

"Socrates and Eudaimonia"

Section 1: Introduction

It has long been a commonplace that ancient ethical thought is characterized by its eudaimonism. The great 19th century moral philosopher, Henry Sidgwick, for example, remarks that "in the whole ethical controversy of ancient Greece . . . it was assumed on all sides that a rational individual would make the pursuit of his own good his supreme aim." Sidgwick also thinks that its commitment to eudaimonism is one of the most important features that distinguishes ancient ethical reflection from that of the moderns from the time of Bishop Butler on.¹ Whether or not we accept Sidgwick's claims, eudaimonia (typically translated as "happiness") is a central concept in ancient Greek ethical and political philosophical thought. In this article, I shall examine the idea of happiness or eudaimonia in Socrates and consider what place it has in his views about how to live and how to act, what content he gives it and its relation to other important notions, such as virtue and knowledge.

But before turning to these substantive issues, I begin by marking out the territory that I shall be exploring. Many scholarly controversies surround any discussion of Socrates.

For example, what evidence do we have for the views of the historical Socrates? How reliable are the depictions of Socrates by Plato, Xenophon, Aristophanes, and other "Socratic" writers? Can we reliably date Plato's dialogues so as to isolate those that are closest in time to his association with Socrates? Since other essays in this volume consider these disputes in greater detail, I shall simply state the limitations of my discussion without examining the arguments justifying them. (My way of carving up this territory, although certainly not the only plausible one, is not uncommon.)

I shall confine my discussion exclusively to Plato, but I take no position on the relation between the views of the character named "Socrates" in these dialogues and the views of the historical Socrates. Plato's dialogues are standardly divided into three chronological groups: early, middle, and late. The early dialogues are sometimes called the "Socratic" dialogues in the belief that they especially reflect Socrates' influence on Plato. I take no position on this either, but I shall focus on the dialogues usually thought of as early.² Thus the relevance of my discussion for the views of the historical Socrates will depend on how the above scholarly controversies are settled.

Section 2: Preliminaries

The adjective eudaimôn ("happy"), and its cognate forms such as the substantive eudaimonia, are compounds of eu and the noun daimôn: eu is the standard adverb of the adjective meaning "good" (agathos) and the noun daimôn denotes divine or semi-divine beings (or more generally the divine forces or powers) who influence what happens to humans. Being eudaimôn is thus, etymologically, to be well-off or successful or in a good way with respect to such beings or forces.

Eudaimôn first occurs in extant Greek literature in Hesiod where it means "free from divine ill-will" or "being divinely favored."³ For example, at the end of his poem, Works and Days, Hesiod closes a discussion of which days are lucky and which unlucky with the comment

That man is happy [eudaimôn] and prosperous in them who knows all these things and does his work without offending the deathless gods, who discerns the omens of birds and avoids transgression.⁴ (lines 826-8)

Similarly, in other archaic poets, such as Theognis and Pindar, its basic sense is "being divinely favored." And the

result of being divinely favored is that I shall have and enjoy many things that are good for me and avoid bad things.

Two passages from these early writers are especially interesting. First, from Theognis:

May I be happy and beloved of the immortal gods, Cyrnus, that is the only prosperity or achievement I desire.⁵ (lines 653-4)

This passage demonstrates the practical centrality of being happy; it is, for Theognis, the most important object of desire and, perhaps, even the only achievement desired. The second passage is the warning from Pindar that "it is impossible for one man to succeed in winning complete happiness." This suggests that although happiness may be the primary object of desire, it cannot be completely or permanently attained by humans.⁶ We shall find related issues in Socrates.

There are two central lines of thought already implicit in these early non-philosophic claims about happiness that are especially important for the later Greek philosophical tradition. The first of these understands being happy and

happiness in terms of well-being. As a first approximation, let us say that a person is happy or attains happiness if and only if she lives a life that is best for her, all things considered.⁷ This characterization contains two basic ideas that, although requiring further specification, are intuitively fairly clear: (i) that of something being good for a person, and (ii) some notion of optimization, maximization or being best overall. Ancient Greeks, just as we do, had a notion of something being good or bad for a person and the notion of taking various good and bad things into account in order to reach some overall judgment of how good or bad a person's state is. If we think of being eudaimôn in this way as attaining one's best overall condition, we might think that "happiness" is an inadequate translation, since "happiness" is commonly understood today to mean "feeling pleasure" or "feeling content." But there is no obvious better translation and as long as we remember that it is a substantive question whether one's best overall state consists in, or even involves, e.g., feeling pleasure, this translation should not mislead.⁸

The second line of thought starts from the idea that human actions and desires have purposes, goals or ends and goes on to suggest that happiness is the most important or

primary end of human actions and desires. We saw something like this in the above quotation from Theognis. This thesis, too, needs to be sharpened and made more precise, but we can note now one significant distinction. The importance or primacy of happiness might simply be a fact about human action or desire: as a matter of fact, this turns out to be the end of all our actions or desires. But Theognis' poem is a series of exhortations and counsels to Cynus and simple declarative statements of how he acts and thinks are frequently implicit pieces of (supposedly wise) advice. So we might also understand this as a normative claim that it is wise or rational to make happiness the primary end of one's actions.

These two lines of thought are logically distinct. It would need further argument to show that if there is (or should rationally be) an ultimate end of our actions and desires, then this is one's own happiness. Why might the ultimate end not instead be the happiness of all, the advancement of truth, or complete and perfect obedience to God's commands? Similarly, the very concept of the best state overall for an individual does not by itself include the claim that this state is or should rationally be the ultimate aim of each individual. We might think, for example, that

it is sometimes rational to sacrifice my own well-being or happiness for some more important goal.

But bringing these two lines of thought together, we arrive at two theses have often been attributed to Socrates.

The Principle of Rational Eudaimonism: For each individual, the ultimate end of all his rational actions is his own (greatest) happiness.⁹

The Principle of Psychological Eudaimonism: For each individual, the ultimate end of all his actions is his own (greatest) happiness.¹⁰

In the rest of this article, I shall proceed to consider some of the basic issues surrounding Socrates' views on happiness.

- (1) Does Socrates endorse either rational eudaimonism or psychological eudaimonism?
- (2) What does Socrates think happiness consists of? What is the relation between happiness and virtue?
- (3) What place does the notion of happiness have in Socrates' ethical thinking?

Section 3: Rational Eudaimonism and Psychological Eudaimonism

For quite some time, a majority of scholars have held that the early dialogues espouse both psychological and rational eudaimonism. But in recent years, both parts of this consensus have come under criticism as has, more generally, the view that ancient Greek ethics is eudaimonist. The critics of the eudaimonist consensus with respect to Plato's early dialogues have pressed two worries. First, they claim that Socrates says things in the early dialogues that are inconsistent (or at least fit awkwardly) with eudaimonism. Second, they claim the positive evidence for eudaimonism in the early dialogues is surprisingly thin.¹¹

Let us consider first the worry about possible inconsistency. In some of these dialogues, especially the Apology and the Crito, Socrates makes what seems to be an unequivocal commitment to being virtuous or just and acting virtuously or justly. In replying to an objection in the Apology, for example, Socrates says

You are wrong, sir, if you think that a man who is any good at all must [δεῖν] take into account the risk of life or death;

he should look only to this when he acts, whether what he does is just [δίκαια] or unjust, whether he is acting as a good [ἀγαθὸν] or a bad man [κακὸν].¹² (Apol. 28B6-C1)

While rejecting Crito's plan to escape from prison, Socrates reminds him of their previous agreements.

Do we say that one must never in any way act unjustly willingly, or must one act unjustly in one way and not in another? Is acting unjustly never good [ἀγαθόν] or fine [καλόν] as we agreed in the past . . . Above all, is the truth such as we used to say it was . . . that injustice is in every way bad [κακόν] for and shameful [αἰσχρὸν] to the one acting unjustly? . . . So one must [δεῖ] never do injustice. (Crito 49A4-B7)

In these passages, Socrates claims that an individual must always act virtuously or justly. Such a commitment raises two concerns. First, if Socrates means that an individual must, from a rational point of view, always act justly even if doing so diminishes his happiness, this would be inconsistent with rational eudaimonism. If this Socrates'

meaning and he also makes the reasonable assumption that in at least some of these cases a person will do, what he must or should do from a rational point of view, then Socrates would also be committed to the denial of psychological eudaimonism. Second, even if virtue and happiness can never come apart, that is, even if the virtuous life must also be the happy life, this does not settle which features of such a life the individual is, or rationally should, take as relevant to his choice. Is he choosing a life on the basis of its happiness, its virtue or some combination of them? If there is a factor that is relevant to choice that is distinct from happiness, this may imperil psychological eudaimonism; if this factor is rationally relevant to choice, this may imperil rational eudaimonism.

To begin with the first point, these passages do not claim or even suggest that the agent's happiness does or even can come into conflict with what virtue requires. In fact, the Crito passage asserts that injustice is "never good" and is "in every way bad" for the one acting unjustly. And, indeed, this passage in context suggests that virtue is always consistent with the agent's greatest happiness (see the discussion of Crito 48B below). Such a coincidence

between virtue and happiness might obtain in several distinct ways.

(1) Identity Claim. Happiness is identical with (or constituted by) virtue.

(2) Part/Whole Claim. Virtue is a part of happiness.

(3) Instrumental Claim. Virtue is instrumental to happiness.

Clearly, if the identity claim is correct, there can be no conflict between virtue and happiness. The part/whole claim does not by itself guarantee a coincidence between virtue and happiness, but a version of it that made virtue a sufficiently important part of happiness could. The instrumental claim could sustain such a coincidence, but only if virtue were a genuinely necessary instrument. I shall return to these options later in this section and in section IV. As I shall also go on to discuss, our decision among these options will affect our answer to our second issue, that is, how much weight or influence happiness has or rationally should have with respect to choice.

