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**SOCRATES THE STOIC?
Rethinking Protreptic, Eudaimonism, and
the Role of Plato's Socratic Dialogues**

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* Note to the Reader: I will not have time enough to read all of this at the colloquium on 11 November, and will instead talk through a detailed outline on a handout. Still, this unwieldy draft records what I currently think I want to convey on 11 November, and I'd be happy to have errors and weaknesses in this draft brought to my attention.

1. Introduction

In the Euthydemus, Socrates and young Cleinias agree, "Not one of the other things is good or bad, but of these two, one—wisdom—is good, and the other—ignorance—is bad" (281e3-5).¹ To some, this is the outrageous and characteristically Stoic claim that wisdom is the only good.²

This essay grew out of comments on an essay by Naomi Reshotko for the 1999 Central Division Meeting of the American Philosophical Association, and I am grateful to Naomi for much discussion. (Her essay has since been published as "Virtue as the Only Unconditional—But not Intrinsic—Good." For further details on this and all other works cited, please see the list at the end of the paper.) The first full draft received helpful comments at the Ninth Annual Arizona Colloquium for Ancient Philosophy and my Spring 2004 seminar on Socratic ethics; I especially thank Mark McPherran, Don Morrison, and Sara Rappe.

¹ References to Plato's works are to Burnet's Platonis Opera, and translations are mine, though my translations of the Euthydemus borrow shamelessly from Sprague's rendering in Cooper's edition and my English for 281e3-5 steals from Long, "Socrates," 166.

² For elaborate defenses, see Ferejohn, "Socratic Thought-Experiments," and Irwin, "Epicurean?" See also Annas, "Virtue as the Use of Other Goods," 55, and Platonic Ethics, Old and New, 45; Cooper, "Aristotle on the Goods of Fortune," 305; Irwin, Plato's Ethics, 57; Long, "Socrates in Hellenistic Philosophy," 166-167; Rappe, "Tracking the Cynics," 293; and Striker, "Plato's Socrates." Unlike these latter scholars, many of whom are addressing the relation between Socrates and the Stoics and not aiming to provide an extended reading of Socrates or the Euthydemus, I try to respond more fully

Others, however, insist that the context qualifies the point: wisdom is the only good by itself or independently or unconditionally.³ The Stoicizing readers think that health, wealth, and other "conventional goods" are not goods at all, except for wisdom. The denying readers, on the other hand, think that "conventional goods" other than wisdom are, in fact, goods, though dependent or conditional goods.

The terms of this disagreement can generate confusion. To head off that problem, I stipulate that the phrase 'conventional goods' is shorthand for those things conventionally recognized as goods. As I use the phrase, it neither assumes nor denies the goodness of the things conventionally recognized as goods. By contrast, I understand dependent goods and conditional goods to be goods. So on my terms, the question that divides Stoicizers and deniers is this: when Socrates argues that conventional goods other than wisdom are not unconditional or independent goods, does he also conclude that they are not goods, or does he allow that they are conditional or dependent goods?

In this essay I argue for the Stoicizing answer. This conclusion by itself is not original, but my argument is. I take the deniers' reasons seriously, and to answer them, I call for rethinking the nature of protreptic argument, Socrates' eudaimonism, and the role of Plato's Socratic dialogues.

to the non-Stoicizing reading of the Euthydemus. Unlike Ferejohn and Irwin, I respond by finding resources within the Euthydemus.

³ Vlastos (Socrates, 228) pulls 'just by itself' from auta kath' hauta in 281d8-1, and insists that the qualification must be extended on pain of invalidity (230n97). I will explain why it does not when I consider the argument in some detail in §4. Many others (e.g., Penner, "Socrates," 135) use 'in itself' to mean the same thing, although Vlastos finds 'in itself' objectionable because it suggests the intrinsic/extrinsic distinction and thereby suggests that all conventional goods other than wisdom are merely extrinsically good (Socrates, 305). 'Independently' fits the technical vocabulary of independent and dependent goods preferred by Brickhouse and Smith, Plato's Socrates, esp. 106-110. Perhaps the most popular qualifier is 'unconditionally': see, e.g., Santas, "Socratic Goods," passim (but "alone by itself" on 43); and Reshotko, "Virtue as the Only Unconditional—But not Intrinsic—Good," 332.

I start in the next section by introducing the deniers' reasons and my strategy for responding.

2. Facing up to Denial

The deniers' case comes in three parts. First, they appeal to apparently conflicting evidence within the Euthydemus. Their starring evidence comes from the argument that leads to the Stoic conclusion. Socrates begins with the premise that health and wealth and such are goods (279a4-b3),⁴ and as he continues, he asserts that "if ignorance leads them, <the conventional goods other than wisdom> are greater evils than their opposites, to the extent that they are more able to serve the leader which is bad, while if prudence and wisdom <lead them>, then they are greater goods <than their opposites>" (281d6-8).⁵ But these are premises in a protreptic argument, an argument that is designed to exhort a non-philosopher to take up the philosophical life. Socrates seeks to convert young Cleinias, to turn him from ordinary values to the love of wisdom. So Socrates begins with a list of conventional goods, and he gradually introduces reasons to pare the list down until only wisdom is left. As I will show in more detail below (in §3), this protreptic requires that Cleinias successively discard false ordinary views as he more closely approaches the wisdom-loving truth. If he follows Socrates' reasoning, he comes to see that the ordinary premises are false. To read those premises as evidence of

⁴ As noted by Vlastos, Socrates, 229. For another reply, see also Annas, "Virtue as the Use of Other Goods," 57n10.

⁵ As noted by Brickhouse and Smith, Plato's Socrates, 107. Other replies to this evidence seem to me less felicitous. Irwin ("Epicurean?" 204) proposes that when Socrates says that health is a greater good with wisdom controlling it than sickness, he might mean that health is more of a good, that is, closer to being a good. Annas (Platonic Ethics, 44) seems to say that Plato has just failed to say exactly what he means, perhaps because of his limited technical vocabulary (43).

Socrates' views, against the evidence of the wisdom-loving conclusion, perversely misunderstands the protreptic nature of Socrates' argument.

Interestingly enough, there is no more counter-evidence to the Stoic claim in the Euthydemus. After Socrates reaches his Stoic conclusion, he respects it with great consistency. He immediately uses the word 'things' (πράγμασιν, 282a3) where a denier should expect to see 'goods' (ἀγαθοῖς), and he later takes care to discuss wisdom's beneficial use of wealth without allowing that wealth itself is beneficial.⁶ In fact, deep into the second protreptic scene, Socrates says plainly and without a qualification anywhere in the neighborhood that "Cleinius and I agreed that nothing is good except a kind of knowledge" (292b1-2).⁷

In other words, once the protreptic nature of the crucial argument is understood, the evidence of the Euthydemus is perfectly univocal. So the deniers need another move. Accordingly, they point to other dialogues in which Plato gives us a similar Socrates who seems to accept the existence of goods other than wisdom.⁸ The deniers here make two assumptions. First,

⁶ See especially 289a1-3, where Socrates asks, "For unless we know how to use the gold, it is not beneficial, or don't you remember?" According to Don Morrison, this question conversationally implies that gold is beneficial, i.e., good. I disagree. What a sentence conversationally implies depends on what conversation it is in. Were this sentence uttered without context, it would imply that gold is good. But it has a context, as Socrates reminds Cleinius ("don't you remember?"), and in this context, Cleinius should know better than to infer that gold is beneficial (at all) from the claim that it is not beneficial without wisdom. Nor should the context be at all in doubt, given the rest of the evidence I note above.

⁷ Vlastos (Socrates, 230n99) inserts his qualifier 'by itself' here, too, on the grounds that Socrates is referring back to his earlier conclusion and his earlier conclusion must include the qualifier. This reading, which falls when Vlastos' reasons for qualifying the earlier conclusion fall, is seriously strained in any case. For on this reading, Socrates reports the earlier conclusion in a very misleading way, despite the fact that eleven pages of conversation have intervened. Moreover, on this reading, Crito is in fact misled, for after the unqualified reminder, he assures Socrates, "Yes, that is what you said" (292b3). Vlastos would need to explain why Plato would want Crito to be misled on this crucial point.

⁸ For Vlastos, the star piece of evidence is Gorgias 467e (Socrates, 228-229, 305-306), but he also cites Gorgias 499c-500a, Lysis 218e, and Meno 78c and 87e (Socrates, 229). Annas ("Virtue as the Use of Other Goods") seems to agree that the Euthydemus is exceptional—"It is only in the Euthydemus that we find the radical conclusion drawn that

they assume that certain of Plato's dialogues share common features that make them Socratic dialogues. I do not quarrel with this. It seems to me quite reasonable to group the dialogues that (1) feature a primary character called Socrates who (2) focuses narrowly on ethical topics and (3) does not treat himself as a source of important knowledge but seeks or tests knowledge in others.⁹ Such a classification does not depend on contentious attempts to measure Plato's writing style or chronological hypotheses about his philosophical development, and it is independent of any particular interpretation of the theory or theories suggested or assumed in the Socratic dialogues. Moreover, it rightly makes plain that the Euthydemus is a

virtue is the only real good" (55)—but she nevertheless tries to defuse the pressure that by Vlastos' passages bring to bear by concentrating on Gorg 467e and arguing that it makes an instrumental/non-instrumental distinction, at cross-purposes with the Euthydemus' conditional/unconditional distinction (57). I do not think that this reply works. Annas' idea seems to be that health and wealth can be non-instrumental in the Gorgias and conditional in the Euthydemus, but Vlastos claims that health and wealth cannot be goods (of any sort) in the Gorgias and non-goods (of any sort) in the Euthydemus. Nevertheless, I think that Vlastos' passages are quite easily defused. In Gorgias 467e, Lysis 218e, and Meno 78c, "Socrates simply asks his interlocutor about commonly recognized goods, and nothing in the argument depends on his agreeing with the interlocutor that these are genuine goods" (Irwin, "Epicurean?" 212). (On Gorgias 467e, see also Brickhouse and Smith, Plato's Socrates, 110-111.) Meno 87e is a provisional claim taken from what is ordinarily believed, and it comes in for revision. Gorgias 499c-500a follows on Callicles' belated recognition of good and bad pleasures, and it is far from clear that Socrates recognizes any good pleasures that are distinct from virtue. (Rudebusch [Socrates, Pleasure, and Value, see esp. 145n6] seems to allow that there are, but I doubt that he should.) Nevertheless, my goal is not to urge a Vlastosian to accept that wisdom is the only good in all the Socratic dialogues. I have my doubts about the tenability of that claim, and more importantly, as will become clear, I have my doubts about the whole Vlastosian project.

