingly craft by giving analogies to medicine, which produces health, and farming, which produces nourishment from the earth. But “product” must be understood relatively loosely. Of the many crafts listed in the second protreptic some have *tangible products that they have made* (e.g. lyre-making produces lyres, cooking produces meals, carpentry produces houses and the like); some have *tangible products that they have acquired* (e.g. money-making produces coins (but not like minting does), fishing produces fish, quail-hunting produces quail); some have *intangible products that they have made* (e.g. lyre-playing produces music, medicine produces health, speech-making produces persuasion); and some have *intangible products that they have acquired (or, perhaps better, have discovered)* (e.g. geometry, astronomy, and calculation produce diagrams).<sup>7</sup> It is important to keep in mind that products can be of any of these sorts.
4. That crafts tend to be arranged in hierarchies is evident throughout the second protreptic, as we encounter example after example of one craft handing over its product to another craft, so that the second craft can use this product as a means for producing its own product. For example, lyre-makers produce lyres, which are then handed over to lyre-players who use

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<sup>7</sup> Those crafts that can be said to *acquire* rather than *make* their products are categorized as species of hunting at 290b-d).

lyres to produce music; speech-writers produce speeches, which are then handed over to speech-makers who use speeches to produce persuasion (289c-290a). In each case, the second craft is in some sense *higher* than the first craft, for without the production of music and persuasion there would be no point to the production of lyres and speeches.

5. That crafts are value-neutral is one of the central themes of the *Euthydemus*. It is an assumption of the second protreptic: Knowledge (i.e. a craft) of how to produce some product (of any of the four sorts discussed above) is not valuable unless one has the further knowledge of how to use that product correctly (288e-289b). The assumption is grounded in the argument of the first protreptic. Knowledge of how to produce some product just is knowledge of how to produce one of the conventional goods (health, money, material goods like tables and houses, etc.). But these products themselves are not valuable, and may even be harmful, unless wisdom guides them. Knowledge of how to produce some product, taken all by itself, is insufficient to guarantee benefit and prevent harm. Whether its product (and therefore the knowledge) is beneficial depends crucially on whether it is used with wisdom.
6. That crafts in general, or wisdom in particular, can be taught is not explicitly argued for in the *Euthydemus*. However, it would have been assumed by both Socrates and Clinias that crafts like carpentry or medicine

could typically be taught, and it is explicitly assumed (while pointedly not argued) that wisdom can be taught (282c).

Since the investigation into wisdom proceeds on the assumption that wisdom will be found among the crafts, and since each of these six features are clearly attributed to crafts in general in the *Euthydemus*, we must suppose that the investigation into wisdom proceeds on the assumption that wisdom has each of these six features. To the details of that investigation we now turn.

#### 4.2. *The aporia of the second protreptic*

Recall that the first protreptic ends with Socrates concluding, with Clinias' enthusiastic endorsement, that it is necessary to pursue wisdom above all else (282a-d). But the first protreptic never gives us a clear specification of exactly what this wisdom that is worth pursuing is. It is clear that it is a kind of knowledge: σοφία, ἐπιστήμη, φρόνησις, and νοῦς are all used to describe it. It is also clear from the discussion of the previous section that wisdom is, or is very much like, a craft. But this is not to go very far toward explicating the nature of wisdom. In particular, we might wonder at the end of the first protreptic what the specific domain and the specific product of wisdom is. There is, to be sure, some indication of this in the first protreptic. Wisdom's domain seems to be something like the correct use, or guidance, of the conventional goods listed at 279a-d, which are able to be used beneficially or harmfully (281d-e). And wisdom's product seems to be human happiness.

[S]ince we all wish to be happy, and since we appear to become so by using things and using them rightly, and since knowledge was the source of rightness and good fortune, it seems to be necessary that every man should prepare himself by every means to become as wise as possible. (282a; Sprague trans.)

Now then, since you believe both that it can be taught and that it is the only existing thing which makes a man happy and fortunate, surely you would agree that it is necessary to love wisdom and you mean to do this yourself. (282c; Sprague trans.)

But we should like something more specific than this, and so Socrates encourages Euthydemus and Dionysodorus to “start where I left off and show the boy what follows next: whether he ought to acquire every sort of knowledge, or whether there is one sort that he ought to get in order to be a happy man and a good one, and what it is” (282e; Sprague trans.). They are happy to resume control of the discussion, but fail to comply with his request. Instead, in this second eristic episode (282d-288a) they produce a number of additional arguments of the same sort they produced in the first episode. These arguments of the second eristic episode center on the impossibility of false speech or contradiction. Some conclusions in the episode are: Nobody speaks what is not; it is impossible to contradict; there are no ignorant men. Socrates highlights the fact that if these conclusions are true, then it is impossible for the sophists to refute him, for he cannot speak falsely and they cannot contradict. He then takes control of the discussion again for a second protreptic episode, contrasting the seriousness with which he will investigate the problem at hand with the brothers’ lack of seriousness. I will argue (i) that Socrates introduces two constraints on the nature of wisdom, (ii) that the second constraint is too strong, and (iii) that it is

precisely this overly strong second constraint that leads to the *aporia* with which the second protreptic section ends.

#### 4.2.1. *Two constraints on the nature of wisdom*

Socrates begins by reminding Clinias where they left off. They had agreed that it was necessary to love wisdom, and the love of wisdom (φιλοσοφία) is the acquisition of knowledge (κτῆσις ἐπιστήμης) (289d). But it won't be just any sort of knowledge, for we have already seen in the first protreptic that some sorts of knowledge don't provide benefit in the absence of wisdom. For example, medicine produces health, but health (and so the medicine that produces it) is not beneficial in the absence of some further thing, namely wisdom. So, the problem at hand is to discover just what sort of knowledge it is necessary to seek (289d). There must be some constraints on what sort of knowledge we are seeking, and the first comes from this very argument in the first protreptic:

(C1) Wisdom is a kind of beneficial knowledge. (288e1-2)

This constraint immediately rules out a great many kinds of knowledge as candidates for the title of 'wisdom'. For example, suppose we possessed knowledge of how to discover where the greatest quantities of gold are buried, or even the knowledge of how to make stones into gold. The first protreptic established that this sort of knowledge would be of no value, unless we also knew how to use the gold correctly (288e-289b). Indeed, such knowledge could be positively harmful in the absence of wisdom. But this seems to rule out any of the sorts of knowledge that

produce the conventional goods, including money-making, medicine, or even the hypothetical knowledge of how to make men immortal (289a-b). For money, health, and immortality can be extremely harmful in the absence of wisdom. Socrates sums this idea up for crafts generally:

“Nor does there seem to be any value in any other sort of knowledge which knows how to make things, whether money making or medicine or any other such thing, unless it knows how to use what it makes.” (289a; Sprague trans.)

The “unless”-clause suggests a second constraint on the nature of wisdom. The second constraint is complementary to the first, for it articulates a specific way that a candidate for wisdom might meet the first constraint. A craft that knew how to correctly use what it makes would, by the argument of the first protreptic, be beneficial. Recall from 280b-281d the **Argument that Wisdom Provides Correct Use (AWC)**.<sup>8</sup>

[AWC]

(AWC-1) Our possessions (broadly construed to include all such things as those

on the initial list of goods) contribute to our happiness just in case they provide some benefit to us. (280b7-8)

(AWC-2) Our possessions provide some benefit to us just in case they are used

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<sup>8</sup> See chapter 3, section 3.3.



correctly. (280b5-281a1)

(AWC-3) So, our possessions contribute to our happiness just in case they are used correctly.

(AWC-4) Correct use of possessions is provided for just in case knowledge is present. (281a1-d2)

(AWC-5) If possessions are not used correctly, positive harm (and not simply lack of benefit) results. (281b4-d2)

(AWC-6) So, wisdom guarantees that one's possessions contribute to one's happiness, and ignorance guarantees that one's possession fail to contribute (and, if used, even detract from) one's happiness.

By **AWC**, a craft that knew how to use its product could guarantee that its product provides benefit and so contributes to the happiness of its possessor.<sup>9</sup> In light of this, Socrates concludes, and Clinias agrees, “Then what we need, my fair friend, is a kind of knowledge which combines making and knowing how to use the thing which it makes” (289b). This, then, is the second constraint on what sort of knowledge we are seeking:

(C2) Wisdom is a kind of knowledge that combines (a) making something and (b) knowing how to use it correctly. (289b)

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<sup>9</sup> Strictly speaking, this result follows simply from AWC1-AWC4.

The argument proceeds on the basis of these two constraints. But I shall linger here for a moment, for I hope to show that (C2) is too strong, and that this dooms the investigation from the beginning.

#### 4.2.2. (C2) is too strong . . .

Why think that (C2) is too strong? Recall that (C2) is motivated because it provides a way to satisfy (C1), which is the more fundamental constraint. The crucial point is to recognize that it provides *a* way to satisfy (C1), not *the* (only) way. That is, satisfying (C2) is sufficient, but not necessary, for satisfying (C1). The problem arises because the following investigation assumes that (C2) is a genuine *constraint*, or *necessary condition*, on the nature of wisdom. But the principle that motivates (C2) guarantees, at most, that finding that something satisfies (C2) is a *sufficient condition* for identifying that thing as wisdom. Consider the reasoning that leads from (C1), understood as a constraint (i.e. necessary condition) on the nature of wisdom, to (C2), understood as a constraint (i.e. necessary condition) on the nature of wisdom.

1. Wisdom is a kind of beneficial knowledge. (C1)
2. Knowledge simply of how to produce conventional goods is not beneficial.
3. So, wisdom is not simply knowledge of how to produce conventional goods.
4. Knowledge of how to produce and correctly use some conventional good(s) is beneficial.
5. So, wisdom is knowledge of how to produce and correctly use some conventional good(s). (C2)

The inference to (5) is patently invalid. From the fact that wisdom is a kind of beneficial knowledge, and the fact that we can identify a kind of beneficial knowledge, it does not follow that wisdom is that kind of beneficial knowledge we have identified. After all, miniature schnauzers are a kind of small animal, and Burmese cats are a kind of small animal, but it does not follow that miniature schnauzers are Burmese cats.

Perhaps, though, we have understated the first premise. After all, a few pages earlier (281e) Socrates summed up the conclusion of the first protreptic by stating that wisdom is the only good: “Then what follows from the things we’ve said? Is it anything other than that none of the other things is either good or evil, but of these two, wisdom is good, and ignorance is evil?” In light of this, shouldn’t we understand (1) to mean that wisdom is the only kind of beneficial knowledge? But if wisdom is the only kind of beneficial knowledge, then as soon as we identify some kind of beneficial knowledge, we can conclude that it is wisdom. The argument from (C1) to (C2), then, is valid after all.<sup>10</sup>

Unfortunately, this way of remedying the argument will not work, for it relies on an implausible interpretation of 281d-e. In chapter 3, I argued that at 281d-e, Socrates is expressing what Irwin calls ‘The Moderate View’:

*The Moderate View:* “When Socrates says that the recognized goods are not goods ‘in themselves’, he means that they are not goods when they are divorced from wisdom. When he concludes that wisdom is the only good, he

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<sup>10</sup> Even ignoring the textual considerations below, this would not guarantee a valid inference. Perhaps there are two or more distinct descriptions of beneficial knowledge, only one of which is satisfied by some actual kind of knowledge. If so, there is no guarantee that, having arrived at one description of beneficial knowledge, we have arrived at a description of beneficial knowledge that is satisfied by some actual kind of knowledge. We may yet need to search for another description of beneficial knowledge.

means simply that only wisdom is good all by itself, apart from any combination with other things.”<sup>11</sup>

On this view, there are two different ways something can be good (and so beneficial). One is to be “good all by itself”, as wisdom alone is. But the recognized goods (and so the various kinds of knowledge that produce them) can be good when they are conjoined with wisdom. So, merely identifying a beneficial kind of knowledge does not rule out the possibility that this knowledge is good only when it is conjoined with wisdom, rather than simply being wisdom.