Neither the Apology nor the Crito contains a general psychological theory nor a theory of rational action, and it is in the middle-period dialogues that we find more sustained attention to psychology, epistemology, and

metaphysics (although we shall consider below several relevant passages from, e.g., the Gorgias and the Protagoras.) Critics of eudaimonism have thus not only pointed to passages such as the ones from the Apology and the Crito that we have noted which stress Socrates' commitments to virtue, but have also suggested that eudaimonism is not invoked at places in the early dialogues where we might expect to find it. One skeptic about the eudaimonist interpretation, for example, points to Socrates' engagement in questioning others as one thing that is not explained by eudaimonism in the early dialogues:

when we look to his [Socrates'] own actual words for an account of why he makes such efforts to improve his fellow citizens' thinking, we find little to clarify what their place in his own eudaimonia might be. Suppose he were confronted with this question 'Are you better off by virtue of your educative activities, and is that the reason why you engage in them, or do you pursue them partly or wholly for themselves?' It does not seem to me—suspending the automatic unargued presumption that Socrates accepted a straightforwardly eudaimonist view—that Plato's early

works really give us a basis for saying how he would answer.¹³

But we do find the following passage in the Apology in which Socrates refuses to accept release on the condition that he keep silent in the future.

If I say that it is impossible for me to keep quiet because that means disobeying the god, you will not believe me and will think I am being ironical. On the other hand, if I say it is the greatest good for a man every day to discuss virtue and the other things about which you hear me conversing and testing myself and others, and that the unexamined life is not worth living for a man, you will believe me even less. (Apol. 37E5-38A7)

Socrates here provides an answer as to why he engages in questioning his fellow citizens and that answer seems to give a decisive reason for acting in this way. It is sufficient, he thinks, to justify rationally his acting in the way that he does.¹⁴ This passage certainly does not commit Socrates explicitly and unequivocally to any form of eudaimonism, but it suggests that we can explain his

"educative activities" by the fact that they promote his happiness and, more generally, that considerations of one's own happiness should have a central position in determining what one is to do. Indeed, it can easily be seen as suggestive of rational eudaimonism.¹⁵ Socrates here gives two reasons for his practices: acting in this way is both to obey the god and also the "greatest good" for himself. He does not say that one has priority over the other.¹⁶ But Socrates also does not suggest that they can apart and there is reason from the Apology itself to think that obeying the god conduces to happiness, at least in large part, because god is benevolent and seeks what conduces to our happiness.¹⁷ Similarly, Socrates does not explicitly say that these criteria should guide all our choices, but there is nothing special about this choice except its importance.

In the Crito, we find a passage that seems to provide further help.

We must treat as most important not life, but the good life [τὸ εὖ ζῆν] . . . and the good life, the fine [καλῶς] life and the just [δικαίως] life are the same. (Crito 48B4-7)

Socrates here gives priority to leading the good life, and insofar as it is most important, it seems that it should at least trump other considerations.¹⁸ But what does "the good life" mean here? Given its context at the conclusion of an argument designed to show that justice is of the greatest benefit to its possessor (Crito 47A-48B), "the good life" should mean a life that is good for the one who lives it. If it merely meant the fine life, or the just life (i.e. the virtuous life) there would be no point to Socrates' further claim that the good life is the same as the fine and just lives. And it is this coincidence that allows Socrates to proceed to settle the practical question of what to do in these circumstances by examining what justice requires (Crito 48B10ff).¹⁹

In neither the Apology nor the Crito does Socrates propound a fully general psychological or normative theory. (Although Crito 48B seems to make a fully general normative claim: we should all give our own happiness the highest priority in acting.) But even in these works that are thought to provide the greatest challenge for eudaimonism in the early dialogues, we find support for both rational and perhaps some for psychological eudaimonism as well.²⁰

In some of the other early dialogues (especially the Euthydemus, the Gorgias, the Meno, and the Protagoras), however, we do find connections between eudaimonism and some more general normative and psychological claims. It is controversial whether Socrates goes so far as to endorse any general normative or psychological claims in the early dialogues and, if he does, exactly what attitude he has towards them.²¹ But there are certain claims that we have good reason to think that Socrates took especially seriously.

- (I) The virtues are properly characterized in terms of knowledge of the good.
- (II) Akrasia or incontinence is not possible, that is, roughly, it is not possible for me to know or believe that one course of action is better for me and yet do something else.
- (III) All wrongdoing is unwilling.

So I shall now turn to some of these connections.

- (I) It is well-known that the early dialogues typically end in aporia, that is, the failure to find a solution to the problem at hand. Paradigmatically, in the early "dialogues of

definition" Socrates fails to find adequate accounts of the virtues: of courage in the Laches, of moderation in the Charmides, and of piety in the Euthyphro. Nevertheless, in the early dialogues Plato takes especially seriously the idea of defining virtue in terms of knowledge of good and bad. In the Laches, for example, the final definition of courage is one that the interlocutor, Nicias, endorses and claims is based on Socrates' views.²² According to this definition, courage is "the knowledge of what is to be dreaded or dared, in war and in everything else" (Laches 194E11-195A1). Socrates shows that this is equivalent to knowledge of future goods and evils (Laches 198B2-C4).²³ This definition of courage is ultimately called into question, on the grounds that, along with other apparently reasonable premises, it leads to the conclusion that courage is knowledge of all goods and evils, both past and present. This entails, it is claimed, that courage is the whole of virtue and, not as previously agreed, a proper part of virtue. There are disagreements over how Socrates thinks this puzzle should be resolved. But on most plausible views, Socrates is at least committed to the claim that every virtue is some form of knowledge of good and bad.²⁴

What implications does this have for eudaimonism? Does Socrates intend by knowledge of good and bad knowledge of what is good and bad for the possessor of the knowledge or what is good and bad is some other way? If this knowledge does not at least include knowledge of what is good and bad for its possessor, it seems to have little relevance to eudaimonism.

It is clear from the context that this knowledge of good and bad is knowledge of what is good and bad for human beings in the various complex circumstances of life (e.g. Laches 194E11-195A1). But what is the relation between this knowledge and its possessor's own good and bad? One of Socrates' concluding remarks in the Laches helps to answer this question.

[There is nothing] wanting to the virtue of a man who knows all good things and all about their production in the present, the future, and the past, and all about bad things likewise. [Such a man could not lack] moderation, or justice, or piety, when he alone can take due precaution, in his dealings with gods and men, as regards what is to be dreaded and what is not, and procure good things, owing to

his knowledge of the right behavior towards them. (Laches 199D4-E1)²⁵

According to this passage, the result of possessing this knowledge is that the individual will act to procure good things for himself and avoid bad things for himself in his actions. A person who possesses such knowledge will possess every virtue and thus the virtue of wisdom. This knowledge of what is good and bad for oneself is sufficient for all of virtue. No other specifically moral kind of knowledge needed for virtue (although this knowledge may well include that acting in the way that is usually thought to be just is good for you).²⁶ So we may infer that since acting so as to procure good things for oneself is the outcome of wisdom, this way of acting must be what reason recommends. Further, Socrates seems to assume that the one having such knowledge will act in accordance with it and this at least suggests the claim that people will act in accordance with their knowledge of what is good (although it does not guarantee that people will act in accordance with their belief about what is good if all they have is belief).

So an individual will act to obtain good things and avoid bad things and this is what is required by reason. But this does not yet commit Socrates to either rational or psychological eudaimonism, since these claims concern what is good and are not yet explicitly concerned with the optimal or the best.

The Good and the Best

Evidence that Plato is committed to some form of optimizing can be found in several early dialogues. In the Charmides, Socrates remarks that if people attained the knowledge that is moderation, they would be happy.

For with error abolished, and correctness guiding, men in that condition [i.e. those who possess such knowledge] would necessarily fare finely and fare well [εὖ πράττειν] in their every action, and those faring well are happy.

(Charm. 171E7-172A3)²⁷

This passage does several important things. First, if the individual has this knowledge, he will fare well and be happy. It is reasonable to infer from this that such knowledge is in fact aimed at happiness. So the end or goal aimed at by such knowledge is not merely some good,

but it has the optimality of happiness (it also has the optimality involved in the idea that all actions are correct). Further, this is the goal for "every action", not just for some. So this passage helps to answer the question about optimality and thus, along with the other passages above, supports rational eudaimonism. Moreover, Socrates thinks that the possession of such knowledge guarantees that the individual will fare well or be happy and such an assumption is reasonable if Socrates is a psychological eudaimonism (if we had ultimate ends other than happiness, having knowledge of what conduces to happiness would not guarantee that we act upon it).²⁸

The picture is the same and the context is less complicated in the Meno. In the Meno, Socrates begins with the claims that (a) everyone desires the good, and (b) no one desires the bad (77B2-78B4). The context makes it clear that the good and the bad involved here are the agent's own good and bad.²⁹ But these are in themselves fairly weak claims.

(i) Socrates does not say that these are our only desires and aversions or that they trump all other desires and aversions.

(ii) These are presented as alleged facts about human nature with no explicit further assertion that these desires are especially rational. (Although if the unfortunate state of affairs obtained in which we are all by nature irrational or arational, we would expect Socrates to comment on this.)

(iii) Socrates claims that we desire the good and not the bad, so once again, this claim does not yet commit him to a form of optimizing.

But later passages in the Meno provide some further evidence. At Meno 87C-89A, we find an argument designed to show that virtue is a kind of knowledge or wisdom. In it, Socrates makes two important claims:

- (1) wisdom guides all external goods and all qualities of the soul towards the end of happiness (Meno 88C1-3),
- (2) this guidance of wisdom is correct (Meno 88D6-E2, cf. 98E12-99A5).

These passages seem to resolve all three concerns (i)-(iii) above. Since the end of wisdom is happiness, it is certainly the case that no course of action could be recommended by wisdom that conflicts with happiness.³⁰ The fact that it is the only goal mentioned strongly suggests that it at least trumps, and perhaps subsumes, all other goals. Further,

because this is the guidance of wisdom and is endorsed as correct, we can infer that happiness is not merely the actual ultimate end of people, but also the rational one. Finally, the goal is said to be not just the good, but happiness, so the ultimate goal has the sort of optimality attaching to happiness. The same picture is found in a similar passage from the Euthydemus.³¹

I shall end this section by looking at the two early dialogues that provide the most explicit detail about Socrates' ethical psychology, the Gorgias and the Protagoras. (These dialogues will also allow us to explore the connections between eudaimonism and Socrates' views about akrasia and the claim that no one does wrong willingly.) In the Gorgias, Socrates divides existing things into the good, the bad and the things that are neither good nor bad as part of his explanation of human action.

