Planning for Pleasure:
Plato on Hedonist Prudentialism

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To Dad, in memory of Mum

(anywhere
i go you go,my dear;and whatever is done
by only me is your doing,my darling)

- e.e. cummings

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ABSTRACT

PLANNING FOR PLEASURE: PLATO ON HEDONIST PRUDENTIALISM

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Plato has a sustained interest in pleasure, and he represents Socrates in dialogue with hedonists repeatedly. Usually this is to critique them, and frequently it involves arguing not just that they seek the wrong life, but that they will fail to get the life of pleasure they do seek. Two pressing questions arise: what exactly does Plato take to be the fatal flaw in the hedonists' plans? And, given that flaw, why does he return to the subject of hedonist prudentialism recurrently?

In 'Planning for Pleasure: Plato on Hedonist Prudentialism', I confront these interpretive questions by analysing Plato's views on hedonist prudentialism (Chapter One), by looking at specific passages representing confrontations with hedonist views in *Protagoras* 356b-357e (Chapter Two), *Gorgias* 492e-493d (Chapter Three), *Republic* IX 583c-585a (Chapter Four), and *Philebus* 20b-23a (Chapter Five), and by arguing for an alternative understanding of Plato's attitude to how we relate to pleasure (Conclusion).

Against existing characterisations of this development which understand it as increasingly pessimistic about pleasure, I argue instead that Plato develops an increasingly fine-grained conception of pleasure, becoming suspicious of only some types as he goes along, while becoming more enthusiastic about others. His focus shifts

to putting ourselves in the right position to accurately judge pleasures and what will please us – a position which, he is increasingly aware, is difficult to occupy.

My thesis makes a clear contribution to this debate in providing an alternative to the more sceptical view. I encourage the re-evaluation of familiar texts, and raise new questions and avenues of inquiry. I contribute to current debates about Plato's understanding of the nature and role of pleasure in the good life, and highlight implications relevant to modern discussions of pleasure and prudentialism, in order to show how Plato's views remain philosophically relevant.

CONTENTS

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INTRODUCTION

Here I will set-out the main questions which motivate my thesis, and the problems I take Plato to be concerned with when it comes to hedonist prudentialism. By 'hedonist prudentialism', I mean the ways that hedonists, or those representing even loosely hedonistic views, plan their lives, with pleasure as their aim. Some of the passages I focus on represent Socrates in dialogue with an explicitly hedonist interlocutor, i.e. someone who is committed to pleasure as the only and ultimate good. Other passages I consider represent Socrates and some interlocutor(s) deliberating over a more loose or pre-theoretical hedonist view, where there is some commitment to pleasure, but where this commitment is not held by an interlocutor with strong views or theoretical commitments. In both types of cases, I will attend to Plato's interest in the strategies for prudential self-concern: how individuals plan their lives with pleasure as their aim, and why having pleasure as an aim can be especially problematic to the future planning or life planning process.

This thesis started from a kind of puzzle: if Plato is so suspicious of pleasure, and sceptical of the role it should play in a life,[1] why does he return to hedonism, and detailed investigations of hedonist prudentialism, repeatedly? Or, in other words, how do we reconcile an apparent anti-hedonism with a sustained interest in the details of the way a hedonist plans their future and their life? One possibility is that Plato is so worried about the dangers of pleasure leading a life that he feels the need to repeatedly

[1] I take Moss (2006), for instance, to defend this type of sceptical view. I will discuss it in more detail in Chapter Two and the Conclusion.

and emphatically demonstrate them. On this reading, his suspicions about pleasure grow and grow, culminating in images such as that of the prisoners in the cave in *Republic* VII, bound by the ties of vicious pleasures.[2] But Plato depicts Socrates arguing not just that hedonists seek the wrong life, but that they will fail to get the pleasure they do seek. As such, we can wonder about what exactly Plato takes to be the fatal flaw in hedonists' plans. And, given those flaw(s), why he returns to the subject of hedonist prudentialism recurrently.

An alternative understanding of why Plato returns to questions of hedonist life planning repeatedly, and the one I will defend, is that this repeated engagement with hedonist prudentialism demonstrates an increasing awareness of both the dangers of allowing pleasure to play the wrong role in a life, and of the difficulties with and importance of it playing the right role. Across the dialogues Plato develops an increasingly fine-grained conception of pleasure, becoming suspicious of only some types as he goes along, while becoming more enthusiastic about others. There can be no blanket ban on pleasure, as it plays a crucial role in the best life. Plato's focus shifts to putting ourselves in the right position to accurately judge pleasures, which pleasures are worth having, and what will please us – a position which, he is increasingly aware, is difficult to occupy. We therefore find increasingly sophisticated treatments of the moral psychology of pleasure and pain, rather than disparagement of pleasure per se.

[2] Moss (2006) 533 argues for this reading of the cave analogy. See n. 104 and my Conclusion for an alternative to this view.

My thesis makes a clear and original contribution to current debates about Plato's understanding of the nature and role of pleasure in the good life by providing an alternative to the more sceptical reading. It highlights the increasingly sophisticated psychology of pleasure, pain, memory and anticipation developed in the dialogues. It reveals the implications of his work that are relevant to modern discussions of pleasure and prudentialism, in order to show how Plato's views remain philosophically relevant. I will now briefly outline the structure of each chapter and provide a sense of the overarching argument.

In Chapter One, 'Plato and the Cyrenaics on Hedonist Prudentialism', I map out the logical space of hedonist prudentialism by characterising first an extreme aprudentialism, then a more moderate version I argue was held by the Cyrenaics, and then Plato's prudentialism. The comparison between the more aprudentialist views and the one Plato holds helps to reveal, by contrast, the nuances of the Platonic position. It shows the implications for his views on our relationship to pleasure, and exposes the Platonic moral psychology of pleasure, pain, and self-concern over a life. This first chapter takes a wide view of the Platonic position as it changes and develops across the dialogues, which I then consider in detail in the four chapters which follow.

Scholarly interest in the development of Plato's views on pleasure and the role it plays in his prudentialism arises in part because of a puzzling contrast between the optimistic assessment of the *technē metrētikē* in the *Protagoras* (356b-357e), compared with the less optimistic assessment of our ability to evaluate pleasures and pains in later works (specifically *Grg.* 492e-493d, *Rep.* IX 583c-585a, and *Phileb.* 20b-23a). As such, Chapters

Two-Five will analyse each of these passages in turn. Moreover, those later passages are frequently charged with missing the mark: failing to show why pleasure seekers will fail in their principal intention. One of the outcomes of my thesis is to show these critiques of particular kinds of hedonism to be more successful, and more carefully aimed, than scholars have previously thought. My analysis also reveals that they are not entirely destructive critiques: while some aspects of hedonism are criticised, there is also constructive work done to reveal how to rehabilitate our relationship to pleasure, and to demonstrate the important role that pleasure plays in the philosophical life.

Chapter Two begins the closer examination of passages which represent Socratic confrontations with hedonist views. In this first examination, 'Tipping the Scales: Hedonism, Temporality & Illusion in *Protagoras* 356b-357e', I argue for the importance of temporality in the argument against the possibility of *akrasia* at 356a, attention to which shows that there is a mismatch between the perception of value of a given course of action, and the equality of concern we have for the pleasures and pains of all the parts of our lives. On this reading, the source of distortion is not in the nature of pleasure (*pace* Moss), but rather in the effect that time has on our value judgements. This reading reveals a more interesting moral psychology at work in the passage: a Platonic concern with having the right attitude to one's future self, as a way of making good decisions, and an interest in the mechanisms we use to identify with our future selves.

In Chapter Three, 'Jars, Sieves and Souls: The Myth of the Water Carriers in *Gorgias* 492e-493d', I argue that Plato's inclusion of two myths in which leaky jars are metaphors for the souls of hedonists with insatiable desires is deliberate, and that the

two images together make a different point than either version alone would. In doing so I confront puzzles about the water carriers myth, including why it depicts hedonists as mindless and forgetful, whether there is a part-whole problem, and what we learn from about Plato's views on the perils of a hedonist's lifestyle. I argue that while there is a problem with the nature of bodily pleasures according to the passage, there is also an issue with souls that administer bodily pleasures to the appetite unrelentingly, resulting in its corruption and cognitive deterioration. This speaks to the reasons for the puzzling contrast between the optimistic assessment of the *technē metrētikē* in the *Protagoras* (addressed in Chapter Two), compared with what is thought to be the less optimistic assessment of our ability to evaluate pleasures and pains in the *Gorgias*, by suggesting that the two passages challenge two fundamentally different aspects of hedonist prudentialism, and the psychology which underlies it, which the Socratic criticisms are sensitive to. The arguments in the *Gorgias* offer unique insight into Plato's clever use of myth to raise important doubts about the appropriate role of subjectivity in a hedonists' life planning, and they lay the groundwork for the argument of *Republic* IX.

In Chapter Four, 'Both Sides Now: Aspect and Illusion in the Account of Pleasure in *Republic* IX 583c-585a', I analyse the argument which likens the pleasures of lives other than that of the philosopher to shadow-paintings. I argue that it depends upon a claim about the role of perspective and comparison in the experience of pleasure and pain: that what precedes an experience can make it seem like a true pleasure or pain, but that this is illusory. Against influential existing interpretations, I defend a reading in which pleasures and pains are taken as appearances in a non-veridical sense. In doing so I address some interpretive puzzles: why illness and pain are appropriate examples in

Socrates' argument; how it is that the neutral state can sometimes feel painful; and why anticipation figures in the argument. I conclude that the argument for the philosopher's life as most pleasant should be taken seriously, as part of the reason why it is the best life, such that it is an important contribution to the project of the *Republic* as a whole.

In Chapter Five, 'The Jellyfish's Pleasures: Mindless Pleasure in the Trial of Lives in *Philebus* 20b-23a', against scholars who characterise the trial of the life of pleasure as a digression or primarily pejorative, I argue that it is a thought experiment containing an important argument in the form of a reductio of the hypothesis that a life could be most pleasant without any cognition. It proceeds in a series of ordered steps, designed to prove that pleasure has an essential self-reflexive component, and culminates in the precisely chosen image of the jellyfish. I argue that understanding the intended resonance of this creature, and the sense in which it is deprived, is critical for reconstructing the argument, and yields new insight into Plato's views on the minimal conditions for pleasure.

In the Conclusion, 'Use Your Illusion: Plato on Pleasure and Prudentialism', I look up from the specific passages I have been concerned with, in order to draw together many of the themes and questions that have been common to them, and to make more general claims about Plato's views on pleasure, pain, and the particular constraints which a hedonist faces when planning their life. Against existing characterisations of this development which understand it as increasingly pessimistic about pleasure, and where pleasure itself is a cause of the soul being overwhelmed or mislead, I argue for a different story of the development of Plato's thought. Instead of becoming increasingly

suspicious of pleasure, I contend that Plato develops an increasingly sophisticated taxonomy of pleasure, becoming sceptical of only some types as he goes along, while becoming more enthusiastic about others. His focus shifts from looking for an objective standard against which to measure pleasures and pains, to putting ourselves in the right position to accurately judge pleasures and what will please us, while at the same time he becomes increasingly aware of the difficulties of occupying such a position. My reading avoids the need to attribute to Plato a general increasing scepticism about pleasure – a view which is too crude, and which fails to account for his increasing attention to the psychology of pleasure and pain, and increasingly fine-grained taxonomy of pleasure, culminating in the sustained investigation in the *Philebus*. It avoids the need to locate the source of illusions in the nature of pleasure, instead shifting the focus to our orientation towards and handling of pleasures within the framework of an ontology of pleasure (distinguishing, for example, bodily replenishments from the firmer pleasures of the intellect). My analysis shows that Plato's moral psychology includes suggestions of ways in which our relationship to certain kinds of pleasure can be rehabilitated which would not be possible if pleasure itself were fundamentally flawed.

CHAPTER ONE
PLATO AND THE CYRENAICS ON HEDONIST PRUDENTIALISM

I Introduction

In order to understand Plato's treatments of hedonist prudentialism, we first need to know something of how he thinks of prudentialism more generally, specifically in terms of the nature of prudential self-concern. What strategies are endorsed or recommended, in the dialogues, for conceiving of and concerning oneself with one's own good? Are we to think, for instance, that he's thinking of prudential concern as directed towards the interests of one's future self, or at one's life as a whole (as we might think that Aristotle conceives of the object of prudential concern in *NE* VI),[3] and are these compatible? Is his conception of the best life independent of one's placement in life, and one's current preferences and concerns, or does temporality and perspective matter? Is the value of planning instrumental, or intrinsic, or both?

Before turning to an analysis of the Platonic positions, represented in different dialogues, I will introduce the Cyrenaic example by way of contrast. The comparison with the Cyrenaics is especially fitting given that my ultimate focus is Plato on hedonist prudentialism in particular. The Cyrenaics' hedonism, and the way in which their views on prudential self-concern arise out of their particular conception of pleasure, thus provide an apt comparison. I will argue for the following key differences between the moderate version of Cyrenaic prudentialism and Platonic hedonist prudentialism,

[3] See, specifically, Arist. *NE* VI.4, 1140a28: '…ποῖα πρὸς τὸ εὖ ζῆν ὅλως.'

indexed to the dialogues in which they appear, since, I will argue, the Platonic position shifts:

- The Cyrenaics advise that our prudential planning should treat the future differently to the present, the latter being far more of a concern to us. Plato, in the *Protagoras*, suggests a prudential strategy for establishing a perspective on all parts of our lives which reflects an equality of concern for all parts. He is optimistic that the distortion which results in us favouring temporally near affections can be corrected for, whereas the Cyrenaics show no such optimism.
- The Cyrenaics do not recognise any cognitive risks with pursuing hedonism. By contrast, in the *Gorgias*, Plato demonstrates a worry about the cognitive cost of pursuing insatiable desires. Yet he also introduces an alternative, and more intellectual hedonist prudentialism, which does not carry that risk. Here we see Plato moving towards a more complex psychology of prudential self-concern.
- A cornerstone of the Cyrenaic view is the infallibility of occurrent affective experiences, which are used as a benchmark and aim in their prudential reasoning. Contrast Plato in the *Republic*, who casts doubt on the infallibility of occurrent affective judgements, and their role in prudential planning. He emphasises, instead, the importance of having the right evaluative framework, where the Cyrenaics require no such thing.
- For the Cyrenaics there is no possibility of a failure of self-awareness when experiencing pleasure or pain in the moment. In the *Philebus*, Plato uses a reductio to establish a similar point, in a different way. He makes explicit the need for a number of cognitive capacities crucial for the life of pleasure, which the Cyrenaics don't discuss.

- Both the Cyrenaics and Plato (in the *Philebus*) suggest that there are limits on our ability to anticipate what a future pleasure or pain will be like. The Cyrenaic reaction is to advise followers not to spend too much energy anticipating future affections. By contrast, the suggestion in the *Philebus* is that a more objective standard, and the development of consistency of character, can minimise the degree to which our prudential planning is affected by failures of self-awareness over time.

These shifts in the Platonic view could be a dialectical shift, aimed at the position being considered, the interlocutors depicted, and the thematic focus of the dialogue in which the views appear. Nonetheless, exposing the Platonic view in each case reveals his increasing awareness of the complexities involved in planning a life aimed at pleasure.

I will begin by mapping out the logical space of hedonist prudentialism, placing aprudentialists on one end of a spectrum, defending a reading of the Cyrenaics as sitting in a middle position, and then placing the Platonic view on the other end. While the older interpretation of the Cyrenaic view understands them as occupying the extreme aprudentialist position (which I will briefly outline), I will focus on a reading according to which they are more moderate. My analysis will highlight the nature of their presentism, their passive epistemology, and how those contribute to their specific form of prudentialism.

Though my main interest here is not Cyrenaic interpretation per se, I contend that the comparison between Plato and the more extreme aprudentialism (too extreme even for

the Cyrenaics), is not in itself very helpful. A contrast with the more moderate version of Cyrenaic prudentialism is far more useful for highlighting the subtleties of the Platonic view. As a result, though it will take some detail to get that position on the table, the pay-off in terms of facilitating a contrast with Plato is worth it. Once I have defended the moderate version of Cyrenaic prudentialism, I will consider the Platonic view as it emerges across four dialogues. In each analysis I will use the Cyrenaic view as a comparison, to help reveal the Platonic view. I will conclude with some remarks about the sophisticated picture of hedonist prudentialism we end up with.