This points to a scope ambiguity in the crucial fourth premise:

(4) Knowledge of how to produce and use some conventional good(s) is beneficial.

For the premise to lead to (C2), it must be read as follows:

*(4\*) Only a sort of knowledge that is of both how to produce some conventional good(s) and how to use that (those) very same good(s) is beneficial. (The ‘only’ is added to get to the necessity claim in (C2).)*

But The Moderate View suggests that this reading is false. Alternatively, we might

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<sup>11</sup> Irwin 1995, p. 57.

read this premise as follows:

*(4\*\*) Knowledge of how to produce some conventional good(s), together with knowledge of how to use that (those) very same good(s), is beneficial.*

On this reading, not only is knowledge of how to use some conventional good valuable, but also knowledge of how to produce some conventional good is valuable (when conjoined with wisdom). For example knowledge of how to use health correctly (i.e. wisdom) is valuable, but so is knowledge of how to produce health (i.e. medicine), when it is conjoined with wisdom. The difference between (4\*) and (4\*\*) is that (4\*) allows only one sort of knowledge which ranges over both making and using, while (4\*\*) allows for one sort of knowledge to range over making, and another over using. The trouble is that only (4\*) entails (C2), but only (4\*\*) could be true on the most plausible reading of 281d-e.

(C2), then, is not motivated by the argument up to this point. The argument up to this point suggests that (4\*) is false, for it suggests that wisdom is valuable by virtue of guaranteeing correct use, while other crafts are valuable by virtue of providing the things which are correctly used by wisdom. This entails that the making and the correctly using of some thing can fall under different crafts. But (4\*) entails that the making and correctly using of some thing must fall under the same craft, and so runs counter to the earlier argument. Since (4\*) is required for the inference to (C2), (C2) is not motivated by the argument to this point. Indeed, since the argument

has so far suggested precisely that the making and correctly using of some thing can fall under different crafts, it thereby suggests that (4\*) is false. But if (4\*) is false and is a necessary condition for (C2), then (C2) is false as well. (4\*\*), on the other hand, allows for making and correct use to come apart, but does not support (C2). Since it is (4\*\*), rather than (4\*), which is supported by the whole argument to this point, we should be sceptical of (C2). (C2) is far stronger than the argument warrants; so strong, that it seems false in light of the argument that is supposed to entail it.

#### 4.2.3. . . . and leads to *aporia*.

Not only is (C2) too strong, but it is precisely the introduction of (C2) that leads to the *aporia* of the second protreptic. That this is so is easily seen if only we recognize that there is a single investigative strategy through the rest of the passage: Find a craft that satisfies (C2). Not surprisingly, given what we have learned in the *Euthydemus* so far, none is to be found. When this strategy fails, Socrates and Clinias throw up their hands and return control of the discussion to the brothers. Here I want to substantiate the claim that it is precisely this strategy – to find a craft that satisfies (C2) – that is employed in the entire investigation.

Having agreed on (C2), Socrates gives an example of the sort of craft that will obviously not satisfy this constraint.

Then it seems not at all needful for us to become lyre makers and skilled in some such knowledge as that. For there the art which makes is one thing and that which uses is another; they are quite distinct although they deal with the same thing. There is a great difference between lyre making and lyre playing, isn't there?  
He agreed.

And it is equally obvious that we stand in no need of the art of flute making, since this is another of the same kind.  
He said yes. (289c; Sprague trans.)

Neither lyre making nor flute making satisfies (C2), for in each case the craft of making a thing is clearly different from the craft of using that same thing. Now that the obvious has been set out as an example, Socrates turns to a variety of less obvious cases. First, he puts the craft of speech writing as a candidate, later saying that “it was in this connection [to speech writing] that I expected the very knowledge we have been seeking all this time would put in an appearance” (289d; Sprague trans.). But Clinias points out that the crafts of making (i.e. writing) speeches and using (i.e. delivering) speeches are distinct. As proof, he explains that some people are skilled at writing speeches but not at delivering them, while others are skilled at delivering the speeches others have written, but are unable to write their own. And in this respect speeches are just like lyres, for some people are skilled at making lyres but not at playing them, while others are skilled at playing the lyres others have made, but are unable to make their own. Thus, concerning speeches the crafts of making and using are distinct, and so speech writing fails to satisfy (C2). Socrates grants that by showing that it fails to satisfy (C2), Clinias (who is notably taking a more and more active role in the discussion) has given “sufficient grounds for stating that the art of speech writing is not the one a man would be happy if he acquired” (289d; Sprague trans.).

Speech writing having failed the test, Socrates forwards another candidate:  
“The art of generalship seems to me, I said, to be the one which, more than any other,

a man would be happy if he acquired” (290b; Sprague trans.). Again, Clinias objects. Generalship, is a species of hunting: man hunting. Clinias argues that generalship fails to satisfy (C2) because: (I) no hunting craft will satisfy (C2); and (II) generalship is a hunting craft. Just in case we missed the point, he explicitly identifies the problem as a failure to satisfy (C2) in passage (III).

- (I) No art of actual hunting, he said, extends any further than pursuing and capturing: whenever the hunters catch what they are pursuing they are incapable of using it, but they and the fishermen hand over their prey to the cooks. And again, geometers and astronomers and calculators (who are hunters too, in a way, for none of these make their diagrams; they simply discover those which already exist), since they themselves have no idea of how to use their prey but only how to hunt it, hand over the task of using their discoveries to the dialecticians – at least, those of them do so who are not completely senseless. (290b-c; Sprague trans.)<sup>12</sup>
- (II) And the same is true of the generals, he said. Whenever they capture some city, or a camp, they hand it over to the statesmen – for they themselves have no idea of how to use the things they have captured – just in the same way, I imagine, that quail hunters hand theirs over to quail keepers. (290d; Sprague trans.)
- (III) So, he said, if we are in need of that art which will itself know how to use what it acquires through making or capturing, and if it is an art of this sort which will make us happy, then, he said, we must look for some other art besides that of generalship. (290d; Sprague trans.)

So, two apparently likely candidates have been dismissed. Crito breaks into the conversation to express his doubt that Clinias said such sophisticated things, and the conversation, while clearly meant to parallel the one with Clinias, is now carried

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<sup>12</sup> This reference to mathematicians and dialecticians has garnered attention for several reasons, on which I cannot here elaborate beyond merely mentioning two. First, it is reminiscent of *Republic* 7. Is this a reference *back to* the *Republic* passage? Or is it an early expression of an idea that later gets developed in the *Republic*? (On the relevance of this passage to the dating of the *Euthydemus*, see chapter 2.) Second, it raises questions about whose ideas are really being expressed at this stage of the dialogue. Crito expresses scepticism a few lines later that it was really Clinias who said these things. Did the young Clinias, who has had little to say until now, really express such a sophisticated position? Or was this Socrates’ idea, put into the mouth of Clinias only during the retelling?



on between Socrates and Crito. Rather than going through the whole story, Socrates gives the short version, confessing to Crito that they never found the craft they were looking for and that every time they thought they were about to find it, it escaped from them as if they were just children chasing larks in a field. Finally, though, they came to the craft of ruling, thinking that “it might be the one which both provided and created happiness” (291b; Sprague trans.). But there they fell into a “labyrinth”, finding at what they thought would be the ending of their investigation that they were really just back at the beginning. Here is how their investigation of the craft of ruling went.

First, they agreed that the statesman’s craft and the craft of ruling are the same. This craft seemed a likely candidate for wisdom because generalship and other crafts handed over their products to the craft of ruling, as if the craft of ruling alone knew how to use these products and was the cause of right action in the state. So far, so good: The parallels to wisdom in the first protreptic are clear, since wisdom there appeared as the knowledge which guarantees the right use of conventional goods (i.e., the products of other crafts). But problems arise when we consider the craft of ruling in light of (C2).

The craft of ruling, as a craft, must have a specifiable product.<sup>13</sup> If it is identical to wisdom, then its product must be good, for unlike medicine and money-making, wisdom is always good. So, it cannot simply provide us with conventional goods, for these are not always good. Notice that the craft of ruling already runs the

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<sup>13</sup> See characteristic 3 in section 4.1, above.

risk of violating (C2), for it was just agreed that the other crafts hand their products over to this one to be used, but it is clear that the product of the craft of ruling cannot simply be those conventional goods that were handed over to it. We might think, based on the first protreptic and on the continued talk of wisdom making people happy, that its product is happiness. But this cannot be, because happiness just isn't the sort of thing that can be *used*, and so if happiness is the product of the craft of ruling, this craft will never be able to use what it makes. So down this route, too, we risk violating (C2). Given (C2), the product of the craft of ruling cannot be either conventional goods or happiness.

This forces the investigators into an odd position. If the craft of ruling cannot produce either conventional goods (because they are only conditionally good) or happiness (because it cannot be used), yet must nevertheless produce something good, then what else could it produce besides *itself*? What other good is left on the table, besides wisdom itself? If the craft of ruling is wisdom, then its product must be none other than itself.

But this, too, is an unhappy path, for how can we give any content to this idea? If I am already wise, then it does me no good for wisdom simply to be producing itself in me. That neither adds to my own state, nor does it look much like the wisdom that was described in the first protreptic. So, perhaps we should understand wisdom producing itself to mean that the wise make others wise. Now it might appear that by the wise making others wise, some benefit has been added to the world. And it might appear that this is a case that satisfies (C2): Wisdom uses itself to produce itself. But

setting aside for the moment the general worry that this too looks little like the wisdom described in the first protreptic, a more immediate worry arises. Scratch beyond the surface and it is clear that there is little content to this characterization of wisdom. What do the wise give to others? Apparently, only the ability to make still others wise? And what do these get? Only the ability to make still others wise. But what good wisdom does for any individual is left completely unexplained, and perhaps even unexplainable. To go back to the more general worry, all the apparent good-making properties of wisdom from the first protreptic have disappeared from view, and it is no longer clear how it could be good at all. As Socrates puts the problem:

And in what respect will they be good and in what respect useful, as far as we are concerned? Or shall we go on to say that they will make others good and that these others will do the same to still others? But in what conceivable way they are good is in no way apparent to us, especially since we have discredited what are said to be the results of the statesman's art [conventional goods like making the citizens rich and free and without faction]. It is altogether a case of the proverbial "Corinthus, son of Zeus", and, as I was saying, we are in just as great difficulties as ever, or even worse, when it comes to finding out what that knowledge is which will make us happy. (292d-e; Sprague trans.)

Here the second (and final) protreptic section ends, as Socrates hands the conversation back to the brothers with a plea to show him which craft wisdom is. Every plausible candidate for wisdom has been tried and found lacking, including the most plausible craft of ruling. The failure to identify wisdom is quite serious, for it is not simply that a few candidates for wisdom have failed. Rather, the whole project has been cast into serious doubt. The point I want to emphasize at this stage is that in every case, including the final one, (C2) played the decisive role in ruling out each candidate, and thereby in casting doubt upon the whole project.