Things neither good nor bad [are] such things as sometimes partake of the good and sometimes of the bad and sometimes of neither, for example, sitting, walking, running, and sailing, or again, stones and sticks and anything else of that sort . . . People do these intermediate things, whenever they do them, for the sake of good

things, [they do not do good things for the sake of the intermediates] . . . So it is pursuing the good that we walk, whenever we walk; thinking it is better [to walk]. And conversely, whenever we stand still, we stand for the sake of the same thing, that is, the good. (I) And so we put a man to death, if we do put him to death, or exile him or confiscate his property, because we think it better for us to do this than not . . . So it is for the sake of the good that the doers of all these things do them . . . Then we do not want to kill people or exile them from our cities or confiscate their property as an act in itself, but if these things are beneficial we want to do them, while if they are harmful, we do not want them. For we want what is good . . . but what is neither good nor bad we do not want, nor what is bad either . . . (Gorg. 467E6-468C7)

This passage commits Socrates to the claims that (i) every action is "for the sake of" the good, and (ii) that every want is for the good. To see what implications this has for eudaimonism, we need to consider some further questions.

First, is the good for the sake of which the agent acts the good of the agent himself? This is what Socrates' argument requires. For example, the inference made at (I)

in the above passage would simply be invalid, unless the claim that "People do these intermediate things, whenever they do them, for the sake of good things" means that "People do these intermediate things, whenever they do them, for the sake of good things for themselves", that is, it must mean that the good for the sake of which X acts is X's own good.³²

Second, granting that whenever X acts X acts for the sake of X's own good are we to understand this as X's own maximal good? We have already seen evidence for optimizing or maximizing in other early dialogues and we shall find perhaps the most worked out statement of it in the Protagoras. But there is also some evidence from the Gorgias. For example, Gorgias 468B1-7 at least strongly suggests optimizing. Socrates presents choice here as a dichotomy: we can either do X or not do X and we do the one that we think is better for us. Such comparisons involve options that are mutually exclusive and jointly exhaustive and thus give us a form of optimization. So since what is aimed at is the agent's own greatest happiness and since Socrates seems to endorse this as a principle of choice, this passage gives us good evidence for rational eudaimonism.³³

The position of the Gorgias on psychological eudaimonism is more complicated. The first complication arises from Socrates' apparent claim that we want (boulomai) only what is actually good, i.e. what is best for them overall (Gorg. 468C2-8).³⁴ On the traditional interpretation, Plato means that all people have at all times the attitude of wanting (boulêsis) towards what is actually good, but also at the same time have a positive desiderative attitude, e.g., a desire (epithumia) for they think best. Moreover, all people at all times act (or try to act) upon the desire for what they think to be best. Although there are controversies on this views about how to distinguish wants from desires, this is straightforwardly a form of psychological eudaimonism, since the agent always acts so as to attain what he thinks best for himself.

A more recent line of interpretation takes the far more radical position that Plato holds that the only positive desiderative attitude we have is towards what is actually best. But on this interpretation as well, Plato is committed to what is reasonably seen as a form of psychological eudaimonism in that it attributes to him the claim that agent always acts in accordance with what he thinks best for himself.³⁵

A greater challenge to psychological eudaimonism in the Gorgias is that Socrates in his closing conversation with Calicles claims that a virtuous person must "rule himself", in particular, must rule his own pleasures and desires and may suggest that the soul can contain desires that are "unrestrained" and "insatiable" (Gorg. 491D7-E1, 493B1-3). It is these passages that provide perhaps the most serious threat to psychological eudaimonism in the early dialogues, since they have suggested to some that Plato goes so far as to allow that a person can act contrary to what he believes at that time is best for him overall ("clear-eyed akrasia").³⁶ I cannot try to settle this issue here and the reader will have to make her own decision on this question. In defense of psychological eudaimonism, we can note the following points.

- (1) If Plato does allow clear-eyed akrasia in these later passages, this is inconsistent with the evidence already noted in the Gorgias for psychological eudaimonism.
- (2) Socrates never commits himself in these later passages to the existence of clear-eyed akrasia.
- (3) There are plausible ways of understanding these passages so as to retain psychological eudaimonism: (a) Socrates might allow for the persistence of desires for

something in the face of a belief that something else is best, but not allow such desires to move the agent to action, or (b) Socrates might allow such desires to move the agent to action, but only after they first change the person's judgment of what is best so that he does not act against his judgment of what is best at the time of action.

But we should also note that even if Socrates were to allow for clear-eyed akrasia in the Gorgias, this does not undermine rational eudaimonism. Socrates claims that a moderate person will be self-controlled and possess all the virtues and this must include wisdom. The upshot of acting accordance with wisdom is that the virtuous person attains happiness (Gorg. 507A5-C7). So for reasons similar to those considered above in connection with the Charmides and the Meno, it is reasonable to see him as also here committed to rational eudaimonism.

A final reason for thinking that Plato holds to psychological eudaimonism in the Gorgias is that he seems to draw some important consequences from it. In particular, Socrates explicitly announces the claim that no one does wrong willingly (ἐκών) and links this to his views about motivation by the good.³⁷ Near the end of the dialogue, Socrates claims that he and Polus had agreed that

"no one does what is unjust because he wants to, but everyone who does injustice does so unwillingly" (Gorg. 509E5-7). There is no prior place in this dialogue that states exactly this claim, but Socrates is probably referring to the claims about motivation that Polus previously agreed to and which we have discussed above (Gorg. 467C-468E). As we saw, it is reasonable to interpret Socrates as claiming that

Whenever I do X, I believe that doing X is overall best for me.³⁸

So if I do injustice, I do this thinking that it is best for me. But this is, Socrates thinks, a false belief. So I only do injustice if I have a false belief that it is better for me to do so. There are different possible explanations of precisely what it is that makes doing injustice unwilling action. The simple fact that a person has a false belief about an action of his is too weak a condition to make the action unwilling. We might have false beliefs about a great many of our actions, but the bulk of these beliefs are irrelevant to our performing the actions. But the Gorgias allows us to go further than this. Given Socrates' claims about motivation, it also the case that if I were to believe that acting unjustly is worse for me, I would not do it. (If

all that Gorg. 467C-468E established were a weaker claim such as that all my actions are motivated by the thought of doing good to something, Socrates could not infer from the badness of doing injustice to my unwillingness to do it.) I would, rather, want to do what I would correctly believe to be better, i.e. act justly. It is my false belief that explains why I act as I do: whenever I do X, I do X because I believe that doing X is overall best for me. This gives good sense to the claim that all wrongdoing is unwilling. (It may also be the case that all along I want to do what is actually best for me and this would give another way in which acting so as to do what is bad for me is unwilling.) Psychological eudaimonism thus explains Socrates' view that all wrongdoing is unwilling.

The final dialogue I shall consider in this section is the Protagoras, in which Socrates famously denies the possibility of akrasia. At the beginning of his discussion, Socrates, on behalf of himself and Protagoras, endorses the following claim.

Knowledge is a fine thing, capable of ruling a person, and if someone were to know what is good and bad, then he

would not be forced by anything to act otherwise than as knowledge commands . . . (Prot. 352C3-6)

This knowledge is knowledge not just of the good and bad, but knowledge of the best, and what Socrates and Protagoras think is impossible is that a person not to do what he knows is best (Prot. 352D4-353A2).

At the end of his argument, Socrates summarizes his conclusions.

No one who knows or believes that there is something else better than what he is doing that is possible, will go on doing what he had been doing when he is able to do what is better. To be weaker than oneself is nothing other than ignorance, and to be stronger than oneself is nothing other than wisdom. (Prot. 358B7-C3)

No one willingly goes toward the bad or what he believes to be bad; neither is it in human nature, so it seems, to want to go toward what one believes to be bad instead of the good. And when he is forced to choose between one of two bad things, no one will choose the greater if he is able to choose the lesser. (Prot. 358C6-D4)

These passages seem to provide very strong support for attributing both psychological and rational eudaimonism to Socrates. They claim that every person will always choose and act to attain what he thinks is overall best and least bad for himself.³⁹ Protagoras 352C3-6 states the claim about a person who has knowledge, 358B7-C3 and 358C6-D4 generalizes it so that action contrary to what believes is best is also impossible. This is presented as a fact about human nature, and thus is sufficient for psychological eudaimonism. But since this is action in accordance with knowledge (or a belief corresponding to knowledge), it is reasonable to think that Socrates endorses the rationality of this and thus endorses rational eudaimonism.⁴⁰

The evidence of the Protagoras is controversial, however, because Socrates' argument against the possibility of akrasia (which we have not examined here) relies on a hedonistic conception of the good, that is, a premise identifying the good for a person with that person's pleasure. Many scholars think that Socrates rejects hedonism elsewhere in the early dialogues.⁴¹ If this is right, then several possibilities are left open.

(1) Socrates accepts hedonism in the Protagoras and his argument against akrasia in the Protagoras requires hedonism.

(2) Socrates does not accept hedonism in the Protagoras and his argument against akrasia in the Protagoras does not require hedonism.

Whether or not Socrates accepts hedonism in the Protagoras remains quite controversial. It is clear, however, that the refutation of the possibility of akrasia at Protagoras (351B-357E) depends on a hedonistic premise, so (2) is false. So if (1) is true and Socrates rejects the possibility of akrasia elsewhere, it cannot be on the basis of an argument that accepts all the premises in the Protagoras' refutation. Attributing psychological and rational eudaimonism to Socrates in the other early dialogues, would thus require the sort of evidence considered above and could not directly use the Protagoras' refutation of the possibility of akrasia. But we might also think that although the Protagoras' refutation of the possibility of akrasia requires hedonism, this passage also shows a commitment to claims that would ground psychological and rational eudaimonism independently of hedonism. In particular, Socrates may suggest that

whatever is pursued by a person, even pleasure itself, is pursued because he thinks it best for himself. From this we can develop an argument for psychological and rational eudaimonism.⁴²

So what should our final conclusion be? I have presented some of the passages especially relevant to a decision and have tried to show what points demand further reflection. Overall, I think that the evidence supports attributing both psychological and rational eudaimonism to the Socrates of the early dialogues. But there are no entirely unproblematic passages that fully explicitly endorse them as theoretical theses.