⁹ Socrates is not a primary character in the Critias, Laws, Parmenides, Sophist, Statesman, and Timaeus. As I understand it, the requirement that Socrates not see himself as a source of important knowledge rules out the Cratylus, Meno, Phaedo, Phaedrus, Philebus, Republic (at least II-X), and Symposium. (It is worth noting, however, that Socrates is keen to credit others (Diotima, priests, etc.) for his most remarkable claims in several of these dialogues.) The restriction of Socratic dialogues to ethics, which is dependent upon Aristotle's testimony, rules out the Theaetetus. If we exclude the allegedly Platonic dialogues whose authorship is widely contested and the Menexenus, an exceptional work whose position cannot be reasonably established as Socratic or non-Socratic by the three criteria I have offered, then the remaining, Socratic dialogues are the Apology, Charmides, Crito, Euthydemus, Euthyphro, Gorgias, Hippias Major, Hippias Minor, Ion, Laches, Lysis, Protagoras, and (if we allow the separation) Republic I.

Socratic dialogue, alongside others in which Socrates seems not to want to assert that wisdom is the only good.¹⁰

It is not enough, however, to support the deniers. After isolating the Socratic dialogues, one still needs to determine how to read them. The deniers operate with what I call the Vlastosian expectation: they expect that nothing Socrates sincerely says in a Socratic dialogue contradicts anything Socrates sincerely says in any Socratic dialogue.¹¹ With the Vlastosian

¹⁰ This is plain, even though chronological speculations have produced no agreement about the Euthydemus. So, for example, those who distinguish between the purely "Socratic" or "elenctic" and "transitional" dialogues sometimes count the Euthydemus in the Socratic group (e.g., Irwin, Plato's Ethics, 12-13), and sometimes do not (e.g., Vlastos, Socrates, 46-47). Moreover, because of the sophisticated positions underlying much of Dionysodorus' and Euthydemus' eristic argumentation and because of Cleinias' breezy insistence that mathematical sciences are subordinate to dialectic (290b10-c6), more radical doubts have been aired about whether the Euthydemus is "early" (by, e.g., Crombie, Examination, 1:223, and Annas, "Virtue as the Use of Other Goods," 62), and some eminences have preferred to read it with the Theaetetus (e.g., Natorp, Platons Ideenlehre, 119-122) or even the Sophist (e.g., Sidgwick, "The Sophists," 306). None of this chronological uncertainty should matter. The basic point remains that Plato's characterization of Socrates in the Euthydemus (whenever it was written) meets informative criteria for the Socrates of a Socratic dialogue. So the basic question remains, why did Plato write the Euthydemus this way, if the Socrates of the Euthydemus contradicts the Socrates of other Socratic dialogues on a basic ethical commitment? This question is not answered by any chronological hypothesis.

¹¹ I do not know if anyone has explicitly adopted this expectation, though Penner ("Socrates," 123) italicizes his advice 'Never consider any one expression of Socrates' views in isolation from other expressions of Socrates' views' and to heed this advice he draws on a wide range of dialogues. My reason for highlighting the expectation is that many scholars make inferences and textual appeals that assume it. The label itself honors Vlastos, who seems to deserve the lion's share of the credit for advancing this way of reading the Socratic dialogues in recent decades, since so many of the interpreters who share this approach were directly influenced by him. As significant as the agreement about the Vlastosian expectation is, it is nevertheless limited in two important ways. First, those who share the Vlastosian expectation do not all agree with Vlastos' further claim that the Socrates of Plato's Socratic dialogues is the historical Socrates; for some reasoned resistance, see the reviews of Socrates, Ironist and Moral Philosopher by Beversluis and Kahn. I set this disagreement aside, as I am not interested in the historical Socrates here. Second, those who share the Vlastosian expectation do not all agree on the exact list of Plato's Socratic dialogues, as different interpretations require different dialogues to be kicked off the list of "purely" Socratic dialogues and onto the list of "transitional" dialogues that are infected with Plato's "developing" "middle-period" views. This I cannot ignore, for my reading of the Euthydemus could be accepted by a partisan of the Vlastosian expectation who is willing to treat the Euthydemus as a "transitional" outlier and not a "purely" Socratic dialogue governed by the Vlastosian expectation. Vlastos is right not to make this move, despite the fact that he considers the Euthydemus "transitional" (Socrates, 46-47). The move

expectation, evidence that Socrates accepts goods other than wisdom is some Socratic dialogues supports the denial of his suggestion in the Euthydemus that wisdom is the only good.

The Vlastosian expectation is not compulsory. No testimony from antiquity encourages us to accept it. Several witnesses, to be sure, associate certain claims and tendencies with Socrates rather than Plato, but none of them confirms that Socrates had a developed ethical theory or that Plato would be bound to work out a single Socratic theory. To the contrary: the specific claims and habitual practices that are associated with Socrates can be and were theorized in various different ways, with divergent implications, by the many "Socratic dialogues" (Sokratikoi logoi) and "Socratics." There is, nevertheless, some reason to adopt the Vlastosian expectation. Those who adopt it produce interesting interpretations of the Socratic dialogues, and each of these interpretations is itself reason to accept the Vlastosian expectation. My point is only that the Vlastosian expectation by itself gives no support to one reading of the Socratic dialogues over another. Rather, the choice between an interpretation predicated on the Vlastosian expectation and one that flouts it should be made on exactly the grounds that govern the choice between any two competing interpretations predicated on the Vlastosian expectation. These grounds are: how intrinsically attractive is the interpretation, and how well does it fit the text and context of Plato's Socratic dialogues?

Obviously, one essay cannot answer the deniers by presenting a comprehensive reading of all the Socratic dialogues that is more attractive than the best going interpretations predicated on the Vlastosian expectation.

itself leaves residual worries: after all, the Socrates of the Euthydemus meets the criteria for the Socrates of a Socratic dialogue (unless we beg the question by insisting that one of the criteria for this Socrates is that he admit of goods other than wisdom), and so the question remains, Why does Plato put into the mouth of this Socrates the claim that wisdom is the only good? But I also reject this move because I think that there is a better story to be told about the (broadly) Socratic dialogues, though I only sketch that story here, in the last section.

I can only take a few steps in that direction. I will argue that the Euthydemus as a whole exemplifies and justifies Socrates' commitment to wisdom as the only good. This should put a higher price tag on the Vlastosian interpretations that deny Socrates the Stoic claim, and it should make clearer why Socrates can and should be committed to the Stoic claim.

To argue that the Euthydemus as a whole adopts the Stoic claim, I will answer three questions about the dialogue. First, why does Socrates conclude that wisdom is the only good in the first protreptic scene? Skepticism about Socrates' argument is widespread, but I think that the skeptics have misunderstood the point of the protreptic and have consequently underestimated the argument.¹² In §3, I show why Socrates has excellent reasons to believe that wisdom is the only good and that Cleinias has excellent, though different, reasons to agree. Second, how should we understand Socrates' perplexity or puzzlement (ἀπορία) in the second protreptic scene? The second protreptic scene is less often discussed than the first,¹³ and commentators have missed the fact that it contains two distinct puzzles. In §4, I show that both puzzles depend upon Socrates' commitment to wisdom as the only good without calling for the rejection of the Stoic claim. That helps my case insofar as it shows how deeply the Stoic claim is implicated in the Euthydemus, but one might think that it also undermines my case by hinting that Socrates means to reject the Stoic claim to escape perplexity. I argue that Socrates gives hints in another direction

¹² As noted earlier, Vlastos (Socrates, 230n97) believes that the conclusion is invalidly inferred unless it is qualified. But even those who want to defend the argument without qualifying the conclusion have trouble with it. Irwin ("Epicurean?" 202) initially says its "faults seem to be recurrent, gross, and obvious," and then he invents for Socrates an account of happiness that makes "some of his moves less clearly illegitimate" (205). Similarly, Ferejohn ("Socratic Thought-Experiments") saves the argument only by dragging into it two principles that he divines with the inspiration of Charmides 174a-c. (Santas ["Socratic Goods"] happily borrows these principles [45-46], but he at least expresses doubts about whether Socrates actually accepts them [46].)

¹³ Especially helpful exceptions include Annas ("Virtue as the Use of Other Goods," 60-64), Striker ("Plato's Socrates"), and Menn ("Physics as a Virtue," 6-7).

entirely, to solve the puzzles while respecting the Stoic claim that lies at their heart.¹⁴ Finally, why does Socrates take seriously the extended eristic argumentation that surrounds his attempts at protreptic? These scenes of the dialogue are even less often discussed, perhaps because they are widely disdained,¹⁵ but I argue in §5 that Socrates' respect for the eristic arguments of Dionysodorus and Euthydemus is required by his commitment to wisdom as the only good. If I am right in my account of the two protreptic scenes and Socrates' reaction to the eristic argumentation, then the Vlastosian interpretations that deny Socrates the Stoic claim are denying the whole dialogue, and not just one or two isolated remarks.

But this will not satisfy the deniers. They have a third reason not to attribute the Stoic thesis to the Socrates of the Euthydemus. They think that the Stoic thesis is philosophically hopeless,¹⁶ or at least that it is philosophically hopeless for Socrates unless he could anachronistically

¹⁴ In Socratic Perplexity, Matthews accords aporia great importance to Socrates and to Plato's developing conception of philosophy, and one upshot is a wariness toward interpretations that insist on resolving all of Socrates' puzzles. (Unfortunately, Matthews does not discuss the aporia of the Euthydemus' second protreptic scene.) I do not mean to suggest that the puzzles are mere surface noise, beneath which Plato buries the treasured truth. Rather, I think that he can both insist that the puzzles are genuine and hint at a possible solution to them.

¹⁵ Ferejohn ("Socratic Thought-Experiments," 109-110, with 109n15) is more explicit than most: "Given that two-thirds [sic] of the text of the Euthydemus is [sic] taken up by Socrates recounting a lengthy (and not very edifying) session of eristic antics by a pair of quite forgettable sophists, it is mildly ironic that there is a very natural sense in which the dialogue stands at the very center of Socratic ethics." "To put the point delicately, these interlocutions are not exactly brimming with philosophical delights, which provokes one to wonder why Plato bothers to record or construct them in such fine detail." I think, by contrast, that several of the eristic arguments bring to light thorny and philosophically rich problems, and that Socrates' serious attention to them shows a philosophically rich commitment. I will only try to substantiate the second of these responses here. For a start on the other, see Kahn, Plato, 323-324.