### 4.3. *For the craft analogy and against the sufficiency thesis*

I have argued that Socrates (a) employs the craft analogy throughout the second protreptic and (b) adopts (C2) – the constraint that wisdom must make and use the same thing – despite the fact that it is stronger than the argument warrants and figures decisively in the unsuccessful result of the investigation. But what should we make of this? Should we reject one or both of the craft analogy and (C2)? Should we suppose that the character Socrates and/or the author Plato is tangled in a problem that he cannot see his way out of? Or should we suppose that we are purposefully being led to discover our own way out of the problem? Clearly on Platonic grounds the answers to these questions are very important, for they concern the possibility of achieving wisdom and the character of wisdom, and thereby are fundamental to how we ought to order our lives.

Perhaps the most common interpretation is to suppose that Plato is rejecting the craft analogy. Though such an interpretation is not inextricably tied to a developmentalist view of the Platonic corpus, it is also common to suppose that in rejecting the craft analogy, Plato is rejecting a position that was wholeheartedly endorsed by the Socrates of the “early” dialogues. Furthermore (though, again, not tied inextricably to these other positions), it is natural on such a view to suppose that the character Socrates is still wholeheartedly endorsing the craft analogy throughout the *Euthydemus*, but that Plato is showing us the unresolvable problems to which his teacher’s view leads.

The most important part of this general interpretation is that the second protreptic is Plato's critique of the craft analogy, for without this the theses about developmentalism and about the motives and commitments of author and character never get off the ground. So, I shall narrow my focus to the claim that here Plato is rejecting the craft analogy. Paradigmatic of this interpretation is Rosamond Kent Sprague's work on the *Euthydemus*.<sup>14</sup> Sprague distinguishes first-order and second-order crafts. First-order crafts like carpentry and shoemaking have an easily identifiable product. The products of second-order crafts like politics are less obvious, if they are productive at all. The problem with the second protreptic, then, is that it tries to force the characteristics of first-order crafts on the craft of ruling, which is second-order. Since first-order crafts are productive, it is concluded that the craft of ruling must be productive. And since first-order crafts fail to be beneficial by virtue of not being able to use correctly what they produce, it is concluded that the craft of ruling must correctly use what it produces. But second-order crafts do not, in fact, share all the characteristics of first-order crafts, according to Sprague, and it is just this demand to make the craft of ruling share all the characteristics of first-order crafts that leads to the failure of the second protreptic.

Hawtreys<sup>15</sup> follows Sprague here:

In fact Plato is here [in the requirement that "the required art/branch of knowledge must be one that both makes something and knows how to use

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<sup>14</sup> Sprague 1976, ch. 4. For the same general view, though incorporating a variety of different details, see also Hawtreys 1981, p. 122; Chance 1992, pp.126-9; Roochnik 1996, pp. 150-177; and Parry 2003, p. 15; but see p. 22ff.

<sup>15</sup> Hawtreys 1981, 122.

what it itself makes”] setting up the failure of the search, which will end in a regress because of the impossibility of finding an object for the supreme ἐπιστήμη (292d8 οἷ τί ἔσονται ἡμῶν ἀγαθοὶ καὶ τί χρήσιμοι;). Doubtless one of the lessons that the reader is expected to infer from this conversation is that it is a mistake to expect this supreme form of knowledge to be in all respects parallel to ordinary crafts.”

Chance<sup>16</sup> also seems to follow Sprague here in putting the emphasis on the failure of the craft of ruling to produce: “[W]e can foresee where the kingly art is in danger of running aground. As a using science, it depends upon its subordinate arts for its products, but to meet the agreed-upon formula, it must also produce.”

Sprague usefully points to the idea that the requirement that the craft of ruling produce and use what it produces causes problems. Indeed, I think it presents the central problem. But I see little reason to think that a distinction between first- and second-order crafts is at issue in the *Euthydemus*. Neither wisdom nor the craft of ruling is ever described as a craft of crafts, nor in any other way that suggests that it is of an entirely different order. Wisdom is higher than the other crafts, in that all the other crafts turn over their products to wisdom for correct use. But the fact that it is higher does not entail that it is of a different order any more than lyre-playing is shown to be of a different order than lyre-making because lyre-makers turn over their product to be used by lyre-players. Lyre-playing is higher by virtue of this fact, but not thereby second-order.

While Sprague, Hawtrey, and Chance are each hitting around the idea that the problem with the investigation is that no craft satisfies (C2), each of them thinks that

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<sup>16</sup> Chance 1992, 125.

this is because the supreme craft – the craft of ruling – has no product. That is, it fails because it is unlike ordinary crafts. It is thus the assumption of the craft analogy that leads to the failure. I will argue instead that it fails to satisfy (C2) not because (C2) requires production, but because it requires that the same craft *produce and use the very same thing*. But this is not a requirement that comes from the craft analogy. Indeed, the craft analogy suggests quite the opposite, and points to a relatively straightforward solution. I will suggest instead that the thesis that virtue is sufficient for happiness motivates (C2), and it is thus the sufficiency thesis, and not the craft analogy, that leads to trouble.

#### 4.3.1. *The craft analogy points to a solution . . .*

Recall the six features of crafts supported by the *Euthydemus* and other dialogues:<sup>17</sup>

1. *Crafts are kinds of knowledge.*
2. *Crafts have a specified domain.*
3. *Crafts have one or more specified products.*
4. *Crafts tend to be arranged in hierarchies.*
5. *A craft is value-neutral in the sense that it does not itself guarantee that its product will be used correctly and so produce benefit.*
6. *A craft is teachable.*

Wisdom has each of these features.

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<sup>17</sup> See section 4.1.

1. That wisdom is a kind of knowledge is clear from the fact that throughout the protreptic sections of the *Euthydemus* ‘wisdom’ (σοφία) and ‘knowledge’ (ἐπιστήμη) are used interchangeably.
2. Just as medicine is set over the domain of human health and illness, so wisdom is set over the domain of human well-being and ill-being generally. Or, to put it as it is frequently expressed outside the *Euthydemus*, wisdom is set over good and evil.<sup>18</sup> Additional support that this is the domain of wisdom also comes from the next feature.
3. Wisdom has a specific product: human happiness. This idea is pervasive in both protreptic sections. Wisdom “makes men fortunate in every case” (280a); “provides men not only with good fortune but also with well-doing, in every case of possession and action” (281b); makes other things good (i.e., makes them contribute to human happiness) (281d); is “the source of rightness and good fortune,” which is in turn the source of happiness (282a); “is the only existing thing which makes a man happy and fortunate (282c); “is the [craft] which, more than any other, a man would be happy if he acquired” (290b);<sup>19</sup> is “the [craft] which both provides and creates happiness” (291b); is “the [craft] that benefits them and makes them happy” (292c); is “the knowledge which will make us happy” (292e).

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<sup>18</sup> See chapter 1, section 1.3.2, for the argument that wisdom is the whole of virtue, and that the whole of virtue is knowledge of good and evil.

<sup>19</sup> This is said of generalship in support of its candidacy as wisdom.



4. Wisdom is arranged at the top of the hierarchy of crafts. Its product is the ultimate goal of all humans (278e); it provides correct use of (281a-b) and “controls” (281e) the products of all other crafts; it is the craft which does not hand over its product to a higher craft (289c-291c); to it the other crafts “hand over the management of the products of which they themselves were the craftsmen. . . . It is the cause of right action in the state and . . . sits at the helm of the state, governing all things, ruling all things, and making all things useful”<sup>20</sup> (291c-d).

These four features give us the resources to find a solution to the failure. (I will return to the last two features momentarily). The principle that leads to failure, (C2), requires that wisdom use and make something. Does it? We can get clearer on the answer by considering ordinary crafts. Consider carpentry. Does it both make and use something? The question suffers a scope-ambiguity (and so would make a perfect set-up for an eristic argument). If the question is whether carpentry makes and uses the same thing, then the answer is surely ‘no’. But if the question is whether carpentry makes something and uses something, where the two things are not necessarily the same, then the answer is surely ‘yes’. For carpentry uses tools and wood to make things like tables that are handed over to others for use. Likewise the smith’s craft uses fire and raw materials to make things - hammers, weapons, etc. - which are then handed over to carpenters and generals for use. In general, we can conclude in good

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<sup>20</sup> This is said of the craft of ruling in support of its candidacy as wisdom.

Socratic fashion, every craft uses one thing (or more than one) and makes something different, handing over what it makes to other crafts to be used. This alone should lead us to suspect (C2), given that we have endorsed the craft analogy.

There are two places where we might expect the pattern to break down a bit. Since this sort of making and using is compatible with, and even suggestive of, a hierarchical arrangement of crafts, with lower crafts handing over their products to higher crafts to be used, it is possible that there would be one or more crafts at the bottom of the hierarchy and one or more crafts at the top. If a craft is at the bottom of the hierarchy, then it would not use the product of another craft. Instead, it might use a product of nature. Some species of hunting might be such crafts. For example, ‘noodling’ is still practiced in parts of the southern United States. Noodling is the practice of catching rather large catfish using one’s fingers as bait. One’s fingers are used and a fish is produced, and then handed over to the cook to fry. Whether or not there are actually proper crafts at the bottom of the hierarchy is not important. What is important is the possibility of a craft at the top of the hierarchy. Such a craft would be productive and useful, like all the other crafts. But while it would use the products of lower crafts, its product would not in turn be used by other crafts. Indeed, we should expect that a craft that is at the top of the hierarchy not merely accidentally but by its nature will make a product that is by nature not of a sort to be usable.

We are now in a position to see that the craft analogy leaves open the possibility of a craft which is by nature at the top of the hierarchy, uses the products of lower crafts, and makes a product which is not usable. So, let us return to wisdom.

Suppose that wisdom is at the top of the hierarchy of crafts. It would, then, use the products of the other crafts - health, wealth, etc. - to produce something. And both protreptic sections are saturated with claims that indicate that the product of wisdom is happiness. Just as we would expect from our above consideration of the crafts, happiness is not the sort of thing that is usable. That is, with happiness we have reached the ultimate goal which need not in turn be employed in the service of some higher goal. Happiness is, by nature, the highest goal.

So, to sum up the results so far, a way out of the *aporia* is suggested by a serious consideration of the craft analogy. The way out is to reject (C2). This clears the way to understand the things which wisdom uses to be the conventional goods listed in the first protreptic, while the product of wisdom is happiness. Happiness is what was sought all along, and it is not the sort of thing to be handed over to be used by another craft. So, the *aporia* can be avoided. This is not, of course to say that the investigation can be concluded. This leaves much about wisdom yet to be discovered. But it specifies what wisdom is in the same sense that we can specify what medicine is by saying it is the craft (i.e., knowledge) whose domain is human health and illness; whose product is health; which uses the products of (at least) smithery (surgical tools), cookery (nutrition), and pharmacy (therapeutic drugs); and which hands its product over to be used by wisdom or ignorance, for benefit or harm, as the case may be. Likewise, wisdom is the craft (i.e., knowledge) whose domain is human well-being and ill-being generally (i.e. good and evil) ; whose product is human happiness; which uses the products of a great variety of crafts including medicine, money-making, and

many others; and which does not hand over its product for use by any other craft, because its product is by nature the highest end and not of a sort to be used.