Section IV: The Content of Happiness

Both psychological and rational eudaimonism are formal theories: they specify what our attitude is (or rationally should be) toward happiness, but they do not give an account of what happiness itself consists in. Nor do we obviously get a such an account in the early dialogues (especially if we do not think that Socrates endorses hedonism in the Protagoras). But there are two issues relevant to the nature of happiness that are explicitly discussed in the early dialogues. First, there is the issue of the relation between being virtuous and being happy.

Second, Socrates, in certain dialogues, advances a Dependency Thesis according to which the goodness of other goods depends on the agent's possession of virtue or knowledge of the good.

Virtue and Happiness

There are a cluster of important issues surrounding the relation between happiness and virtue in the early dialogues. Three of the main questions are:

- (A) Is virtue identical with happiness?
- (B) Is virtue sufficient for happiness?
- (C) Is virtue necessary for happiness?

So let us consider each.

A. There are some passages in the early dialogues that might suggest that virtue is identical with happiness.

[A man] should look only to this in his actions, whether he acts justly or unjustly, whether his deeds are those of a good or a bad man. (Apol. 28B8-C1)

I do not think it is permitted that a better man be harmed by a worse. (Apol. 30D1-2)

We must treat as most important not life, but the good life [τὸ εὖ ζῆν] . . . and the good life, the fine [καλῶς] life and the just [δικαίως] life are the same. (Crito 48B4-7)

So how might these passages support the identity of happiness and virtue? If Socrates is a rational eudaimonist, then he accepts that the ultimate end of all rational action is the agent's own happiness. So by claiming that virtue is the only thing that we should look to in our actions, does not Apology 28BC suggest that happiness and virtue are the same thing? Apology 30CD claims that a better man cannot be harmed by a worse man. If we think that the worse man can inflict all sorts of damage on a good man—to his body, his soul, his external goods, and on those close to him—except diminish his virtue, we might again think that only thing bad for a person is vice or the diminishment of virtue and thus that the only thing good for a person is virtue. Similarly, Crito 48B in asserting that good life and the fine life are "the same," might be taken to assert the identity of happiness and virtue.⁴³

But before turning to the interpretation of these passages, we should consider the consequences of accepting the identity of virtue and happiness. Some have

thought that if Socrates were to hold the identity thesis, this would have disastrous consequences for him. First, if happiness is identical with virtue, it would follow that virtue is the only non-instrumental good and this is flagrantly in conflict with our intuitions. Second,

happiness is the final reason which can be given for any purposeful action, hence for any rational choice between alternative courses of action. It follows that if Identity were the true relation of virtue to happiness, we would have no rational grounds for preference between alternatives which are equally consistent with virtue—hence no rational ground for preference between states of affairs differentiated only by their non-moral values. And if this were true, it would knock the bottom from eudaemonism as a theory of rational choice. For many of the choices we make in our day-to-day life have to be made between just such states of affairs, where moral considerations are not in the picture at all.⁴⁴

But neither of these consequences, in fact, follows. Even if it were the case that in the happy life the only thing contributing to its happiness is its virtue, it would not

follow that virtue is the only non-instrumental good. But if happiness is an optimal state and even if optimality is attained by including virtue and no other good, other things could be non-instrumentally good. It might just be the case that no combination of them or no combination of them and a possible state of virtue could be as good as a life of optimal virtue.

There might still be the worry that the identity thesis would undermine eudaimonism as a theory of rational choice. If happiness is an optimal state, it might often be unattainable by any available action and then the goal of maximizing the good and minimizing the bad might well allow one to take into account other non-instrumental goods (the possibility of which, as we have just seen, is not ruled out by the claim of identity). Moreover, the underdetermination worry may only be pressing if considerations of virtue typically leave open a very wide range of choices.⁴⁵ But Socrates may not think that this is the case. In the Apology, for example, Socrates claims that he goes around "doing nothing but trying to persuade both young and old among [the Athenians] not to care for your body or your wealth in preference to, or as strongly as, the best condition of your soul" (Apol. 30A7-B2). This activity

explains Socrates' great poverty (Apol. 31A-C), since it allows him little time to do anything else. So this requirement on Socrates is highly demanding and sharply restricts his possible patterns of activity. Moreover, there are grounds for thinking that this is not simply a special requirement imposed on Socrates by the god, but is required or least recommended by the nature of justice (e.g. Apol. 29D7-E3 and 32A1-2).

Nevertheless, there is good reason to think that Socrates allows both that (i) there are non-instrumental goods besides virtue, and (ii) a person's optimal state includes more than virtue (and thus that Socrates rejects the identity thesis).

(1) There are ways of disarming the three above passages so that they are consistent with (i) and (ii). They may simply be asserting a certain primacy to virtue or justice, e.g., that it is by far the most important non-instrumental good.

(2) There is a great deal of evidence that Socrates in the early dialogues is not (and does not recommend being) indifferent to all apparent goods and evils besides virtue and vice. A reasonable explanation of this is that he is a rational eudaimonist and accepts (i) and (ii).⁴⁶

(3) In a point related to (2), in the Euthydemus and the Meno, Socrates endorses a Dependency Thesis about goods (cf. Apol. 30B2-4 and Charm. 173A-175A). Roughly, this is the claim that nothing is good for its possessor unless she is virtuous, but other things can become good for their possessor if she is virtuous. The most reasonable interpretation of this thesis (which we shall discuss further below) is that Socrates allows some things, such as health, to benefit a virtuous person apart from their contribution to that person's virtue.

So we do have good evidence that Socrates accepted (i) and (ii) in the early dialogues. Nevertheless, it is worth exploring what might motivate or follow from a denial of (i) and (ii). It is perhaps especially worth doing so, since Socrates does not typically in the early dialogues examine in depth the psychological and metaphysical connections of his claims.

If all that is non-instrumentally good for me is my own virtue, this makes my well-being strongly self-confined. The only non-instrumental goods for me are states or activities of myself.⁴⁷ Such a view conflicts, or at least is in strong tension, with some of our basic intuitions and practices. Many of us seem to think that that facts about

the world can directly affect our own well-being.⁴⁸ Many people, for example, think that the well-being of their loved ones is good for themselves apart from its affect on their own virtue (or any other state of themselves).

Confining what is non-instrumentally good for me to virtue, also seems in tension with the related intuition that it can directly benefit me to bring about things in the world, or states of affairs, that possess genuine value. Why not think that if I am a cancer researcher, it would be good for me if my lifelong efforts actually succeeded in producing a cure for cancer? Such seems especially tempting, if one holds a realist view about the non-relational value properties of things. More prosaically, it seems to be an obvious fact about human life that we can (and typically do), even after reflection, desire and aim at many things other than states of ourselves. We might think that these considerations suggest either that (a) the notion of the ultimate ends of action tends to pull apart from that of what is best for oneself, or (b) some of these aimed for and desired ends should count as non-instrumentally good for me.

None of these conflicts or tensions shows that the identification of happiness with virtue is incoherent or patently false. Later in the Greek tradition, the Stoics—

sometimes appealing to Socrates as an early proponent of this view—explicitly held that the only non-instrumental good was virtue and that the only non-instrumental evil was vice. But they did respond to these tensions by developing deep and controversial theories of human nature and of the nature of the world that supported the identity thesis.

Perhaps one plausible way to support the identity thesis is by means of identifying the happiness or well-being of a creature with the full realization or perfection of its natural capacities and holding that this full realization or perfection is constituted by virtue.⁴⁹ Such an identification of virtue with the full realization of a human being's natural capacities might obtain in more than one way. If human nature, at bottom, were to consist in a single capacity (or a set of capacities in which the lower ones are simply subsumed by the higher), virtue could be a single thing insofar as the realization of that single capacity is itself unitary. Alternately, if human nature, at bottom, were to consist of several distinct capacities (which do not all merely subserve a single highest one), then virtue could still have a certain kind of unity insofar as the full

realization of these capacities were co-realizable or, more strongly, interdependent.

But even if we accept the identification of virtue with the full realization of capacities in either of these ways, we cannot yet tell how plausible it is to identify the individual's well-being with a full realization of its capacities. If, for example, the nature of a creature essentially involved the disposition to detect and predate a certain kind of animal, say sheep, it is hardly clear that such a creature would be well-off, no matter how finely honed these dispositions were, if there were no sheep in the environment. The problem is not it would starve, (since this would involve a failure to realize its capacities), but rather that if there are no sheep around, a sheep detector just a waste.⁵⁰

As we have seen, there is reason to think that Socrates takes especially seriously, or is moving towards, an account of virtue as knowledge of good and bad that includes knowledge of what is good and bad for the agent. On such an account of virtue, there is an obvious worry about how it could be identical with happiness. Merely knowing what is good and bad for oneself does not, it seems, guarantee that one in fact obtains the good and avoids the bad. Such

knowledge seems to be hardly sufficient for happiness (and perhaps not even necessary for it, since one might obtain the requisite goods without having such knowledge). If, for example, I know that what is good for me is an overall balance of pleasure over pain, such knowledge seems to fall far short of ensuring that I obtain such a surplus.

A thesis identifying virtue with happiness on this conception of virtue would require that knowing the good brings with it optimal well-being and this seems to require that such knowledge itself constitute what is best for the individual. Such a claim might be plausible on a conception of human nature that could explain why such understanding by itself constituted the good for the individual. We do find in middle-period dialogues, such as the Phaedo and the Republic, accounts of human nature that emphasize the centrality to it of the rational capacity to possess understanding of reality and value. And we find there support for the idea that contemplation of what is non-rationally good or of the property of non-relational goodness is the central aspect of the perfection of human nature. But without an account of human nature in the early dialogues that could do similar work, the identity of

virtue and happiness must remain deeply implausible for Socrates.⁵¹

B. Is virtue sufficient for happiness?

There are passages in the early dialogues that might seem to suggest that virtue is sufficient for happiness. These include Crito 48B4-7 quoted above as well as the following.