II Cyrenaic Aprudentialism

In practising their unique form of pleasure-seeking, the Cyrenaics developed a philosophy that has at its heart the advice that the wise man will eat, drink and enjoy today while it's here, while steering clear of avoidable trouble. They recognised affections (*pathē*): pleasure and pain, defining pleasure as a smooth motion (*leia kinesis*) in the soul, and pain as a rough motion, so that pleasures don't differ from one another, nor is one more pleasant than another.[4]

The Cyrenaics are generally understood to hold the view that the *pathē,* pleasure and pain, are to be understood as, if not strictly, at least primarily physical. They appear to be some breed of reductive physicalists, to the extent that they take many things that we would consider to be mostly mental pleasures or pains, such as the enjoyment of

[4] Diog. Laert. *Lives* II.86-7. (A list of all abbreviations of classical works used is included in the Bibliography.)

puzzling over abstract mathematical problems, to have a mostly physical explanation. But the evidence points to this being true only in the case of pleasure and pain, leaving room for some non-physical psychological experience. Anything not reducible to the *pathē* (usually physical sensations of pleasure and pain) would be corrigible by definition, in their view. The Cyrenaics also have a unique account of perception, in which basic affections – pleasures and pains – are passively received and incorrigible physical sensations.[5]

A common traditional reading of the Cyrenaics is that they are aprudentialist. I take Irwin (1991) to endorse this kind of aprudentialist and extreme presentist reading of the Cyrenaics. On this reading, they believe past and future pleasures and pains to be irrelevant to a person's good, since they don't believe themselves to be temporally extended rational agents, and they believe 'any concern with an extended future for myself rests on illusion and unwarranted belief.'[6] They therefore advocate an indifference to the future, and advocate against prudential self-concern which extends beyond the current moment. The most extreme version of this reading would narrow the temporal scope of their prudential self-concern to the specious present.

One of the principal ways this aprudentialism is demonstrated, according to this reading, is in the Cyrenaic views on pleasure and pain. They are often considered a school of extreme presentists when it comes to pleasure, recognising only the pleasure

[5] Sext. Emp. *Adv. Math.* VII.191. The emphasis on the physical is also an emphasis on the passive, on which see Sext. Emp. *Adv. Math.* VII.191; Brunschwig (1999) 252 ff.
[6] Irwin (1991) 69.

of the present moment, and advising against turning our attention away from present pleasure in favour of past or future pleasure.[7] This is based on their hedonism, their epistemology, and their unique account of pleasure, wherein it is emphasised that all of our *pathē* are particular, unitary experiences, which are passively perceived, and where our only access to pleasure is access to the unitemporal (*monochronos*) pleasure of the moment, which is a motion that peters out in time. As a source for this we have an important passage from an early 3rd century a.d.e. work by Athenaeus, reporting the view of Aristippus, the head of the Cyrenaic school:[8]

> He [Aristippus] also argued that pleasure exists only in the individual moment [*monochronos*]; and like profligates generally, he believed that neither the memory of past pleasures nor the expectation of those to come was of any significance to him. Instead, he was of the opinion that the Good exists exclusively in the moment, and felt that having enjoyed himself before or being likely to do so again meant nothing to him, since the former was over, while the latter had not yet occurred and was uncertain; this is what hedonists feel, when they maintain that it is the moment that gives one pleasure.[9]

Part of the Cyrenaic doctrine on pleasure is that all pleasures are equal, each being as pleasant as the next.[10] Thus, if the Cyrenaics denied that past or future pleasures are of any concern to them, they are in fact saying something stronger: that these are not pleasures at all. The extreme aprudential reading of the Cyrenaics thus conceives of

[7] Graver (2001) 162 agrees that this has become the standard reading, citing, for example, Gosling and Taylor (1982) 41-42; Döring (1988) 40-42; Mitsis (1988) 51-57; Irwin (1991); Annas (1993) 230-32; Tsouna (1998) 14-18; and Long (1999). See note 15 for evidence that this reading is gradually becoming less standard.

[8] Ath. *Diep.* XII.544a; also Sext. Emp. *Adv. Math.* I.117, I.226. Voula Tsouna (1998) 17-18 argues that *monochronos* should be understood as unitary and singular, with no prospective or retrospective value.

[9] Ath. *Deip.* XII, 544a-b, trans. S. Douglas Olson (2010). See also Ael. *VH* (frr. 207-08 Mannebach) 14.6 for a similar account.

[10] Diog. Laert. *Lives* II.87.

them as denying pleasures of the past and future, and certainly denying that we should plan our lives with the possible future pleasure of some unrelated person-stage in mind.

With this extreme picture in view, I will now defend a picture of the moderate presentism I take to accurately describe the Cyrenaic view.

III Moderate Cyrenaic Presentism and Prudentialism

Despite their reputation, up until relatively recently, as extreme presentists, we find in the ancient sources examples of the Cyrenaics discussing issues that would only be of interest to someone concerned with their future *pathē*: discussions of pleasure over a lifetime, the utility of friendship and prudence, and the purpose of wealth.[11] Our evidence about them includes recommendations about taking exercise and amassing wealth, so far as those are useful for obtaining pleasure, and a defence of the possibility of progress in philosophy and other disciplines.[12] Indeed, they connect happiness, which is comprised of particular pleasures, to pleasures of the past and future:

> However, the bodily pleasure which is the end, according to Panaetius in his work *On the Sects*, [is] not the settled pleasure following the removal of pains, or the sort of freedom from discomfort which Epicurus accepts and maintains to be the end. They also hold that there is a difference between "end" and "happiness". Our end is particular pleasure, whereas happiness is the sum total

[11] Ibid. II.87-92.

[12] Ibid. II.91, 93. On friendship, see especially the evidence of the Annicereans, who, though in some senses a deviant Cyrenaic sect, don't seem deviant in the particular sense of having radically different views about pleasures of the future and future planning. Hence *Lives* II.97: 'Though we make pleasure the end and are annoyed when deprived of it, we shall nevertheless cheerfully endure this because of our love of our friend' (trans. Hicks, 1925). On patriotism, see *Lives* II.96. For a discussion of the Cyrenaic attitude towards prudence, see O'Keefe (2002) 411, n. 47.

> of all particular pleasures, in which are included both past and future pleasures.[13]

Further, in their arguments about happiness, they say not that it is of *no* relevance, but that obtaining it necessitates taking some pain with the pleasure – a line moderate enough that Socrates, of whom the original Cyrenaics were followers, would probably agree.[14] As such, there is some work to be done in elucidating the exact nature of their prudentialism, and how it differs from Platonic conceptions.

Here I will explain and defend a moderate presentist reading of the Cyrenaics, and argue that it gives rise to what should be understood as a similarly moderate attitude of prudential self-concern. While this reading is less extreme than the standard reading, it has recently begun to attract more scholarly approval, and is retains many of the familiar hallmarks of Cyrenaic philosophy that older interpretations rely on.[15] In setting out the more moderate version, though, I hope to bring out the features of Cyrenaic prudentialism, including the justification for it, in a way which is more helpful for comparing it to the Platonic account.

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[13] Diog. Laert. *Lives* II.87.

[14] Diog. Laert. *Lives* II.88, 90. On the Socratic origins of the Cyrenaics see Tsouna (1994). Aristippus the Elder (435 – c.356 b.c.e.), the founder of the school, was a pupil of Socrates. This raises the interesting question, too broad in scope to take on here, of to what degree Platonic hedonist prudentialism may in fact be responsive to Cyrenaic doctrine.

[15] For those who hold the controversial but still 'standard reading', see note 7. Warren (2001) 167-8; Tsouna-McKirahan (2002) 464-89; O'Keefe (2002); Graver (2001) 162-3; Warren (2014a) 191-3; and Sedley (2017) 5-6 join me in defending a more moderate reading.

The moderate presentist reading of Cyrenaic prudentialism is characterised by an attitude of indifference to objects which are uncertain or affectively inaccessible, rather than by a failure of identification with one's future self. It is a unique and striking view, which sits in contrast to the Platonic view as we find it in any of the dialogues. The ways in which it differs are more nuanced and interesting than is sometimes thought, and will require detailed analysis. In support of this reading, I introduce what I take to be a key passage:

> Aristippus seemed to speak with particular conviction when encouraging people neither to bother themselves in retrospect over what has passed, nor to toil in prospect of things to come. For this kind of behaviour is the mark of happiness and proof of a gracious frame of mind. He told them to pay attention to each day as it comes, and similarly to that part of the day in which the individual's action or thought takes place. For he said that the present is ours, not the past nor the future. For the former has perished and it is unclear if the latter will be.[16]

I suggest we read this passage from Aelian as indicative of two claims which are characteristic of Cyrenaic presentism and their related prudentialism: first, in the present, we can only experience present pleasure and pain. Second, as a result of the first, we should only care about present pleasure and pain. The second claim relies on the first: that is to say, the recommendation of our restricted concern is justified by the claim about restricted access. I will discuss these in turn.

According to the Aelian passage, the Cyrenaics deny that the past or future have any bearing on current pleasure. The basis for this strong denial is that the past no longer exists, so access to the memory of past pleasures does not give us access to anything existing. Below I will argue that the sense in which it no longer exists is that the motion

[16] Ael. *VH* 14.6, translated in Warren (2001) 172.

comprising the affection has stopped, and the affection itself is no longer felt. At the same time, the future has not yet come into existence, and pleasures of the future are uncertain, in a way that makes them inaccessible, unfelt, and not worthy of concern. The reason for attributing no value to remembered or expected pleasures needs some elucidation. Where Epicurus, by contrast, holds that mental pains are worse because they cause us pain in the past, present and future, the Cyrenaics hold that physical pain is worse, and that it affects us only in the present.[17] So while physical pain and pleasure may be a legitimate concern for a Cyrenaic, a purely mental pain of the past or future has no bearing on their current state, since it does not affect them physically now, in terms of causing pleasure or pain now.

The Cyrenaics also say that there is no pleasure to be had in the memory or recollection of pleasure, because the motions of the soul are exhausted (*ekluetai*) over time.[18] A number of modern commentators take this to fall in line with Aristippus' advice about life in general.[19] For, contrary to Epicurus, Aristippus advised that we should generally expand our desires, so much so that we may be in danger of anticipating future pleasures to such a degree that should they not arrive, we may be very disappointed.[20] Their prudential advice is that we should, therefore, content ourselves with the certain

[17] Diog. Laert. *Lives* X.137.

[18] Ibid. II.90.

[19] For example Gosling & Taylor (1982) 42; Warren (2001) 172.

[20] In fact, since even the wise hedonist is still subject to pain and sorrow (according to Diog. Laert. *Lives* II.91), too much thought of the future and the many desires that will likely go unfulfilled could be very depressing indeed. Witness the late dissident Cyrenaic Hegesias, who foresaw a future so full of anguish that he advised mass suicide for his followers, and became known as the 'Death Persuader' (*Lives* II.20).

and irrefutable pleasures of the here and now, free from anxieties about those of the future which are, in an important sense, uncertain. The justification for this restriction of our desires is thus importantly different to that of the Epicureans. It is based on uncertainty and the idea that the past and future are not 'ours'.

The Cyrenaics define pleasure and pain as motions of the soul. With respect to past pleasures, the motion of the soul which diminishes in time is the pleasant feeling (*hedupatheia*) which Aristippus identifies as the *telos*. And, adopting Epicurean language, in the way many of our sources do, we could say that the only pleasures the Cyrenaics recognise are kinetic pleasures, the physical motions which by nature become weaker the further away they are in time.[21] Even with this specific conception of pleasure, they find room for intermediate states, which are experienced, but not experienced as pleasure or pain.[22] They locate value in present, felt affections, and deny that we can occurrently experience *pathē* of the past or future. In our passage from Athenaeus, it is reported that Aristippus claimed that pleasure only exists in the 'individual moment' which, while not necessarily meaning that it is 'specious', implies that the value of pleasure does not extend beyond the time at which it is felt.[23]

[21] Warren (2001) 168-9.

[22] Evidence for the intermediate state includes Diog. Laert. *Lives* II.86; Sext. Emp. *Adv. Math.* vii 199-200; Euseb. *Praep. Evang.* XIV.18.32.

[23] Ath. *Deip.* XII, 544a-b. The Cyrenaic use of the adjective '*monochronos*' is most often translated as 'momentary'. Tsouna (1998, 15-16) defends translating it as 'unitemporal', and suggests that it could be more extended in duration, but the moment still 'has no prospective or retrospective value, and can only be enjoyed while it is actually occurring' (16).

The Cyrenaics' passive epistemology and their conception of pleasure and pain, in combination, result in a severe restriction on our access to sensations. Only occurrent *pathē* can be experienced as passive, incorrigible sensations, and therefore trusted. Access to *pathē* of the past and future, by contrast, is either restricted or tainted. It is restricted if the motion which characterises the *pathē* has died out or has not yet come to be. It is tainted if it has the status of something other than a passively perceived motion, such as an abstract thought or a memory, which fall into categories understood to be corrigible by nature.

For the Cyrenaics, then, notably in contrast to the Epicureans, hedonic experience has no extension past-wards or future-wards. Beyond the span of time which a soul motion can last, there is no sensory stimulation in the basic sense. This could come from empirical observation of sensation: the lovely tingle I experience when dipping into warm bath water will fade, and my memory of the feeling will do nothing to restore it. It's merely a representation of a motion, not the motion itself. Hedonic experience tracks the present, on the Cyrenaic view. While I can remember that I experienced some pleasure, I can't remember the pleasure I experienced. Likewise, while I can anticipate that I will experience some pleasure in the future, I can't anticipate the pleasure I will, or may, experience. These are motions of the soul which I no longer or don't yet have access to. It's plausible that I can't anticipate without some kind of stock of experience to draw on, but whatever I can do by way of anticipating, it can't consist in literally re-experiencing past pain, and there is as yet no future pain to tap into. The representation that I will experience pain could simply be what a faded or fading soul motion is, but it seems likely that most old soul motions will have faded to below the level of experience.

If this account is right, there is a disjoining, in the Cyrenaic scheme, between hedonic experience-as-motion and temporally-distant experience which is merely represented. It's not clear whether these representations of past experience even count as motion, though they are described as motions which have died out, and are thereby recognised as having once been motions. They are a kind of non-criterial past experience. We can have second order awareness of these past experiences in the present, but since the Cyrenaics hold that all and only what is experienced as pleasure or pain in the present, and is an occurrent motion, is criterial, past motions are categorically excluded. Past motion has faded out, cannot be tapped into, and can only be represented. It therefore cannot be recommended for the purposes of future planning, and should not be an object of concern for a good Cyrenaic, even on this moderate view.

IV Cyrenaic Indifference to Retrospective and Prospective Affections

We have a metaphysics that underlies the Cyrenaic attitude of emotional indifference to prudential considerations of pleasure and pain of the past and future, as described principally in the Athenaeus and Aelian passages, and according to the moderate reading of them. Yet the metaphysics alone doesn't fully justify or explain their attitude, described in those same passages. Athenaeus describes Aristippus as believing that *pathē* of the past and future are not of any significance to him, and that they meant nothing to him, since they were uncertain. Aelian reports that he encouraged people not to bother themselves over the past or future. We need more than the metaphysical reading to explain why it is uncertainty, rather than lack of access, which generates this attitude, and exactly what the attitude of indifference to anything other than pleasure

and pain of the present amounts to. This is key to understanding their prudential strategy.

On the face of it, there are two likely arguments for the claim that we should care only about present pleasure and pain, and plan our lives with only the value of these in view. The first is that only our present selves are really ourselves, and we can thus only experience present pleasure and pain.[24] The second is that we shouldn't care about past and future pleasures and pains – we have some reason, other than a lack of identity with our future selves, to cultivate indifference to *pathē* of other times. I will argue that the Cyrenaics hold the latter view, and I will explain how it shapes their prudentialism.

The evidence as we have seen it says that the Cyrenaics have this 'impersonal' attitude to remembered and anticipated affections not in the sense that they take them to belong to a person-stage radically disconnected from themselves, but rather because their access to motions of the soul are weakened or diluted when there is distance in time

[24] This characterises the view I take Irwin (1991) to endorse, and which I disagree with when I defend the more moderate version. I am not the first scholar to defend a more moderate version of Cyrenaic presentism, nor am I first to take issue with Irwin's particular reading of Cyrenaic presentism. Tim O'Keefe (2002), for instance, does both (396, n. 7):

> When I speak of the Cyrenaics' 'lack of future concern,' it is this sort of disregard for the future that I have in mind, a rejection of the prudent hedonism of the type advocated by Epicurus and Socrates in the *Protagoras*. Aristippus says that the expectation of future pleasures is "nothing to him." I will be discussing what exactly this might mean, but it *cannot* mean that one has no care about anything that extends beyond the present temporal point that one inhabits. After all, even a simple action like reaching for a glass of water in front of oneself to satisfy thirst involves a concern for a future state of affairs, albeit only a few seconds hence. Desire is almost always an intentional state regarding expected future satisfactions. Even on the most restrictive interpretation of the Cyrenaics' concentration on only the present, it must at least involve something like William James' 'specious present'.

between that motion and the present: weakened in the case of memory, diluted by mere possibility in the case of anticipation. More specifically, when it comes to prudential planning and the anticipation of future affections, there may even be a story about how these depend on remembered affections, which would bring the two parallel accounts, and the reason for their uncertainty, closer together.[25]

There is uncertainty about the anticipated affections, and it's this uncertainty that generates the impersonal attitude. This reading doesn't require positing extreme presentism of the Cyrenaics, but rather a weaker or more modest presentism which just says that they have a different attitude to past and future affections than present ones. For them, we should care only about present pleasure and pain because we have reason *not* to care about past and future affections, and that reason is lack of access to them, which generates uncertainty.[26] If we experience present pleasure and pain about something in the past or future, that present pleasure or pain is metaphysically and phenomenologically different from the *pathē* of those other times, and, for the Cyrenaics, it doesn't count as pleasure or pain from the perspective of the present moment. Instead, it counts as a non-hedonic concern. This reading explains how the Cyrenaics can hold the attitude they do to past and future *pathē*, while leaving room for some

[25] I have in mind here the idea that, in order to anticipate a pain or pleasure in the future, I use my experiences of pleasures or pains from the past to imagine what they might be like. Indeed, our evidence of the Cyrenaics engaging with this topic shows them discussing both memory and anticipation in the same breath. When the Cyrenaics talk about past motions of the soul dying out, this would plausibly impact both their memory of past affections, and their anticipation of future ones.