Though the first four features of wisdom as a craft are enough to show a way out of the *aporia*, it is worth showing that wisdom has the final two features as well. After all, if wisdom lacks these two features, that might be taken to cast doubt on whether wisdom really has the other features. Moreover, it might be thought that these two features are among the most problematic to attribute to wisdom. How could wisdom, the only unconditional good, be value-neutral? And what evidence do we have that wisdom is teachable? Though each of these questions is worthy of (and has many times been the subject of) its own extended treatment, I address each question only briefly here.

5. Wisdom itself is value-neutral. Crafts are value-neutral in two related senses. First, crafts cannot guarantee that their products which are handed over to other crafts will be used for good rather than evil. This sort of value-neutrality does not apply to wisdom, for wisdom does not hand over its product to other crafts, and since its product is not something usable, it is not subject to misuse. But this, far from being a violation of the craft analogy, is exactly what we should expect, since a central feature of crafts is that they are arranged hierarchically. But wisdom is properly value-neutral in a second sense. Knowledge is knowledge of opposites. For example, a skilled carpenter not only knows best how to make a sturdy bed, but also knows best how to make a bed that will fall apart the first time

someone lies on it. And a skilled physician is not only best able to cause health, but also best able to cause disease. Likewise, a wise person not only knows how to produce happiness, but also how to produce misery. This should be unsurprising: the same knowledge of good and evil is required in each case, just as the same knowledge of health and disease is required to produce either one. Health and disease are two sides of the same knowledge-coin, as are good and evil. So, wisdom itself is equally capable of producing happiness or misery, and so counts as value-neutral.

How, then, is wisdom an unconditional good? Is it not sometimes good and sometimes bad, depending on whether it produces happiness or misery? It is not, but rather always good. This is because of an additional psychological fact about humans. As a matter of unchangeable psychological fact, all humans always aim at happiness above all else, and therefore aim away from misery above all else. Wisdom just is the knowledge of how to produce the former and the latter. As a matter of psychological fact, then, (and not as a matter of something strictly internal to the craft of wisdom itself), no wise person would ever aim at misery rather than happiness. Wisdom itself is value-neutral, though given universal facts about human psychology its application is never value-neutral.

6. In the *Euthydemus*, wisdom is simply assumed to be teachable. This is explicit at 282c. But someone might think that this assumption is stated in such a way as to leave it open to later revision. For any sort of general case, we have to turn outside of the dialogue. Here I limit myself to three considerations that make it plausible to think that wisdom is teachable. First, Socrates' actual method in the Socratic dialogues of attempting to acquire knowledge, including moral knowledge or wisdom, is to find someone who knows and learn from them. Second, in the *Republic* we still find evidence that wisdom is teachable, for philosopher-kings are required to go through a rigorous and highly structured program of education in order to acquire the wisdom to rule the city. Finally, much of the argument in the last third of the *Meno* proceeds from the claim that something is knowledge just in case it is teachable. While this section of the *Meno* is perhaps the passage that has garnered the most attention for suggesting that wisdom/virtue is not teachable, never is the biconditional that something is knowledge just in case it is teachable questioned. Indeed, arguments that virtue is not knowledge are based on this biconditional. But in the *Euthydemus*, wisdom is clearly taken to be knowledge, and so should be taken to be teachable as well.

4.3.2. . . . *but the sufficiency thesis leads to aporia.*

Now that we understand how the *aporia* arises, it will be useful to ask why it arises at all. What is its function in the dialogue? Why does Plato write this episode? A first suggestion is that, just as Socrates directed the first protreptic about pursuing knowledge in response to the sophists' contradictory conclusions about learning, he directs the second protreptic in response to their claims that there is no false speaking, contradiction, or ignorance. We frequently see Plato's Socrates knocking down interlocutors' false pretensions to wisdom. Hugh Benson has argued that this is a key part of his fulfillment of his divine mission.<sup>21</sup> Before the ignorant will pursue wisdom, they must become aware of their need to do so. Perhaps, then, in the wake of a number of eristic arguments for the impossibility of error or ignorance, Socrates thinks it appropriate to remind Clinias of how little he knows.

There is a more important insight to be gained, though, by asking what motivation Plato might have for having Socrates make the specific claim that wisdom must make and know how to use the same thing. While it does arise in the context of considering other crafts like finance and medicine, nothing to this point entails this principle. And this principle is the very one that leads to trouble. So why have Socrates accept it?

I propose the following way to understand this passage. In the first protreptic, Plato has argued that wisdom is necessary for happiness. It is so because happiness requires having many conventional goods and using them rightly, while using them

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<sup>21</sup> Benson 2000, ch. 2.

rightly requires wisdom. But notice that the first protreptic does not entail that having wisdom is sufficient for happiness. One might be wise but possess little which wisdom can use. In this case, one will be worse off than one who is wise and has much. Indeed, for all we know from the first protreptic, a man who is wise but possesses very little - i.e. is poor, ill, ugly, etc. - in addition to not being extremely happy, may even fail to meet the minimum standards for happiness.

But if wisdom could guarantee possession of the things it knows how to use, then it would be sufficient for happiness. It could guarantee possession of the things it knows how to use if it knew how to make them.<sup>22</sup> So, I suggest that the principle that wisdom must make and use the same thing functions to test whether wisdom is sufficient for happiness. We find in the second protreptic that it is the adoption of this principle leads to failure. This gives us reason to reject the principle.

Whether Plato meant (C2) to function as a test of the sufficiency thesis, and whether he meant for us to discover this and as a result reject the sufficiency thesis, are issues that are beyond me. As much as I like to think that I have special access to the inside of Plato's head, in my soberer moments I recognize how elusive any such access is. As I see it, there are two main possibilities.

Perhaps Plato introduces (C2) with the intention of using it to test the sufficiency thesis. If so, then in showing us that (C2) results in failure, Plato is showing us that we should reject the sufficiency thesis. Why would he not come right out and make explicit the connection between (C2) and the sufficiency thesis?

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<sup>22</sup> And how to produce the tools required to make them, and how to produce the tools required to make these tools, and so on all the way down.



Perhaps because he recognizes the value of readers figuring it out for themselves, or perhaps because he takes the sufficiency thesis to be the historical Socrates' view, and he hesitates to criticize his teacher in a blunt and open manner. This is hardly a rock-solid argument for the view that Plato intentionally, but not explicitly, shows how the sufficiency thesis results in *aporia* so that careful readers will reject the sufficiency thesis. But it is on just as solid ground as the standard view, according to which Plato intentionally, but not explicitly, shows how the craft analogy results in *aporia* so that careful readers will reject the craft analogy. Indeed, it is on more solid ground, for far from resulting in the *aporia*, the craft analogy provides the resources to avoid it.

Alternatively, perhaps Plato is working through an issue that really is puzzling to him. Even though the sufficiency thesis does not seem to be in view in the first protreptic, and not only fails to follow from the arguments of the first protreptic but actually seems in tension with them, something very much like the sufficiency thesis pervades the air. Socrates says things in other dialogues that many have taken to suggest or actually express the sufficiency thesis, and it is highly probable that the historical Socrates said similar things. Aristotle was keen to emphasize the self-sufficiency of happiness and the happy man, even while he rejected the sufficiency thesis. But this is a fairly subtle distinction, and certainly the average Athenian would have praised the self-sufficiency of the virtuous, perhaps expressing it in language that seemed to express the sufficiency thesis. Plato himself is quite enamored with the power of wisdom, and perhaps this coupled with the general philosophical and culture background of the times led him unwittingly to overreach in stating (C2).

By temperament, I prefer the first alternative – that Plato is, with eyes wide-open, testing the sufficiency thesis and finding it lacking. But temperament is perhaps a poor guide to truth, and here I will say only that those who felt justified in accepting the methodology of the standard view should feel no less justified in accepting the methodology embodied by the first alternative. At least they will now enjoy the added bonus of having correctly identified the source of the *aporia*. And those who accept the second alternative, or remain agnostic between the two, should not hesitate to join the rest of us in drawing an important philosophical conclusion: Whatever Plato's actual motivation, it is clear at least that the sufficiency thesis would motivate (C2). And (C2) leads to the *aporia*. Or, perhaps more fairly, (C2) in conjunction with the craft analogy leads to the *aporia*. But we have abundant evidence in the *Euthydemus* for the craft analogy, and very little evidence for the sufficiency thesis. This is good reason to think that, whatever Plato actually does, he should retain the craft analogy but reject the sufficiency thesis.

## Chapter 5: Felix Socrates?

### 5.1. Felix Socrates

In his justly acclaimed *Socrates: Ironist and Moral Philosopher*, Gregory Vlastos included a brief epilogue titled “Felix Socrates”.<sup>1</sup> It is worth quoting at some length.

Confronting an imaginary detractor who reviles him for having lived in a way which now puts him in danger of being executed as a criminal, [Socrates] replies:

*Ap.* 28b-d: “Man, you don’t speak well if you believe that someone worth anything at all would give countervailing weight to danger of life or death or give consideration to anything but this when he acts: whether his action is just or unjust, the action of a good or of an evil man. Mean, on your view, would be those demigods who died in Troy, the rest of them and the son of Thetis . . . Do you think *he* gave any thought to life or death?”

. . . Achilles gambles happiness for honor, prepared to lose. And lose he does. He dies grief-stricken. . . . So too other heroic figures in the tragic imagination of the Greeks die overwhelmed by grief. Antigone goes to her death in unrelieved gloom, fearing that even the gods have forsaken her. Alcestis is so devastated, she thinks of herself as having already “become nothing” before her death. But not Socrates.

In the whole of the Platonic corpus, nay in the whole of our corpus of Greek prose or verse, no happier life than his may be found. He tells the court how happy he has been plying daily his thankless elenctic task, expecting them to think what he tells them too good to be believed:

*Ap.* 38a: “And if I were to tell you that there can be no greater good for a man than to discourse daily about virtue and about those other things you hear me discuss, examining myself and others – for the unexamined life is not worth living by man – you will believe me even less.”

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<sup>1</sup> Vlastos 1991, pp. 233-235.

If we are to “count no man happy before the end,” we have Plato’s assurance that his hero’s happiness would meet that test:

*Phd.* 117b-c: “He took the cup most cheerfully, O Echeocrates, without any change of color or expression on his face . . . He drained it very easily, in good humor.”

Is this surprising? If you say that virtue matters more for your own happiness than does everything else put together, if this is what you say and what you mean – it is for real, not just talk – what is there to be wondered at if the loss of everything else for virtue’s sake leaves you light-hearted, cheerful? If you believe what Socrates does, you hold the secret of your happiness in your own hands. Nothing the world can do to you can make you unhappy.

In the quest for happiness the noblest spirits in the Greek imagination are losers: Achilles, Hector, Alcestis, Antigone. Socrates is a winner. He has to be. Desiring the kind of happiness he does, he can’t lose.

The lengthy quote is justified not only by Vlastos’ characteristically flowing prose, but also by how well he articulates a view that many readers of Plato have found compelling. Plato’s Socrates, contrary to what the majority of the jury thinks of him, contrary to what many of his interlocutors like Callicles and Thrasymachus think of him, and, indeed, contrary to what some later readers of Plato’s dialogues think of him, is – far from a misguided or misfortunate failure – a grand success. He has achieved happiness. Indeed, the central lesson to be learned from Socrates’ life is that happiness is achieved through the single-minded and relentless pursuit of virtue. It is precisely through his own practice of philosophy, of the pursuit of virtue, that Socrates achieved happiness.