There is nothing bad for a good man either in life or in death and his affairs are not neglected by the gods. (Apol. 41D1-3)

It is very necessary that the moderate person, because he is just and courageous and pious . . . is a completely good person, and that the good person does well and finely whatever he does, and that the person who does well is blessed and happy, while the corrupt person, the one who does badly, is miserable.⁵² (Gorg. 507B8-C5)

The exact relation between the sufficiency thesis and the identity thesis is complicated.⁵³ But one way in which the sufficiency thesis has been interpreted so as to be distinctive is this: being happy is a threshold or scalar

notion, not an optimizing one. There are a range of lives somewhat below the optimal life, all of which are very good lives, that count as happy. On this view, it could be true that A is happier than B, while it is also the case that A is happy and B is happy. The most straightforward way to flesh out this idea is to see happiness as a composite of distinct goods and the degree to which one is happy as a function (not necessarily a simply additive one) of the goods that one possesses. Virtue is a sufficiently important good that by itself—without any other goods and despite any evils—its possession makes one's life very good or happy. The addition of further goods, or a reduction in evils, could increase one's surplus of good over bad and thus make one happier.

The sufficiency thesis would have two quite striking implications.

(A) Since the agent's virtue is within the agent's control, her well-being or happiness is within her control.⁵⁴

(B) The world is supportive of virtue. Many moderns find that there is a conflict, or at least a tension, between the individual's virtue and her well-being. If the sufficiency thesis is true, then the world—including human nature—is such that virtue guarantees happiness.

If Plato does hold the sufficiency thesis, then both these claims express a proposition that he would accept. Nevertheless, they are easily misinterpreted by a modern reader. As a point of comparison, consider the following two passages, the first in which Augustine describes the turmoil surrounding his conversion, and the second from Kant.

During this agony of indecision I performed many bodily actions, things which a man cannot always do, even if he wills to do them . . . I tore my hair and hammered my forehead with my fists . . . But I might have had the will to do it and yet not have done it, if my limbs had been unable to move in compliance with my will. I performed all these actions, in which the will and the power to act are not the same. Yet I did not do that one thing that I should have been far, far better pleased to do than all the rest and could have done at once, as soon as I had the will to do it, because as soon as I had the will to do so, I should have willed it wholeheartedly. For in this case, the power to act was the same as the will. To will it was to do it.⁵⁵

Ask [a man] whether, if his prince demanded it, on the pain of . . . immediate execution, that he give false testimony against an honorable man whom the prince would like to destroy under a plausible pretext: he would consider it possible to overcome his love of life, however great it may be. He would perhaps not venture to assert whether he would do it or not, but he must admit without hesitation that it would be possible for him.⁵⁶

Augustine realizes in his period of struggle that it is open to him at any moment to follow god and that by doing so he will bring himself into a good condition of soul and a condition that is good for him. Both the good condition of soul and benefit for himself are fully within his control; they require only that he will appropriately. (I leave aside complexities arising from Augustine's views about the role of grace.) In the passage from Kant, any rational person must admit that it is possible for him to act on the moral law and thus for his action to have moral worth. Kant does not claim that the person's happiness is within his own control, but acting on the moral law is within the person's control and simply depends on the manner of his willing.

For Socrates, in contrast, virtue is within the person's control insofar as it is a state of an individual's soul and does not additionally require that anything in particular be true of the person's body or of the external world. If virtue is sufficient for happiness, this is also true of happiness. But if virtue requires knowledge, it is not ensured by any choice or decision open to the person at any given time: attaining knowledge will require much more than deciding to do so and, indeed, Socrates does not guarantee that it is possible for everyone (and below I shall discuss whether he thinks it is possible for anyone).

Second, moderns tend to see possible conflicts between individual well-being and morality insofar as morality involves a commitment to, e.g., promoting the well-being of all or to acting in a way that reflects an impartial point of view. But neither of these ideas is immediately relevant to the sufficiency thesis as Socrates would understand it. Taking virtue as knowledge of good and bad for the agent, what the sufficiency thesis comes to is the claim that knowing what is good and bad for oneself is sufficient for happiness.⁵⁷ As I have suggested, it is not clear that this line of argument succeeds, but it does seem to be what underlies Socrates' suggesting that virtue is

sufficient for happiness. Note that Socrates' rationale for the sufficiency thesis does not seem to rely on any further substantive assumption about what virtue requires. Although Socrates appears to think that there is a considerable—but not full—overlap between what a conventionally virtuous person and what a Socratically virtuous person would do, his line of thought supporting the sufficiency thesis does not require this and Socrates does not in the early dialogues explain fully why there should be such an overlap.⁵⁸

The sufficiency thesis, however, may be called into question by other passages that suggest that a sufficient degree of ill health could, not only deprive a virtuous person of happiness, but in fact, make his life not worth living. In the Crito, for example, as part of an argument stressing the importance of justice as the healthy condition of the soul, Socrates seems to suggest that life is not "worth living with a body that is in a bad condition and corrupted" (Crito 47E4-6, cf. Gorg. 505A and 512AB).

We can still defend the attribution of the sufficiency thesis to Socrates by suggesting that a severe degree of bodily damage can render a virtuous person unhappy only by undermining the virtuous condition of soul. We can thus

give considerable weight to the passages about bodily condition without denying sufficiency.⁵⁹ Further, if the loss of goods, such as health, and the suffering of evils, such as disease, can make even the virtuous person's life not worth living, then these goods and evils must have considerable weight in determining the individual's overall balance of good and evil. If so, it becomes increasingly difficult to justify the claim that being virtuous or acting virtuously always takes priority over other goods and evils.

This worry is especially acute, if the dividing line between being virtuous and not being virtuous is such that the non-virtuous person can approximate the virtuous person closely. If such approximation is possible, then it is hard to justify the priority of virtue. Why should the non-virtuous person who approximates the virtuous person as closely as possible and who has all other possible goods and no evils be worse off than the virtuous person who has no other goods and all other possible evils? The idea that the virtuous person is always better off and that one is always better off acting virtuously seems to require that there is a great divide between virtue and anything that falls short of it. What it would go well with is, for example, the sort of discontinuity that is found between an

action having moral worth or lacking it in Kant's system or that between knowledge and belief in Plato's middle-period epistemology.

Finally, given an understanding of virtue as knowledge of the good there are problems for the sufficiency thesis that are related to those considered above in connection with the identity thesis. Here, too, unless such knowledge has great value in itself, it is implausible to think that it is sufficient for happiness. But this seems to require that such knowledge be more than simply knowledge of what is best for oneself.

C. Is virtue necessary for happiness?

It has seemed to many that the answer to this is obviously yes. Consider, for example, the following passage from the Gorgias.

Polus: It is clear, Socrates, that you will not even claim to know that the Great King is happy.

Socrates: Yes, and that would be true, for I do not know how he stands in regard to education and virtue.

Polus: Really? Does happiness depend entirely on that?

Socrates: Yes, Polus, so I say anyway. I say that the admirable and good person, man or woman, is happy, but

that the one who's unjust and wicked is miserable.⁶⁰ (Gorg. 470E4-10)

The necessity of virtue for happiness also follows immediately from the Dependency Thesis (which I shall discuss below).

But if virtue is necessary for happiness, we then face serious worries about the possibility of happiness. If knowledge is necessary for virtue, then Socrates is not happy and perhaps no human can be happy.

To begin, it is not clear that these are unacceptable results. Especially if happiness is an optimal state, it is not obviously counter-intuitive or a disaster for Socrates' ethical theory to hold that no one, not even Socrates himself, is happy.⁶¹ What would be more worrisome, however, is the possibility that without virtue no one could have a life worth living (and it would be an especially unattractive consequence for Socrates if no one could improve with respect to well-being, if he did not become virtuous).

On the account of virtue as knowledge of good and bad, it seems quite plausible that one could live a life well worth living without such knowledge and it is certainly

plausible that one could improve with respect to well-being without having such knowledge. A person might have many goods other than virtue and many true beliefs about good and bad without possessing knowledge. It is not obvious that such a person's life could not be worth living and it certainly seems plausible to think that improvements to his well-being might accrue if he gained more true beliefs and lost false ones (especially if these are important beliefs). Indeed, this line of thought calls into question the necessity of virtue for happiness. If happiness is not an optimal state, why would it be impossible for such a person to be happy? Although as we saw, for example, in our discussion of the Apology and the Crito, Socrates asserts the centrality of virtue in choice and life, we do not yet have an account of virtue that would ground such a claim. I thus turn to Socrates' most radical and philosophically interesting defense of the importance of virtue.

The Dependency Thesis

In the Euthydemus and the Meno, Socrates seems to advance a thesis about the dependence of all other goods upon wisdom or knowledge of the good.⁶² Let us introduce some terminology.

x is a Dependent Good if and only if x is good for a wise person and x is bad for an unwise person.

x is a Dependent Evil if and only if x is bad for a wise person and x is not bad for an unwise person.

Dependent Goods include such things as wealth, health, beauty and strength, but also some purely psychic goods such as a keen memory. Dependent Evils are the natural contrast class and include things such as poverty, sickness and so on. Corresponding to this account of Dependent Goods and Evils, we can give an account of Independent Goods and Evils.

G is an Independent Good if and only if G is good for a person regardless of what else she possesses.

B is an Independent Evil if and only if B is bad for a person regardless of what else she possesses.

Wisdom is an Independent Good and lack of wisdom an Independent Bad.

In the Euthydemus and the Meno, Socrates suggests that all goods that are entirely distinct from wisdom are Dependent Goods (I shall call this the "Dependency Thesis.") So why does he think that this is true? The line of thought suggested by some of the examples in the Euthydemus is this.

(1) Right use of a Dependent Good is a necessary (and sufficient) condition of its possessor benefiting from the possession of a Dependent Good.