[26] More could be said about the nature of the uncertainty under discussion. It could be uncertainty about the point in time at which something will occur, where and how it will occur, or it could be about the nature of the object. The emphasis seems to be that this is something that isn't yet manifest in its details, even if an event is almost definitely going to happen.

concern for the future, and without requiring a radical view about personhood. On the more moderate reading, then, there is some connection between person stages, it's just weaker than at first expected – the disconnect isn't a matter of lack of psychological identification over time, but rather uncertainty generated by access to only diluted or expired soul motions, or lack of access altogether.

Our exploration of Cyrenaic prudentialism has revealed the intimate connection between their views on temporality and temporal perspective on the one hand, and their prudential advice about how to conceive of and plan a life on the other. For them, the scope of what should be in view when planning one's life is very limited: we should really care only about present pleasure and pain, and any planning about the future should be done with extreme caution, and an awareness that we are considering something which is inaccessible, by definition corrigible, and uncertain.[27] They do not value life planning or having the right perspective on one's life in itself, for its own sake, but only instrumentally, as a means of obtaining occurrent pleasure, and avoiding occurrent pain. That is not to say that they fail to consider their past or future at all, but that their importance is hugely diminished, even if the pains of tomorrow may become the pains of today, or this moment.

Having set out and then rejected the more extreme Cyrenaic aprudentialism, and then defended a more moderate Cyrenaic prudentialism, I will now compare the latter to the Platonic account.

[27] Note that it is our current anticipations of the future which are corrigible, by definition, rather than the future itself being so.

V Plato

Here I will analyse the nature of Platonic prudential self-concern as it appears in four dialogues, and ask what strategies are endorsed or recommended, in each of these dialogues, for conceiving of and concerning oneself with one's own good. I will be especially interested in whether the Platonic account conceives of prudential concern as directed towards the interests of one's future self, or at one's life as a whole, and whether these are compatible. I will also be interested in whether Plato's conception of the best life is independent of one's placement in life, and one's current preferences and concerns, or, by contrast, whether temporality and perspective matter. Finally, I will consider whether Plato finds intrinsic, or merely instrumental value in the act of prudential planning.

Though we could mine many of the dialogues for clues to the Platonic position on this issue, my analysis is directed at the discussions found in just four: the *Protagoras*, the *Gorgias*, the *Republic*, the *Philebus*.[28] These texts contain important discussions of perspective, temporality, and prudentialism. They are specifically chosen as passages where Plato is engaged with hedonist prudentialism, such that this introduction paves the way for the broader analyses in the subsequent chapters of the thesis. My analysis here anticipates interpretations which are fully detailed and defended in later chapters. For the purposes of this introduction, my comments are more abstracted from the texts.

[28] The *Phd.* and the *Soph.* are other contenders for texts which we could mine for clues to the Platonic position(s). I restrict my analysis to these four due to constraints of space, and so as to focus the discussion on the dialogues I will examine in more detail in the chapters to follow.

Here I will argue that across these dialogues, we see Plato become increasingly intrigued by what it takes to plan a life as a whole, and increasingly sensitive to factors which make it difficult to do so successfully, especially for those with hedonist commitments.[29] I will defend that the *Protagoras* and the first part of the *Gorgias* represent a simpler critical engagement with hedonist prudentialism, and I will discuss the moment in the *Gorgias* which I take to be the turning point at which we see Plato recognise and respond to a more sophisticated version of it. I argue that the account in *Republic* IX develops naturally from this shift, and that there and in the *Philebus* we see more sophisticated treatments, which demonstrate an increasing Platonic recognition of the complexity of the phenomena under consideration. I begin with the *Protagoras*.

VI The *Protagoras*

Socrates' position in the *Protagoras* is in some ways the most intuitive position to take with regard to the pleasures of the past and future. The position is that pleasures of the future are equally valuable to present pleasures, and it's only a kind of illusion that makes those closer to us in time appear more valuable, and those further away less so.[30] If we are committed to maximising overall pleasure, we should correct for this distortion, in our prudential reasoning, in order that it not undermine our efforts. By

[29] In doing so, I generally accept the now mostly uncontentious ordering of the dialogues which has the *Prot.*, *Grg.*, *Rep.* and *Phileb.*, if pulled out from the rest, in that order, from earliest to latest. My main contention is that the treatments of hedonist prudentialism shift and develop across these treatments, but I take my analysis to reinforce the traditional temporal ordering, rather than presupposing it. On the ordering of the Platonic dialogues, see Schofield (1999) 419 and Guthrie (1975) 195 ff.

[30] *Prot*. 356a5-6.

extension, for whatever goods it is that we value, we ought not to value when in our lives they obtain, if the temporal position of that good doesn't impact the nature of the good, but rather, on a maximising view, plan our lives so as to avoid any kind of distortion getting in the way of that maximisation.

This is the kind of picture we get in the argument against akrasia at *Protagoras* 356a5 ff. There, the Platonic interest in thinking about lives in a long-range way is introduced at 351b7-9, with the idea that to have lived a pleasant life to the end is to have lived well. Spurred on by the imagined objection of a hypothetical interlocutor, Socrates argues against there being a difference between pleasures and pains which are more or less proximate in time. In Chapter Two, I argue that, rather than an assertion of temporal neutrality, the passage presents an argument which shows that there is a mismatch between the perception of value of a given course of action, and the equality of concern we have for all the parts of our lives. This mismatch is due to the effect of temporal proximity and distance on our value judgements.

Attention to the role of temporality helps reveal the implications of this argument for the account of Platonic prudentialism in this dialogue, brought out by the exchange metaphor at 355e, and the weighing and measuring analogies. Through these images, we discover that weighing produces a time-neutral, but not time-adjusted answer to the question of which course of action to pursue.[31] We learn that Socrates and the Many, who are committed to a kind of long-range hedonism, share an assumption that the

[31] This anticipates Chapter Two, §III.i, where I defend this interpretation.

temporal location of a pleasure or pain does not affect its normative significance.[32] Instead, time plays a distorting role in the sense that it creates difficulty in fixing the comparative pleasure in different options, because it creates a difficulty in fixing the options themselves. We see this via an analogy from hedonic prudential planning to weighing pleasures against pleasures and pains against pains, in which the reason for the difficulty of fixing values is because the entries into the pans of the imagined scale are *anticipated* pleasures and pains.[33] As such, the image *presumes* identification with our future selves as the subjects of pleasures and pains of a sort which we can anticipate and care about from our current position, and where that concern is equal to the concern we have for occurrent or near-term pleasures and pains.

The suggested solution, which is described as the very salvation of life (356e), is the *technē metrētikē* or measuring art. This involves having the right attitude to our future selves and our lives as a whole, and one which is reflective of the equality of concern we have for the *pathē* of all the parts of it. The problem this art corrects for is not a failure of psychological self-identification over time per se, but rather a problem with positioning ourselves to gain a perspective from which to accurately identify the affective weight and value of the outcomes of potential courses of action. This requires temporary *over*-identification with our future selves, where the agent who is well-versed in this art is not someone with abnormal objectivity, or a view from nowhere, but one who can

[32] Socrates endorses long-range hedonism here at least for the purposes of the argument. The argument could be ad hominem, as many read it (with Irwin 1977, 103 as a notable exception).
[33] See Chapter Two for a defence of this reading.

extend their self-awareness into the future exaggeratedly, across their whole lives.[34] This would then yield an anticipatory affective valuation which is accurate in the sense of being aligned with what we value, and undistorted by the facts of our being temporal creatures, judging from a temporally tensed perspective. The introduction of the *technē* suggests a Platonic optimism about the contribution reason makes to planning a life, while at the same time demonstrating a Platonic recognition that we are temporal beings, and that there is work to be done to gain a perspective on our lives which aligns our judgements with our values.

This is an apt point of comparison with Cyrenaic theory. For the Cyrenaics, too, see some value in thinking about our future selves, and their pleasures and pains. They too recognise this value as instrumental, with the act of organising a life not itself being considered valuable. And they too recognise a kind of distortion which affects our anticipation of future pleasures and pains. For them, it is corrigibility and lack of access which generates uncertainty. In contrast to the sense of Platonic optimism, the Cyrenaics do not think these factors can be corrected for. Planning for the future is inherently tainted by these factors, and there is no hint that reason can overcome them.

Being engaged in an organised life is not itself of interest in the *Protagoras*. The motivation for the measuring art is not to achieve a prudential perspective which is

[34] See Chapter Two for a defence of this reading. The self-awareness I describe is exaggerated in the sense that it goes beyond our normal sense of awareness of our future selves, in which there is room for us to see that future self as oneself, but still fail to act in their best interest as a result of caring less about their interest than our occurrent self-interest.

valuable in itself. It is instrumentally valuable, in that, if we are committed to maximising long-range pleasures, and we are beings in time, judging from a temporal perspective, then we need a tool like the *technē metrētikē* to make those judgements accurate. We get the sense that an algorithm could be employed to do this, without any loss of value for our lives, according to this argument. In the context of this dialogue, Plato's interest in prudentialism is simpler: it is necessary in order to achieve what the Many seek to achieve. However, this passage does demonstrate a burgeoning Platonic concern with the importance of having the right attitude to one's future self, as a way of making good decisions. It also demonstrates a Platonic recognition of factors which make prudential planning more difficult, such as the effect of time, and with the mechanisms we can use to overcome these difficulties, identify with our future selves appropriately, and value our future goods accurately.

VII The *Gorgias*

In the *Gorgias* Socrates confronts an explicitly hedonistic position in his discussion with Callicles. In the passage centred around the myth of the water carriers at 492e2-494a7, and the argument between the interlocutors about the issues a hedonist may face when planning their lives, we find a discussion about subjectivity, personhood, and the different type of restrictions on prudential reasoning we face, depending on the ends we seek. Here I will suggest ways in which this section of the dialogue contributes to our understanding of Plato's position on hedonist prudentialism.

The passage in question contains two myths which, in Chapter Three, I argue are distinct in ways which suggest a deliberate and meaningful manipulation on Plato's part. The first depicts an agent pursuing pleasure as represented by the water of Hades, using their soul, or a part of it, represented by a sieve, to transport it to some jars, representing another part of the soul, or the soul itself.[35] The focus of the critique in the passage is the imperfection of the vessel (the sieve, representing the soul or part of it), but that imperfection is relative to the nature of the content it is used to handle (water, representing pleasure). The agents are depicted as pursuing pleasure irrationally and thoughtlessly, either causing a psychic, mental deterioration, or as a result of one. The conative[36] deterioration suggested by the sieve, I suggest, is representative of a cognitive deterioration and instability in the agent whose psychic, directing part is made to serve the interests of the appetite, without the benefit of knowing the nature or cause of the ends they aim at (501a5).

It is only the intemperate of the first myth who have sieves, which suggests that the problem of the means one uses to obtain an end is primary in this discussion, relative to the problem of ends. In the Chapter Three discussion, I suggest that this passage provides insight into Plato's interest in means and ends, since the two are not isolated from one another. In planning a life and pursuing a goal, the means one uses and the ends one aims at are intimately connected, and it's not clear that it is open to Socrates, as

[35] I discuss the difficulties of the part-whole relation in the myth in Chapter Three, §III.iii, below.
[36] By 'conative' deterioration I mean a deterioration in action and behavior. Within the metaphor this is represented by the sieve's inability to hold and facilitate the transport of water to the pierced jars. I argue that outside of the metaphor this is suggestive of a kind of cognitive deterioration.

interlocutor, to grant a hedonist of the type Callicles represents their ends, in order to aim his critique at means alone. The focus on reliably bringing about a goal which is not itself up for grabs in the context of a discussion of hedonist prudentialism comes across as at best dialectical. While the passage contains an important entry point for thinking about the issue of who is leading whom when one part of the soul controls either another part, or serves the soul as a whole, it is ultimately constrained. I suggest that this constraint is due to how under-theorised Callicles' view is, and that some sections of *Republic* IX can be read as a development of this same line of argument, there facilitated by a more complex psychology.[37]

The discussion of the first myth, in which the intemperate have sieves, is quickly set aside, thanks to Callicles' cold reception, in favour of a different focus, captured by the second myth. One striking difference between the two myths is that while the first focuses on an imagined agent and the workings of their soul, as represented by jars, the second talks about a comparison between the two lives (493d7) of two men, who *possess* jars, rather than whose souls are depicted *as* jars. The shift from a focus on psychic interaction to a focus on lives is made by Socrates, and suggests approaching prudentialism with lives as a whole in view is a more promising route, and yields a better and more stable cognitive picture for the agent. This picks up the thread from the *Protagoras* of taking a long-range perspective, but develops it in a different way, focusing on a different aspect of prudential psychology, and demonstrating an

[37] I defend this reading in Chapter Three, §IV.iii below.

increasing Platonic awareness of the difficulties of planning a life, and more nuanced suggestions for how to work around these, as a result.

In turning to this second version of the myth, I suggest that Socrates is implicitly endorsing the idea that mindful hedonist prudentialism is possible, despite the problematic ends of adherents of this view. He does not force the discussion to stay on the issue of faulty souls, but produces an alternative in which the agent is neither mindless nor forgetful. The movement from sieves to jars, or from the first myth to the second, marks a turning point, not just in the dialogue, but in the development of Plato's views. From the simpler critical engagement with the challenges hedonists face in planning their lives represented in the *Protagoras* and the first myth of the *Gorgias*, we now see Plato recognise the possibility of a more mindful hedonism, and a type of hedonist prudentialism which can be conceived of as making use of intellectual tools. This recognition of a more intellectual hedonist prudentialism is then developed in *Republic* IX and the *Philebus* – both because of the promise it offers, and the difficulties it raises, as we will see below.

Comparison with the Cyrenaic theory is helpful here. For the Cyrenaics, there are issues with a committed hedonist using reason to pursue their goal and plan their lives. Within the strict confines of what can and ought to be planned, on their view, no cognitive deterioration takes place. And for Plato, too, the cognitive deficiencies of a hedonist attempting to fulfil their ever-greater desires is only one possibility. There is an alternative, as represented by the second myth. The key difference revealed by comparison to the Cyrenaic theory is that Plato recognises the possibility of things going

wrong when a person pursues an end irrationally, without a *technē* of it. The model of personhood in which one is made to serve oneself, without understanding what one is pursuing, is one in which there is a cognitive cost. The difficulty of avoiding that error – that model of how a life is planned and a goal pursued – is something Plato is sensitive to. The problem of personhood, life planning, and subjectivity can only be satisfactorily pursued with a model of psychic complexity which allows a full engagement with these questions. That is what we find in the *Republic*.

VIII *Republic* I-IV

In book I of the *Republic*, Plato's more general interest in prudentialism is put on the table, and he already picks up a thread from the *Gorgias* when he talks in terms of determining which whole way of life (ὅλου βίου διαγωγήν, 344e1-2) would be most worthwhile. The early books of the *Republic* continue to demonstrate a concern with how we plan our lives, and how our perspectives and concerns change over time. In book I (328c-d) we learn that there is value in conversing with the aged, who have escaped the tyranny of base desires, to understand what old age will be like. Lives are re-evaluated based on one's proximity to death (330e2), and the subject of planning how we ought to live is evoked repeatedly (344e, 345b, 352d, 353d-e). This theme continues: in book II there is a discussion of the impression youth have of what sort of person they should be, and how best to travel the road of life (365b1); in book III we see consideration of the fine and good character which develops in accordance with an intelligent plan (400e1-2), and of the arrangement of one's life to avoid common pitfalls (405c1-3).

In book IV, the value of planning is depicted as intrinsic, rather than purely instrumental, and life planning itself looks like a form of pleasure, when performed by the guardians. The guardian rulers are chosen based on their own belief that throughout their lives, pursuing what is best for the city will align with what is best for them (412d-e). Their good ordering of the city will be the source of their happiness (421c4), and in so doing they will display self-control, measure, calculation, and harmony (431a-e). This is, of course, a stand-in for what will happen in the soul (435e-436e). The introduction of an account of psychological complexity in the second part of book IV facilitates a more sophisticated discussion of the different aspects of planning a life, as performed by the different parts of the soul. The *logistikon*, with the *thumoeides* as its ally, is said to guard against the expansion of the appetite's power, which would overturn a life (442a-b). Reason guards the soul by planning and using knowledge of what is good for the whole soul (442c5). It exercises foresight (προμήθεια, 441e5) on behalf of the whole soul, and looks after a whole life by planning (442b6).