Vlastos’ confidence in Socrates’ happiness comes primarily from two elements of Socrates’ speech in the *Apology*. On the one hand, Socrates makes various claims to the effect that the pursuit of virtue ought to dwarf all other pursuits. So at 28b-d

(quoted above), Socrates reveals his commitment that the pursuit of virtue ought to dwarf even the pursuit of survival. And this is not the only passage Vlastos could have cited. A bit later, Socrates famously tells the jurors how he would respond if they offered to acquit him on the condition that he cease to practice philosophy.

I will certainly not cease practicing philosophy and exhorting you and pointing out to whomever among you I ever happen upon that – speaking in my usual way – “You, good man, are an Athenian, of the city that is greatest and most esteemed for wisdom and power (εις σοφίαν καὶ ἰσχύν). Aren’t you then ashamed of your taking care to possess as much wealth as possible, as well as esteem and honor, while you take no care or thought for wisdom (φρονήσεως) and truth and the best condition of your soul (τῆς ψυχῆς ὅπως ὡς βελτίστη ἔσται)?” And if one of you disputes this and claims to care, I will not let him go or leave him immediately, but I will question, examine, and test him; and if it doesn’t seem to me that he has acquired virtue (κεκτηῖσθαι ἀρετήν), as he claims, I will reproach him because he treats the most valuable things as the least, and the inferior as the greater. I will do these things with whomever I happen upon, both young and old, and stranger and citizen, but more so with citizens because you are nearer relations to me. For the god commands these things – know that well – and I think there is no greater good for you (οὐδέν πω ὑμῖν μείζον ἀγαθὸν γενέσθαι) in the city than my service to the god. For I go around doing nothing other than persuading you, both young and old, to care for neither bodies nor wealth before or as zealously as for the most excellent condition of your soul (μήτε σωμάτων ἐπιμελεῖσθαι μήτε χρημάτων πρότερον μηδὲ οὕτω σφόδρα ὡς τῆς ψυχῆς ὅπως ὡς ἀρίστη ἔσται), saying, “Virtue does not come from wealth, but wealth and all the other goods for men – both private and public – come from virtue” (Οὐκ ἐκ χρημάτων ἀρετὴ γίγνεται, ἀλλ’ ἐξ ἀρετῆς χρήματα καὶ τὰ ἄλλα ἀγαθὰ τοῖς ἀνθρώποις ἅπαντα καὶ ἰδίᾳ καὶ δημοσίᾳ)<sup>2</sup>. *Ap.* 29d-30b

In this passage, Socrates makes it clear that the pursuit of virtue (the best/most excellent condition of the soul) ought to dwarf the pursuit of wealth, esteem and honor, and the excellent condition of the body. To place such things as wealth above

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<sup>2</sup> It is also possible to render this with a somewhat different sense, as in the Grube/Cooper translation: “Wealth does not bring about virtue, but virtue makes wealth and everything else good for men, both individually and collectively.” The choice between these translations is important, but does not affect the present point.

virtue, and to pursue such things more zealously, is to turn the proper value scheme on its head. Attaching the appropriate importance to virtue is such a benefit, and failure to do so such a shame, that, as Socrates tells us, he spends all his time going around exhorting and persuading people to care for virtue above such things as wealth. He does so in his customary manner of confronting others to elicit their claims to care for virtue above such things as wealth. When they make such claims, he questions and tests them, and reproaches them if he finds that their claims do not hold good. He goes so far as to claim that virtue is not only more important than wealth and other goods, but is actually the source of them, while they are not in turn a source of virtue. Clearly, Socrates does advocate the single-minded pursuit of virtue.

On the other hand, Socrates also makes various claims to the effect that the practice of philosophy, to which he devotes his life, is the greatest good or the thing that produces happiness. So at 38a (quoted above), Socrates says that there is no greater good than the daily discussion of virtue, in which Socrates wholeheartedly engages and encourages others to engage. But, plausibly, if this practice is the greatest good for humans, then those who engage in it – and thereby attain this highest good – are happy. Indeed, we might think that Socrates expresses this idea quite explicitly at 41b1-c7, when he describes what life in Hades might be like:

It would be a wonderful (θαυμαστή) way for me to spend my time whenever I met Palamedes and Ajax, the son of Telamon, and any other of the men of old who died through an unjust conviction, to compare my experience with theirs. I think it would be pleasant (οὐκ ἂν ἀηδές εἴη). Most important, I could spend my time testing and examining people there, as I do here, as to who among them is wise, and who thinks he is, but is not. What would one not give, gentlemen of the jury, for the opportunity to examine the man who led the

great expedition against Troy, or Odysseus, or Sisyphus, and innumerable other men and women one could mention? It would be an extraordinary happiness (ἀμήχανον ἂν εἴη εὐδαιμονίας) to talk with them, to keep company with them and examine them. In any case, they would certainly not put one to death for doing so. They are happier (εὐδαιμονέστεροι) there than we are here in other respects, and for the rest of time they are deathless, if indeed what we are told is true. (Grube trans.)

In this passage, Socrates imagines himself continuing in the afterlife in Hades his daily practice of philosophy. He imagines himself doing just what he is doing here: talking to people about virtue, and testing and examining those who think they are wise to see if they really are wise. The only apparent differences are the notariety of his interlocutors and the lack of limitations on how long this practice can continue, since the participants would be “deathless”. But if the limitless continuation of his current activities – albeit with more famous interlocutors – would be “extraordinary happiness”, then it seems that Socrates must be happy now and in this life, as well. For in this life he practices constantly the very same activities that are alleged to bring extraordinary happiness in the next life. If this is what brings happiness in the next life, it is plausible to think that this same thing brings happiness in this life, as well.

Vlastos is not the only luminary to make an explicit case that Socrates is happy. Thomas Brickhouse and Nicholas Smith argue this case as part of a comprehensive and original interpretation of Plato’s Socrates. They argue that happiness derives from good activity, and that one activity in particular stands out in Socrates’ life: his practice of philosophy, or the examination of himself and others.

It is precisely this activity, according to Socrates, that has made his life worthwhile. Socrates shows that he regards this activity as necessary for happiness when he says, “the unexamined life is not worth living for a human

being” (*Ap.* 38a5-6). He goes on to show that he thinks it is sufficient for happiness when he indicates that so long as he could engage in this activity, Socrates would consider himself happy: he would count it as an “inconceivable happiness” (*Ap.* 41c3-4) if death offers him the opportunity to pursue his mission with the dead in Hades.<sup>3</sup>

There is quite a bit of evidence, then, especially in the *Apology*, that seems to suggest that Socrates is happy. I count myself among Socrates’ many ardent admirers, and I dearly wish that this view of a successful, happy Socrates were accurate. But it is not. To be sure, it is neither wholly unmotivated nor wholly misleading. But its central claim, that Socrates was happy, is false by Socrates’ own lights.<sup>4</sup> Or so, at least, I will argue.

## 5.2. *A puzzle*

So, Socrates is wholeheartedly committed to the practice of philosophy – i.e. the pursuit of virtue – and makes various claims that suggest that this practice is the greatest good or the thing which provides happiness. Nevertheless, there is a serious problem with concluding that Socrates is happy. For Socrates believes that virtue consists in a sort of moral knowledge, and he repeatedly disavows moral knowledge. So, it looks as if there is evidence for the following claim:

- (1) Socrates lacks virtue (moral knowledge).

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<sup>3</sup> Brickhouse and Smith 1994, pp. 129-130.

<sup>4</sup> And Socrates’ own lights are the only lights that concern me in this chapter.



Furthermore, Vlastos himself attributes to Socrates the belief that virtue is necessary for happiness. And Vlastos is in the company of the majority of scholars on this matter.<sup>5</sup> So, it looks as if there is evidence for the following claim:

(2) Virtue (moral knowledge) is necessary for happiness.

If Socrates accepts both (1) and (2), then by his own lights he cannot be happy. But earlier it appeared from the *Apology* that we had evidence for the following claim:

(3) Socrates is happy.

Now we see that (1) – (3) are an inconsistent triad, each of which finds apparent support in the dialogues. Which, if any, shall we jettison? In the remainder of this chapter I will consider the merits of each claim in turn, arguing in the end that the weight of the evidence is in favor of jettisoning (3) and retaining (1) and (2). My argument will rely at crucial points on the interpretation of the *Euthydemus* I have articulated in earlier chapters.

### 5.3. *Solution 1: Deny that Socrates lacks virtue*

One possible solution to the puzzle is to deny that Socrates lacks virtue. If Socrates is virtuous, then there is no conflict between supposing that virtue is necessary for happiness and that Socrates is happy. As will become clear in the following section, Brickhouse and Smith would not accept such a solution. Their argument against the necessity of virtue for happiness depends on establishing that

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<sup>5</sup> See chapter 1, section 1.3.1, for a discussion.

Socrates lacks virtue but is nevertheless happy. But others, including Vlastos, might be inclined to such a solution, so it is worth investigating how it might go.

Certainly Socrates thinks that moral knowledge is necessary for virtue. Indeed, we can attribute a stronger position than that to Socrates: Virtue is moral knowledge (of a certain sort).<sup>6</sup> Evidence for that comes from all over the dialogues, where virtue itself, as well as individual virtues, are identified as knowledge of good and evil.<sup>7</sup> That, for Socrates, virtue is knowledge is a commonplace among scholars.<sup>8</sup> So one who would accept that Socrates is virtuous must suppose that he possesses the relevant knowledge. But there is an immediate problem with supposing such a thing: Socrates is famous for repeatedly disclaiming knowledge or wisdom. Here is a sampling of his disclaimers from his response in the *Apology* to the Delphic oracle's proclamation that no one is wiser than Socrates:

What is his riddle? I am very conscious that I am not wise at all; what then does he mean by saying that I am the wisest? . . . So I withdrew and thought to myself: "I am wiser than this man; it is likely that neither of us knows anything worthwhile, but he thinks he knows something when he does not, whereas when I do not know, neither do I think I know; so I am likely to be wiser than he to this small extent, that I do not think I know what I do not know. (*Ap.* 21b1-d7; Grube trans.)

The good craftsmen seemed to me to have the same fault as the poets: each of them, because of his success at his craft, thought himself very wise in other most important pursuits, and this error of theirs overshadowed the wisdom they had, so that I asked myself, on behalf of the oracle, whether I should prefer to be as I am, with neither their wisdom nor their ignorance, or to have both. The

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<sup>6</sup> I mean this to be compatible with views on which virtue is knowledge plus something else, like a certain affective state. For a defense of a view of affective states as important for Socratic moral psychology, see Brickhouse and Smith forthcoming.

<sup>7</sup> See e.g., *Laches* 199, *Charmides* 174, *Euthydemus* 288-292.

<sup>8</sup> See chapter 1, section 1.3.2, for a discussion of virtue as moral knowledge.

answer I gave myself and the oracle was that it was to my advantage to be as I am. *Ap.* 22d-e, Grube trans.

What is probable, gentlemen, is that in fact the god is wise and that his oracular response meant that human wisdom is worth little or nothing, and that when he says this man, Socrates, he is using my name as an example, as if he said: “This man among you, mortals, is wisest who, like Socrates, understands that his wisdom is worthless.” (*Ap.* 23a-b; Grube trans.)