(2) Wisdom is a necessary (and sufficient) condition of the right use of a Dependent Good.

Therefore,

(3) Wisdom is a necessary (and sufficient) condition of its possessor benefiting from the possession of a Dependent Good.

Carpenters, for example, are not benefited by possessing tools and raw materials, unless they know how to use them and carpentry provides knowledge of how to use means to bring about beneficial ends (e.g., Euthyd. 280C4-E2). More generally, the goodness of Dependent Goods for their possessor is dependent on knowledge of the good because such knowledge is necessary and sufficient for using Dependent Goods correctly. If you do not know how to use

the resources available to you, you will not be able to use them rightly and if you do not use your resources rightly, they will not benefit you. If, on the other hand, you do know how to use your resources, you will use them rightly and they will benefit you.

The Dependency Thesis should be welcome to Socrates. If it is true, the necessity of virtue (understood as wisdom) for happiness quickly follows, since the person lacking virtue or knowledge can have nothing good. What is the relation of the Dependency Thesis to the claim that the virtuous person is always better off than the unvirtuous and that virtue is sufficient for happiness? First, on the Dependency Thesis, it will be the case that nothing benefits the person lacking knowledge. On the other hand, the person with knowledge possesses the Independent Good that consists in having such knowledge. This, however, does not settle the comparative question, since the Dependency Thesis allows that Dependent Evils, such as sickness, are bad for the virtuous person. The comparative thesis would only be plausible if knowledge of the good were an especially weighty good in itself and the corresponding lack of knowledge an especially weighty evil. Understanding happiness as a threshold concept, the

sufficiency of virtue for happiness would require that knowledge of the good by itself (and despite the presence of any Dependent Evils) is a weighty enough good to push the person over the threshold of happiness.

But it is not clear that Socrates has adequate grounds for thinking this in the early dialogues. The natural line of thought suggested by the Euthydemus and the Meno passages is that the relevant wisdom is the knowledge of good or correct use, that is, it consists in the knowledge of how to use Dependent Goods in order to produce a good for their possessor. But such an understanding of the Dependency Thesis faces serious problems. First, there is the problem of bad luck. Such knowledge does not seem sufficient for benefiting from Dependent Goods, since accidental misuse and unexpected external circumstances may disrupt normally correct use and cause it to misfire.

There are also problems with good luck. Why should such knowledge be necessary, if a person can accidentally use the Dependent Good correctly or do so under the guidance of others without possessing knowledge herself? But more important for our questions about happiness, such an account of the Dependency Thesis does little to suggest that this sort of knowledge of the good (and thus virtue

understood in this way) is of more than instrumental value. Once again, Socrates does not develop a worked-out justification for thinking that virtue understood in this way is of such extraordinary value and we can see Plato's middle-period metaphysics, epistemology and psychology as offering the resources to provide some grounding for this claim.⁶³

Section V: Concluding Issues

Socrates' views about happiness which we have considered have a number of important apparent advantages for him.

1. Rational eudaimonism establishes a single rational goal for all action and choice. This gives Socrates a clear strategy for justifying the choice to develop the virtues and act virtuously: he can provide such a justification by showing that this most conduces to the individual's happiness. Moreover, rational eudaimonism sharply restricts the possibility of irresolvable rational conflicts for an individual agent by giving a single goal for action, that is, the agent's own (greatest) happiness. (If there are ties for first place, it seems reasonable to allow that any of these actions is rational.⁶⁴)

2. The fact that rationality recommends the course of action that most conduces to the agent's own happiness does not entail that rationality recommends that considerations of happiness ought to guide the agent's actual practical deliberations. It might be the case that happiness is best achieved by focusing on other considerations in one's deliberations. But Socrates does not seem to think that such a possibility in fact obtains. He seems to think that attaining happiness is best achieved by taking it as a target in one's own deliberations. This is why, for example, he stresses the pressing need for each of us to acquire knowledge of what is good and bad for us.

Since we all wish to be happy, and since we appear to become so by using things and using them correctly, and since knowledge was the source of correctness and good luck, it seems that every man must prepare himself by every means to become as wise as possible.⁶⁵ (Euthyd. 282A1-6)

Thus along with his commitment to rational eudaimonism, Socrates has a theory of what ideal practical deliberation should be like. In light of Socrates' lack of knowledge in

the early dialogues of what virtue is and what is good, non-ideal deliberation will take the form of relying on claims that have been examined and not yet refuted (Crito 46BC and 49AB).

As argued above in section 3, Socrates' repeated emphasis on the need to be guided in one's deliberations by the thought of what is virtuous or just is perfectly consistent with the idea that the agent's deliberations should be guided by the thought of his own happiness. Acting virtuously is the always better for the agent (and the virtuous agent is aware that this is the case) and thus the person can, as Socrates does at Crito 47A-48D, deliberate about what is just as a way of deliberating about what is best for himself.

3. Rational eudaimonism provides a formal specification of our proper concern with others: we should take account of and be concerned with others in the way that most conduces to our own happiness. This does not, however, tell us how far we should be concerned with others. But it does provide a natural way of further specifying that concern. Such concern could, for example, be manifested by respecting the rights of others or helping to advance their preferences. But it is natural for a rational

eudaimonist to think that the proper target of concern for others is advancing their happiness. Rational eudaimonism may thus allow us to fix the way in which we should show concern for friends and for others more generally.⁶⁶

A rational eudaimonist should also want to explore whether happiness can help give content to other important ethical (and political) ideas. If our above analysis of virtue is correct, it gives content to the notion of virtue since my action is just if and only if it is best for me overall. But might it also, for example, help give content to the notion of a just or correct law or institution? The most straightforward, but not the only, way it might do so is via the principle that a just law or institution is one that makes the city and its citizens as happy as possible.⁶⁷ Further, a rational eudaimonist should consider whether happiness can help give content to the notion of treating another person justly (insofar as this is distinct from treating him in accordance with a just law or institution). Must such an action affect the person's happiness in any special way? In particular, is it a necessary or sufficient condition (or perhaps both) of a person being treated justly that this treatment aims at (or perhaps is just consistent with) that person's (greatest) happiness? (This is, of

course, a stronger requirement than that of simply doing no harm.)

4. Psychological eudaimonism provides Plato with the basis of a theory of ethical education and training. If people always act to try to bring about what seems best to them, ethical education and persuasion should focus on their beliefs about what is good. It does not need to take into account the possibility that desires and emotions might lead the person to act contrary to what she thinks best at the time. (Although there could be reason for special training if there are desires and emotions that might cause an irrational change in the person's judgment of what is overall best or even if they merely persist in the face of an overall best judgment, without leading to clear-eyed akrasia or irrational judgment changes, but occasion some psychic turmoil or disturbance.)

5. Finally, rational eudaimonism may be attractive to us for reasons that Socrates himself does not clearly articulate and may not share. We might think that eudaimonism has the potential to provide a rational goal that is less contested and more compatible with naturalism than many other options. It may be possible to come to some more widely shared agreement about what benefits a human

being or makes them flourish than to agree about what the Form of Justice requires or what a rational agent can will as a universal law. Such agreement may rest on our ability to develop an account of human nature and understanding happiness in terms of that nature.⁶⁸

But there are also important worries about Socrates' eudaimonism and certain gaps and tension in his views. I shall start by mentioning two concerns that have been especially prominent.

1. Significant lines of thought in modern moral philosophy reject the idea that the single ultimate goal of practical reason is the agent's own happiness. Kant, for example, holds that practical reason takes an interest in acting from the moral law and Sidgwick accepts the "dualism of practical reason" according to the principle of rational egoism and the principle of rational benevolence are both equally authoritative, obligatory, and rational.⁶⁹ Rational eudaimonism will need a response to these views.

2. A related objection is that rational eudaimonism is unacceptably egoistic. Some have argued that if my ultimate end is my own (greatest) happiness, then I can take an interest in other people things, such as virtue or the well-being of others, only instrumentally, that is, only

insofar as they are causal means to the distinct end of my own well-being or happiness. This worry has generated and continues to generate a lively controversy. A common response to this objection is to claim that rational eudaimonism can allow these things are not (merely) instrumental my own happiness, but are themselves part of my happiness. So I do not choose, e.g., virtue as a means to my happiness, but rather because a virtuous life is in itself part of what it is for me to live happily. Objectors still worry (a) whether choosing virtue in this way is really compatible with choosing it "for its own sake", and (b) that even if it is compatible, rational eudaimonism still has the unattractive consequence that if virtue is not optimally conducive to my happiness, I should not rationally choose it.⁷⁰ This second concern is connected to the resolution of the first. But even apart from these concerns, Socrates in the early dialogues does not provide a detailed description of how we should take the interests of others into account.

I shall close by noting what I think are perhaps the two most serious gaps in Socrates' views that mark issues to which Plato and the rest of Greek ethics were sensitive. First, as we have noted, Socrates does not provide a detailed account what is good for human beings. Without

some such account, it is very hard to tell whether happiness captures all that is of rational interest to us. Almost all of the following writers in the Greek ethical tradition attempt to provide such an account via an analysis of human nature along with the claim that the realization of that nature is central to happiness. Although Socrates does offer some important claims about human nature, such as psychological eudaimonism, these are not sufficiently detailed to provide a detailed, substantive account of the human good. Moreover, without such a substantive account, it is quite difficult to see why (as Socrates clearly expects) a person seeking happiness would follow, at least in large part, ordinary judgments about what is and is not virtuous.

Finally, as we have seen, Socrates in the early dialogues both insists on the priority of virtue and seems to be moving in the direction of an account of virtue as knowledge of good and bad. Yet as we have also seen, it is very unclear that such a conception of virtue can sustain the priority claim, the necessity or sufficiency of virtue for happiness, or the Dependency Thesis. We can see Plato's middle-period view of human beings as most fundamentally rational creatures, his understanding of rationality as

involving love and knowledge of the truth, and his conception of knowledge as requiring a grasp of Forms are one response to this gap. On this conception of human nature and account of virtue as involving knowledge of Forms, the priority claim, the necessity and sufficiency of virtue for happiness, or the Dependency Thesis are much more plausible.⁷¹ And in the Stoics, who perhaps have more in common with Socrates than do any of the other Greek ethical thinkers, we also find a response to this gap in the their development of detailed theories of human nature as rational, the connection of human nature to the nature of the rest of the universe, and a conception of the knowledge that constitutes virtue as a form of knowledge of the goodness and order of the universe itself. It would be a fruitful approach to considering Greek ethics to see how each of the traditions responds to the questions we need to resolve in order to evaluate Socrates' views.