¹⁶ See especially Vlastos, Socrates, 215-216 and 224-225. Compare Irwin ("Epicurean?" 212), who at least flirts with the idea of denying Socrates' apparent claim exclusively for philosophical reasons, for he thinks that the textual grounds for denial are not fully convincing (211-212) and he is even willing to acknowledge that Socrates in the Socratic dialogues has multiple and incompatible conceptions of happiness (213-214).

employ a variety of Stoic distinctions to develop and defend the thesis.¹⁷ But there are two things to say. First, opposition to the Stoic claim depends upon a particular construal of what it means to act for the sake of one's happiness, and I argue that Socrates construes the thesis differently. According to the deniers' view of Socratic eudaimonism, one should always act so as to bring about one's happiness. This eudaimonism is a broadly consequentialist thesis. But according to Socrates, at least as I understand his argument for the Stoic claim and his hints concerning the puzzles of the Euthydemus, one should always act so as to instantiate happiness. For reasons that will become clear, I call this coherentist eudaimonism. It contains more than enough resources to sustain the Stoic claim.

The deniers could still say that the resources cannot be given to Socrates except anachronistically. My second response is to shrug. Someone had to be the first to think of some of these philosophical moves, and I see no principled reason to insist that Plato could not be that person. If the Stoics could do it at the end of the fourth century BCE, why could Plato have not done it a few decades earlier? Surely it is not because Plato lacked cleverness or imagination.

All told, my reading of the Euthydemus puts it at odds with some other Socratic dialogues, and so it raises questions about how these dialogues should be read. I will return to this question briefly in a final section of the essay, but my purpose is not to defend any one methodological program. I need only to call into question the Vlastosian program so as to make room for the Euthydemus to speak for itself.¹⁸ My primary aim is to hear what the

¹⁷ I thank Don Morrison and Sara Rappe for pressing this worry.

¹⁸ I read the Euthydemus as a Socratic dialogue but without the Vlastosian expectation. On my view, what makes it Socratic, and what it shares with other Socratic dialogues, is a particular Socrates, who is characterized by a few (mostly paradoxical) beliefs (e.g., do not harm others) and a few practices (e.g., examining others for knowledge). I do not here try to say exactly which beliefs and practices are characteristic of Socrates in the Socratic dialogues and which are not, for that would require a much longer paper. I

Euthydemus itself says about the nature of protreptic argument and the pursuit of happiness, and my primary conviction is that Socrates' position about how one should change one's views and one should pursue happiness are both interesting and plausible.

3. The First Protreptic

Some people think that Socrates cannot mean that wisdom is the only good because he does not have a successful argument for this conclusion. The skepticism about Socrates' argument, however, largely misses what is distinctive about it. Socrates is trying to give an example of protreptikê ("turning toward"), whose point is to turn Cleinias from conventional values toward wisdom-loving ("philosophic") values (278d1-5, cf. 275a4-7). In this respect, Socrates' arguments here are unlike his usual mode of question-and-answer that is designed to test his interlocutor's beliefs. Socrates wants to turn Cleinias toward philosophy by positive argument, in five stages, from an initial stage in which Cleinias assents to conventional views about the relation between goods and happiness to the final stages in which he agrees that only wisdom is good and that he should pursue wisdom above all else.

There is an enormous gulf between the conventional values of stage one and the philosophic values of stages four and five. The premises that support the wisdom-lover are false by the lights of conventional values, and the premises that articulate conventional values are false by wisdom-loving lights. This means that an argument from conventional premises to unconventional conclusions cannot be sound, not from the point of view of conventional values (which resists the conclusion and fails to grasp the true premises for the conclusion) and not from the point of view of philosophic

only attempt a reading of the Euthydemus that attributes to its Socrates nothing that is not in the Euthydemus or uncontroversially characteristic of Socrates.

values (which insists on replacing the conventional premises). So it misses the point to criticize Socrates' explicit protreptic arguments as unsound.

A more suitable criticism would track what Socrates is trying to do. Since he is trying to convert Cleinias from conventional to philosophic values, there are two tasks he must fulfill. The first concerns Socrates' wisdom-loving perspective: does he have non-question-begging reasons for his philosophical conclusion and a reasonable translation of the conventional premises that he invokes though he thinks them false? The second concerns Cleinias: does Socrates give Cleinias some reason to jettison the explicit conventional premises and to adopt the wisdom-loving premises that are not explicit? If Socrates' conclusion is reasonable, then the first question should be answerable in the affirmative, but the second might nevertheless prove difficult, given the gulf between the conventional and philosophic standpoints. Socrates, at least, is aware of the difficulty. After he learns that Dionysodorus and Euthydemus claim to teach virtue (273d8-9), he notes that a demonstration of this would be no small task (274d6-7), and he asks the brothers whether they can teach virtue to anyone or only someone who is already persuaded to study with them (274d7-e3). This puts a fresh point on the second question: what reasons does Cleinias receive to move from conventional premises to Socrates' wisdom-loving ones, and to what extent is he already persuaded from the start to study with Socrates?¹⁹

I will answer these questions by analyzing the first protreptic scene's five stages. Socrates, I will show, draws upon a perfectly consistent position that supports the claim that only wisdom is good. Cleinias, on the other hand, is largely persuaded from the start to adopt the wisdom-loving stance,

¹⁹ I do not mean to suggest that it is not reasonable to follow the practical guidance of those one takes to be living well. Cleinias, as I will suggest, is persuaded for some good reasons, even if those reasons do not entail that he should take up loving wisdom. The contrast I articulate here between deductive argument and reasoned change in view is well made by Harman, Change in View.

though Socrates is nevertheless the agent of this persuasion and though Cleinias is still not fully converted at the end of the scene.

The first stage articulates the conventional starting-point (278e3-279c4). Socrates begins with two claims that he represents as obvious: everyone pursues happiness (278e3-5),²⁰ and one is happy if one has many goods (279a1-4). These are not, in fact, obvious to everyone. The second claim, in particular, will be rejected in stage three of the protreptic, and so Socrates presumably does not take it to be obvious. But Socrates and Cleinias treat these claims as obvious to the conventional point of view. They next produce a list of things that are conventionally recognized as good for us (279a4-c2), including material external goods (wealth), bodily goods (health, good looks, and other bodily needs), social goods (noble birth, power, and honor), virtues of character (temperance, justice, bravery), and intellectual virtue (wisdom).²¹ They cap off the preliminary stage by

²⁰ Socrates says only that all people desire eu prattein ("to do well"), but the ensuing argument assumes that eu prattein ("to do well"), eupragia ("good action"), eudaimonein ("to fare well" or "to be happy"), and eudaimonia ("welfare" or "happiness") are equivalent. (Compare Aristotle, EN 1095a18-20.) Socrates applies this ecumenical approach to terminology also to wisdom, invoking sophia ("wisdom"), phronêsis ("practical wisdom" or "prudence"), epistêmê ("knowledge" or "understanding"), and technê ("skill" or "art" or "craft") interchangeably before asking what knowledge or skill this special wisdom is. These equivalences are important. The first reveals Socrates' commitment to happiness or welfare as something one does, not something that happens to one, and the second reveals Socrates' commitment to including at least some general features of skills (or arts or crafts, technai) in his account of wisdom.

²¹ Socrates treats the virtues and wisdom as more controversial claimants to the list of conventional goods, and seeks Cleinias' special endorsement. So Socrates and Cleinias clearly have in mind the conventional evaluation of virtues and wisdom. Do they (and Cleinias in particular) also have in mind the conventional conception of the virtues and wisdom? This is important, as Socrates goes on to argue that these virtues are not goods (281e3-5 with 281c6-7). If the argument addresses the virtues as they are popularly conceived, i.e., as character-states apart from wisdom, then it is not hard to understand why he would do this. (So Annas, "Virtue as the Use of Other Goods," 59n17.) But if he suggests that Socratic virtues are not goods, then things are much more complicated. Either we have to take him to be assuming complicated counterfactuals—he is considering Socratic temperance, justice, and courage as they would be were they apart from wisdom (see Vlastos, Socrates, 228n92)—or we have to take him to be a bit baffled. The former view would have Socrates recognizing a residue of the virtues apart from knowledge of good and bad, and it raises questions about why

agreeing that this list of conventional goods is exhaustive (279c2-4). This sets up the main protreptic argument: Socrates will eventually eliminate every member of the conventional list of goods except for wisdom, and thus leave only wisdom as a good.²² The strategy requires that the first claim and the exhaustiveness of the initial list be defensible, and that the list itself, in addition to the second claim, be false.

Next, Socrates "recalls" and seeks to eliminate one pretender to the list of conventional goods (279c4-280b3). He notes that everyone thinks of good fortune as a great good, but he refuses to add it because it is redundant with wisdom. Readers have struggled to understand Socrates' point at this stage. First, it is not clear what his primary claim is. He says once that wisdom is good fortune (279d6), and twice he says only that wisdom suffices for good fortune (280a6, 280b1-3). The slide is, I think, explicable. Though Socrates is committed to the identity claim—I will argue below that he is—he does not seriously expect Cleinias to accept it at this point in the protreptic. That is why he introduces the identity claim with the ironical dêpou; why he asserts playfully that "even a child would know this;" and why he kids about Cleinias' amazed reaction to it (279a7-8). He

Socrates does not make things more explicit, as he does at Meno 88b1-6 (see Santas, "Socratic Goods," 47n27). The latter view will seem disappointing unless we embed our account of the Euthydemus into a very particular developmental story and appeal to the Meno for satisfaction (see Ferejohn, "Socratic Thought-Experiments"). I favor the simpler reading: Cleinias is to think of virtues as ordinarily conceived character-states, as the distinction in the list between the virtues and wisdom suggests. Note that Socrates concludes his first protreptic display with the bare claim that Cleinias must love wisdom (282d1-2), and not that he should love wisdom and care for virtue, which is what Socrates was shooting for. Despite the fact that he is entitled to the stronger conclusion on a Socratic account of the virtues, he prescinds from stating it, perhaps because he does not want to confuse Cleinias, who has the ordinary conception of the virtues in mind.