Insofar as Socrates has any wisdom, it amounts only to a recognition of his own ignorance. It is precisely this that distinguishes him from the great majority of people. Such wisdom is worth little or nothing. If such wisdom is worth little or nothing, then it can hardly suffice for virtue, since virtue and wisdom and the best possible state of the soul are the “most important things” (*Ap.* 29d-30b).

Vlastos makes a famous distinction that, though he does not use it in this way, might be thought to solve this problem for those who would attribute virtue to Socrates.<sup>9</sup> The distinction arises from comparing passages like those from *Apology* 21-23 with passages in which Socrates claims to know something. For example, a little later in the *Apology* (29b6-c1), Socrates says:

I do know, however, that it is wicked and shameful to do wrong, to disobey one’s superior, be he god or man. I shall never fear or avoid things of which I do not know, whether they may not be good rather than things that I know to be bad. (Grube trans.)

This is not an isolated case. Consider, for example, the following two passages, in which Socrates does not explicitly claim some moral knowledge, but seems strongly to imply it:

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<sup>9</sup> Vlastos 1994, pp. 39-67.

And the mistaken act done without knowledge you must know is one done from ignorance. (*Prot.* 357d7-e1, Lombardo and Bell trans.)

Injustice is ignorance (no one could now be ignorant of that). (*Rep.* 351a5-6, Grube/Reeve trans.)

The passages in which Socrates seems to universally disavow moral knowledge, coupled with passages in which Socrates seems to avow some particular moral knowledge, led Vlastos to distinguish between certain knowledge and elenctic knowledge. Certain knowledge is what Socrates universally denies. Certain knowledge is distinguished from elenctic knowledge by its infallibility. Elenctic knowledge is true belief justified through the practice of elenctic examination. Since elenctic examination cannot yield certainty, truths justified through this process will be fallibly justified. When Socrates claims to know some particular moral truth, he is claiming to have elenctic knowledge of that truth. Since he is not universally disavowing knowledge in the same sense in which he avows knowledge of some particular truths, the tension disappears.

Such a distinction might appear useful to the one who wants to attribute virtue, and therefore moral knowledge, to Socrates, since it would allow one to attribute elenctic knowledge to Socrates while explaining away Socrates' universal disavowals as disavowals of certain knowledge. All that remains is to suppose that elenctic moral knowledge is the sort that constitutes (or is a sort sufficient to constitute) virtue, and there is a way to maintain the second solution in the face of Socrates' disavowals of knowledge.

Vlastos's distinction faces a variety of problems, and a significant literature has been devoted to assessing it.<sup>10</sup> Here, I am not concerned with assessing the distinction, but rather with assessing its applicability to our present puzzle. For, I will argue, even if the distinction successfully reconciles Socrates' avowals and disavowals of knowledge, it cannot successfully support the claim that Socrates is virtuous. There are at least three reasons to think that the distinction cannot support the claim that Socrates is virtuous: (i) Socrates' statements in the *Apology* about the value of his own wisdom differ radically from his statements about the value of virtue; (ii) The weaker sense of knowledge, elenctic knowledge, seems insufficient for virtue; (iii) Repeatedly, after arguing that wisdom is necessary for happiness, Socrates professes to be unable to identify what that wisdom is or to explain it to others, suggesting that he fails to possess the sort of wisdom that is necessary for happiness.

The first reason to doubt that Vlastos's distinction can solve our puzzle is the most straightforward. If the sort of knowledge or wisdom that Socrates does possess is the sort that constitutes virtue and is required for happiness, then we should expect that Socrates' would ascribe a similar value to his own wisdom and to virtue. But he does quite the opposite, ascribing radically different values to his own wisdom and to virtue. Of his own wisdom, he says that it is "worth little or nothing", attributing to the god a claim like the following: "This man among you, mortals, is wisest who, like Socrates, understands that his wisdom is worthless" (*Ap.* 23b2-4). What distinguishes

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<sup>10</sup> See, e.g., the discussions in Benson 2000, pp. 231-233, and Brickhouse and Smith 1994, ch. 2 (esp. pp. 35-36).

Socrates from the majority of people is that he sees his own wisdom for what it really is: something of little value, or perhaps even of no value at all.

This is in sharp contrast to the way he describes the value of virtue. Socrates thinks he has been given a divine mission to exhort the Athenians to pursue “wisdom, truth, [and] the best condition of the soul” (*Ap.* 29e). That is, he encourages them to pursue virtue, saying that wealth and all other goods for men come from virtue, rather than the other way around (*Ap.* 30b). He goes so far as to say that wisdom and virtue are “the most valuable things (τὰ πλείστου ἄξια)” (*Ap.* 30a1-2). But if wisdom and virtue merit a divine mission and count as the most valuable things, they can hardly be described as “worthless”. Whatever this virtue and wisdom that Socrates encourages the Athenians to pursue may be, it cannot be the same thing that Socrates thinks distinguishes him from the majority of people.

A second reason to doubt that Vlastos’s distinction can solve our puzzle is that weaker knowledge does not seem to be sufficient for virtue. Hugh Benson makes a compelling case for this.<sup>11</sup> It is nearly a commonplace among Socratic scholars that Socrates is committed to the view that moral knowledge is necessary and sufficient for virtue. Suppose that the moral knowledge in view here is elenctic knowledge, or the weaker, fallible sort of knowledge. We can make good enough sense of the view that such knowledge is necessary for virtue; even if the stronger sort of knowledge is necessary for virtue, surely the weaker sort would be necessary as well. But, Benson

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<sup>11</sup> Benson 2000, pp. 239-242.

argues, that the weaker sort of knowledge is sufficient for virtue is not nearly as plausible.

Take something that Socrates purportedly knows in the weaker sense, that disobeying one's superior is wrong. This knowledge alone will not suffice for virtuous action. At a bare minimum, argues Benson, Socrates will also need to know who his superiors are. But if this further knowledge is necessary for virtue, then the simple, elenctically known proposition that disobeying one's superior is wrong is not sufficient for virtue. A stronger sort of knowledge is needed if it is to be sufficient for virtue. Moreover, Benson argues that there is no reason to suppose that someone with the weaker sort of knowledge will always choose the virtuous action. For one, one often needs to know more than the general moral principle in order to act virtuously. For another, someone who has elenctically justified true belief that they recognize to be fallible may be overcome by "the lure of competing objects of desire", thus failing to act virtuously.<sup>12</sup> In the *Protagoras* Socrates argues that one would never knowingly choose a lesser good over a greater good. But this position becomes less plausible if the weaker sense of knowledge is in view. Finally, Benson argues that if Socrates thinks that the weaker sort of knowledge suffices for virtue, then it is surprising that he thinks that there are so few (maybe even no) virtuous people in Athens. For the oracle distinguishes Socrates' wisdom from that of others solely based on his recognition of his own ignorance. If Socrates does know some things, that knowledge cannot be the basis of the oracle's response, and so others must have the same sort of knowledge.

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<sup>12</sup> Benson 2000, p. 241.

But if such knowledge is sufficient for virtue, then others must be virtuous as well. But this does not seem to be Socrates' judgment of the Athenians virtue. If Benson is correct, then, supposing that Socrates considers the weaker sort of knowledge to be sufficient for virtue not only seems philosophically misguided (for it does not seem to really be sufficient), but also fits poorly with his view that no one ever chooses a lesser good over a greater good and with his low view of Athenian virtue.

A third reason to doubt that Vlastos's distinction can solve our puzzle is that Socrates repeatedly argues that wisdom is necessary for happiness,<sup>13</sup> and then goes on to suggest that he does not have wisdom. This is evidence that, whatever sort of wisdom is necessary for happiness, Socrates does not have it. So, for example, in the *Euthydemus* Socrates argues that wisdom is necessary for happiness, but then fails to be able to say what it is. But wisdom in the *Euthydemus* is clearly being conceived of as a craft,<sup>14</sup> and any true craftsman should be able to say what his craft is. At least, he should be able to identify the product of his craft; a physician would be able to say that his product is health, a cobbler that his product is shoes, and so on. But Socrates cannot do this, even after significant effort. So there is reason to think that Socrates does not have the wisdom that he argued was necessary for happiness. And there is no reason to think that Socrates is changing the subject here, talking about one kind of wisdom in the first protreptic and another in the second. Indeed, my analysis in the previous two chapters and the strong transitional ties between the protreptic sections (the second begins "where we left off" (288d)) demonstrate that it is the same kind of

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<sup>13</sup> See the following section for discussion of some of these texts.

<sup>14</sup> For the argument for this claim, see chapter 4.



wisdom at issue throughout. It is a wisdom that is necessary for happiness, but that Socrates lacks. And the *Euthydemus* is not an isolated case. In the *Charmides*, Socrates argues that knowledge is necessary for happiness (esp. 174b-d; more on this passage below), but then calls himself a “worthless inquirer” (176a) when he is unable to say what this knowledge is. Again, it seems unlikely that Socrates takes himself to have the sort of knowledge that he argues is necessary for happiness.

Given all these difficulties with supposing that Vlastos’s distinction can solve our puzzle, even granting that it successfully reconciles Socrates’ avowals and disavowals of knowledge, I propose we look elsewhere for a solution to the puzzle. Denying that Socrates lacks virtue is implausible. Let us turn to the other two solutions.

#### *5.4. Solutions 2 and 3: Deny the necessity of virtue or deny that Socrates is happy*

Brickhouse and Smith agree that Socrates lacks virtue, but they dissent from the majority view and reject (2), that virtue is necessary for happiness.<sup>15</sup> It is a clear Socratic commitment that moral knowledge is necessary for virtue. But Socrates repeatedly disclaims possessing moral knowledge. It follows that Socrates himself is not virtuous. But in the *Apology* Socrates claims to be good, and suggests that his goodness is sufficient for happiness. So, Socrates is happy. But if all this is correct, it follows that virtue is not necessary for happiness. Since Brickhouse and Smith’s case

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<sup>15</sup> See esp. Brickhouse and Smith 1994, pp. 123-134.

for rejecting (2) depends on making a positive case for (3), it will be useful to consider the second and third potential solutions together. I will argue that there are strong independent reasons to accept (2), but that the alleged independent evidence for (3) is much weaker and fails to establish (3).

Brickhouse and Smith's strategy is to argue that the *Apology* shows that one can be good and happy without being virtuous. Despite claiming at *Ap.* 21b1-d7 that he does not possess moral knowledge, Socrates seems to take himself to be both good and impervious to attempts to harm him. A few pages later, he tells the jury:

“Be sure that if you kill the sort of man I say I am, you will not harm me more than yourselves. Neither Meletus nor Anytus can harm me in any way; he could not harm me, for I do not think it is permitted that a better man be harmed by a worse; certainly he might kill me, or perhaps banish or disfranchise me, which he and maybe others think to be great harm, but I do not think so. I think he is doing himself much greater harm doing what he is doing now, attempting to have a man executed unjustly.” (*Ap.* 30c-d; Grube trans.)

And at the end of his trial, after he has been sentenced to death, Socrates exhorts the jury:

You too must be of good hope as regards death, gentlemen of the jury, and keep this one truth in mind, that a good man cannot be harmed either in life or in death, and that his affairs are not neglected by the gods. What has happened to me now has not happened of itself, but it is clear to me that it was better for me to die now and to escape from trouble. That is why my divine sign did not oppose me at any point.” (*Ap.* 41c-d; Grube trans.)

Since Socrates' goodness seems to guarantee that he cannot be harmed, and since one who is never harmed (and generally attains what is 'better') is plausibly thought to be

happy, Brickhouse and Smith conclude that Socrates is happy. But since Socrates' goodness does not consist in virtue, then virtue must not be necessary for happiness.