This marks a shift from the earlier Platonic material, most notably from the *Protagoras*, in which the value of planning a life was purely instrumental, its source being the end which one can succeed or fail to achieve. Here in the *Republic*, planning itself is recognised as a good (442c5) and a form of pleasure, and is depicted as part of reason's care of the soul, and exercise of its faculties of calculation and foresight.

The aim one seeks in a life is still crucial, and book V begins an account of how that aim can radically alter within the course of a life. We might think of the dramatic account of what an agent goes through upon seeing the Form of the Good as a depiction of a kind

of transformative experience. This is unlike contemporary accounts of transformative experience, which emphasise that our futures are subjective, and that we must necessarily choose between different possible futures in ignorance of what they will be like for us.[38] Seeing the Form of the Good is transformative in the sense that it makes you see what are the right things to aim for, and makes those things matter to you, but it does not transform what those things are from what they were (*Rep*. 504e-505d). It's an epistemic and motivational transformation for the agent who sees, and whose soul is turned (VII. 516a1 ff., 517b-c, 518c). The change concerns the agent's relation to the Good, rather than a change in the Good itself. The good things were already good and choice-worthy, whether or not the agent realised it. This type of transformation is about knowing the good, versus discovering or constructing it. But it shares with the contemporary accounts of transformative experience a sense that this realisation can and will radically alter one's prudential planning.

To focus more on the role that pleasure plays in the account of prudentialism in the *Republic*, and facilitate a comparison with the Cyrenaic account, I will now focus on an important passage in book IX. *Republic* IX provides a more sophisticated account of prudentialism than we find in either the *Protagoras* or the *Gorgias*, in part because it considers the complex nature of how we come to make judgements and form attitudes as a result of particular perspectives we have on our lives, and how we might overcome the misrepresentation that making judgements from a limited perspective can lead to.

[38] See, for example, Paul (2014).

IX *Republic* IX

In the argument at 583b2-585a7, which I examine closely in Chapter Four, the focus is on judging one's affective experiences, whether there is room for error in doing so, and, if there is, what the source of that error is. The pleasures of lives other than those of philosophers are there described as like shadow-paintings, in the sense that, for non-philosophers, the experience that precedes or follows a pleasant or painful experience can make it appear like a true pleasure or pain, where it is not. Instead, this is a misjudgement as a result of the perspective of judgement, and a comparison made within a framework of limited experience. The perspective Plato takes as his example of one from which illusory pleasure experiences can arise is that of suffering pain or illness, at 583c2-584a10. According to this argument, those in this position who have not experienced the truest and purest forms of pleasure are susceptible to mistakes, while the organisation of the soul of the philosopher, which allows them access to these best and truest pleasures (587a), makes them alone invulnerable to illusion.

In Chapter Four I argue that this passage is one in which Plato argues for the possibility of the fallibility of our occurrent affective experiences. He does so by establishing agreement that there is a calm intermediate state between pleasure and pain which is neither of the two, but which can *appear* like either; appearances which, on my reading, are non-veridical.[39] In doing so, he makes room for an aspect of pleasure and of pain which we don't grasp by appearance alone, but rather have to have the right evaluative framework to apprehend.

[39] I defend this reading in Chapter Four, §VII.

The Cyrenaic view contrasts nicely with these claims. Firstly, as discussed above, the Cyrenaics join Plato, at least as he argues in this context, in recognising a neutral intermediate state between pleasure and pain. Both camps describe it as a calm of the soul, and a state of rest (*Rep*. 583c5-8; n. 20 (above)), and both compare this calm state of rest to pleasures and pains as motions of the soul (583c-d). But the Cyrenaics deny that the neutral middle state can be felt as pleasant or painful, or that juxtaposing the calm of the middle state with the motion of the affective states can lead to untrue appearances. Secondly, the Cyrenaics don't discount restorative kinetic pleasures as mere pseudo-pleasures, compared to some superior kind. All pleasures are equal and have equal prudential value, as do all pains. Thirdly, both Plato and the Cyrenaics share a concern about the epistemic states of agents. For Plato, the concern is that ignorance in terms of inexperience with true pleasure makes us vulnerable to fallibility about our occurrent affective experiences.[40] The Cyrenaics deny this: for them there is no room for being mistaken about one's present hedonic state, and occurrent pleasures and pains are categorically veridical experiences. If a pleasure is happening to me now, and it is not a memory, thought, or anticipation of a pleasure, then there is no room for fallibility, no matter what preceded or follows it.

Furthermore, the Cyrenaics are not interested in the effects of perspective, or the effects of a comparison between a past state and a current state, or a current state and a future state. Perhaps their moderate presentism licenses this: the injunction to enjoy each day, and each part of each day as it comes protects them, to some extent, against the

[40] I defend this reading in Chapter Four, below.

distortion arising from comparison. That is not to say that they are unconcerned with the possibility of misreporting one's affective experiences by misremembering, which I argue Plato is interested in.[41] Both the Cyrenaics and Plato are interested in pre-joy and pre-pain, and both are concerned about the effects of the contemplation of these on an agent, but their respective concerns are different. For the Cyrenaics, the concern is to ensure that their followers practice only a detached consideration of past and possible future affections. Plato's concern is to avoid the effect of the comparison of occurrent affections to past and possible future affections from generating pseudo-pleasures and pains, which an agent may then orient their life to pursue or avoid, under the false belief that they are the real thing (584c).

Plato's radical move, in this passage in *Republic* IX, is to argue that the appearances of *pathē* are non-veridical: perspective and comparison generate an attitude to the affective state which itself generates or contributes to psychological pleasure or pain. In contrast to the claims of the Cyrenaics, he holds that the perception of pleasure and pain can seem veridical, but in fact be subject to illusion, even occurrently.[42] A pleasant feeling isn't distinctive of pleasure, nor is a painful feeling distinctive of pain. Rather, and surprisingly, they can accompany the pseudo-versions of these affections, generated by the perception of contrasts.

There is an aspect of true pleasure and pain which we do not grasp by appearance alone, but rather must have the right affective and evaluative framework in order to

[41] I defend this reading in Chapter Four, §II, below.

[42] I defend this reading in Chapter Four, below.

comprehend. This means that, when it comes to planning one's life, and affording pleasures and pains their proper role in a life, it is crucial to do so with the right experiences as background, and having formed the right context of affective judgement. The Cyrenaics require no such framework. For them, the nature of pleasure, pain and perception is much simpler. For Plato, in this passage, the essence of pleasure is complex. And while it is not in the nature of pleasure to be illusory, our introspective judgements about our affective experiences are fallible, and we must put ourselves in the right position to avoid deception. This position is that of the philosopher, and the philosopher alone. The superiority of the philosopher's life is thus in part due to the superior position from which they alone can make accurate affective judgements when planning their life. The intellectual pleasures do much more than just pleasing an agent – they are part of a set of experiences which are crucial to rehabilitating our relationship to pleasure.

X The Trial of the Life of Pleasure in the *Philebus*

The consideration of hedonist prudentialism in the *Philebus* is yet more sophisticated, in at least two senses: first, the interlocutors break down and assess the individual capacities required to plan a life. Second, there is a discussion of remembering and anticipating, and the role these play in planning a life, which paints a complex picture of the assessments an agent makes from a given perspective in time. I will consider each of these elements of the dialogue in turn.

The assessment of the individual capacities an agent makes use of when planning a life occurs within the context of the trial of the life of pleasure, at *Phileb*. 20b-21d, which I analyse in Chapter Five. There, the interlocutors set out to decide the question whether pleasure can render a life good and happy unaided by cognition. In doing so, they imagine Protarchus stripped of one after the other of the cognitive faculties he currently has and, with each deprivation, describe the affective cost, which Protarchus had not foreseen. We learn that without wisdom he would be ignorant of whether he was enjoying himself even when he was: he would be unable to remember he had enjoyed himself in the past, without memory; he would be unable to realise he was enjoying himself in the present, without belief; and he would be unable to calculate future pleasure, without calculating ability (*Phileb.* 21b-c).[43] By the last step, this imagined agent is no longer able to be hypothesised as human, and is instead compared to a jellyfish.[44]

Plato explicitly attaches to our ability to plan our lives in terms of pleasure the need for memory, judgement, and anticipatory calculation, which collectively amount to self-awareness in terms of enjoyment across a lifetime. Without these cognitive abilities we can neither plan a life geared towards pleasure, nor enjoy it even in the moment. Even a non-hedonist's ability to enjoy themselves is thus tied to self-awareness of this type. Pleasure and enjoyment can come apart, in this argument, which suggests that prudential self-concern involves both a more objective conception of one's good, and an awareness of enjoyment across and within the parts of one's life.

[43] I defend, below, that this should be read as a stepped procedure, in Chapter Five, §IV.ii.
[44] See Chapter Five, n. 312 for a defence of why the referent should be taken to be a jellyfish.

This thought experiment emphasises that Protarchus must render judgement on whether the life of pleasure alone is choice-worthy from the position of the occupant of such a life ('en soi', 21a). Compare this with the method we saw in the second myth of the water carriers in the *Gorgias*: here again we note a focus on lives, judging from the perspective of a life, and the importance of one's position within a life. The bearer of the life of pleasure alone loses the ability to do just that. In stripping them of their cognitive capacities, the interlocutors discover that their self-awareness, and their affective self-reflexivity is also stripped away, such that they are left unable to enjoy their pleasures. A much more complex picture of the relationship between an agent and their pleasures is drawn here, to which we can compare the Cyrenaic account.

For the Cyrenaics, pleasure is defined as a pleasant motion in the soul. There is a sense in which awareness of that motion is crucial, but the possibility of a failure of awareness is discussed only in terms of that motion not being strong enough to be sensed, as opposed to failure conditions in which the motion is strong enough, but there is a problem with an agent's awareness of it. The Cyrenaic account is under-theorised with respect to that kind of failure. But what it lacks in sophistication, it makes up for in simplicity. For, like Plato (though for different reasons), the Cyrenaics make no room for ignorance of enjoyment. For them, the simplicity of the account means that they don't need to worry about the possibility of pleasure and the awareness of pleasure coming apart. For Plato, in the final analysis, there is a denial that the two *can* come apart: pleasure is inherently complex, and there is no such thing as self-sufficient, non-cognitive enjoyment of a pleasure.

XI The Anticipation of Pleasure in the *Philebus*

The final step of the deprivation is a depiction of an agent who has lost the idea of themselves as the subject of their future pleasures, and has no conception of self to attribute future plans to. This relates the trial passage to the passage starting at *Phileb.* 38e ff., in which anticipatory pleasures are analysed, using the image of a painter and a scribe. The scribe writes on the soul (39a), and the judgements and utterances taken from the senses and then viewed as images inside oneself are painted by the painter. The painter thus provides an inner picture of the subject to itself, including images of anticipated pain and pleasure (39d), such as when they depict the agent as beside themselves with delight (40a9-12). The deprived agent in the life of pleasure alone is without scribe and without painter. This cognitively deprived agent has no material preserved in memory for the scribe to write with, and its painter (if it had one) would have no perspective on the agent as an object (of delight, etc.). The memory and anticipation of pleasure are capacities which pre-suppose the self-reflexivity which is lacking here. The later passage is a dramatisation of the subjectivity missing in the life depicted in the earlier, jellyfish-like life.[45]

The painter and scribe passage is a difficult one which has vexed interpreters.[46] In it, hope for the future is described as an illustration, with the text written on the book of the soul as its source. The distinction between these two processes suggests that past

[45] The question of whether the painter and the scribe are identical to the agent, or not, recalls the part-whole issue of jars in the *Gorgias*, here made more complex by these being cast as persons.
[46] For a discussion of modern debates of this image, and false pleasures in the dialogue more generally, see Bravo (1995).

pleasures cannot be stored as *pleasures*, they can be stored only as memories *of* pleasures – memories with representative content but no affective content.[47] Perhaps this is because the occurrent experience of present pleasure *relies on* the beliefs or judgements stored in memory. After all, at 21c it is the lack of δόξα which means that the jellyfish is unable to δοξάζειν he was enjoying himself even when he was. Since the one memory faculty cannot do double duty by capturing the affectively vivid aspect of pleasure, there is a need for the painter, who captures the 'what it is like' in a second step – marked in the text as temporally discreet by the 'τότε' at 39b9. Exactly what the painter captures is hard to pin-down, but the text suggests it as a picture of a feeling, not the feeling itself. Drawing on the earlier passage helps here, and suggests that the painter's painting is analogous to our subjective experience of our own affective states, cast into the future as an image of what some possible affection will be like. It is enough to base your calculations for the future on, for instance, but not enough in itself to fill your lacks, or meet your desires.

Why might Plato be careful to set out both a painter and a scribe, and suggest this point about anticipatory pleasures not meeting one's desires? As I read it, this later passage is an attempt to distinguish the representative aspects of memory and anticipation from the affective and subjective. It is explicitly concerned with pleasures and pains of the

[47] This resonates with Irwin's (1995, 334) note that 'Plato does not speak simply of memory of pleasure in the past; he speaks specifically of my remembering that I was previously pleased (21c1).' The deprivation Plato picks out is very specifically a subjective one.

soul alone, without the body, including intellectual pleasures (39d).[48] The introduction of these considerations adds complexity to the prudential picture Plato draws. With these in place, there is a possibility not just of experiencing intellectual pleasures, whose importance is recognised in this dialogue, but also anticipating those. We can imagine a kind of feedback loop, in which we derive pleasure from the memory of past intellectual pleasures, used as material to generate the anticipation of future intellectual pleasures. Plato is careful to suggest that this is not possible.

Here is another point of comparison with the Cyrenaics, for whom the anticipation of future affections is possible, but only to a limited extent, and is to be practiced carefully and selectively. Their advice to anticipate future pains in order to lessen the shock of them when and if they arrive is recorded by Cicero.[49] But in lessening the shock of the anticipated pain, we shouldn't think that they could experience a portion of some set amount of pain in advance, nor that the correlate could happen for pleasure.[50] Rather, they advise their followers to spend some time considering possible future scenarios, especially painful and distressing ones, in an affectively disinterested way. This doesn't change the nature of the pleasure or pain when or if it becomes occurrent, but it may lessen the shock of it, which is the part of the experience that Cicero's testimony tells us is up for grabs. And, given their moderate presentism, we have good reason to think

[48] See *Phileb*. 34e-36b for the distinction between bodily and psychic pleasures. For a discussion of this distinction in the *Philebus* see, for instance, Tuozzo (1994), Evans (2007), and Fletcher (2014) 2-7.

[49] Cic. *Tusc. Disp.* III.xiii.28-29. For a defence of Cicero as a reliable reporter of Cyrenaic views on this issue, see O'Reilly (2019).

[50] Cf. Graver (2001) 170, in her analogy to peeking at a present early, and the response in Striker (2002).

that a Cyrenaic may be more prone to shock than the average person: since most of their focus is geared towards the present, and turned away from the past or the future, they may spend less time than is usual considering future possibilities, such as family members dying, illness, war, or other ills that may befall them, and which carry an affective cost. Besides, given the non-criterial status of remembered and anticipated affections in the Cyrenaic scheme, they are well-advised not to invest too much in what are bound to be inaccurate anticipations, whose resemblance to the affective reality of occurrent pleasure or pain is feeble at best.

Contrast Plato: the *Philebus* account does not share the Cyrenaics' suggestion that the agent is ill-advised to spend their time anticipating future affections. But it does suggest that there is a limit to what they can anticipate. For the Cyrenaics this is based on non-occurent affections being non-criterial by definition. The account in the *Philebus* is strikingly similar in that it also recognises this. For Plato, the limit is imposed by virtue of the content of anticipated affections being conceived of as pictures or images of the affective states, and not the states themselves. While those images might generate occurrent pleasure for the anticipating agent, that pleasure is different from the pleasure anticipated. Like for the Cyrenaics, there is a limit to how useful the anticipations of affections is. It can be used as a base for prudential planning, for instance, but with caveats around the differences which may arise when and if the anticipated pleasure becomes occurrent and actual. There is also a suggestion of how to help ensure that the anticipated affection is accurate, which is through a consistency of character. The consistent character is in a better position to plan their lives because their desires, and

their affective responses, are easier to predict. The implicit injunction is to cultivate consistency and harmony in one's life.

XII Conclusion

In concluding I return to the key questions I set out to answer, and I draw some general inferences. The questions we started with were these: first, what strategies are endorsed or recommended by Plato for conceiving of and concerning oneself with one's own good? Second, is prudential concern directed towards the interest of one's future self, one's life as a whole, or both, in his view? Third, is the Platonic conception of the best life independent of one's placement in it, and one's current preferences and concerns, or does temporality and perspective matter? Fourth, is prudential planning instrumentally or intrinsically valuable? I contend that the answer to each of these questions shifts as we look across these dialogues.