²² So Socrates and Cleinias must mean what they say when they characterize the conventional list as exhaustive. This could be cause for consternation. Where is pleasure? Where is the welfare of others? Are these not good for me? (Cf. Bobonich, "Plato's Theory of Goods," 115.) I think that Socrates wants these to come along for free, pleasure in every use of conventional goods and the welfare of others in justice. I cannot argue for this here, but compare the way in which he tries to show that good fortune is redundant (in the next stage of the protreptic, discussed anon).

introduces the claim to gauge Cleinias' distance from the wisdom-loving perspective, and as soon as Cleinias makes clear how far he is from accepting the identity of wisdom and good fortune, Socrates sets about arguing for the weaker sufficiency claim.²³

Unfortunately, readers have also struggled with Socrates' two arguments on behalf of the sufficiency claim. First, he offers a few cases to suggest that the wise have more good luck (more successful outcomes) than the unwise (279d8-280a5). The problem is that this hardly entails the sufficiency of wisdom for good fortune (success). I doubt that it is supposed to.²⁴ Rather, because Cleinias is shocked by the thought that wisdom is good fortune (279d7), Socrates needs to remind Cleinias of ordinary ways in which wisdom has some power of over ordinary luck. This shakes Cleinias out of a conventional thought that even the wise are powerless in the face of fortune, and it prepares him to consider some unconventional thoughts about wisdom and luck. The unconventional thoughts enter with Socrates' second reason for the sufficiency claim: "wisdom would never make any mistake but must do right and have good fortune [success], for otherwise it would not be wisdom" (280a6-8). This looks like an analytic claim: wisdom by definition causes right action and good fortune (success).²⁵ So understood, Socrates is not providing any reason to suppose that ordinary wisdom guarantees ordinary luck. He is instead using special concepts of

²³ See also Reeve, *Apology*, 137-138n39, against Kraut, *State*, 211-212n41. For an attempt to deflate the identity claim and take it seriously at this point in the argument, see Reshotko, "Virtue," with response by McPherran, "Socrates and Irwin."

²⁴ Socrates does move from the *epagogê* to the sufficiency claim with *ara* at 280a6, but he surely does not intend a strict logical inference by this *ara*. A deductive inference follows the sufficiency claim, with *gar* at 280a7-8, and nothing in the text requires us to think that the *ara* signals an inductive inference.

²⁵ So Hawtrey, *ad loc.* Irwin ("Epicurean?," 203) takes the claim to be synthetic and obviously false. Brickhouse and Smith (*Plato's Socrates*, 119-120n31) try to defend the sufficiency thesis by significantly deflating it. Reeve (*Apology*, 132-136) defends it by reading "wisdom" as the ruling art of the *Republic*, licensed (he thinks) by the second protreptic in the *Euthydemus* and by *Alcibiades* 133b7-134a14.

wisdom and good fortune to assert that the one guarantees the other.²⁶ He introduces a possibility, without developing it or giving any reason for accepting it.²⁷ Indeed, he as much as admits that he has given no reason when he notes that he cannot recall how Cleinias agreed with him on the sufficiency thesis (280b1-3).

It might be objected that if Socrates does not give Cleinias any good reason to believe that wisdom at least suffices for good fortune, then the protreptic argument is doomed to fail. But this misunderstands the protreptic. First, ordinary claims about good fortune do not stand directly in the way of Socrates' desired conclusion. He seeks to persuade Cleinias to pursue wisdom as his goal, and ordinary good luck is hardly a suitable contender for this role. (Good luck is not something one can pursue, however fervently one might wish for it.) Socrates will still succeed if he can persuade Cleinias that wisdom is the only conventional good that is really a good.²⁸ Second, the indirect obstacle represented by conventional views about wisdom and fortune cannot be surmounted by an argument from premises concerning conventional wisdom and fortune to conclusions about philosophic wisdom and success. All Socrates can do is to motivate Cleinias to trade in his conventional conceptualization of wisdom and fortune for the extraordinary one according to which wisdom guarantees success. He can

²⁶ Thus far I agree with Dimas, but I reject his suggestion that Socrates conceives of good fortune (eutuchia) as simply good activity (eupragia). See 281b. McPherran and Rudebusch read the argument differently (10th Arizona conference, February 2005.)

²⁷ He here makes an explicit introduction, but the associations were implicitly introduced earlier (contra Chance, Euthydemus, 58), when Socrates says that "some god" gets this conversation going, through the mechanism of his daimonion (272e1-4), and that the ability to teach virtue that Dionysodorus and Euthydemus profess (273d8-9) is a "gift of Hermes [hermaion]" (273e2). These claims associate god-sent fortune with the pursuit of wisdom and wisdom, respectively. For attention to these claims and for the careful distinction between the ordinary and extraordinary conceptions of good fortune, I am grateful to McPherran, "Socrates and Irwin." I am wary, however, of McPherran's further claim that Socrates' conception of fortune is akin to Stoic providence.

²⁸ So, too, Brickhouse and Smith, Plato's Socrates, 119-120n31, who cite Ferejohn ("Socratic Thought-Experiments"), though I cannot find the exact location.

do this by pointing to difficulties in the ordinary conceptualization and by offering an attractive, consistent account of the philosophic one. Thus far, he has only begun to make these moves, and that is why he is surprised by Cleinias' willingness to go along (280b1-3). But more is yet to come, and Socrates has no need of completing Cleinias' turn from ordinary thoughts about wisdom and luck to philosophical thoughts about wisdom and success in the second stage.

With preliminaries established and a new set of possibilities introduced, Socrates is ready to get down to business. He reviews the first-stage findings (280b3-6) and begins to revise them toward the third-stage conclusion that wisdom is necessary and sufficient for happiness (280b3-281b4). The main argument of stage three is quite simple to outline:

1. The correct use of conventional goods is necessary and sufficient for happiness (280b7-281a1).²⁹
2. Wisdom is necessary and sufficient for the correct use of conventional goods (281a1-b2).
3. Therefore, wisdom is necessary and sufficient for happiness (281b2-4).

This is simple to outline, but not easy to justify. The chief question is, what counts as the correct use of a conventional good?³⁰ Some of Socrates' examples naturally lead to the thought that correct use is successful production of some separate benefit: the carpenter needs to use his tools correctly to produce the benefit of a house (280c8-d1, 281a2-4), and the

²⁹ This is supported by argument: a person is happy by the possession of conventional goods only if they are beneficial, and conventional goods are beneficial only if they are used and used correctly. This seems to apply to every item on the list of conventional goods and thus to wisdom itself. So wisdom will have to use itself correctly. (See also Ferejohn, "Socratic Thought-Experiments," and Brickhouse and Smith, *Plato's Socrates*, 130.) I see no problem with this consequence: Socrates emphasizes that happiness requires activity.

³⁰ This question is not isolated as often as it should be, but for a very helpful exception, see Bobonich, "Plato's Theory of Goods," esp. 104-118.

person who possesses food needs to use that food correctly to produce the benefit of nutrition (280c1-3). But this cannot be Socrates' whole point, for wisdom is not necessary for this kind of correct use. With some tools and some luck, a band of amateurs could build a solid house, and I am quite sure that I can successfully down a meal without satisfying Socrates' demands on wisdom and even without much luck.³¹

Socrates' argument is more plausible, though, if he supposes that the correct use of a conventional good also requires use at the right time, to the right extent, for the right purpose, and in relation to the right things. There is good reason to think that he does have this more demanding model in mind. After all, Socrates must and does insist that wealth, health, and beauty need to be directed by knowledge for correct use (281a6-b1), and so we have to ask what Socrates recognizes as the correct use of these conventional goods. It is harder to apply the productive model in these cases.³² But consider wealth. I suppose that Socrates must require the right intentions in the correct use of wealth, and that he must require of the right intentions that they, at least, could survive elenctic examination. I also suppose that this is enough to see why Socrates might suppose that wisdom is necessary for correct use. If wisdom is needed for security in the face of ongoing elenctic examination, if security in the face of ongoing elenctic examination is needed to justify one's intentions, and if justified intentions are needed for correct use, then wisdom is necessary for correct use.

³¹ This might be called the problem of good luck: if correct use can be achieved with good luck, then wisdom is not necessary for correct use after all. See Brickhouse and Smith, *Plato's Socrates*, 130, and Bobonich, "Plato's Theory of Goods," 112-113. The problem of bad luck—much discussed by Irwin, "Epicurean?" 202-205—suggests that wisdom is not sufficient for correct use. I turn to that more commonly recognized problem in a bit.

³² One wants a clear picture of happiness as some goal-state to be produced. As Ferejohn ("Socratic Thought-Experiments," 111) complains—among many others—there seems to be "no positive test which certifies wisdom or anything else as being conducive to eudaimonia." Perhaps the desire is misplaced.

Quite apart from Socrates' association of justification with surviving dialectical examination, there are reasons to suppose that one needs a coherent set of commitments about how to use conventional goods in order to use them correctly. First, a particular use of a particular conventional good is the right use at the right time only if there is not some other use (perhaps of some other conventional good) that has a stronger claim, and so the ability to use conventional goods rightly requires a broad understanding of how this particular use here and now fits into an unfolding pattern of uses of conventional goods in past, present, and future circumstances. Can someone pick out the fitting piece without knowing the whole pattern? It seems quite unlikely. Second, and more importantly, if correct use requires not just the right thing at the right time but also the right purpose, then knowledge is clearly required. A fool might do what the wise would do from time to time, but the fool cannot do what the wise would do for the right purpose because the right purpose is (plausibly enough) the fully justified purpose and the fully justified purpose (plausibly enough) requires knowledge.

So much, then, for the necessity of wisdom for correct use of conventional goods. There remain two related difficulties. Why should we suppose that wisdom suffices for this correct use, and why should we suppose that this correct use suffices for happiness? Surely, the worry goes, a person needs some ordinary luck in order to have conventional goods that can be used, and a person needs some more ordinary luck in order for the wise use of conventional goods to turn out well.

But this quite obviously depends. It depends in part on what is required for a person to attain wisdom: if the attainment of wisdom requires the secure acquisition of a baseline amount of conventional goods, then there is no trouble in assuming that wisdom will have conventional goods to use correctly. In addition, it depends in part on what is required of correct

use: how much success is required of a use for it to be successful?³³ Finally, it depends upon what is required of happiness: if happiness requires acts of great material generosity, then it seems difficult to deny a role to fortune, but if happiness requires correct use of whatever fortune tosses our way, then there is no difficulty at all.