Despite its initial plausibility, Brickhouse and Smith depend too much, in my view, on considering these two brief passages in the *Apology* in isolation from the rest of the Platonic corpus. For there are several passages that suggest quite clearly that virtue is necessary for happiness. Perhaps the clearest of these is *Euthydemus* 277-282, which Brickhouse and Smith recognize is potentially problematic for their view.<sup>16</sup> This passage is standardly taken to be an argument for the necessity and sufficiency of virtue for happiness.<sup>17</sup> On my interpretation, Socrates does not argue, claim, or presuppose that virtue is sufficient for happiness. But he clearly argues that virtue is necessary for happiness.<sup>18</sup> Indeed, there seem to be at least two arguments for this claim. At 280b-281d, Socrates argues that wisdom is necessary for correct use, that correct use is necessary for benefit, and that benefit is necessary for happiness. From this he concludes that wisdom is necessary for happiness. And at 281d-e, Socrates argues that the goodness of all other things requires wisdom, and he has maintained throughout 277-282 that happiness requires goodness. From this he concludes that happiness requires wisdom. So we seem to have two explicit arguments for the second claim in our inconsistent triad.

Brickhouse and Smith attempt to downplay the apparent force of this passage in the *Euthydemus* by focusing on the central role of *correct use* in the argument. Two

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<sup>16</sup> Brickhouse and Smith 1994, pp. 130-131.

<sup>17</sup> See chapter 3.

<sup>18</sup> For the details of my interpretation, see chapter 3.

points are central to their treatment of the passage. First, because use is an activity, the importance of correct use seems to cohere nicely with Brickhouse and Smith's focus on virtuous activity, rather than virtue itself, as the thing that directly contributes to happiness.<sup>19</sup> Second, however, they argue that plainly virtue is not necessary for correct use, and so apparently we are not licensed to conclude on the basis of this passage that virtue is necessary for happiness, even if we are licensed to conclude that correct use is necessary for happiness. As evidence, they imagine a "well-intended, but not fully virtuous person who uses his money to buy wheat to sustain his body for several more hours of philosophical argument to dissuade someone who is thinking about becoming a sophist."<sup>20</sup> Suppose further that a fully virtuous person would do exactly the same thing with her money. Then it seems that both the virtuous and the non-virtuous person have used their money correctly, since (a) we can assume that the virtuous person has used her money correctly, and (b) both the virtuous and the non-virtuous person have used their money in exactly the same way. So, virtue is not necessary for correct use.

This analysis seems to ignore the strong way that Socrates makes his case:

Well then, in working and using things concerning wood, surely there is nothing else that produces correct use than knowledge of carpentry?"

"Clearly not," he said.

"And also in work concerning utensils the producer of the correctness is knowledge."

He agreed.

"Then," I said, "also concerning the use of the first of the goods we spoke of – wealth and health and beauty – was it knowledge which directed

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<sup>19</sup> See chapter 1, section 1.3.3.4 for a discussion of virtue and virtuous activity.

<sup>20</sup> Brickhouse and Smith 1994, p. 130.

and made our action correct with respect to using all such things correctly, or something else?”

“Knowledge,” he said.

“It seems then that knowledge provides men not only with good fortune but also with well-doing, in all possession and action.”

He agreed.

“Then, by Zeus,” I said, “is there any benefit from other possessions without intelligence and wisdom? (281a1-b6)

Socrates seems to hold that “there is nothing else that produces correct use than knowledge” in any given domain; that knowledge “directs and makes our action correct” with respect to using goods like wealth and health and beauty; that “knowledge provides men with well-doing [i.e., correct action] in all possession and action”; and that there is no “benefit from other possessions without intelligence and wisdom”. But these claims appear to be expressions of the necessity of wisdom or virtue for correct use, full stop. In the face of these claims, it is difficult to maintain that Socrates would deny that virtue is necessary for correct use.

Nevertheless, there is still something persuasive about the counterexample Brickhouse and Smith give to this principle. Let us suppose for a moment that, despite the appearances of 281a-b6, Socrates accepts such counterexamples as disproving the principle that virtue is necessary for correct use. Perhaps, then, Socrates would confess to having overstated his case. What he really means is that wisdom or virtue is the only thing that *reliably* produces correct use. Any other cases of correct use will be somehow accidental or lucky. His overstating the case could then be explained by his conviction that wisdom is required for consistent correct use, and that a life without consistent correct use is not a happy one. So, wisdom is necessary for the sort of consistent correct use that is necessary for happiness, but is

not necessary for every particular instance of correct use. Such a view would remain consistent with the protreptic aims of the passage – it still gives Clinias sufficient reason to pursue wisdom – and parallels nicely my interpretation of Socrates' earlier claim that wisdom produces good fortune.<sup>21</sup> This latter parallel is supported by the way Socrates puts things in the passage quoted above: “It seems then that knowledge provides men not only with good fortune but also with well-doing, in all possession and action.”

Would this interpretation give Brickhouse and Smith a way to block the argument to the necessity of virtue for happiness? Not as it stands, for the argument has been modified to give it the following form: Virtue is necessary for consistent correct use; consistent correct use is necessary for consistent benefit; consistent benefit is necessary for happiness; so, virtue is necessary for happiness. But perhaps Brickhouse and Smith could make an additional modification to the argument, in light of an important fact about Socrates' life to which they give some attention. Socrates has long been blessed with a *daimonion*, and this *daimonion* is action-guiding. Brickhouse and Smith rely centrally on the *daimonion* to explain Socrates' claim at *Apology* 37b that he has wronged no one. The *daimonion* turns him away, even in small matters, whenever he is about to do something wrong. Because of this, Socrates does not use his possessions incorrectly, that is, in a way that produces harm. And so, because of this divine intervention, Socrates is able to achieve consistent correct use, and so consistent benefit, and so happiness, without being virtuous.

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<sup>21</sup> See chapter 3.

This way of accounting for Socrates' happiness does not fit well with the *Euthydemus* passage, though. For immediately following the text quoted above, Socrates continues:

“Then, by Zeus,” I said, “is there any benefit from other possessions without intelligence and wisdom? Would a man benefit more from possessing many things and doing many things without sense, or from possessing and doing little with sense? Examine it this way. Doing less, wouldn't he err less? And erring less, wouldn't he do less badly? And doing less badly wouldn't he be less miserable?”

“Certainly,” he said.

“Then would someone do less if he were poor, or wealthy?”

“Poor,” he said.

“And if weak or strong?”

“Weak.”

“And if honored or dishonored?”

“Dishonored.”

“And would he do less if courageous and temperate or cowardly?”

“Cowardly.”

“So then also if he were lazy rather than hard-working?”

He agreed.

“And if slow rather than fast, and dull of sight and hearing rather than sharp?”

With all such things we agreed with one another. (281b4-d2)

For someone like Socrates who lacks wisdom, doing less is better than doing more, for doing less provides less opportunity for harm and thereby makes one less miserable. Certainly, to be less miserable is to be further down the continuum toward happiness, but one who is properly described as 'less miserable' is not properly described as 'happy'. Quite the contrary: Socrates is here endorsing the idea that happiness requires wisdom-guided action, while also allowing that the ignorant may be better off – that is, less miserable – by virtue of doing less and so doing less harm to themselves.

Socrates' *daimonion* acts in a way that is consistent with this picture. The *daimonion* directs Socrates only *away* from particular actions, never *toward* them. That is, the *daimonion*'s guidance is always for Socrates to refrain from action that would be harmful, but is never toward action that would be beneficial. Given Socrates' account in the *Euthydemus*, this is exactly the sort of behavior we would expect from a benevolent *daimonion* with an ignorant man in its charge, for an ignorant man is better off doing less. The *daimonion* is a great blessing to Socrates because it makes him less miserable. But this is not at all to say that it makes him happy.<sup>22</sup>

The next passage in the *Euthydemus* confirms this view, for here we have the argument that goodness requires wisdom.

“In sum, Clinias,” I said, “it is likely that concerning all the things that we first called goods, the account of them is not that they are goods in themselves by nature, but rather it seems to be this: If ignorance leads them, they are greater evils than their opposites, insofar as they are better able to serve the evil master; but if intelligence and wisdom lead them, they are greater goods, though in themselves neither sort is of any value.”

He said, “Apparently, it seems to be just as you say.”

“Then what follows from the things we’ve said? Is it anything other than that none of the other things is either good or evil, but of these two, wisdom is good, and ignorance is evil?”

He agreed. (281d2-e5)

Here Socrates argues that health, wealth, and the other recognized goods are greater evils than their contraries if used without wisdom, but greater goods than their contraries if used with wisdom. From this he concludes that each recognized good

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<sup>22</sup> Though Brickhouse and Smith make the *daimonion* central to their account of Socrates' goodness (and so his happiness), they seem to recognize some of the limitations of the *daimonion* (1994, p.133): “But in spite of the enormous benefit afforded him by the daimonic alarms that have warned him away from the commission of evil, his *daimonion* would nevertheless not allow him to draw authoritative inferences regarding what course of action would express moral virtue.”



other than wisdom is in itself neither good nor evil, and so wisdom is the only good in itself.<sup>23</sup> The upshot of the argument is, again, that wisdom is required for goodness. This is further strong and explicit evidence for the second claim of our inconsistent triad – that virtue (moral knowledge) is necessary for happiness. And this reading of these arguments in the *Euthydemus* is confirmed by Socrates' summary statements:

Then let us consider the consequence of this. Since we all want to be happy, and since we appear to become happy by using things and using them correctly, and since it is knowledge that provides the correctness and good fortune, it is necessary, it seems, for all men to prepare themselves in every way for this: how they will become as wise as possible. (282a1-6)

Now then, since you believe both that it can be taught and that it is the only existing thing which makes a man happy and fortunate, surely you would agree that it is necessary to love wisdom and you mean to do this yourself. (282c8-d2; Sprague trans.)

Again, the explicit focus is on the necessity of wisdom for happiness.

Other texts, too, support the necessity of virtue for happiness. Consider the following passage, which occurs near the end of the *Charmides*.

Socrates: All this time you've been leading me right round in a circle and concealing from me that it was not living knowledgably that was making us fare well and be happy, even if we possessed all the knowledges put together,

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<sup>23</sup> Irwin (1995, 57) usefully describes the two main interpretations of this passage:

*The Moderate View*: "When Socrates says that the recognized goods are not goods 'in themselves', he means that they are not goods when they are divorced from wisdom. When he concludes that wisdom is the only good, he means simply that only wisdom is good all by itself, apart from any combination with other things."

*The Extreme View*: "When Socrates says that the recognized goods are not goods 'in themselves', he means that they are not goods; any goodness belongs to the wise use of them, not to the recognized goods themselves. When Socrates concludes that wisdom is the only good, he means that nothing else is good."

As I have put it (and as I argue in dissertation ch. 3), Socrates is expressing the moderate view. If he is instead expressing the extreme view, that only strengthens my case in the present context.

but that we have to have this one knowledge of good and evil. Because, Critias, if you consent to take away this knowledge from the other knowledges, will medicine any the less produce health, or cobbling produce shoes, or the art of weaving produce clothes, or will the pilot's art any the less prevent us from dying at sea or the general's art in war?

Critias: They will do it just the same.