Across the accounts I have analysed, the hedonist prudential strategies recommended demonstrate in their author an increasing awareness of the central role that reason plays. With the introduction of a measuring art in the *Protagoras*, reason is used as a tool for pursuing ends. In the *Gorgias*, both ends and means come under the consideration of reason, including the nature of ends. In the *Republic*, knowledge of the Form of the Good is key to the prudential strategy recommended. Plato also recognises that perspective matters, and he endorses the need for the right affective and evaluative framework. The *Philebus* puts reason in an even more central position with respect to

hedonist prudential planning: there, an objective conception of one's own good, and awareness of and enjoyment across and within the parts of one's life are both crucial.

Prudential concern is directed, in the *Protagoras,* towards both the interests of one's future self, and one's life as a whole. In the *Gorgias* the concern is directed towards whole lives, using mindful planning, and memory. In the *Republic*, Plato is still thinking of lives, but here prudential concern is directed towards an objective goal. In the *Philebus*, concern for one's future self and concern for one's life as a whole are compatible: there is a recognised need for self-awareness, but this stretches across a lifetime. Considered in this order, Plato seems to widen the scope of prudential concern to whole lives, while at the same time becoming increasingly aware of the need not to abandon self-awareness while doing so. His focus shifts from ways of relating to one's future self, to considering life as a kind of journey, and the need to make a good life choice.[51] This represents a significant shift in how he is conceiving of the prudential task: it means that no particular time in one's life is prioritised for concern, but instead the orientation and shape of a whole life is taken into view.

The Platonic conception of the best life is independent of one's placement in it in the *Protagoras*, but to treat it that way, we need to make up for the distortion imposed by temporality and perspective. In the *Gorgias*, the focus is on whole lives rather than one's placement in it, as well as the type of life one leads, e.g. the importance of the life of the philosopher. In the *Republic*, there is recognition that one's placement in life, and the

[51] For interesting contemporary discussions of these issues see Parfit (1984) parts Two and Three, and Persson (2008) secs. III and IV.

perspective this generates matters, but Plato suggests that this perspective must be overcome with the right evaluative framework. In the *Philebus*, there is recognition of a limit to the accuracy of what can be anticipated from any point in a life, and a suggestion that consistency of character is important. Looking across these accounts, Plato's conception of the good life is one which is judged against an increasingly objective criterion, and it becomes increasingly wide in scope, focusing on whole lives. But there is also, at the same time, an increasing awareness of the effects of one's perspective, the need to correct for the bias this imposes, and the limits on one's anticipatory planning when engaged in from any given perspective.

Finally, in terms of whether prudential planning has intrinsic or merely instrumental value, we have seen that in the *Protagoras* and the *Gorgias* the value of planning is instrumental, while in the *Republic* (emphatically), and in the *Philebus* (more subtly) it is intrinsic. Reason leading the soul, and the use of reason to plan a life, is, in these latter two accounts, part of the pleasure of a good, intellectual life. The Platonic treatment of hedonist prudentialism is more nuanced, more sophisticated, and takes into consideration increasingly complex moral psychology across the passages I have considered.

In the next four Chapters, I will make the case for how to read key passages on hedonist prudentialism in each of these four dialogues. Then, in the Conclusion, I will analyse Plato's shifting attitude to pleasure, and the role it should play in a good life.

CHAPTER TWO
TIPPING THE SCALES: HEDONISM, TEMPORALITY & ILLUSION IN *PROTAGORAS* 356B-357E

I Introduction

Imagine sitting in your office, reading a philosophical text, when you develop a craving for something pleasantly sweet. This craving may be more specific or less ('that dark chocolate in the fridge' or 'something fruity'), and it may be more intense or less. Either way, it demands immediate satisfaction. The craving is not equivalent to a desire for more sweet things in one's diet in general, and may be had in conjunction with just the opposite desire. A reassurance that there will be sweet things a few hours later, after dinner, does not satisfy this craving. That is because an important aspect of the desire for this pleasure is that it is 'temporally tensed', by which I mean that it is a desire whose object, the pleasure of eating some sweet treat, is specifically a desire to have that pleasure now. It is not equivalent to the desire for that same pleasure after dinner, or in a month's time, or in general. To fail to appreciate that the pleasure you desire is an immediate one, rather than a temporally neutral one, is to fail to capture this phenomenon.

At *Protagoras* 356a4 ff., Socrates seems to fail in just that sense, by failing to appreciate the difference the temporal location of pleasures makes. While arguing against the common understanding of akrasia, or what it is to be 'overcome by pleasure', he imagines the following hypothetical interjection to his claim:

> For if someone said, "But Socrates, there is a great difference between immediate pleasure and pleasure and pain at a later time," I should say, "Surely not in any

other respect than simply pleasure and pain; there isn't any other way they could differ."[52]

The objection envisioned posits that there is a significant difference between immediate pleasures and those which will occur later; or, in other words, that the temporal location of pleasures matters for the way in which we appreciate them. Socrates' response is to claim that whether a pleasure or pain is remote or near in time makes no difference for their actual value; it is only ever a difference 'of greater or smaller' that can be measured. Do we have here a Socratic assertion of temporal neutrality without an argument? What does it mean to say that immediate and later pleasures and pains can only differ in respect of pleasure and pain?

While scholarship on this passage tends to focus on the possibility of akrasia, the themes of temporal bias and temporal neutrality are critical. Without addressing the worries they generate, we are left with a fundamentally unsatisfactory description of the phenomena under discussion. Temporal neutrality is the claim that the location in time of benefits and harms in a life should not affect their normative significance. As it appears in this argument, it is an assumption about the rationality of choice. It implies that agents should have equal concern for all the temporally disparate parts of their lives.[53] Their failure to choose in accordance with this equality of concern, on Socrates' account, is a form of ignorance. This leaves us wondering whether this supposed

[52] *Prot.* 356a4-9, trans. C.C.W. Taylor (1996). Here is the Greek from the TLG (1903 repr. 1968):
εἰ γάρ τις λέγοι ὅτι 'ἀλλὰ πολὺ διαφέρει, ὦ Σώκρατες, τὸ παραχρῆμα ἡδὺ τοῦ εἰς τὸν ὕστερον χρόνον καὶ ἡδέος καὶ λυπηροῦ,' μῶν ἄλλῳ τῳ, φαίην ἂν ἔγωγε, ἢ ἡδονῇ καὶ λύπῃ; οὐ γὰρ ἔσθ᾽ ὅτῳ ἄλλῳ.

[53] For a discussion of this definition, see Brink (2010).

Socratic assumption is one in which failures of temporality are just rational failings, or moral failings, too. It also leaves us wondering why we should follow Socrates in supposedly denying that temporal location matters, when it seems to. Has Socrates dismissed the objection he raises, only to pass the worry on to his readers?

Here I aim to address these questions by bringing out the importance of temporality and the role it plays in the argument of this passage. I suggest the need to understand the psychology depicted by the two analogies Socrates provides as an explanation for how we can correct the distorting effects of time he recognises: weighing on scales, and the measurement or estimation of size. It is not clear why these are good analogies for what one could do to counter the distorting effect of appearances, why the measuring art has two parts and what they each contribute, and whether the temporal neutrality generated by the *technē metrētikē* is something which can and should be sought.
The importance of temporality in the argument is an aspect of this passage which has been under-appreciated in the existing scholarship.[54] My main contention here is that it deserves our attention, and that attending to it has three main advantages. First, it shows that Socrates does not simply assert temporal neutrality, but rather gives an argument in support of the view that we ought to value each of the parts of our lives equally. His argument shows that there is a mismatch between the perception of value of a given course of action, and the equality of concern we have for the pleasures and pains of all the parts of our lives, due to the effect that temporal proximity and distance

[54] An exception is Nussbaum (2001), who addresses these themes in her Chapter 4 - The Protagoras: a science of practical reasoning, pp. 89-121.

have on our value judgements. A specific kind of temporal neutrality is needed as a correction.

Second, and more controversially, attention to temporality reveals that the source of distortion and illusion in those who succumb to the power of appearances is not in the nature of pleasure, but rather in the effect that time has on our value judgements. Contra Moss (2006), I argue that it is not the nature of pleasure itself that makes our judgements about pleasures and pains susceptible to distortion, but rather the perspective from which we make these judgements. [55] Perspective distorts, not pleasure qua pleasure.

Third, attention to temporality demonstrates that in his discussions with hedonists, [56] Plato is concerned with having the right attitude to one's future self, as a way of making good decisions. Reading the passage this way reveals a Platonic interest in the mechanisms we use to identify with our future selves, and the effects that identification has on how we value our future goods. The moral psychology of the passage is more interesting if we take Plato's analogies seriously.

II The Denial of Akrasia

The passage I will focus on comes towards the end of the *Protagoras*, in the context of an investigation of whether pleasure and the good are the same (351d). There Socrates and

[55] Moss (2006) 503–535.

[56] Even in the loose sense of the term I employ here, on which more below.

Protagoras examine the phenomena of what the Many call 'being overcome by pleasures' (τῶν ἡδονῶν ἡττᾶσθαι, 353a1) in order to show that it is a case of ignorance, rather than a case of akrasia, as the Many think it is.[57] Recent scholarship has focused on the theme of the possibility of akrasia in this passage. My focus, by contrast, will be aspects of the passage which have not been properly appreciated.

The original opinion of the majority[58] is that the way in which the pleasures of food, drink, sex, etc., produce immediate pleasure, but later disease, poverty, and other ill effects must mean that immediate pleasure somehow overpowers agents. This phenomenon occurs despite those agents' present awareness of the later ill effects of choosing these immediate pleasures (353c-d). On the view of the majority, when we choose a pleasure near at hand, with all its resultant pains, this is not a case of stupidity, ignorance or short-sightedness about the likely results of that choice. We know from the outset that these later pains and deprivations will outweigh the instant gratification, but we choose this course of action anyway, not because of ignorance, but because of a kind of informed weakness. Socrates addresses the hypothetical mass that makes this

[57] It is worth noting the use of the plural 'pleasures' here, suggesting that tokens rather than the type are being picked out. We find nearly this same phrase, including the plural, in Aristotle's *[Pr.]* XXVIII 950a9-10, in a discussion of *akolasia* or intemperance, in which, as in the *Protagoras*, it is used to denote a failure or defeat.

[58] τῶν πολλῶν δόξαν ἀνθρώπων, 353a8. For ease, I will join Moss and other translators in referring to this group as the 'Many'. That said, I am careful to distinguish the Many (οἱ πολλοὶ) of 352d5, who will hold the akrasia explanation of the phenomenon of being overcome by near pleasures, from the many (πολλούς) who experience it. Though there could well be overlap, it is unsafe to assume that the Many as a whole all have first-hand experience of being overcome, or cannot join the interlocutors in standing back from those who experience the phenomenon and analysing it.

argument, at first recruiting Protagoras to his side, and questioning the Many (353c), seeking to prove that this is the wrong way to understand what happens in these cases.

Socrates is resistant to this view because he takes it that treating such cases as cases of akrasia grants that knowledge can be dragged around like a slave by pleasure (352b). He seeks to show the Many that it is, instead, a case of ignorance. He does this, first, by establishing that the crowd would agree that such things as exercise, military training and medical treatments are good things despite being painful (354a2-5), because they ultimately bring about health, good physique, and political safety, which are in turn good because they result in pleasure and the avoidance of pain (354b4-6).[59] What emerges through this passage is that the Many are committed to pursuing courses of action where the overall balance of pleasure over pain is best, irrespective of when the pleasures and pains occur. As part of teasing out the long-range commitment to pleasure over pain of the Many, Socrates tries to establish that enjoying something bad when it deprives us of some greater pleasure, or brings about pains greater than the pleasures within it, is bad, and that this is an example of the enjoyment of something *itself* being bad (354b-d). Likewise, when the state of pain relieves some pain greater than it, or brings about some greater pleasure, it itself is called good (354d-e). The criterion for calling something either bad or good is the same in each case: namely, it is called bad if the choice brings about more pain than pleasure (or more pain than relief of pain) *overall*, good if it brings about more pleasure (or more pain relief) overall. On

[59] By this point in the conversation, Protagoras increasingly answers on behalf of the Many. Compare Protarchus in the *Philebus*, who plays a similar role as spokesperson, though there Protagoras speaks on behalf of a different group.

this view, the good or bad results of the choice must be taken into account in the determination of whether the action itself is good or bad.

As part of his view that you can exchange 'pleasant' and 'good' in the account of incontinence, Socrates makes the striking claim that 'pleasant' (*hedu*) can be understood in this same over-arching way, such that, for instance, medical treatment is called 'pleasant' when it results in greater overall pleasure (354d). All the same, the condition of being in pain itself is called bad by the Many, the condition of being in pleasure is called good (354e). Is this substitution of terms an acceptable move?

Socrates seems to treat '*hedu*' as parallel to '*agathon*' in a way that it does not obviously seem to be. While we might call some activity x good (*agathon*) over time because it results in more good than bad on the whole, we would not normally call that same x pleasant (*hedu*). For example, we might call having a filling drilled at the dentist 'good', but it resulting in more overall pleasure would not normally lead us to deem the drilling itself 'pleasant'. Taylor (1991) notes that Socrates seems to be using *hedu* in an extended sense, to cover the desire for pleasure more generally, a move which he argues makes the substitution invalid.[60] Despite Socrates' efforts to get us to think about pleasure in a more abstract sense, the common use of *hedu* is not to pick out the results of a process, but rather the pleasure experienced during the process. Here that process seems to be extended to include all of the resulting, longer term pleasures and pains.

[60] Taylor (1991) 180-1.

An alternative construal, which helps us resist Taylor's claim about the invalidity of the substitution of *hedu* for *agathon*, is to consider Socrates to be talking about pleasure in the 'source' sense.[61] This is the sense in which we use the term when we describe long distance running or getting over a cold as a pleasure. Socrates could mean that these are the causes of feeling pleased. Drilling a tooth could be aptly described as a pleasure if what he means by that is that it forms part of the course of our dental health recovery. This doesn't commit Socrates to the view that drilling itself is pleasant, but rather reflects the Many's commitment to choosing a course of action which maximises pleasure over pain overall, calculated with a view to the future effects of their choice. Socrates could here be emphasising the Many's focus on results rather than sources. The Many are busy measuring the particular balance of pleasure over pain resulting from their choices (ends), while failing to focus on the courses of action which are the means of bringing these about.

I take this substitution move as Socrates' attempt to extend the meaning of *hedu* and align it to the ordinary use of *agathon* in a manner that highlights and emphasises the Many's commitment to maximising the pleasure in the results of their choices over the long term. It also serves the purpose of clarifying that these are not presentists or other rabid hedonists.[62] And while there is good reason for the Many not to go as far as saying

[61] On the 'source' versus 'experience' senses of pleasure, see Shields (2011) on Aristotle's analysis of pleasure. See also Owen (1957), and Aufderheide (2013).

[62] Here it is important to clarify in what sense the Many are committed to pleasure. For instance, I refrain from describing them as hedonists in anything other than a loose sense, so as to distinguish their commitments from other examples found in the dialogues, such as that of Callicles in the *Gorgias*, and of Philebus and his lot in the *Philebus*. The Many are committed to pleasure as the good, as we learn from 354c5, so they are some kind of hedonists. However, they are hedonists in a much looser, pre-theoretical sense. For example, they are described as

that pain is good, since they are committed to pursuing pleasure as the good, Socrates pushes them as far as possible in that direction by reforming the use of *hedu*, such that even the painful parts of medical treatment get called 'pleasant'. The explanation for how one would commit to what might seem an awkwardly extended use of the term is not that the Many have strange views about pain being pleasant, but rather that Socrates wishes to emphasise the Many as interestingly long-range thinkers, who are concerned with the overall balance of pleasure over pain, and who focus on results over the means to those results. That is not to say that they are some odd subset of hedonists, but just that the view begins with common, folk intuitions about pleasure and pain, yet turns out to be somewhat less intuitive, and to stretch our common use of terms when the implications of the view are drawn out.

Socrates is working up to the weighing and measuring analogies by first narrowing down the source of his disagreement with the Many, and thereby locating the source of the error in the phenomenon of being overcome. He has so far established that the goal of having more pleasure than pain overall is a shared assumption. Another agreed assumption is that the aim of the Many is a life of pleasure without pain. This aim is

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habitually calling some pleasant things bad and some painful things good (351c3), and their view is contrasted with a view Socrates gives voice to, at 351b7-9, that to live a pleasant life to the end is to have lived well (βεβιωκέναι). They are committed to a view by which pleasant things are judged in a way which includes the pleasures and pains they cause as consequences: they are good insofar as they are pleasant and are either productive of more pleasure, or are neutral in that respect, but not productive of pain (351c; 353d-354c6). Their commitment is to a kind of long-range hedonism which takes into account both the pleasant experience of the moment, and the long-term affective consequences of an action. The view characterised here begins as an attempt to capture common intuition. As the reformation of '*hedu*' takes place, we see Socrates drawing out the less intuitive implications of the view due to the long range hedonistic commitments of the Many.

conceived of without reference to other goods which are not a pleasure or do not result in a pleasure, nor other bad things which are not pains or do not result in them (355a). This is a reductive move, where it is agreed that the only determinant of success or failure in choosing possible actions is the balance of pleasure over pain, as opposed to any other factor. On this account, when one is overcome, being overcome can be described as the absurd (γέλοιος, 355a6) situation where one knowingly does a bad (and non-necessary) thing because of having been overcome by the good (355c-d).[63] It follows that the good isn't worth as much or doesn't weigh as much (οὐκ ἀξίων, 355d3) as the bad.