One natural approach to the protreptic at this point is to assign to Socrates some detailed commitments on these questions. Some scholars think that he is defining happiness down, and wise use is merely adaptive to any possible circumstances.³⁴ Others think that he is assuming the possession of some minimal amount of conventional goods (other than wisdom).³⁵ This second camp divides in two. On the one hand, although happiness requires a minimum of conventional goods, wisdom (and whatever is required to have acquired wisdom) might guarantee the possession of the minimum.³⁶ On the other hand, happiness might require a minimum of conventional goods that is dependent upon fortune.³⁷ The last of these positions is inconsistent with what Socrates says in the first protreptic, for he says that wisdom suffices for happiness (281b2-4, 282a4-5, 282c8-d3), and so there is good reason not to attribute it to him in the

³³ See Striker, "Plato's Socrates," 244-246.

³⁴ See Irwin, "Epicurean?" Brickhouse and Smith (Plato's Socrates, 114-117) object, cogently, that there must be some limits to adaptiveness for Socrates (he would not adapt by harming another, e.g.). This objection might render the revised adaptationist account redundant with some specifications of the second position I outline above.

³⁵ See Ferejohn, "Socratic Thought-Experiments," 115n25. Ferejohn goes on to insist that happiness does not require any particular conventional goods other than wisdom, and this is contestable. Moreover, there can be contests over how demanding the required minimum of conventional goods is. (To what extent is Socrates responsive to conventional requirements on happiness?) But these disputes are less important for my purposes than the one I highlight next.

³⁶ Reeve (Apology, 132-136) takes this route, with a remarkably high conception of the minimum required conventional goods. This is met by a similarly high conception of wisdom. Compare Rudebusch, Socrates, 144n6.

³⁷ See Brickhouse and Smith (Plato's Socrates, especially 117-119 with 119-120n31).

Euthydemus.³⁸ But between the first two positions—each of which encompasses a range of possible specifications—does Socrates give any indication of a clear commitment?

I do not think that he does, and I do not see why he should. His point, remember, is to persuade Cleinias that he should care for wisdom above all else. It should be clear to Cleinias, in the wake of the second stage, that according to some schemes of value, wisdom does not suffice for happiness whereas, according to other schemes, it does. The question is, can Socrates give Cleinias good reasons to adopt one of the former instead of the latter? To be sure, Socrates has some good reasons. He has his lifetime of elenctic examinations going for him, at least if his scheme of values has survived examination and the alternative schemes he has encountered have always failed. But these are not reasons Cleinias is in a position to appreciate. Nor can Socrates simply report the gist of what he has learned, setting out in some detail his scheme of value according to which wisdom suffices for happiness and explaining at length the inconsistencies of the alternatives. For the point here is to persuade Cleinias to adopt a Socratic scheme of value, and for this, Cleinias needs to take up the examined life for himself.

The problem is not simply that Cleinias must be a wisdom-lover in order to uncover the reasons that support wisdom-loving. Until Cleinias has taken on the pursuit of wisdom deeply enough to have subjected his

³⁸ Brickhouse and Smith (Plato's Socrates, especially 117-119 with 119-120n31) depend upon the Vlastosian expectation here. They are impressed by the explicitness of Socrates' pronouncements in the Crito and Gorgias about the debilitating effects of bodily disease. The debate about those passages is now epic. I just want to note how explicit Socrates is in the Euthydemus. In addition to his conclusion at the end of the third stage (281b2-4), quoted below, Socrates says to Cleinias at the end of the first protreptic, "Wisdom... is the only thing to make a person happy and fortunate" (282c9-d1, with 'wisdom' carried over from c8); he says to Dionysodorus and Euthydemus at the end of the first protreptic, "Or if you do not want to do that, from where I left off demonstrate to the boy whether he should possess every knowledge or some single knowledge in order to be happy and a good man, and what this is" (282d8-e3); and he says to Crito, in characterizing the wisdom Cleinias should seek, "This political skill must make people wise and give them knowledge if it would be the skill that benefits them and makes them happy" (292b7-c1).

lingering ordinary beliefs to merciless examination, he will retain ordinary reasons to resist the Socratic scheme of value. So it should be obvious that Socrates' argument in the protreptic cannot completely persuade Cleinias all at once. Socrates can merely get Cleinias to see a possibility in an attractive light and invite Cleinias to test it against its rivals.³⁹

But given that this is all that Socrates can do, it should be clear that he has done quite well. First, he introduces the possibility that wisdom suffices for happiness. This depends, of course, upon what wisdom demands and upon what happiness requires. But Socrates also motivates the plausibility of the claim. He suggests that wisdom might be so demanding as to suffice for right action, and that the ordinary notions of good fortune and happiness should be revised to track right action. Finally, Socrates has an argument for his scheme of values that cannot be outlined on a page, the argument of his own character and his own life. If Cleinias sees in Socrates and his life an attractive model, then he has reason to test the possibilities that Socrates seriously proposes. And it seems as though Cleinias does in fact see Socrates as an attractive model, for he earlier rushed over eagerly to see Socrates (273b1-3).

Moreover, all of these protreptic reasons can motivate us the readers to conclude that "knowledge [i.e., wisdom], then, it seems, provides people not only with good fortune but also with good action [i.e., happiness] in every possession or action" (281b2-4).⁴⁰ Socrates links the possibility that he introduced in the second stage with its companion claim that he has motivated in the third, for the same scheme of values that promises the sufficiency of wisdom for happiness also promises the sufficiency of wisdom for good fortune (success). If we adopt this scheme of values and the commonplace that happiness is good fortune, then we will assent even to

³⁹ On this important point about the limited strength of protreptic argument, see also Annas, *Platonic Ethics*, 31-51, esp. 49.

⁴⁰ For the terminology, see note 20 above.

the outrageous claim that wisdom is good fortune, and we will accept as sound the argument of the third stage.

Indeed, the third stage of the protreptic is so successful (as protreptic) that we might wonder why Socrates does not leave well enough alone.⁴¹ If Cleinias is persuaded that wisdom is necessary and sufficient for happiness, then surely Cleinias will love wisdom. But there is a problem. If there are other things that make their own independent contributions to happiness, then Cleinias might spread his love around a bit. Socrates does not want that to happen. So he goes on to argue that nothing other than wisdom makes its own contribution to happiness. Nothing other than wisdom is good.

In the fourth stage of the protreptic, the elevation of wisdom leads gradually to the demotion of the other conventional goods (281b4-281e5). First, Socrates picks up on the thought that other conventional goods beneficial only if used wisely and indeed harmful if used poorly (cf. esp. 280e5-281a1). He argues that the possession of conventional goods provides more opportunity for action, and combined with folly, greater opportunity for action can only be greater opportunity for foolish action, which is harmful (281b4-e1).⁴² He summarizes his reasoning by saying that wisdom makes other conventional goods better than conventional evils but that folly makes conventional goods worse than conventional evils (281d6-8). This sustains the conclusion that the other conventional goods are not goods or valuable just by themselves (281d4-5, d8-e1), because the

⁴¹ Cf. Irwin, "Epicurean?" 203.

⁴² This argument is straightforwardly plausible for conventional goods like wealth (281c3-4), but it has been questioned for conventional goods like bravery and temperance (281c6-7). (See Ferejohn, "Socratic Thought-Experiments," 111n18.) I think the point is just that the brave man (as ordinarily understood) is not captive to his fears and the temperate man (as ordinarily understood) is not captive to his appetites, and so (ordinary) bravery and temperance make a broader range of actions possible (a standardly non-threatening range of actions plus all those that would paralyze the cowardly and the intemperate). Justice is the harder case, and it is interesting that Socrates does not explicitly consider it.

benefiting that other conventional goods do is entirely dependent upon wisdom.

But now Socrates asks, "What, then, follows from what we have said? Is it anything but this, that not one of the other things is good or bad, but of these two, one—wisdom—is good, and the other—ignorance—is bad?" (281e2-5). Vlastos notes that this inference, as stated, is invalid: Socrates has shown only that the other conventional goods are not good just by themselves, and from this it does not follow that the other conventional goods are not good at all.⁴³ It might seem that Socrates is guilty of an eristic trick, dropping qualifiers, and that we have to insert them into the conclusion. But this cannot be right. First, if this is how Plato wants us to read the argument, then he must want us to recognize that Socrates is guilty of an eristic trick. But I doubt that Plato would want to assimilate Socrates' protreptic to Dionysodorus' and Euthydemus' eristic.⁴⁴ Second, and more importantly, inserting the qualifiers does not replace an invalid inference with a valid inference. Rather, it replaces the fallacy of dropping qualifiers with the fallacy of begging the question, for Socrates cannot validly infer that the other conventional goods are not goods by themselves from the claim that the other conventional goods are not goods by themselves!⁴⁵

There is a better explanation of Socrates' inference. Instead of inserting qualifiers into his conclusion, one needs to make explicit a tacit premise. Socrates starts from the claim that the other conventional goods

⁴³ Socrates, 230n97.

⁴⁴ Note that the very first eristic argument after the first protreptic can be read as though it drops qualifiers (283b4-d3), and this sort of fallacy recurs frequently (see esp. 295a-296d).

⁴⁵ Vlastos does not and could not say that 281e3-5 is not inferred at all, for Socrates says that it is (281e2-3). So Vlastos must mean that 281e3-5 is inferred exclusively from 281b4-d2 (and not from 218d2-e2). But then he should admit that Socrates speaks in an awfully misleading fashion at 281e2-3, where he certainly seems to say that he is going to make a new inference (note especially the oun). See also the similar response to Vlastos offered by Long, "Socrates in Hellenistic Philosophy," 167n62.

are not good by themselves. I suggest that he means that they do not have in themselves the causal power of benefiting; all benefiting is provided by wisdom. It is not hard to see how he might arrive at this point. Once he has said that other conventional goods never benefit without the presence of wisdom, then he has two possible explanations available. One is that special compounds of wisdom plus other conventional goods have causal powers of benefiting that neither part has on its own. The other is that wisdom has the causal power of benefiting, and the other conventional goods have none. Socrates might well opt for the second, since he has asserted that wisdom suffices for happiness (281b2-4; cf. 282a4-5 and 282c8-d3).⁴⁶ If he does understand the point that other conventional goods are not by themselves good as the claim that other conventional goods have no causal power of benefiting, then he is halfway home. He now needs to assume only that the causal power of benefiting is required of goods.⁴⁷ From these two premises it follows that the other conventional goods are not goods. Only wisdom has the causal power of benefiting; only wisdom is good.