Socrates: But my dear Critias, our chance of getting any of these things well and beneficially done will have vanished if this is lacking. (*Charm.* 174b-d; Sprague trans., with changes)

Here Socrates tells us that we “have to have” the knowledge of good and evil – which just is virtue<sup>24</sup> – in order to “fare well and be happy”. Without it, our chance of doing things “well and beneficially . . . will have vanished”. This is an explicit claim that virtue is necessary for happiness.<sup>25</sup> This passage, then, provides strong evidence to corroborate the evidence from the *Euthydemus* that Socrates is committed to the necessity of virtue for happiness.

There seems to be a great deal of evidence that Socrates is committed to the necessity of virtue for happiness. What, then, should we make of the passages at *Ap.* 30c-d and 41c-d, which Brickhouse and Smith take to show that a good man cannot be harmed, that Socrates is a good man, and that Socrates is therefore happy. One possible response, which I am not much interested in, is to suppose that Socrates simply does not express a consistent view on the matter. Perhaps this is right, but here I take it for granted that this is an interpretation of last resort. Another response, initially more plausible in my view, is to recognize that these passages really do provide support for the view that by his own lights Socrates is happy, but to suppose

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<sup>24</sup> See, e.g., *Laches* 199c-e.

<sup>25</sup> See chapter 1 for further analysis of this argument.

that he must here be speaking loosely, given the overwhelming evidence to the contrary outside of these passages. Socrates may here express a proposition that goes beyond his own considered judgment, perhaps because of the rhetorically charged situation of the *Apology*.

While I would be content to retreat to this second response if necessary, it would be more satisfying if we could read these passages in a way that shows them to be consistent with the accounts of the necessity of virtue for happiness we find in many other parts of the Platonic corpus. I propose just such a reading. Again, here are the passages:

“Be sure that if you kill the sort of man I say I am, you will not harm me more than yourselves. Neither Meletus nor Anytus can harm me in any way; he could not harm me, for I do not think it is permitted that a better man be harmed by a worse; certainly he might kill me, or perhaps banish or disfranchise me, which he and maybe others think to be great harm, but I do not think so. I think he is doing himself much greater harm doing what he is doing now, attempting to have a man executed unjustly.” (*Ap.* 30c-d; Grube trans.)

You too must be of good hope as regards death, gentlemen of the jury, and keep this one truth in mind, that a good man cannot be harmed either in life or in death, and that his affairs are not neglected by the gods. What has happened to me now has not happened of itself, but it is clear to me that it was better for me to die now and to escape from trouble. That is why my divine sign did not oppose me at any point.” (*Ap.* 41c-d; Grube trans.)

The first thing to notice is what Socrates does *not* say in these passages. First, Socrates never claims either that he himself is happy or that good men are happy. Indeed, he never mentions happiness at all. Second, he never claims that benefits come to him because of his goodness. As with happiness, he never mentions benefit at all, but only harm. The absence of harm alone is not sufficient to make one happy.

Recall that at *Euthydemus* 280b-281d Socrates argues that benefit is necessary for happiness. He does at one point make a comparative claim, that “it was better for me to die now and to escape from trouble”, but it is far from clear that he means to endorse the thesis that death is positively a benefit to him. Perhaps death is just the removal of certain harms, or “troubles”. Put all this together and it is far from clear that Socrates is making any claims about happiness or the connection between goodness and happiness in these passages.

Not only this, but Socrates never even explicitly claims to be good in these passages.<sup>26</sup> Again, he makes (or rather, strongly implies) a comparative claim: He is better than Meletus and Anytus. But 30c-d never even mentions a good man. At 41c-d, Socrates does mention a good man, but again it is not at all obvious that he means to be calling himself good. Socrates says these things in his remarks to those members of the jury who voted to acquit him, and his remarks (as is the case at 30c-d) are aimed at encouraging the members of the jury to pursue and fear the right sorts of things. They should pursue wisdom and virtue rather than money and power, and they should fear ignorance rather than death. The lesson of the *Euthydemus* is that the wise and virtuous will gain all the happiness available to them in their circumstances, and so wisdom is to be pursued over all else, including longer life. The lesson of 41c-d is the

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<sup>26</sup> There is a passage at the end of the first protreptic of the *Euthydemus* that seems to suggest (though not decisively) that wisdom is required for goodness, which may also mitigate against Brickhouse and Smith’s attribution of goodness to Socrates: Socrates encourages Euthydemus and Dionysodorus to “start where I left off and show the boy what follows next: whether he ought to acquire every sort of knowledge, or whether there is one sort that he ought to get in order to be a happy man and a good one, and what it is” (282e; Sprague trans.). See also the stretch at 273d-274e, where Socrates seems prepared to use ‘teach virtue’, ‘teach wisdom’, and ‘make good’ equivalently.

same: the jury should attend to virtue rather than things like preserving their lives. They should fear ignorance rather than death, for if they attain wisdom they will gain all the happiness available to them in their circumstances, but if they remain ignorant even the very things they care about will bring them harm.

Likewise at 30c-d, Socrates is encouraging the jury to give supreme attention to virtue, for without virtue even the things one pursues may cause one great harm. The passage calls to mind the *Gorgias*, where Socrates argues that suffering injustice is less harmful than acting unjustly (see esp. 469ff). In the *Gorgias*, Socrates allows that we should try to avoid the harm of suffering injustice (469c), but that above all we should try to avoid the great harm of acting unjustly.

At 30c-d, Socrates begins and ends the passage with comparative claims: “harm me more than yourselves”; “which he and others think to be a *great* harm” (emphasis mine); “he is doing himself much greater harm”. But in the middle, he makes claims that seem to be categorical: “Neither Meletus nor Anytus can harm me in any way”; “I do not think it is permitted that a better man be harmed by a worse”. I propose that we read the comparative claims throughout, so that the apparent categorical claims are not actually categorical. Some evidence for this comes at 37b-c, where Socrates says that imprisonment, a fine, and exile are things that “I know very well to be an evil”. This contradicts the categorical reading of 30c-d. If Socrates is allowing that these may be harms (and harms Meletus and Anytus could inflict on him), though not great harms in comparison with acting unjustly, the apparent inconsistency is dissolved. Again, this reading fits well with the surrounding context:

30c-d is flanked on one side by the famous passage in which Socrates describes his divine mission of exhorting the Athenians to care not for wealth, reputation, and honors while ignoring wisdom, truth, and the best possible state of the soul (28e-30b); and it is flanked on the other side by the famous metaphor of Socrates as gadfly stirring up Athens, a great horse (30e-31b). The point of the larger passage is to exhort the Athenians to direct their efforts to the right sorts of pursuits, and the comparative reading fits this context nicely.

There is another passage that Brickhouse and Smith take to show that Socrates is happy: *Apology* 41c.<sup>27</sup> Here Socrates says that “it would be an extraordinary happiness to talk with” the likes of Odysseus or Sisyphus, “to keep company with them and examine them” (Grube trans.). But of course, keeping company with others and examining them is precisely what Socrates spends his time doing in this life. If the very same activity that Socrates devotes himself to in this life would be an extraordinary happiness in the next, then it would seem that Socrates must be happy in this life as well. But again, Socrates is not virtuous, and so virtue must not (though elenctic activity may be) necessary for happiness. To put it another way, if elenctic activity suffices for happiness but not for virtue, then virtue is not necessary for happiness.

Two observations should serve to undermine the apparent force of this passage. First, this passage, like those considered above, occurs in a context in which Socrates is trying to persuade the jurors to fear death less than they fear ignorance or

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<sup>27</sup> Brickhouse and Smith 1994, pp. 129-130.

vice. The focus here is not so much on the distinctiveness of the activity (elenctic activity), but on the superior quality of people with whom Socrates can engage in such activity (great heroes), and on the lack of obstacles (like hostile juries) to engaging in such activity. Given such a set of interlocutors and an unlimited amount of time to talk with them, Socrates may even have high hopes that he will find the wisdom he seeks.<sup>28</sup> The state of affairs he describes, then, is a “happy” one. This shift from talking of Socrates as happy to talking about a happy state of affairs should not be viewed with suspicion. First, Socrates never says explicitly in this passage that he means to describe himself (or rather, his hypothetical future self) as happy. And second, there is precedence in the *Apology* for this use of the term ‘happy’. At 25b, Socrates says that “it would be a great happiness” were it the case that he alone corrupted the youth, while all others improved them. But clearly he does not mean to attribute happiness to himself or any particular individual here. Rather, he means something like ‘a very happy state of affairs’. Indeed, this is exactly how Grube translates it.<sup>29</sup>

Second, and even more tellingly, only one page earlier (40c-d) Socrates claims that if “the dead are nothing and have no perception of anything”, then he would count

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<sup>28</sup> Constructivists can allow that Socrates may find this wisdom even if none of his interlocutors is wise either. Non-constructivists, too, may suppose that Socrates could find this wisdom through elenctic activity: Perhaps at least one of these great men and women is wise, and can impart this wisdom to Socrates.

<sup>29</sup> In the only other use of εὐδαιμονία or one of its cognates in the *Apology* outside of 41c, Socrates again uses it in a way that cannot quite be taken as a straightforward attribution of genuine happiness to some individual. At 36d-e, he tells the entire jury, “The Olympian victor makes you think yourself happy; I make you be happy.” But surely Socrates does not think that many (or perhaps even any) of the jurors are happy. He must mean rather that he brings them closer to attaining happiness, or something of the sort. But then Socrates’ imagined afterlife spent examining the great men and women of the past may also be interpreted this way: It brings Socrates closer to happiness than his current state.

death as “a great advantage”. In other words, Socrates says that annihilation would be a great gain for him. Plausibly, for someone for whom annihilation would be a great gain, life is not worth living. But a life that is not worth living is not a happy one. So, whatever Socrates means at 41c, he does not mean to suggest that he is now happy. Perhaps what he means is to emphasize that, while he values his investigations now, it would really be something special if he gained access to the likes of Homer and Ajax and Odysseus. And maybe he even thinks such investigations might lead to his happiness. But we should not infer that he is happy now.

I have argued that there is strong evidence that Socrates is committed to the necessity of virtue for happiness. In addition, I have argued that the apparent counterevidence – that Socrates in the *Apology* counts himself as happy – is merely apparent. Add to this the case I made in the previous section that Socrates is not virtuous, and it becomes clear which member of our inconsistent triad must go. Rather than deny the necessity of virtue for happiness or that Socrates lacks virtue, the solution to our initial puzzle is to deny that Socrates is happy.

Proposition (3), that Socrates is happy, is the only member of the inconsistent triad for which there is not strong independent support. The apparent evidence for (3) is merely apparent. But there is strong independent support for (1) and (2), and together these entail that (3) is false. This is strong evidence that Socrates was not, by his own lights, happy.

This, for me at any rate, is a disappointing conclusion. But it is no less accurate for being disappointing. There is some consolation to be had, though. For



one, Socrates was, by his own lights, less miserable than most others. For another, he was actively searching for happiness, encouraging others to do the same. He had cleared away many of the impediments to happiness, like ignorance of ignorance. And he proved an inspiration to a long tradition of philosophers who followed him in trying to achieve and account for happiness. Furthermore, while I have argued that Socrates held that virtue is necessary for happiness and that he lacked virtue, I have not argued that Socrates was correct about these matters. It is even possible Socrates was wrong about the necessary conditions for happiness or virtue and that he himself was happy or virtuous; but if so, he was wrong about the most important feature of himself.

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