In what way can the good outweigh the bad, or vice versa? Socrates' answer (or the one he and Protagoras say they would assent to, at least) is that the one is greater and the other smaller, or there is more on one side and less on the other.[64] As such, being 'overcome' (ἡττᾶσθαι) is analysed as getting more bad things for the sake of fewer good things. The construction of the exchange phrase (ἀντὶ ἐλαττόνων ἀγαθῶν μείζω κακὰ λαμβάνειν, 355e3) indicates that the bad deal one gets (because of the acceptance of greater evils) is the price paid for the fewer goods received.[65] It is as if by accepting

[63] By 'non-necessary' here I mean voluntary, i.e. it being open to the agent not to do the action. Socrates is rather careful to separate this from compelled action with his 'οὐ δέον αὐτὸν πράττειν' at 355d2. This contrasts to some extent with Aristotle who, in his account of *akrasia* in the *NE*, assumes it is in some way voluntary. If being overcome by pleasure is to be understood as an ostensible case of *akrasia*, Socrates wants to resist explaining it as a case of compulsion. This suggests a further division between compulsion and ignorance.

[64] ἢ κατ᾽ ἄλλο τι ἢ ὅταν τὰ μὲν μείζω, τὰ δὲ σμικρότερα ᾖ, 355d8-e1.

[65] Taylor (1991) 186-7 defends the view that the shift from 'fewer good things' to 'greater evils' at 355d2-3 is not significant, noting that the language of 'taking' (λαμβάνειν) things implies activity on the part of the agent, who chooses by acting, as opposed to passively receiving greater evils.

the fewer, but more near-term pleasures, the agent knowingly takes on a debt which involves accepting later, greater pains.

Being overcome by pleasure is analysed, in the weighing analogy, into a bad deal that we trick ourselves into making, in which we get more bad things for the sake of fewer good things, or the bad seizes (λαμβάνειν) the whole despite or in exchange for (ἀντὶ) the good. The ἀντὶ re-emphasises the image of scales, balances, and transactions, and is ultimately echoed in the Socratic criticism of the Sophists' practice of exchanging so-called wisdom for money. It indicates that the reason why you are overcome is that there is a choice you make which includes greater evils and is not worth the price you paid for it, in terms of what you gave up in goods. The ἀντὶ should thus be understood as something like 'at the price of', which still includes a notion of exchange, but captures the claim that it is a bad bargain, and one which a rational person would or even could not knowingly make. This relates to the counterbalancing thesis of the weighing metaphor, signalled by the ἀξίων at 355d3-4. Socrates wants to give us a means to avoid a situation in which the pleasure we choose isn't worth as much or doesn't weigh as much as the pain.[66]

Re-supplying the terms 'pleasure' for 'good' and 'pain' for 'bad', a picture emerges of someone choosing by their actions painful things, while knowing they are painful,

[66] The LSJ entry for ἄξιος gives the following possible translations: 'ἄξιος, ία, ιον: counterbalancing, … weighing as much, of like value, worth as much as'. The emphasis seems to be less on what kind of units we are thinking of here (weight? value?), and more on the effect of the one cancelling out or counterbalancing the other.

because of having been overcome by pleasant things, which don't weigh enough to conquer (ἀναξίων ὄντων νικᾶν) the painful things in the overall tallies (355e-356a). We therefore have a third shared assumption, which is that pleasures and pains can outweigh each other. They're treated as commensurate goods, subject to *relative* excess and deficiency.[67] The relative magnitude of pleasure and pain, as opposed to an absolute, is the explicit object the Many pursue: they want more pleasure than pain overall, even if that means accepting some nearer pain in exchange for greater pleasures in the long run. Yet the nearness of some pleasures, and the distance of some pains, affects the perceived weight of some options. The disagreement between Socrates and the Many lies in how to explain that we often come to make this bad bargain with ourselves, because of this nearness and distance.

At this step Socrates introduces a pointed objection in response to his own statement, in the voice of a hypothetical interlocutor. The objection is that an immediate pleasure is very different from either pleasure or pain which comes later.[68] But Socrates

[67] ἡ ὑπερβολὴ ἀλλήλων καὶ ἔλλειψις, 356a2-3.

[68] τὸ παραχρῆμα ἡδὺ τοῦ εἰς τὸν ὕστερον χρόνον καὶ ἡδέος καὶ λυπηροῦ, 356a6. It is worth pausing to wonder why Plato introduces the objection this way, with Socrates providing an objection to his own argument, but in the guise of an imagined other, rather than just mentioning it as a possibility in his own voice, or having a genuine interlocutor provide it. Why can't Protagoras voice this objection on behalf of the Many, for example? Why is it important that it is depersonalised, or held at a distance by Socrates? Taylor (1991) suggests that the abstraction required to bring this objection runs counter to the immediate pleasure characteristically pursued by this person. However, one needs to be careful to distinguish the perspective of the agent who is overcome from the view of the Many. The Many explain being overcome as an experience of taking immediate pleasure, but the argument shows that their overall view should lead them to a different explanation, and it emphasises their long-range view. Further, while presumably some of the Many have experienced this phenomenon, at 352d, when the phenomenon is introduced, there is a separation between the Many (οἱ πολλοὶ) who will hold the overcoming/akrasia view of the phenomenon, and the many (πολλούς) who experience it.

immediately denies this on the grounds that there is no way in which pleasures and pains can differ which does not refer to pleasure or pain itself. He then introduces the weighing metaphor:

> For if someone said, "But Socrates, there is a great difference between immediate pleasure and pleasure and pain at a later time," I should say, "Surely not in any other respect than simply pleasure and pain; there isn't any other way they could differ. Rather, like someone who is good at weighing things, add up all the pleasant things and the painful, and put the element of nearness and distance in the scale as well, and then say which are the more. For if you weigh pleasant things against pleasant, you always have to take the larger and the more, and if you weigh painful against painful, you always have to take the less and the smaller. And if you weigh pleasant against painful, if the painful are outweighed by the pleasant, no matter which are nearer and which more distant, you have to do whatever brings the pleasant about, and if the pleasant are outweighed by the painful, you have to avoid doing it.[69]

The objection raised at 356a is that the akratic agent is right to be biased toward near pleasures: we do treat pleasures and pains differently depending on their temporal proximity, and we ought to, since they are quite different. Socrates' response is to ask how it is that they could differ in any other respect than simply pleasure and pain, and

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Though there could well be overlap, it is unsafe to assume that the Many as a whole have first-hand experience of being overcome, so as to attribute to all of them the characteristic pursuit of immediate pleasures. They are a group who opine on the reasons for this behaviour, and who are able to stand back from it at least enough to do so. This implies some level of abstraction, though perhaps not enough when the subject is their own lives. As such, it is still open to Socrates to speak here on behalf of those who are overcome.

[69] *Prot.* 356a4-c1, trans. Taylor (1996). Here is the Greek from the TLG (1903 repr. 1968):

> εἰ γάρ τις λέγοι ὅτι 'ἀλλὰ πολὺ διαφέρει, ὦ Σώκρατες, τὸ παραχρῆμα ἡδὺ τοῦ εἰς τὸν ὕστερον χρόνον καὶ ἡδέος καὶ λυπηροῦ,' μῶν ἄλλῳ τῳ, φαίην ἂν ἔγωγε, ἢ ἡδονῇ καὶ λύπῃ; οὐ γὰρ ἔσθ᾽ ὅτῳ ἄλλῳ. ἀλλ᾽ ὥσπερ ἀγαθὸς ἱστάναι ἄνθρωπος, συνθεὶς τὰ ἡδέα καὶ συνθεὶς τὰ λυπηρά, καὶ τὸ ἐγγὺς καὶ τὸ πόρρω στήσας ἐν τῷ ζυγῷ, εἰπὲ πότερα πλείω ἐστίν. ἐὰν μὲν γὰρ ἡδέα πρὸς ἡδέα ἱστῇς, τὰ μείζω ἀεὶ καὶ πλείω ληπτέα: ἐὰν δὲ λυπηρὰ πρὸς λυπηρά, τὰ ἐλάττω καὶ σμικρότερα: ἐὰν δὲ ἡδέα πρὸς λυπηρά, ἐὰν μὲν τὰ ἀνιαρὰ ὑπερβάλληται ὑπὸ τῶν ἡδέων, ἐάντε τὰ ἐγγὺς ὑπὸ τῶν πόρρω ἐάντε τὰ πόρρω ὑπὸ τῶν ἐγγύς, ταύτην τὴν πρᾶξιν πρακτέον ἐν ᾗ ἂν ταῦτ᾽ ἐνῇ: ἐὰν δὲ τὰ ἡδέα ὑπὸ τῶν ἀνιαρῶν, οὐ πρακτέα.

to say that there isn't any other way that they could differ. As a result, when it comes to valuing pleasures and pains, agents should make decisions and take actions on temporally neutral grounds, with equal concern for all the parts of their life. This looks like a flat-out denial of the rationality of temporal bias, and an assertion, without argument, of the need for temporal neutrality.

Despite this apparent assumption, I will argue that we find in this passage an argument in support of the claim that an agent who shares the specific commitments of the Many ought to make decisions and take actions on temporally neutral grounds. This is so on the assumption that the agent behaves in a way which is consistent with these commitments, and that the agent has an equality of concern for the pleasures and pains of all the parts of their lives. Socrates' point is a dialectical one, rather than an undefended assertion: agents who are explicitly committed to maximising pleasure and minimising pain in the long run should make temporally neutral decisions in order to achieve their goal.

Protagoras foreshadows this earlier in the dialogue, at 351d2-3. When asked whether a pleasant thing is good just insofar as it is pleasant, and results in nothing but pleasure, he responds:

> Rather it seems to me safer, having regard not only to what I say now but also to all the rest of my life…[70]

[70] *Prot.* 351d2-3, trans. Taylor (1996). Here is the Greek from the TLG (1903 repr. 1968):
ἀλλά μοι δοκεῖ οὐ μόνον πρὸς τὴν νῦν ἀπόκρισιν ἐμοὶ ἀσφαλέστερον εἶναι ἀποκρίνασθαι, ἀλλὰ καὶ πρὸς πάντα τὸν ἄλλον βίον τὸν ἐμόν…

This regard for all of one's life is the perspective the Many are committed to, and when we go wrong, on this reading it is not because of a failure to commit to temporal neutrality, but because of a failure in action due to the distorting influence of time. All parties agree that the temporal location of the pleasure or pain does not affect its normative significance.[71] If viewed from a temporally abstracted position, equal pleasures and pains of different times will carry the same weight. The problem is that the way in which we usually perceive pleasures and pains is deceptive: those closer to us in time appear (φαίνεται) larger, and those further away appear smaller, according to the visual metaphor at 356c, which is then extended to include judgments of thickness, multitudes, and sounds. If we are to successfully choose courses of action which are maximally pleasant overall, and avoid those which are maximally painful, we need some strategy which would render the appearances ineffective,[72] and render them unable to confuse us or make us change our minds and regret our actions (356d8), by *making visible* to us the truth.[73]

How would this be achieved? The answer is the *technē metrētikē.* This study of relative excess, deficiency and equality turns out to be, in a dramatic conclusion, our very

[71] I am careful to say 'does not' rather than 'should not' here. Socrates doesn't seem to be considering people who mistakenly think time matters irrespective of the quantity of pleasure. Rather, he seems to be thinking of people who are *deceived* by time into misjudging the quantity of pleasure.

[72] ἡ δὲ μετρητικὴ ἄκυρον μὲν ἂν ἐποίησε τοῦτο τὸ φάντασμα, 356d7-e1.

[73] δηλώσασα, again in the language of visual metaphor. At 309c, in the dramatic frame, Socrates reports something like the dramatic opposite occurrence to being overcome by pleasure: being with the attractive Alcibiades yet being distracted and forgetting about him most of the time. Here there is no stripping needed, because the desire for Alcibiades is not one which magnifies his importance in a landscape of possible activities.

salvation in life (σωτηρία τοῦ βίου, 356e6). And being 'overcome by pleasure', then, turns out to be an act carried out in ignorance, rather than a case of akrasia, since it results from the lack of the measuring art, which is a type of knowledge (357c). Its success in helping us choose wisely is meant to show that being overcome by pleasure is a form of ignorance which can be corrected by a type of knowledge, rather than it being a weakness of will.

I will now turn to examine the two parts of the measuring art, weighing and measuring, to understand how they are supposed to function. Why are there are two distinct parts, what kind of illusion do they correct, and how do they correct it?

III The Two Metaphors of the Measuring Art

Socrates' claim at *Protagoras* 356b-357e is that there is a measuring art which can help us to avoid choosing actions based on a false view of their respective resulting pleasantness or painfulness.[74] The measuring art is described with the help of metaphors of weighing and measuring or estimation. In this section, I will ask what processes of choice these two actions are trying to represent, and why the first metaphor

[74] It is clear why pursuing a course of action based on a correct, rather than distorted estimate of pleasure or pain would be crucial for a committed hedonist, but why is it so for Socrates? There is an open question about how far Socrates is committed to hedonism in the dialectic. Though his commitments are not my main focus here, I will be interested in the psychological plausibility of the technique he describes, on the assumption that the user of the technique is a committed hedonist.

is not enough on its own, such that Socrates feels the need to introduce the second. I will also ask what this solution to the problem of false judgements about prospective pleasures and pain entails. I will start with the weighing image.

III.i Weighing

The first part of the measuring art is weighing. Specifically, Socrates envisages the weighing of pleasures against pleasures, pains against pains, and pleasures against pains (356b3-5). The units which fill the pans are described in terms of size, number, and degree of intensity, with both pleasure and pain having positive weight in each case. The outcome of the weighing procedure, or its psychological equivalent, is meant to show us the choice-worthy course of action.

The procedure is time-neutral in that the pleasures and pains of all points in time are lumped together. It is not, however, time-adjusted. Time adjustment would require changing the value attributed to the pleasures and pains based on their temporal location. As the argument shows, the problem with temporal location is that it makes it difficult to fix the weight, number, or intensity values of the entries that go into the pans. By the time an agent puts an entry onto the scale, there is already an opportunity for it to have become distorted.

The exact content of the pans is an under-appreciated detail of the argument. So far I have been talking of pleasures and pains going into the pans, reflecting the language of the passage, but even this leaves the objects in the image vague. One might imagine, for instance, that the idea is to put pleasant and painful things on one side of the balance,

and the pleasures and pains they yield on the other. So, in the example of deciding whether to eat a piece of cake, the contents of the pans could include either the object (cake), the activity that would bring pleasure (cake-eating), or the expected pleasure that would result from that activity. The description of the contents of the pans that Socrates gives us does not help us decide: he says that we weigh pleasant things (τὰ ἡδέα) and painful things (τὰ λυπηρά, at 356b1 ff.), which, if anything, suggests objects.[75] However, we also know that what goes in the pans is subject to degrees of size and scale (356a5-6), can be attached to actions in the sense of actions bringing these affections about,[76] and are subject to distortion (356c6), which can be corrected by measurement. Additionally, Socrates denies that actions can differ in any respect other than the pleasure and pain they yield.[77] This suggests that ἡδονή and λύπη – pleasures and pains themselves – are what go in the pans, since they are the only option which can themselves be measured by size and scale, attached to actions, and are subject to distortion.[78] And these could only be the *anticipated* pleasures and pains that would follow from future courses of action.[79]

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[75] This is an additional reason to consider the proposal introduced above, that Socrates is attempting to shift the focus of this argument to the sources of pleasure. 'Pleasant things' could be understood as things that produce pleasure, and painful things are things which produce pain or lessen the balance of pleasure over pain when compared with available alternative. My interpretation is different, since I understand Socrates to be working in a dialectical way, and not forcing this shift. That said, I am sympathetic to the idea that the 'source' reading could be what Socrates is committed to, and that his commitment starts to show at certain points in the discussion.

[76] ταύτην τὴν πρᾶξιν πρακτέον ἐν ᾗ ἂν ταῦτ᾽ ἐνῇ, 356b8.

[77] ἢ ἡδονῇ καὶ λύπῃ, 356a8-b1.

[78] It's hard to picture the cake itself, or cake-eating, as opposed to the expected pleasure of cake-eating, getting distorted.