This final inference is crucially important to the protreptic, in two ways. First, Cleinias must now reject some of the earlier claims of stage four as provisional. Socrates earlier suggests that wealth in the presence of wisdom benefits, but this, it turns out, is false. Wealth in the presence of

⁴⁶ I do not think that Socrates has to opt for the second explanation—attributions of causal efficacy are always a bit dicey, and the metaphysics of wholes and parts admits of multiple approaches—but it is easy enough to see why he would and why he would forgo the metaphysical niceties required to provide a fuller defense of his option. Moreover, this is enough to explain the plausibility of the argument to Cleinias.

⁴⁷ I suppose that Socrates considers this point true by definition. Socrates and Crito presuppose the connection at 292a7-10, for they immediately agree that the kingly skill which is the candidate to be the wisdom that was earlier called the only good must be beneficial. It is no objection to say that Socrates talks in the first protreptic as though a good might not be beneficial (280b7-8), for there he is using the term 'goods' provisionally.

wisdom no more benefits than leather in the presence of cobblery produces a shoe. Cobblery makes the shoe, and wisdom does the benefiting.⁴⁸

Cleinias is also now ready for the take-home message of stage five (282a1-d3). Cleinias, like everyone, wants to be happy. But now he should see not only that wisdom is necessary and sufficient for happiness, but also that it is the only thing with the power of effecting happiness. So Cleinias should devote himself wholeheartedly to the pursuit of wisdom.⁴⁹

If my recap of all five stages is correct, there can be no doubt that the conclusion of this protreptic argument is that wisdom is the only good. This is the conclusion toward which Socrates works, and the only claims he makes that are inconsistent with it are provisional claims that express conventional values meant to be discarded by Cleinias with his turn toward philosophic values. Moreover, Socrates motivates this conclusion. There are gaps in his account, questions Cleinias might ask. But the protreptic is broadly successful. By reasonable argumentation, Socrates brings Cleinias to see the weakness of conventional values and to entertain wisdom-loving values. Socrates does not—and cannot—present a full case for philosophy, and Cleinias moves more quickly than he ought toward accepting what Socrates says because of his admiration. Such is the limitation of protreptic argument: it calls for a wholesale change in view, and one only very rarely has good reasons to make such a wholesale change. Socrates knows that Cleinias is persuaded largely because he wants to be persuaded (cf. 274d6-e3 and 280b1-3), and he knows that Cleinias is only incompletely persuaded. Neither of these facts makes Cleinias unreasonable. But they do

⁴⁸ I came to this way of putting the point while reading Annas ("Virtue as the Use of Other Goods," 55), but I do not blame her if it is wrong. Note that if we were to indulge in the metaphysical niceties that the Socrates of Plato's Socratic dialogues avoids, then we might call the cobbler's leather and the wise person's wealth mere necessary conditions and not causes of benefit.

⁴⁹ There are interesting remarks in the fifth stage about the teachability of virtue. Socrates does not commit himself; rather, he uses Cleinias' belief that virtue is teachable to underscore the importance of pursuing wisdom.

leave Socrates and Cleinias more work to do. Among other things, Cleinias does not yet even understand what this wisdom is that he should wholeheartedly pursue. That is the topic for the second protreptic discourse.

4. The Second Protreptic

After some eristic jostling by Euthydemus and Dionysodorus, Socrates picks up where he left off (288c6-d4, cf. 282d8-e4).⁵⁰ Unsurprisingly, in the second protreptic discourse, he confirms his commitment to the claim that only wisdom is good (292b1-2; cf. 288e2-289b4). In fact, he affirms the claim so deeply that he follows it to perplexity (aporia, 292e6, 293a1; cf. 291b1-c2). Or so I will argue. But the perplexity raises questions for the reader: does Plato give clues about how it should be resolved? Is the perplexity in fact a signal that we should reject the claim that wisdom is the only good?

At the end of the first protreptic, Socrates and Cleinias agree that wisdom is beneficial. Now, Socrates wants to help Cleinias to understand what it is. His first step is to narrow the search by assuming that it is not every or all knowledge, but just some particular knowledge (288d9-e1, with 282d8-e4). He does not at first explain why he makes this assumption, but he does return to the point later (292c7-10). With the field narrowed, Socrates and Cleinias cast about for some specific knowledge that would be beneficial. Specific knowledge should have a specific object, but using results from the first protreptic, Socrates argues that knowledge of a specific object often fails to be beneficial because it fails to know how to use its object (288e2-289b4). His examples are fantastic versions of money-

⁵⁰ The second protreptic scene is partly reported in dramatic narrative (288d5-d8) and partly reported and then rehearsed in conversation with Crito (290e1-292e7). I am mainly interested in the single protreptic with Cleinias that Socrates reflects on in these diverse ways, but I will also address why the report is divided below (in note **xx**).

making and medicine: even if we had knowledge of finding gold or of making people immortal, we would not have beneficial knowledge unless we knew how to use gold and immortality.

At an impasse, Socrates narrows the search a second time. He suggests that they need some knowledge that knows both how to produce and how to use what it produces (289b4-6). The plausibility of this restriction seems to depend upon the assumptions that the sought-for knowledge is a skill, art, or craft (technê) and that a skill has a particular "product" (ergon). But the requirement of a "product" should be understood broadly. A skill's "product" does not have to be fabricated; it might be skillfully acquired or otherwise realized. Socrates and Cleinias go on to discuss several skills that are like hunting in that they acquire their "products" rather than fabricate them (see esp. 290c1-3). They do not talk about dancing, but dancing is a skill that neither fabricates nor acquires a "product."⁵¹

This second restriction hardly helps Socrates and Cleinias to discover the particular wisdom that Cleinias should pursue. They eliminate lyre-making, flute-making, the art of making speeches, and the art of generalship on the grounds that they do not know how to use what they know how to produce.⁵² But they come close to finding the desired skill

⁵¹ This broad use of 'product' is alive and well in business schools. An MBA readily talks about "product" and might mean by that fabricated items (dolls, cars), harvested natural resources (crude oil), or services (banking). Henceforth, I will drop the scare-quotes, but caveat lector.

⁵² Two of the eliminations have repercussions worth noting. First, the elimination of the art of making speeches allows Socrates to take some digs at unnamed rival(s). Cf. 304d2-306d1. On the identity of the rival discussed in the later passage, see Guthrie, History IV, 282-283. Second, Cleinias' elimination of generalship also throws out hunting, fishing, geometry, astronomy, and calculation on the grounds that all of these have to hand over their products to some other skill for correct use (cooking in the case of the first two, and dialectic in the case of the last three). The sophistication of Cleinias' remarks prompts Crito to jump in. Crito doubts that Cleinias (290e1-2) or Ctesippus (291a1) could have said all this, and assents to Socrates' suggestion that perhaps a "superior being present" uttered it (291a2-7). This is usually taken to indicate a little game that Plato is playing in order to signal his own responsibility for the

when Cleinias introduces the art of politics as the skill that uses what generalship produces (namely, captured human beings). The two consider the possibility that the art of politics is the desired wisdom, where the art of politics is conceived generally, as the same as 'kingly' art (291c4-5).⁵³ Now, Socrates finds it clear enough how the political skill uses things correctly: it uses all things in the polis correctly (291c9-d3). But he wants to know what the product of the political skill is (291d7-292a3). Crito (who is now rehearsing the inquiry Socrates originally made with Cleinias) struggles to answer this question (292a4-6) but quickly agrees that the kingly art must be beneficial (292a7-10)—it has been proposed as the special wisdom and the special wisdom is beneficial—and that therefore its product must be a good (292a11-12). But nothing is good except some sort of knowledge (292b1-2). So both the kingly art itself and the product of the kingly art are the same, namely, beneficial knowledge.

This is the puzzle. Socrates seems to find the beneficial productive wisdom, but he can understand its productivity only insofar as it produces wisdom in others.⁵⁴ There is nothing for wisdom to do but make others

ideas Cleinias uses, for this particular characterization of mathematics and dialectic suggests Republic VII. (See, e.g., Reeve, Apology, 132-133n31.) This seems right, but it is not clear what follows: possibly unitarianism about the dialogues (see Shorey, Unity, 76-77), possibly a proleptic reading of the Euthydemus (Kahn, Plato, 208-209 and cf. 321-325), possibly just a recognition that Plato could write a Socratic dialogue in his maturity.

⁵³ Some readers cannot keep the Republic's philosopher-rulers out of their minds at this point. (See Reeve, Apology, 134, and Annas, "Virtue as the Use of Other Goods," 61-63.) But the Lovers, Alcibiades, and Statesman are also relevant (as Reeve and Annas are well aware), and so there is no need to see Socrates' position in the second protreptic as "infected" with "middle-period" Platonism. Not only no need, but I think that Socrates' indifference to the distinction between the political skill and the kingly skill is virtually required by his conception of the political skill in other Socratic dialogues. I cannot argue for that here, but see Schofield, "Socrates on Trial in the USA," ad fin.

⁵⁴ This is not the way the passage is standardly read (as by, e.g., Annas, "Virtue as the Use of Other Goods," and Striker, "Plato's Socrates"), but the evidence is pretty clear. Socrates (who does not presuppose that he and Crito have the kingly art, surely) asks for the kingly art's product "for us" (291d7; cf. 292a11); he discusses possible products that the kingly art provides to "the citizens" (292b5-c1; cf. 292c4-5); and then he characterizes the beneficial knowledge as the knowledge "with which we will make other

wise, and there is no clear picture of what the wisdom is that is to be produced (292d1-e2). So it remains unclear what this wisdom is.