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¹ Sidgwick (1981: 92, 404-5). For general discussions of happiness in the Greek tradition, see Annas (1993) and White (2002).

² I count as early, Apology, Charmides, Crito, Euthydemus, Euthyphro, Gorgias, Hippias Major, Hippias Minor, Ion, Laches, Lysis, Menexenus, Meno, and Protagoras. The stylometric evidence for putting these dialogues earlier than the rest is fairly strong and is accepted by some scholars who see no substantive philosophical differences between the early and middle dialogues (Parmenides, Phaedrus, Republic, and Theaetetus), see Kahn (1996: 37-48), [other references or reference to earlier chapter]. Although there is some stylometric evidence for placing Cratylus, Phaedo, and Symposium after the early group and before the middle, my reasons for treating them as not belonging with the other early dialogues depend on substantive considerations about their content and thus are more controversial.

³ de Heer (1968, 26), this book is a quite helpful study of happiness in non-philosophical Greek thought.

⁴ Evelyn-White (1982). Here and elsewhere I have made occasional changes in the cited translation.

⁵ Edmonds (1968), note on trans. of aretês?

⁶ Nemean 7. 55-6, Race (1997).

⁷ For the idea that happiness is the state or condition of being happy, see Euthyd. 289C6-8 with 291B4-7 and Gorg. 478C3-7.

⁸ See Kraut (1979) and Vlastos (1991, 200-209), this worry goes back at least to Sidgwick (1981, 92). I use "state" quite broadly to include stretches of a life and thus to include activities.

⁹ For further discussion, with references, of (a) this principle, see Irwin (1995, 25-5), (b) whether happiness is a scalar notion, i.e., comes in degrees, or is identified strictly with the optimal point, see Bobonich (2002, 210-3). The Principle of Rational Eudaimonism is meant to assert that the ultimate end is the optimal outcome on either understanding of happiness. There are many interesting issues that I cannot discuss here. For example, how exactly is the notion of what is best for a person, all things considered, in the long-run to be characterized? If we identify it with the outcome that is in the given circumstances best for the agent, then badly-off agents in poor circumstances might attain their happiness by

attaining the least bad of the available horrible outcomes. If on the other hand, set the standard of happiness by reference to the best possible human circumstances and abilities, then happiness might be inaccessible to everyone.

¹⁰ Note that this Principle does not say what psychological facts about a person make it true that his desires have the ultimate end of happiness and it does not immediately entail that that the person must have any particular conscious attitude, cf. n.*.

¹¹ For good discussions, with references, of eudaimonism see, Annas (1999, 31-51), Brickhouse and Smith (1994, 73-136) and Vlastos (1991, 200-232). For criticism of the eudaimonist consensus, see Morrison (2003) and White (2002). As we shall see in section 3, more are inclined to challenge psychological eudaimonism (especially on the basis of certain passages in the Gorgias) than rational eudaimonism. Brickhouse and Smith (1994) and Irwin (1995) both provide good references to the secondary literature on many of the issues discussed in this chapter, I shall often cite them in my notes in lieu of listing this literature here.

¹² For Plato translations, I have used those in Cooper (1997). dein which is translated as "must" is from deô (B) in LSJ, i.e. "lack, miss, stand in need of", not, as is sometimes said, from deô (A) "bind, fetter." The LSJ entry for dein has the typographical error of "deô (A)" for "deô (B)", also see Frisk (1960-72) and Goodell (1914).

¹³ White (2002, p. 181).

¹⁴ The context, I think, makes it clear that Socrates sees this as a rationally decisive consideration.

¹⁵ Although neither passage is fully precise, Apol. 25D9-26A8 suggests the claim that no one willingly does what is bad for himself and Apol. 30B2-4 may suggest the Dependency Thesis. I discuss both of these theses below.

¹⁶ In the Republic, Plato tries to show that no matter what the attitude of the gods, the just person is always better off than the unjust person. Since Plato accordingly recommends justice, it seems that he would give one's own happiness priority over obeying god's commands, in the counterfactual situation in which they come apart.

¹⁷ E.g. Apol. 41C8-D7, 30D6-31A9, cf. Rep. 379B1-C7 and Brickhouse and Smith (1994, 176-212). Apol. 41C8-D7

provides reason for thinking that engaging in the elenchus is good independently of being commanded by god.

¹⁸ Socrates does not explicitly say that happiness subsumes all other considerations. So, strictly speaking, this leaves open the possibility that if two courses of action are tied as highest with respect to happiness, there is some other consideration that might rationally decide between them. But Socrates says nothing to suggest that he has this possibility in mind.

¹⁹ For the interchangeability of eu zên and being happy, see Rep. 353E10-354A2. The equivalent phrase eu prattein ("to do well") is also interchangeable with being happy, see Euthydemus 278E3, E6, 279A2 and 280B6-7; the evidence is well presented by Brickhouse and Smith (1994, p. 113). Aristotle thinks that the identification of eu zên and eu prattein with living happily is a commonplace, see NE 1095a18-20.

²⁰ Cf. n. 16.

²¹ Some other essays in the volume might discuss this; if not, I'll provide further references.

²² Nicias think that his own definition follows from (or at least comes close to following from) something Socrates has "often" said, Laches 194C7-D10.

²³ Although barbarous English, "bads" might be preferable to "evils", since the latter is too easily assumed to be "moral evils", rather than things bad for their possessor.

²⁴ See, with references, Brickhouse and Smith (1999, pp. 158-73) and Cooper (1999, pp. 76-117).

²⁵ Strictly, this is a question to which the interlocutor assents. Note porizô at Laches 199E1 is in the middle. In parallel construction at 199D8-E1, the person is taking precaution for himself with respect to good and bad things concerning human beings and gods; he is not taking precaution for the gods, since they have nothing to fear.

²⁶ Socrates has just argued that genuine knowledge (epistêmê) of good and bad is general in form, so this person will also know general truths about what is good and bad for human beings. But since Socrates stresses that the outcome of this knowledge is acting so as benefit oneself, it is reasonable to conclude that this is the goal of such knowledge.

²⁷ Socrates might reject this proposed definition of moderation, but there is no reason to think that he rejects the idea that a person who had genuine moderation would be in the condition that he describes, cf. Laches 199D4-E1. This view seems to require that the virtues are at least interentailing and for our purposes we do not need to settle the Laches worry of whether there is some even stronger relation among them. That Socrates is trying to identify the knowledge that which will make its possessor happy is also clear from Charm. 173D6-174E2.

²⁸ For an argument that Euthyd. 278E_{ff} along with an argument from the Lysis about the proper explanation of action entails psychological eudaimonism, see Irwin (1995, pp. 52-5).

²⁹ Meno 77B6-78B8, especially 77C7-9, 77E5-78B2. Even those who do not think that Plato in the early dialogues endorses rational eudaimonism, accept that the good and bad aimed at in this passage is the agent's own good and bad, e.g. Morrison (2003, p. 23).

³⁰ Socrates clearly means to claim here that my wisdom guides all my external goods and the qualities of my soul so as to bring about my happiness, and that my lack of wisdom

makes it the case that these same things harm me, Meno 88B1-8. As Meno 88B5-6 shows, this is what Socrates intends his argument (87E5-88D3) to prove and this is the only plausible conclusion of the argument: it would simply be question-begging to see it as a reason to think that my wisdom guides things to produce happiness for others. At Meno 87D8-E2, Socrates suggests that because virtue is something good and makes us good, virtue makes us beneficial (ôphelimoï). Socrates does not say to whom we are beneficial and it is perfectly acceptable Greek to say that a person is beneficial to himself, e.g. Laws 808C5-6. Although Socrates does seem to think that a virtuous person does not harm others, but rather benefits them, (e.g. Apol. 25C-26A, 30E-32E, Crito 49AD), this is not what the argument at Meno 87E5-88D3 is intended to show. This point is perhaps even clearer from the very similar argument at Euthyd. 278E-282A, cf. *next footnote.

³¹ Euthyd. 278E-282A. Euthyd. 280B8-281D2 makes it clear that my wisdom guides all my other goods so as to attain my own happiness, cf. 288D6-E2. 282A1-7 tells us that we must (dei) in every way try to become as wise as possible because wisdom is necessary and sufficient for the agent's

happiness. This is an overall verdict concerning what we are to do, so happiness at least takes priority over other ends.

³² Morrison (2003, pp. 25-6) suggests that all that Socrates is committed to in this passage is that a person always acts for the sake of the good of someone (or something) or other, not that the person acts for the sake of his own good. Morrison also thinks that at Gorg. 468B, when Socrates makes this inference he is assuming that we are adopting the perspective of a tyrant and that in this case we must be acting for the sake of our own good. This is, however, not convincing. The thesis about acting for the good is a perfectly general one in this section and the claim about what we do is meant to state a truth about how all people act, Gorg. 467D6-E1, 468B1-4 (cf. Meno 77E-78B). There is no implicit restriction to the point of view of the tyrant at Gorg. 467D6-E1, 468B1-4 or 468B4-6 and Socrates allows that even a just person might perform these actions, 470B1-8. Application of this general psychological thesis that all act for the sake of their own good is made to the specific case of the tyrant at 468D1ff., not at 468B4-6. Nor is it the case that Socrates at Gorg. 470A9ff. suggests that

the criterion for performing action is whether or not it is just independently of whether it is better for the agent. What Socrates accepts is that the criterion for whether or not to do an action is whether it is better for the agent and he also holds that just action is always better for the agent.