[79] This also makes sense of the way that weighing functions. For example, let's take the case of weighing pleasures against pleasures, where an agent is wondering whether they should have a piece of cake now, or a bowl of strawberries in fifteen minutes. It would hardly help the decision to (figuratively) put cake in one pan and a bowl of strawberries in another. Though it might help

The weighing and measuring images would only work if we assume that we identify with our future selves as subjects of pleasure and pain which we can anticipate from our current position. The false appearances of pleasures and pains that the procedure corrects are appearances of our anticipated affections, and these are based on the pleasures and pains being temporally tensed, and the subjectivity of judgements about pleasure and pain: it's because some happen to be closer to the subject, and the subject always perceives them from a temporal position, that the possibility of error exists. The position of the Many presupposes an equality of concern for the pleasure and pain of their future self, and those of their current and near-term self, and it is common ground between Socrates and the Many that the temporal location of pleasures and pains does not affect their true value.

When Socrates says, at 356b1-2, that the elements of nearness and distance should be put onto the scale as well, what does this mean? The key sentence is:

> συνθεὶς τὰ ἡδέα καὶ συνθεὶς τὰ λυπηρά, καὶ τὸ ἐγγὺς καὶ τὸ πόρρω στήσας ἐν τῷ ζυγῷ, εἰπὲ πότερα πλείω ἐστίν.[80]

Taylor translates this as:

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to bring them forward in time for the purposes of comparison, it would not be much help in making the decision of which to choose, nor would it isolate the affective aspects of the two possible options, or allow the outcome to be transmitted from the first two tests to the third. Bringing the options onto equal temporal footing is a major motivation for this procedure. However, it is explicitly addressed by and corrected for in the second part of the procedure, the estimation, rather than in this first weighing part. Likewise, the acts of putting cake-eating and bowl of strawberry-eating into the pans suffer from the same defects. Putting the expected pleasures or pains of doing these things into pans thus looks like the best contender for inputs that would yield the kind of like-for-like measurement required for the tests.

[80] Greek from the TLG (1903 repr. 1968).

> … add up all the pleasant things and the painful, and put the element of nearness and distance in the scale as well, and then say which are the more.[81]

My suggestion is that a more neutral translation of the key phrase helps us to see that this is not an assumption of temporal neutrality, but rather a recognition that in placing pleasant and painful things in the scale, the effect that temporal nearness and distance have on those things (the anticipated affections) is already included. This more neutral translation of the key phrase might be:

> '… put pleasant things and painful in the scales, and place with them in the scales the nearness and the distance...'

This is more neutral in the sense that it does not presuppose that in placing the elements of nearness and distance in the scale with the pleasant and painful things, which is what the sentence says, those elements are separate from the pleasant and painful things, except theoretically. The way I read the sentence is that by virtue of placing pleasant and painful things in the scale, the *effect* that nearness and distance have on those things is already included. The idea is not that nearness and distance would have to have some independent affective weight; all parties agree that it should not. Rather than an assumption of temporal neutrality, Socrates' characterisation of the position of the Many shows that temporal distortion is relevant because it causes us to go wrong about the comparative pleasure of different options by imposing value or disvalue where there is none. As such, we should not expect it to be weighed. Instead, it is a factor which creates a difficulty in fixing the comparative pleasure in different options, because it creates a difficulty in fixing the relevant options.

[81] Trans. Taylor (1996).

Why should we agree with Socrates that nearness and distance needs to be corrected for? His argument here is aimed not at showing that we can or should do this, but at establishing that doing so is essential for the Many, if they are to maximise overall pleasure and minimise overall pain over a lifetime. We could distinguish at least three claims related to temporal neutrality that might be at work here:

(1) x isn't pleasanter than y simply by being temporally closer.

(2) It is irrational to care more about x than y simply because x is closer (i.e., I shouldn't care about x more than y because x will happen next Tuesday and y next Wednesday).

(3) No one cares about x more than y simply because x is temporally closer.

One might claim that Socrates believes all of these things, and that he believes the earlier imply the later. But the main thrust of his argument in this passage is to show that the Many are committed to (1), and that their commitment to (1) implies a commitment to (2) and (3). (2) is a denial of the normative hedonic reasons for temporal bias, and (3) is a denial of the psychological hedonic reasons, which are closely connected here. As such, if someone were to care more about x than y simply because x is closer than y, the nature of their error would be ignorance rather than akrasia: there is no room to knowingly care more about x than y by virtue of its proximity if one subscribes to the commitments of the Many.

This analysis clarifies how agents go wrong even when they can choose well between sets of options: they misjudge the affective weight of the contents before they put them in the scales. This first image of weighing also reveals the source of their error as time. It

does not tell us what the solution is. The weighing procedure on its own is limited because it fails to give us a complete criterion of choice between courses of action, since it fails to correct for the affective 'weight' of anticipatory pleasures and pains based on the temporal distance which distorts their appearances. For that we need the second image, that of measuring or estimating, and in fact we need it *first*, to correct the entries and ensure their accuracy before they go into the pans to be weighed against each other.[82] I will now turn to consider that second part of the procedure, and how it is said to correct for temporal distortion.

[82] Why, then, is it given to us second in the text? Warren (2014b) suggests that Socrates chooses this order:

> …perhaps because he can in this way familiarise us with the notion of the commensurability of pleasures and pains that his model requires, before moving on to the measuring procedure which will be the principal element in his insistence on the power of reason over the potentially disruptive power of mere appearances.

Warren's suggestion is plausible, and I would add to it that another reason for the ordering is to establish that the shared commitment between Socrates and the Many to the maximising of overall pleasure and pain, combined with the weighing procedure, is not enough to correct for the distortion which time imposes, such that a separate correction procedure would be needed.

We might still worry that on this reading weighing doesn't look as we'd expect. For instance, we might think that one of the important functions of weighing is to disclose a not immediately perceptible property, especially in cases where, for example, a large but deceptively light thing is weighed. Further, it would seem odd if the image is one in which an agent fixes a weight using measurement *before* the object is placed in the scales. Where then does weight get fixed, if both procedures are only comparative?

On my reading, the status of weighing looks different. It is focused on balancing and comparing commensurate goods, as the use of *axion* suggests. It is an appropriate second stage in the process because it does not fix value or weight, but only compares it. Neither does measuring compare value. Instead, the agent fixes value, they use measuring to correct for distortion, and then they use weighing to compare corrected weights, and determine relative value. The result they get is a winner between two or more options, rather than a number, and that is enough to motivate action directed at pleasure.

III.ii Measuring

Unsatisfied with the work of the first metaphor of weighing, Socrates introduces a second image of measuring or estimating size, distance, thickness, number, larger, smaller, and a comparison with odd and even (356c4-357b3):

> … 'Do the same magnitudes look bigger when you see them near at hand, and smaller at a distance, or not?'
>
> 'They will say that they do.'
>
> 'And similarly with thicknesses and numbers? And the same sounds are louder near at hand and softer at a distance?'
>
> 'Yes.'
>
> 'So if our wellbeing had depended on taking steps to get larger quantities, and avoid smaller ones, what should we have judged to be the thing that saves our lives? The art of measurement or the power of appearance? The latter, as we saw, confuses us and makes us often change our minds about the same things and vacillate back and forth in our actions and choices of large and small things; but measurement would have made these appearances powerless, and given us peace of mind by showing us the truth and letting us get a firm grasp of it, and so would have saved our lives.' In the face of this would they agree that it is the art of measurement that would save us, or some other?'
>
> 'Measurement,' he agreed.
>
> ' 'And what if the preservation of our life had depended on a correct choice of odd and even, whenever one had to make a correct choice of a larger number or a smaller, either each kind against itself or one against the other, whether near at hand or at a distance? What would have preserved our life? Knowledge, surely. And surely some sort of measurement, since that is the art concerned with larger and smaller quantities. And since we are concerned with odd and even, it would surely have been none other than arithmetic.' Would our friends agree, or not?' Protagoras, too, thought they would agree.
>
> ' 'Well then, gentlemen; since we have seen that the preservation of our life depends on a correct choice of pleasure and pain, be it more or less, larger or smaller or further or nearer, doesn't it seem that the thing that saves our lives is some technique of measurement, to determine which are more, or less, or equal to one another?'

'Yes, certainly'…[83]

The weighing metaphor has revealed that measures of affective weight can be distorted. Now Socrates adds, or at least fully describes, a number of ways in which the items we might weigh could be judged, and these judgements be distorted. The measuring image positions physical distance as the analogue to temporal distance, with magnitude, thickness, number, and volume as analogues of value.[84]

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[83] Trans. Taylor (1996). Here is the Greek from the TLG (1903 repr. 1968):

φαίνεται ὑμῖν τῇ ὄψει τὰ αὐτὰ μεγέθη ἐγγύθεν μὲν μείζω, πόρρωθεν δὲ ἐλάττω: ἢ οὔ;

φήσουσιν.

καὶ τὰ παχέα καὶ τὰ πολλὰ ὡσαύτως; καὶ αἱ φωναὶ <αἱ> ἴσαι ἐγγύθεν μὲν μείζους, πόρρωθεν δὲ σμικρότεραι;

φαῖεν ἄν.

εἰ οὖν ἐν τούτῳ ἡμῖν ἦν τὸ εὖ πράττειν, ἐν τῷ τὰ μὲν μεγάλα μήκη καὶ πράττειν καὶ λαμβάνειν, τὰ δὲ σμικρὰ καὶ φεύγειν καὶ μὴ πράττειν, τίς ἂν ἡμῖν σωτηρία ἐφάνη τοῦ βίου; ἆρα ἡ μετρητικὴ τέχνη ἢ ἡ τοῦ φαινομένου δύναμις; ἢ αὕτη μὲν ἡμᾶς ἐπλάνα καὶ ἐποίει ἄνω τε καὶ κάτω πολλάκις μεταλαμβάνειν ταὐτὰ καὶ μεταμέλειν καὶ ἐν ταῖς πράξεσιν καὶ ἐν ταῖς αἱρέσεσιν τῶν μεγάλων τε καὶ σμικρῶν, ἡ δὲ μετρητικὴ ἄκυρον μὲν ἂν ἐποίησε τοῦτο τὸ φάντασμα, δηλώσασα δὲ τὸ ἀληθὲς ἡσυχίαν ἂν ἐποίησεν ἔχειν τὴν ψυχὴν μένουσαν ἐπὶ τῷ ἀληθεῖ καὶ ἔσωσεν ἂν τὸν βίον; ἆρ᾽ ἂν ὁμολογοῖεν οἱ ἄνθρωποι πρὸς ταῦτα ἡμᾶς τὴν μετρητικὴν σῴζειν ἂν τέχνην ἢ ἄλλην;

τὴν μετρητικήν, ὡμολόγει.

τί δ᾽ εἰ ἐν τῇ τοῦ περιττοῦ καὶ ἀρτίου αἱρέσει ἡμῖν ἦν ἡ σωτηρία τοῦ βίου, ὁπότε τὸ πλέον ὀρθῶς ἔδει ἑλέσθαι καὶ ὁπότε τὸ ἔλαττον, ἢ αὐτὸ πρὸς ἑαυτὸ ἢ τὸ ἕτερον πρὸς τὸ ἕτερον, εἴτ᾽ ἐγγὺς εἴτε πόρρω εἴη; τί ἂν ἔσῳζεν ἡμῖν τὸν βίον; ἆρ᾽ ἂν οὐκ ἐπιστήμη; καὶ ἆρ᾽ ἂν οὐ μετρητική τις, ἐπειδήπερ ὑπερβολῆς τε καὶ ἐνδείας ἐστὶν ἡ τέχνη; ἐπειδὴ δὲ περιττοῦ τε καὶ ἀρτίου, ἆρα ἄλλη τις ἢ ἀριθμητική; Ὁμολογοῖεν ἂν ἡμῖν οἱ ἄνθρωποι ἢ οὔ;

ἐδόκουν ἂν καὶ τῷ Πρωταγόρᾳ ὁμολογεῖν.

εἶεν, ὦ ἄνθρωποι: ἐπεὶ δὲ δὴ ἡδονῆς τε καὶ λύπης ἐν ὀρθῇ τῇ αἱρέσει ἐφάνη ἡμῖν ἡ σωτηρία τοῦ βίου οὖσα, τοῦ τε πλέονος καὶ ἐλάττονος καὶ μείζονος καὶ σμικροτέρου καὶ πορρωτέρω καὶ ἐγγυτέρω, ἆρα πρῶτον μὲν οὐ μετρητικὴ φαίνεται, ὑπερβολῆς τε καὶ ἐνδείας οὖσα καὶ ἰσότητος πρὸς ἀλλήλας σκέψις;

ἀλλ᾽ ἀνάγκη.

[84] The same distortion by distance is said to affect judgements of thickness and number. While thickness seems plausible, it is not as clear what number refers to. Socrates could have in mind collections of similar or identical objects which, at a distance, may blend together and look fewer

Our perception of value or, in the analogy, of size, volume, etc., can be distorted by spacial distance, the analogue of temporal distance. Visual distortion is therefore a stand-in for the distortion imposed on our perceptions by our temporally biased perspectives. This is the φαινομένου δύναμις (356d4) – the power of appearances – which is illusory. It confuses us, it makes us vacillate in our choices, and it results in us choosing smaller pleasures over larger. This is likened, in the passage, to cases such as when I perceive the fir tree in my lounge decorated for Christmas as larger than the one in the forest observed through my window, at a distance.[85]

The possibility of error is located in perception (or at least what perception stands for in the analogy), rather than in action. It is not the case that, as part of the phenomenon at issue, we see the affective outcome of, for example, eating a second piece of cake, with all of its resulting pains, and we choose it anyway. Neither is it that we attribute value to things that are temporally nearer (as a presentist might). We fail because we don't see the pains as being as big as they are, relative to the pleasures. The error is depicted as a kind of metaphorical misperception cast as ignorance. The visual metaphor shows that what an agent needs is not a new entry into the pan, but rather a corrected, undistorted

in number, whereas up close they are numerically distinct and appear more numerous. Volume is intuitive enough. For example, the volume of a body of water can appear smaller at a distance. Henceforth these are visual distortions, but Socrates adds the example of the volume of sounds, which likewise seem lower at a distance. The focus in each of the examples is physical distance as an analogy for temporal distance, and of size, volume, number or thickness as analogues of value.

[85] Readers familiar with the British comedy series *Father Ted* may recall this as typical of Father Dougal, who is unable to understand how cows in the distant field could be larger than the toy cow in his hand, when they look the same height from his perspective. '…OK, one last time. These are small… but the ones out there are far away. Small… far away…'

version of the same entry. The measuring art would render appearances powerless to waylay an otherwise decent decision-making strategy.

How is measurement or size estimation a solution which corrects for this power of appearances? Having used some familiar examples of the distorting power of physical distance to convince us of the problem, Socrates' proposed solution is to correct for the distortion of appearances by measurement, in order to facilitate accurate estimations, and then comparisons. For example, if I am unsure which fir tree is bigger of the one in my lounge decorated for Christmas, or the one in the forest observed from a distance through the lounge window, I check their two sizes (height and width, for instance) using a measuring tape, and then compare them. In fact I may not need anything as accurate as the measuring tape. Since we know from the first image that what we are capable of achieving is only estimations accurate enough for rough comparisons, precision seems not to be the focus. It may be enough to stand next to the two trees, and see that one is about my height, the other at least three feet taller than me.

What is the analogous measurement behaviour we would apply when considering pleasures and pains? The psychological correlate of walking up to an object in the distance to measure it (even roughly) and compare it to something closer would be to generate a measurement of the magnitude of a pleasure or a pain in the future – its magnitude at the time it occurs – and compare it to the magnitude of a present pleasure or pain, or at least one whose affective content is closer to the present in time. Since we cannot literally walk up to our future selves or anticipate their pleasure and pain in a way which is undistorted by time, we need some means of removing the distorting

effect of distance by using a tool of measurement which does not distort the size of the object in the way our perception does.

To do this for possible pleasures and pains of the future, we need to consider them in a way which is ultimately time-adjusted, and therefore time-neutral. The desired outcome is a scenario in which we can correct for the closer pleasant things appearing larger due to their proximity rather than their magnitude, or in which the more distant pains appear smaller because of their temporal distance rather than their severity. Size, in the analogy, is a stand-in for magnitude or severity of the *pathē*. But we get no guidance, in this passage, as to how to generate the measurement, and facilitate the comparison. We need some psychological tool which is the equivalent to something like the architect's caliper. This would have to do the equivalent of removing us from a specific time (or bringing the possible, anticipated future pleasures and pains into the present), allowing us to judge the affective consequences of our actions from a perspective which is neutral at least between our present and any points in our future, while at the same time maintaining our ability to identify with ourselves at all or any of the times of our future life.[86]

We do not find out, from the passage, what this psychological tool is. What are we to make of this unsatisfying outcome? My suggestion is that the first image, of weighing, shows what really matters to the Many in deciding what to do: relative pleasure and pain. The second image, of measuring, reveals how it is that they make mistakes despite

[86] Or perhaps one which allows us, from our present temporal stance, to judge the after-effects of behaviour as if we were that future self.

having the right conception of what really matters: they are trying to judge relative pleasure and pain (as they should), but they misjudge them because of the φαινομένου δύναμις – the power of appearances. The passage is not designed to give a detailed solution to the problem, but rather to show that if one held the commitments of the Many, this would be the kind of strategy they would need, and this strategy is a *technē*, which requires knowledge.[87] When one is overcome by nearer pleasures, due to the distorting effect of the power of appearances, this is a kind of ignorance.