One might seek to escape the puzzle by rejecting Socrates' second restriction. If the sought-after wisdom is not a productive art, then no problem arises about what it is supposed to produce. But this does not remove the entire perplexity.⁵⁵ Even if the kingly art does not need to produce good effects in others, it still needs to guarantee correct use to be beneficial at all. How can it guarantee correct use unless it is knowledge of what is good? And how can it be knowledge of what is good if it is the only good? In that case, wisdom would have to be knowledge of itself, and it is far from clear what this could be.⁵⁶

What is one to make of this lurking puzzle? There are several possibilities. One might suppose that Plato is genuinely puzzled, and that there is no solution in sight. Or one might suppose that Plato has in mind a solution that offers only in another dialogue.⁵⁷ But it is also possible to find hints of how to solve the puzzle in the Euthydemus.⁵⁸

persons good" (292d5-6, emphasis mine; the point is repeated at 292d8-9). (Nor should this totally shock those who hold the Vlastosian expectation: consider the suggestion in Republic I that the ruler's art is to benefit the ruled.) Note that if we take these textual hints seriously, then there might well be a difference between the productivity of the wisdom qua kingly art (produce wisdom in others) and the productivity of it qua knowledge beneficial to oneself (which is not discussed). And if that is right, then there are, strictly speaking, two puzzles here: the first is the puzzle of providing content to the product of the kingly art, and the other is the puzzle of providing content to one's own beneficial knowledge. I treat them as such, though, of course, the puzzles are closely related.

⁵⁵ Contra McCabe. Cf. the problems at the end of the dialogue Speetzen highlights.

⁵⁶ Putting the point this way encourages connections between the Euthydemus, the Charmides, and the Alcibiades.

⁵⁷ Cf. Kahn, Plato, 325, emphasis added (and cf. 208-209): "Socrates' second protreptic ends with a regress that can be resolved only when the content of the royal art is identified as the highest object of knowledge."

⁵⁸ Contra Kahn, Plato, 208-209.

One way of doing this is to suppose that Socrates and Cleinias should reject the claim that wisdom is the only good.⁵⁹ But there is no very good hint in the Euthydemus that Socrates and Cleinias should follow this escape route. There is only the importance of the Stoic claim to the puzzle. Nor is it easy to see why Plato would have Socrates argue for the Stoic claim only to hope that his readers would later strike the claim. It would be far more consistent of his Socrates to be genuinely perplexed.⁶⁰

But there is a hint that something is amiss with the perplexity in the Euthydemus. Socrates first restricts the search for wisdom by rejecting the possibility that it is every or all knowledge. He does this sneakily and without any attempt to justify the move. On the heels of the first protreptic, he had mentioned that wisdom could be every or all knowledge or it could be a special sort of knowledge (282d8-e4), but in the second protreptic, he simply assumes that it is a special sort of knowledge (288d9-e1). He returns to the contrast briefly, at just the point that he and Cleinias are seeking to understand the kingly art's production of good. He asks if the kingly art provides "every or all knowledge, cobblery and carpentry and all the rest" (292c7-9). Cleinias understandably says no.

But what if Cleinias were to balk at Socrates' way of construing the alternative to specific knowledge? They need to know what the content of wisdom or the kingly art is, and they can find no specific content that is not puzzling. But what if Cleinias were willing to say that wisdom is knowledge of everything? I do not mean everything that is knowable or even everything that is known by someone or other. (Compare Quine's answer of 'everything' to the ontological question, "What exists?") Rather, I mean that

⁵⁹ Cf. the objections raised by Plato, Republic 505b6-c4, Plutarch, Comm not chp. 27, and Sextus, M XI 186-187.

⁶⁰ Many readers will want to note that he is also perplexed in the Charmides about the related problem concerning knowledge of knowledge.

the political art must know everything that a person needs to know in order to know anything.

This might seem mysterious, but recall that we are considering what Socrates could want Cleinias to think that wisdom is. If Socrates has a conception of the wisdom that he seeks, it should be manifest in his pursuit. Socrates does not pursue cobblery and carpentry, though he does reflect on the general characteristics of cobblery and carpentry. Rather, he examines people who claim to know the most important matters, and he seeks answers to the questions about the most important matters that survive his elenctic examinations. So, although what exactly knowledge is might remain a bit unsettled, Socrates' way of life suggests, roughly, that knowledge is an elenchus-proof set of psychological commitments, where those commitments must extend to the most important matters. An elenchus-proof set of attitudes might or might not include knowledge of how to make shoes, but it must include commitments about justice and self-control. Moreover, if Socrates' central belief in the Euthydemus is correct, it must also include the commitment that only the coherent, elenchus-proof set of attitudes itself is good.

On this view, Socrates could escape the perplexity about what wisdom or the political art is. Wisdom, the only good, is knowledge of everything a person needs to know to have a coherent set of psychological commitments. This view is suggested by the Euthydemus in three ways. The first protreptic advances without explaining the thesis that wisdom guarantees correct use, and I have argued that this thesis is most plausible on the assumption that wisdom is a broad, coherent account of how to use conventional goods. The second protreptic advances puzzles about wisdom that rest in part on the assumption that wisdom must be some specific knowledge, whereas attention to Socrates' way of life suggests that wisdom is a more general view about how important matters hang together. Finally,

as I shall now argue, this conception of wisdom helps to explain one of the most mysterious features of the Euthydemus.

5. Eristic

About two thirds of the Euthydemus are filled with displays of what Socrates calls eristic wisdom (272b9-10). Many others have not been so kind. Indeed, Socrates notes that most people would be more ashamed to refute others eristically than to be refuted (303d2-5). According to Crito, an esteemed writer of speeches calls eristic "worthless" and "ridiculous" (305a6-8), and Crito himself calls public engagement with it "worthy of reproach" (305a8-b3). But Socrates shows remarkable patience, in public, for the eristic arguments of Dionysodorus and Euthydemus, and he even asserts that he wants to learn "the eristic wisdom" (272b9-10; cf. the more ironic 272b1-4). Why?

To ask this question, we need not think that Socrates is an unabashed enthusiast for eristic. He is most certainly not. He peppers his remarks about Dionysodorus and Euthydemus with ironic praise, and he disdains the pursuit of victory in verbal argument for its own sake, without regard to truth or falsity, which is what he takes eristic to be (272a7-b1).⁶¹ There should be no doubt that Socrates wants Cleinias to prefer his own approach to wisdom over Dionysodorus' and Euthydemus', and no doubt that Socrates wants Crito to send his son Critobolus into the Socratic sort of philosophy and not the eristic one.⁶² Nevertheless, in sharp contrast with the esteemed

⁶¹ See Kerferd, Sophistic Movement, 59-67.

⁶² This is plausibly the main point of the dialogue. See Hawley, Commentary, 15-23, and Chance, Euthydemus, 21. There is much more to say here, first about the possible identities of the "eristics" whom Plato is trying to contrast unfavorably with (his own?) Socratic philosophy—the Megarics are a popular guess—and then about the Isocratean philosophy that Plato also seems to be contrasting unfavorably with (his own?) Socratic philosophy, and finally about the relation of Antisthenes to the proceedings. For a general introduction to these questions, see Hawley, Commentary, 23-30, and for an

writer of speeches and *Crito*, Socrates shows serious interest in the eristic argumentation, and this calls for explanation.

If we take Socrates to be sticking to wisdom as the only good and advocating the pursuit of wisdom as an elenchus-proof set of attitudes, then we have an explanation. For one way in which one can fail to survive examination is by failing to master the dialectical art, broadly construed, but failing to make the proper distinctions and by falling into fallacy. So happiness requires attention to eristic, requires mastery of the eristical tricks. To drive this point home, Plato has some of the final eristic arguments in the dialogue concern the very questions of Socrates' protreptic discourses, the need for goods, what is appropriate to the skilled, and the possession and use of conventional goods (299a-303a).⁶³

In other words, I suggest that Socrates is motivated to take eristic seriously for just the reason that Zeno of Citium takes sophisms seriously. It is reported that Zeno "compared the skills of dialecticians to those just measures that measure not wheat or any other worthy thing but chaff and crap" (Stobaeus II 12,2 Wachsmuth).⁶⁴ Zeno was not denigrating the dialecticians; having a good crap-detector is no paltry thing. Indeed, it is necessary to have the argumentative skills of the eristics and dialecticians if knowledge is, as Zeno and the Stoics hold, "stable, firm, and unshakeable by

interesting rehabilitation of Antisthenes as a central figure in the Euthydemus (and, according to the Euthydemus, Cynicism), see Rappe, "Father of the Dogs?"

⁶³ Many scholars (e.g., Hawtrey, Commentary, 20) have said that the eristic argumentation in the Euthydemus has some value as logical gymnastics. What I take myself to be showing, however, is that why these logical gymnastics are crucial to the wisdom Socrates wants Cleinias to pursue.

⁶⁴ It is not clear whether the word 'dialecticians' is here used as a general term for those interested in logic, as it usually is from the third century BCE on, or as a specific reference to a particular school of logicians that is said to follow Eucleides of Megara and to include especially Diodorus of Cronus. The word 'eristic' shows similar elasticity: sometimes it seems to pick out a specific school of followers of Eucleides of Megara, and at other times it seems to be a very general term of abuse for dialectical arguers interested in victory above all else. For one plausible take on this, see Sedley, "Diodorus Cronus," 74-78.

reason or argument."⁶⁵ Unsurprisingly, Zeno "ordered his pupils to study dialectic since it is able to solve sophisms" (Plutarch, Stoic rep 1034f), and he responded to the dialecticians' puzzles with Solutions and Refutations (DL VII 4).⁶⁶ Something very much like this, I suggest, is also why Socrates shows interest in eristic in the Euthydemus.⁶⁷ For Socrates believes that wisdom is the only good, and he acts as though surviving refutation is at least necessary for wisdom.

6. Socrates the Stoic?

It is time for objections. The deniers often say that it is philosophically hopeless for Socrates to hold the Stoic thesis, either because the thesis itself is indefensible or because Socrates does not have the Stoic distinctions that make a reasonable defense possible. Thus far, I have attributed to Socrates no particularly Stoic distinctions or thoughts. That goods must causally benefit is Socratic orthodoxy; that wisdom requires an elenchus-proof psychology falls neatly out of Socrates' central mission. But the deniers might think that Socrates does not have the resources to make good on the Stoic thesis.

⁶⁵ See Stobaeus II 7.51 73,19-74,1 Wachsmuth; DL VII 47; Sextus M VII 151; Pseudo-Galen SVF 2.93; Philo SVF 2.95; and cf. Cicero, Academica I 41-42, which attributes these features of knowledge to Zeno.