³³ Socrates claims that the one doing injustice is more miserable (athlios) than the one suffering injustice (Gorg. 469A1-B6) because doing injustice is the worst thing (469B8-9). (For this inference to be as obvious as Socrates and Polus suppose it is—Polus disputes the truth of the claim that the one doing injustice is more miserable, not the connection between my being miserable and my action being worst—worst must mean "worst for the agent.") Socrates comments that he would choose to suffer rather than to do injustice (469C1-2) for this reason (note ara at 469B12). It is reasonable to take this both as a consequence of the general psychological claims that Socrates has just made and, since Socrates seems to approve of this choice, as an endorsement of the rationality of choosing the less miserable option. Although Socrates does not work out a calculus for taking good and

bad both into account in arriving an overall judgment of how well-off the person is, the claim that the happiest person is one without any badness in his soul suggests that such overall judgments are possible (469C3-E5).

³⁴ My above discussion explains why I think that good as the object of want is what is best for the agent overall. This understanding is shared by both traditional interpretations and Penner's new interpretation. On Plato's terminology, see Kahn (1987); for a survey of positions on these issues, see McTighe (1984). My discussion of these issues is indebted to an unpublished paper by Rachana Kamtekar.

³⁵ I believe that this an accurate account of Penner's position, see, e.g. his (1991). Penner (1991, pp. 201-2, n. 45) may allow for desires in the Gorgias for things that are not actually good (e.g. Gorg. 491DE, 493D-494A) as long as they are not sufficient to bring about action. It is not clear that this interpretation can explain actions that do not achieve the actual good. In the case of an action for what is actually best, this interpretation explains the action in part by a desire for the actual good. When I make a mistake and do something that I wrongly think is best, why

is not a desire to perform this action also needed to explain how I act?

³⁶ See, e.g., Brickhouse and Smith (forthcoming), Devereux (1995), and Irwin (1995, pp. 114-7); Cooper (1999, pp. 29-75) is an especially sensitive and subtle discussion.

³⁷ See Brickhouse and Smith (1994), McTighe (1984) and Weiss (1985). For a related line of thought, see Apol. 25D9-26A8.

³⁸ I intend this to be neutral between the traditional interpretation and Penner's.

³⁹ It is clear that the good and bad at stake here are the agent's good and bad, e.g. Prot. 354A7-E2, 355D3-4, 358D1-4. For optimizing or maximizing overall, see Prot. 355B3-357E8. Doing the worse while knowing the better is a problematic experience in the view of both Socrates and the many, but no one would be puzzled by the possibility that an agent knows a certain course of action is best for something, but does not do it. Nor is there any reason to think that the many would describe a case of acting to do what you believe best for yourself, but not for others, as one in which your knowledge was dragged about "like a slave" (Prot. 352C1). The many's reason for calling

proposed actions good and bad is the good or bad they bring to the agent (Prot. 353C9-354E2). Morrison (2003, pp. 30-2) claims that Prot. 358C6-D4 is meant to apply only to circumstances in which "any further consequences or side-effects" of the agent's choice other than those on his own good and bad are excluded. But (i) there is no sign in the text of a restriction that would so radically change the meaning of Prot. 358C6-D4, (ii) the restricted claim would not respond to the original worry that it is sometimes possible to do the worse while knowing the better, and (iii) the inference that cowards do not go meet what they think dreadful or bad for them cannot possibly mean that they do not do so only when "any further consequences or side-effects" are excluded.

⁴⁰ Further evidence for rational eudaimonism in the Protagoras is that the measuring art assures that we always go for what is actually best for us and thus saves our life is clearly endorsed by Socrates as giving us rational guidance (356C4-357B5). Also note that even the many here doubt only psychological eudaimonism, they do not hint at any doubts about rational eudaimonism. With respect to psychological eudaimonism, note that it does not require

that the agent's desire for the overall best that produces action is always fully available to his consciousness and Socrates' analysis of apparent akrasia in the Protagoras may involve the postulation of a desire for the overall that is not fully available to consciousness, cf. Bobonich (forthcoming).

⁴¹ For further discussion, see Irwin (1995, pp. 78-94) for an interpretation that is (overly) sympathetic to finding hedonism in the Protagoras, for an alternate interpretation, see Zeyl (1980). For general discussions of hedonism in the early dialogues, see Gosling and Taylor (1984) and Weiss (1989).

⁴² For an example of how to do this, Zeyl (1980).

⁴³ For discussion, see Brickhouse and Smith (1999, pp. 123-55), Irwin (1995, pp. 118-20), and Vlastos (1991, pp. 200-32).

⁴⁴ Vlastos (1991, pp. 224-5, emphasis deleted).

⁴⁵ It is unrealistic to expect practical deliberation always to take the form of finding a unique best action. Even without the idea of satisficing, it seems quite plausible to think that we often identify several actions as better than any of their other competitors, roughly as good as each

other, and realize that it is best overall simply to choose among them without thinking that our choice is an endorsement of one of them as uniquely best.

⁴⁶ On (1) and (2), see the literature cited in *n.43.

⁴⁷ There are demarcation problems here. It is useful to distinguish states and activities that have only intrinsic properties from those that have relational properties. For example, being pale is an intrinsic property of Socrates, standing to the left of Simmias is a relational property. It does not seem that virtue is likely to be an intrinsic property for Socrates because knowing that *p* does not seem to be an intrinsic property. Even if we make the assumption (which is widely questioned by contemporary philosophers) that my belief that *p* is an intrinsic state of me, knowing that *p* requires not only that I am in a certain state, but also that the world is in a certain state, i.e. that *p* obtains in the world. Nevertheless, there seems to be an intuitive sense in which my knowing the good is more self-confined than my actually bringing about the good in the world.

⁴⁸ For a start on contemporary discussions, see Parfit (1984, pp. 493-502).

⁴⁹ Cf. Cooper (1999, pp. 268-9). Some of the intuitive appeal of this idea may derive from its plausibility in the case of non-human living things. It is perhaps relevant that few non-human living things are thought to have such desires or plans or projects at all and especially any that involve the state of the world except insofar as it impinges upon them. This thought needs, however, to take into account in some way the goal of reproductive success. Also note that virtue might be necessary for the full realization of a person's natural capacities, but not be sufficient for it or constitute it.

⁵⁰ Cf. Copp and Sobel (2004).

⁵¹ One might also think that the knowledge required is something like knowledge of god's will or plan for things. Sharing in god's will or plan could be such a full realization of human nature. Such an understanding, unlike the sort of contemplation of the Phaedo or the Republic, perhaps need not involve the grasp of an elaborate theory. Such questions will become important in the Stoics.

⁵² Cf. Rep. 353D-354A and *n.43.

⁵³ For discussion with references, see Bobonich (2002, pp. 209-15).

⁵⁴ This is especially the case if no non-rational motivations that could prompt an agent to clear-eyed akrasia. I leave aside here worries about, e.g., determinism or circumstantial luck. The identity thesis would, of course, also have these same implications.

⁵⁵ The Confessions, Book 8, Chapter 8: Pine-Coffin (1983, pp. 171-2).

⁵⁶ Groundwork of The Metaphysics of Morals, Book 1, Chapter 6, Problem II, Remark 5:30: Gregor (1996, p. 163).

⁵⁷ If Socrates accepts psychological eudaimonism, a person with such knowledge would act (or try to) act upon it; if he recognizes the existence of non-rational motivations that can prompt to clear-eyed akrasia or irrationally change the agent's judgment of what is best, then it is natural for Socrates to recognize the existence of virtues that would inhibit such non-rational motivations.

⁵⁸ Perhaps the most specific defense of practices are those of Socrates' political obligations in the Crito, and those of his elenctic activities in the Apology and Gorgias (which have a clear political dimension insofar as these activities are intended to improve his fellow citizens, e.g. Apol. 30D-32A, 36BE; Gorg. 521D-522A: Socrates may be the only

true statesman in Athens). The "do not harm" principle is asserted in the Crito (49AE) and receives some defense in the Gorgias, but this principle is surprisingly unspecific until we receive what we do not get in the early dialogues, that is, an account of what is really good and bad for people.

⁵⁹ Brickhouse and Smith (1999, pp. 139-40), Kraut (1984, pp. 37-9), and Vlastos (1991, pp. 200-32).

⁶⁰ Cf. Brickhouse and Smith (1999, pp. 147-9).

⁶¹ Cf. Apol. 40CE and de Heer (1968, pp. 38-67).

⁶² Euthyd. 278E-282E, Meno 87D-89A. For discussion, see Annas (1999, pp. 40-51), Bobonich (2002, pp. 123-45), Brickhouse and Smith (1994, pp. 103-36), Ferejohn (1984), and Irwin (1986), (1995, pp. 55-8).

⁶³ E.g. Bobonich (2002, chapters 1 and 2).

⁶⁴ Rational eudaimonism, of course, does not by itself entail that there is always (or strictly ever) a fact of the matter about what most conduces to the agent's own happiness. But nowhere in the early dialogues does Socrates suggest that there are two courses of action for an agent that cannot be ranked such that one is overall better or equal to the other.

⁶⁵ The Dependency Thesis also constrains the form of practical deliberation. Insofar as it should aim at what is best for the agent and nothing benefits a person lacking virtue or knowledge of the good, practical deliberation should be carried out in light of whatever psychological states are required for virtue or knowledge of the good.

⁶⁶ See, e.g. Euthyd. 282E and Lysis 208A. For an interesting modern discussion, see Darwall (2002).

⁶⁷ For the idea that Socrates aims at benefiting all, see Apol. 36BC. The Gorgias claims that this makes him the only one to practice the art of statesmanship truly (521D6-8) and that this is the task of the good citizen (politês, 517C1-2); more generally see Gorg. 515BD, 517B-518C, and 521D-522B.

⁶⁸ Cf. Foot (2001) and Hursthouse (1999). Note that this does not entail that such theories of human nature would be entirely non-normative.

⁶⁹ For a discussion of Sidgwick, see Frankena (1992).

⁷⁰ For a discussion of these issues with references to the literature, see Bobonich (2002, pp. 450-79).

⁷¹ Although this is not to say that all these claims obviously follow (and there are particular concerns about the

sufficiency thesis). For further discussion, see Bobonich (2002, chaps. 1-2).