⁶⁶ Naturally, what Zeno did, Chrysippus did twenty times over. The greatest Stoic's titles include twelve works in 23 books on the liar paradox, another 26 books for nine works on other puzzles, and seven studies totalling seventeen books on amphiboly, according to Barnes' totals ("The Catalogue of Chrysippus' Logical Works," 177-178). Note especially the titles On Sophisms and On Dialectical Puzzles (DL VII 198), and cf. Plutarch, Stoic rep 1035f-1037c (chp 10).

⁶⁷ Does this interest in logic show the original input of Plato or is it compatible with the ethical interests of the Socrates of the Socratic dialogues? The full articulation of why the Socrates of the Euthydemus should be interested in eristic goes beyond what the Socrates of a Socratic dialogue could say, for it requires an account of what knowledge is. But the interest in argumentation for the sake of avoiding refutation does not require anything beyond the Socrates of a Socratic dialogue. Plato is, I think, brilliantly hinting at doctrinal solutions by a dramatic portrayal that is perfectly consistent with the limited interests of a Socratic dialogue's Socrates.

Vlastos argues against the Stoic thesis like this. If wisdom is the only good and a person does everything for the sake of his or her good, then no one has any reason to prefer health to sickness or, to borrow Vlastos' example, a clean bed to one covered in vomit. But that is crazy. So Socrates cannot have really believed that wisdom is the only good.

Now, there is an instructive general response available: that \underline{p} is crazy is not, in general, a compelling reason to prescind from attributing \underline{p} to a philosopher, especially a philosopher who is willing to outrage common sense. After all, the difficulty with the belief that wisdom is the only good is no reason to prescind from attributing it to the Stoics. Why not Socrates?

But the particular response is more important: the objection rests on a misunderstanding of what it is to act for the sake of the good. If acting for the sake of the good requires acting so as to bring about the good as a consequence of one's action and wisdom is the only good, then one has reasons to $\underline{\phi}$ rather than $\underline{\psi}$ if and only if $\underline{\phi}$ -ing brings about more wisdom than $\underline{\psi}$ -ing. In the absence of this reason, one is left flipping a coin, or following a momentary whim.⁶⁸

But why suppose that acting for the sake for the good is aiming to bring about the good? This "consequentialist" reckoning of acting for the sake of the good is not compelled by anything that Socrates says. Although he argues that only wisdom is good on the grounds that only wisdom has the causal power to benefit, this entails only that wisdom has the causal power to effect right use. There is no need to suppose that right use brings about happiness as a further consequence; right use could constitute happiness. Indeed, there is good reason to attribute to Socrates the view that right use constitutes happiness. For if right use does not constitute happiness—that

⁶⁸ I mean by acting on a whim acting not for the sake of a reason but for no particular reason at all. If one asks a person why she did what she did, and she says, "No particular reason," or "I just felt like it," then she acted on a whim. The renegade Stoic Ariston of Chios is not far from endorsing this picture, on some hostile interpretations.

is, if it brings about the good as a further consequence—and if only wisdom is good, then he would seem to face a version of the second protreptic's puzzle. Moreover, when Socrates wants to consider the power of wise use to bring about some separate benefit in the second protreptic, he focuses narrowly on the case of bringing about the separate benefit in other people, not in oneself. He does not explicitly require that wise use bring about a separate benefit in oneself. I conclude that Socrates' eudaimonism in the Euthydemus is not the consequentialist kind according to which one should act always to bring about one's happiness. Instead, Socrates holds in the Euthydemus that one should always instantiate happiness by acting wisely, where wisdom is a coherent set of attitudes. I call this, for shorthand, coherentist eudaimonism.

With this point, a response to the deniers' philosophical worry becomes available. A successful Socratic philosopher, like anyone, has reason to do what he desires to do. So if he desires to sleep in clean comfort instead of vomit, then he has reason to sleep in clean comfort. The successful Socratic philosopher, unlike most of us, has good reason to do what he desires to do because his desires are themselves fully justified as parts of a coherent set of attitudes.

Why, the deniers might object, should we suppose that the philosopher desires to sleep in clean comfort instead of vomit? How can we tell what attitudes must be part of any coherent set? These are very good questions that are not directly addressed in the Euthydemus. The Stoics address them by insisting that nature guarantees that certain desires must be present in any coherent set of psychological attitudes. But the Socrates of Plato's Socratic dialogues never confronts the question of what guarantees that his interlocutors will have true beliefs that can be used to expose a contradiction with their false beliefs. Perhaps it is reasonable for Socrates to avoid confronting this question. Perhaps there is nothing more to say short

of a massive program of empirical research or a developed providentialist tale about nature, both of which are considerably outside the scope of Socrates' interests and abilities.

This point explains why Socrates' proto-Stoicism in the Euthydemus is underdeveloped, without at all casting doubt on the conclusion that Socrates is committed to the Stoic thesis in the Euthydemus. Socrates is generally committed to the assumption that his interlocutors have true beliefs in them that can be used to expose a contradiction with their false beliefs, and this assumption is enough to sustain confidence that those with coherent sets of attitudes will have true beliefs and reasonable desires. Whether Socrates explicitly sees this in any of Plato's Socratic dialogue is a question, but he is surely committed to it in practice. With that commitment, Plato could well think that Socrates could sustain the thesis that only wisdom is good.

7. Rethinking the Role of the Euthydemus

I conclude that Socrates in the Euthydemus is deeply committed to the claim that wisdom is the only good. To deny this simply by isolating Socrates' argument at 279-281 and qualifying his claim that wisdom is the only good is tantamount to failing to read the dialogue as a whole. If I am right about this, then those of us who want to read the Euthydemus as a whole have three options: (1) we can insist that Socrates consistently holds that wisdom is the only good despite the appearances in some other dialogues;⁶⁹ (2) we can exile the Euthydemus from our favored list of Socratic dialogues despite the fact that the Socrates of the Euthydemus meets the uncontroversial criteria for the Socrates of the Socratic dialogues;⁷⁰ or (3) we can surrender the Vlastosian expectation. The best

⁶⁹ See note 8 above. Cf. Diogenes Laertius II 31.

⁷⁰ See note 11 above.

route is the one that leads to the best overall interpretation. I myself prefer to surrender the Vlastosian expectation, but here I can only offer a sketch of the possible payoff.⁷¹

Instead of approaching the Socratic dialogues as vehicles for a single Socratic theory, imagine that Plato wrote them as diverse experiments. Through these experiments the character of Socrates remains consistent, his commitment to ethical inquiry remains consistent, and his few paradoxical tenets remain consistent. But Plato is otherwise playing around, testing the Socratic tenets against conventional wisdom in various ways and exploring different ways in which the Socratic tenets might be fit into a coherent philosophical theory.⁷²

I believe that in these diverse experiments Plato hits upon two deeply different ways of systematizing Socratic ethics. On one model, a person needs knowledge of good and bad in order to bring about her own happiness. This model I call consequentialist eudaimonism, and it is especially evident in the Protagoras, where knowledge of good and bad is an art for calculating how to procure the most pleasure in the long run.⁷³ On the other model, a person needs knowledge of good and bad because a life with that knowledge is happiness. Because this model holds that the removal of psychological conflict provides both knowledge and happiness, I

⁷¹ This essay is one of thirteen chapters in a book manuscript called The Eudaimonist Alternative, and the embarrassingly programmatic claims of this conclusion get further support in other chapters.

⁷² Again, I pitch this approach against the Vlastosians, but it is also opposed to the skeptical and proleptic readings of Socratic dialogues. Although Kahn (e.g., "Did Plato?," 40 and 49n14) and Grote (Plato, 1:367, 375-376) would agree that there is no single Socratic theory in the Socratic dialogues, Kahn (e.g., "Did Plato?," 39) is eager to read some of these dialogues proleptically, as though Plato wrote them to prepare readers for his already established "middle-period" ideas, and Grote (Plato, 1:367, 375-376) denies that Plato has any positive doctrinal goals in the Socratic "dialogues of search." And again, I make no claims about when Plato wrote these Socratic dialogues.

⁷³ Obviously, I am not using 'consequentialist' in the technical way according to which a consequentialist theory is agent-neutral. (See, e.g., Scheffler, "Introduction.") But Anscombe, who coined the term in "Modern Moral Philosophy," used it in a broader way—so much so that Prichard and Ross come out as consequentialists!

call it coherentist eudaimonism, and as I have argued today, its roots are evident in the Euthydemus.

I favor this way of reading the Socratic dialogues for two general reasons. First, I believe that it gives us a better account of the individual dialogues themselves: I have tried just to give an example of this today, to show that Socrates in the Euthydemus can speak with special clarity when he is not being made to agree with what he says in all the other Socratic dialogues. Second, I believe that this approach gives us a fuller appreciation of Plato's genius. For on my story, Plato does more than record or even construct a single Socratic theory for his Socrates. He manages to develop in his Socratic dialogues the two dominant strands of ancient ethical theory, both the consequentialist eudaimonism that would be especially ascendant in Epicurus' Garden and the coherentist eudaimonism that would be especially ascendant in the Stoa.⁷⁴ Much more of the story remains to be told, of course: the Stoa responds not just to the Euthydemus but to a wider range of Socratic and Cynic commitments and to Plato's particular development of coherentist eudaimonism (in, say, the Republic),⁷⁵ and Epicurus draws not just on hedonist versions of Socratic ethics but also on an appreciation of mental tranquillity that goes back (among philosophers) at least to Democritus.⁷⁶ But I think it fitting to start with the realization that Plato's reflections on Socrates set the agenda for ancient ethics by introducing two eudaimonist alternatives.

⁷⁴ For an alternative account of how Plato's Socratic dialogues can be related to later developments, see Irwin, "Epicurean?," 210 and 215. Some of those who work with the Vlastosian expectation prefer to find Socratic ethics superior to the later developments of Socratic themes, including especially Vlastos and (I believe) Penner. See Irwin, "Socratic Puzzles," 264.

⁷⁵ I have said more about the Socratic background to Stoic ethics in "Socrates the Cosmopolitan," Stoic Cosmopolitanism, and especially "Socrates in the Stoa." I argue for a deep parallel between Plato's Republic and Chrysippean ethics in other chapters of my work-in-progress The Eudaimonist Alternative, one of which will soon appear as "Minding the Gap in Plato's Republic," but see also Menn, "Physics as a Virtue."

⁷⁶ See, e.g., Warren, Epicurus and Democritean Ethics.

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