If this is so, it implies that there is a kind of knowledge which would overcome this power of appearances. While Socrates' main aim in the argument is to deny akrasia as an explanation of the relevant error, that doesn't get him off the hook. We want to find at least a suggestion of what the psychological equivalent of the measuring tool would be. I contend that the passage does contain such a suggestion, and that this involves having the right attitude to our future selves, which is reflective of the equality of concern we have for the pleasures and pains of all parts of it, which we would otherwise lack. In thinking of what this would involve and how this would be a

[87] The suggestions in this passage are carefully put by Socrates. He repeatedly uses the third person plural to indicate that the claims on which the measurement strategy depend are those which they (the Many) will admit (φήσουσιν, 356c6; φαῖεν, 356c8) or the men would acknowledge (ὁμολογοῖεν οἱ ἄνθρωποι, 356e3; 357a3). This is the strategy they must think best, given their commitments. In addition to holding the claims at arm's length, Socrates also casts them as hypotheticals, with repeated use of 'if' clauses (ἦν, 356d1; 356e5). He positions the measurement strategy as the one which would save our lives if our wellbeing depended on choosing larger and avoiding smaller quantities. As such, it is unclear, from this argument alone, that Socrates himself endorses such a commitment. The focus is showing that if one held the commitments of the Many, this art would be crucial to the successful pursuit of their stated aim. That said, despite this unclarity, we are still at liberty to consider why Socrates is interested in giving a solution, and why he suggests this one.

solution, we can usefully think of studies which demonstrate how poor we generally are at planning and saving for retirement. Some studies hypothesise that the reason for this poor planning, and the resultant failure to save adequately, is a failure to identify with our future selves.[88] Contemporary researchers in psychology and behavioural economics propose one novel solution which has been found to be effective: a software which displays a retirement planning portal on one side of a screen, and an aged version of the user's face on the other, showing them an image of themselves at their target retirement date. This has been shown to increase the amount they choose to save now, with the idea that they do this because the image facilitates increased occurrent identification with their older self.

I take it that this is something like the psychological equivalent of the architect's caliper: some psychological means of gaining a perspective on our lives which allows us to choose and behave in ways which reflect our values, including an equal concern for the pleasures of our future selves. Socrates' emphasis on the commitment of the Many to their long-range pleasures and pains, and all the later consequences of their choices, puts a finger on this. It shows that the crux of the argument is not about valuation or misevaluation of goods, but about how we relate or fail to relate to our future selves, and the devaluation of future goods which can happen because of this failure of identity. In fact, since we need to care about our future *pathē* in a way which renders the

[88] For example Parker, Carvalho, and Rohwedder (2013); Hershey and Mowen (2000). In his discussion of this passage, Warren (2014b) 114-116 cites Quoidback, Gilbert and Wilson (2013)'s research demonstrating participants' inability to predict the degree to which their preferences will change over time.

pathē of all times temporally neutral, we need to be able to *over*-identify with our future selves, in the sense that we need not just to identify with them, but to identify with them in such a way as to render their concerns as equivalent to those of our present selves.

The retirement planning portal example suggests that it is important that the subject of the future pleasures and pains is oneself. The image that changes the users' behaviour is not of *a* retirement aged individual, or an image of the world in the future, but of *themselves*, their own face, at that later age. Properly identifying, and in this case over-identifying with that remote person is not just about being temporally adjusted, it is also about it being yourself, and identifying with the subject of those future pleasures and pains in a way which allows one to vividly anticipate them. The agent who is good at using the measuring art is not someone who has a total objectivity, or a kind of view from nowhere, but rather one who has a kind of self-awareness which extends into the future, and across their whole life.[89]

It turns out that, provided the inputs are accurate, we're quite good at weighing up our options. We see this demonstrated in the weighing analogy, which depicts the successful weighing of relative, commensurate goods. We just need a strategy to ensure those inputs are not distorted by their temporal location. The argument of this passage forces us to confront that temporality and a lack of identification with our future selves

[89] Cf. Nagel (1989). This imagined agent is in stark contrast to the jellyfish of the *Philebus* (πλεύμων, 21c), whose lack of self-awareness even in the present prevents them from enjoying their own pleasures. For an argument to this effect, see my Chapter Five.

and their affections are the source of such distortion. A failure to appreciate this can lead interpreters of the passage to cast pleasure as inherently problematic. In the next section I will consider one such interpreter, and provide an alternative interpretation.

IV Moss on Pleasure and Illusion in the *Protagoras*

In her article 'Pleasure and Illusion in Plato' (2006), Moss aims to show that there is a close and important association between pleasure and illusion in Plato's moral psychology and ethics.[90] She argues that the desires of reason and the desires of appetite are both concerned with the good, for Plato, but that what distinguishes them is the latter's susceptibility to illusion, such that they are unable to distinguish the good from the merely apparently good.

Here I will consider Moss' reading of the dialectic between Socrates and the Many in the *Protagoras*. In particular, I will focus on the model she suggests for understanding how the measuring art corrects for the power of appearances, and what the appearance losing its power means. I will argue that a different model of how the desire for pleasure is akin to perception is at play in the passage, one which, when the measuring art is applied, yields the equivalent of a new perception. This means that the source of illusion is not in the nature of pleasure itself, but rather in the effects of time and the possibility of failing to properly identify with our future selves. On my reading,

[90] Moss (2006).

pleasure is not deceptive, appetite is not uniquely susceptible to illusion, and suspicion is not the right way to characterise the view of pleasure at work in the *Protagoras*.

Moss begins her paper by establishing a Platonic suspicion of pleasures, citing passages in the *Philebus*, *Phaedo*, and *Timaeus* in which Socrates suggests that philosophers keep pleasure at a distance.[91] She contends that, rather than a reaction to advocates of hedonism among his contemporaries, Plato's distrust of pleasure is part of a philosophical stance on the nature of pleasure as inherently *deceptive* in the sense that it portrays a false appearance of goodness.[92] Her aim is to trace the development of the connection between pleasure and illusion through the *Protagoras*, *Gorgias*, and *Republic*, and show that Plato's account of the desire for pleasure shifts radically across these three dialogues, representing a general change in his view of desire from his early to his middle period.[93] This shift in Plato's view is inspired by the increasingly close relation he sees between pleasure and illusion, and between appetite and a susceptibility to optical illusions specifically. Moss aims to show how Plato arrives at this radical stance in *Republic* X by tracing it back to the seeds of the view as found in the *Protagoras* and *Gorgias*.

In the *Protagoras*, Moss motivates her case for reading Plato as developing an association between pleasure and illusion by arguing that he uses precisely this connection to

[91] Ibid. 503, citing *Phd.* 83b5-7, *Tim.* 69d1, and *Phileb.* 33b.

[92] Moss (2006) 504, citing, as Platonic accusations against pleasure, *Phd.* 81b3, *Rep.* 413c1-2 and 584a10, *Laws* 863b7-11, *Phileb.* 65c5.

[93] Ibid. 504. I will confront this account of Plato's developing views in my Conclusion.

explain how desire for pleasure leads people to pursue harmful pleasures by deceiving them with illusions. Moss understands the view of the Many to include a characterisation of the desire for pleasure as 'an impulsive desire for immediate gratification'.[94] She reads Plato's introduction of the art of measurement as a solution to these agents' mistakes about what will satisfy their desires as being based on a claim that they are the victims of systematic illusions about pleasures.[95] Her example is the pleasure-seeker who indulges in a second piece of cake because it yields pleasure in the moment, ignoring her belief that she will later feel sick or regret the decision. In this example, what does the appearance losing its power mean? Moss imagines that when the agent sees the second piece of cake as pleasant enough to outweigh the pains that will result from eating it, that appearance losing its power could either lead to the illusion actually disappearing, or to it losing its power to affect the agents' desire. She finds it more plausible that Plato would endorse the latter, but grants that in the context of the *Protagoras*, nothing he says rules out the former.[96] The agent's desire for pleasure is analogous to their judgements about illusions, rather than their mere perceptions of illusions, in that the illusions can influence, but also be corrected for. This would not be the case if they were perception-like. This is what Moss will characterise as Socrates' account of desire as rational, because of the sensitivity to calculation, and the close connection between measurement and science or knowledge she finds in Plato.[97]

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[94] Ibid. 506.

[95] Ibid. 507, citing *Prot.* 356c5-d4.

[96] Ibid. 507 n. 10.

[97] Ibid. 509, n. 12, citing *Prot.* 357b4 and *Phileb.* 55d5-e3 for the epistemic nature of measurement. She goes on to provide further support from the *Republic*. She notes that by the standards of the *Republic*, the desire for pleasure as presented in the *Protagoras* would count as an instance of a desire of reason, but she claims that we should expect differences in these treatments, given, at

Moss takes Plato's observation about the increased pleasantness of close-at-hand pleasures (presented in the voice of Socrates' imagined interlocutor at 356a5-7), expressed using the analogy to optical illusions, to make a point which is restricted to desires for *pleasure*, as opposed to other possible objects of desire.[98] The special connection between desiring pleasure and susceptibility to illusions does not apply to desiring wealth, health, or knowledge, on her reading, since the temporal distance of these other objects fails to affect their perceived size. Moss agrees with Plato that these types of objects may seem preferable if nearer, but that the sense in which they are preferable collapses into them being more pleasant.

Moss argues that, for Plato, desiring pleasure is akin to perception in the sense that it is a matter of perceiving a certain sort of appearance. But if this is right, Moss argues, it undermines Socrates' argument that the desire for pleasure is sensitive to calculation in the *Protagoras*, since rational calculation can make optical illusions lose their power over an agent's judgement, but not their vision, in which the nearer object would still appear larger.[99] If, on the other hand, desires for pleasure operate in a manner analogous to perception, we would expect an account in which rational calculation could make illusions lose their power over that agent's judgement, but *not* their desire for pleasure, since on that account they would continue to desire the nearer object even while recognising that pursuit of that object is not in their best interest.

minimum, the acceptance that pleasure is the good in the *Protagoras*, an acceptance which is not found elsewhere.

[98] Ibid. 509-10.

[99] Ibid. 510.

Moss notes that Plato's claim is that 'when we desire pleasure we are peculiarly susceptible to the power of illusion, but [he] nonetheless claims that our desires for pleasure are in fact rational, sensitive to calculation.'[100] I take it that this explanation of Socrates' apparent optimism is based on a failure to appreciate temporality as the source of illusion, since Moss takes pleasure's susceptibility to illusion as the root of the problem.

Contra Moss, I suggest a different model for how to understand the way in which desiring pleasure is akin to perception. She claims that Socrates' argument is undermined because the measuring art cannot make agents lose their distorted vision, it can only affect the ability of that distortion to alter an agent's judgement. But this assumes that what is represented by vision in the analogy is to be understood in visual terms in the psychological equivalent. In my analysis above, I argued that the analogues for the inputs into the pans are not objects like cake, or the activity that would bring pleasure (cake-eating), but rather the expected pleasure that would result from cake-eating.[101] The psychological equivalent of vision, when the analogy is made literal, is

[100] Ibid. 532.

[101] Here are the parts of the analogy, and their psychological equivalents, on my reading:

	Element Subject to Distortion	**Correction**	**Faculty or activity involved**	**Error (paradigm example)**	**Solution**
Analogy:	Size	Re-sizing	Visual perception	See the object as bigger	New, undistorted perception of object's size
Stands for:	Value	Re-valuation	Anticipatory affective valuation	Anticipate the affective value as greater	New, undistorted anticipatory

anticipatory affective valuation. Judgement is already built into this model, in that it yields the weight that is put into the scales. While the agent does not get a new vision *per se*, they do get the psychological analogue of that, which is a new anticipatory affective valuation.

On my reading, the outcome of the measuring art is the equivalent of a new perception, due to the corrected value, not a new judgement based on the same information. On this model, the analogue of perception itself can be corrected for, and Socrates' argument that the desire for pleasure is sensitive to calculation is not undermined. The analogy from visual perception to valuation of prospective affections shows that the appetitive desire for pleasure needs to be informed by the conclusions of calculation, not be expected to do calculation, or thought to be inalterable. The emphasis is not on reason's ability to persuade an agent that the appearance of a harmful pleasure as good is deceptive and false, but rather on how to evaluate pleasures and pains from a perspective which reflects that agent's own commitments. This does not imply that pleasures project a false appearance of goodness, but rather that we make errors in valuing these and other commensurate goods. Pleasures do not have a special power to deceive, and the kind of reform required to avoid erring need not involve being suspicious of pleasure.

					affective value

My analysis shows that the source of the illusion affecting appearances in these cases is temporality and a failure to over-identify with our future selves, rather than something in the nature of appetite or desire itself. It is important to note that pleasure is not uniquely subject to this distortion, nor is it uniquely vulnerable. Temporality and a failure of extended self-awareness as the sources of illusion are not a result of the Many's hedonistic commitments, for example, since one could say that illusion is caused by these factors even if you think the good is not pleasure, or if you put other goods in the scale, provided they are commensurable. Temporality is also not the only possible source of appearance distortion affecting judgement. Uncertainty, for example, could also make it difficult to fix the values of pleasures, pains, or other goods when weighing them. Temporality and extended self-awareness are the focus in this argument because the argument is designed to address a particular psychological phenomenon which is apt to be misunderstood as a case of akrasia, and to show that it is our temporal perspective which distorts value perception, rather than that the nature of pleasure is itself illusory.

This does not imply that pleasures and pains are uniquely susceptible to distortion. Rather, other candidate goods can also be distorted by factors such as time and a failure to identify with one's future self properly. Honour would be one candidate example: I may value the honour of becoming my country's President more than becoming Class President, but I may also choose a course of action geared towards the latter at the expense of the former, due to its proximity, and a failure to properly over-identify with my older, future self. Moss denies that the susceptibility to illusions that pleasure is subject to can apply to wealth, health, or knowledge, since, according to her, the

temporal distance of these objects fails to affect their perceived size. She agrees with Plato that they may seem preferable if nearer, but that the sense in which they are preferable collapses into them being more pleasant.

I disagree with this deductive reading: Plato clearly recognises the value of goods other than pleasure, even in the discussion leading up to this passage in the *Protagoras*, in which he and Protagoras discuss courage.[102] However, there is special reason to think that value being reduced to pleasure may be licensed in this argument, given the special conditions Socrates and the Many agree to, where any factors affecting the choice of actions get reduced to pleasure and pain values, and put in the scales (356b2). Even still, Socrates granting this to the Many, for the purposes of fulfilling their goal, which concerns all and only the relative pleasure and pain balance, does not imply that those items are the only ones susceptible to illusion. They act that way in this argument because they are the only items being considered, and everything else reduces to a factor of them. That does not in itself entail that the understanding of the psychology of the phenomenon of being distorted which we get from this passage should be taken, outside of this immediate context, to apply only to pleasure. If Plato thinks this is the way the psychology of these agents works, it's not obvious that this part of the view is limited to the objects included in the reductive view of the Many. In Plato's wider work,

[102] *Prot*. 349d6-51b2; 353b1.

it looks as if everything is subject to appearances. Distortion is a global phenomenon, which is why we have many good visual and auditory analogies in the dialogues.[103]

My alternative suggestion for how to understand the perceptual model at work in this passage paints a different picture to Moss' of what the agent who successfully uses the measuring art looks like. On Moss' view, in the case of a proximate pleasure, the successful measurer still sees a distorted, large (in the analogy), over-valued object, but judges, despite that appearance, that the value is lower. There is an on-going discrepancy between their knowledge and their perception. On my view, the good valuer gets a fresh, corrected perception, and is not continually subject to erroneous, distorted perceptions in the same way. That is not to say that they see a different object as such, but that they see the same object differently. I think of this as a kind of 'seeing as'. In the cake example, the agent would still see the same second slice, and in the language of the metaphor they would see it as smaller, but outside of the metaphor what that means is that they would see it as less valuable, and therefore less desirable.[104] On my account, the knowledge yielded by the *technē metrētikē* is not located in a capacity, but is rather more holistic, in that it changes the framework of perception due to a change in judgement. Here vision and judgement are aligned, and the ideal agent is

[103] Cf. *Soph.*, as just one example, where the objects are perceptual but are not pleasures. For instance imitation misleading the weary (234b-c), false likenesses (234d), phantasma (235d-236b), mimetic art and poetry (267a).

[104] Compare the cave analogy of the *Republic*. At the risk of explaining a metaphor using a metaphor, my reading, if applied there, is the equivalent of the philosopher returning to the cave with a new perspective, and still seeing the same shadows, but now seeing them *as* shadows. Judgement is built into the perception.

no longer subject to systematic errors. This yields a more attractive picture of a successful measurer than one who is still subject to bad inputs.

The *Protagoras* may well reflect some Platonic optimism about our desire for pleasure: optimism about the contribution that reason makes to planning a life. In other contexts Plato emphasises the difficulties we face when doing so, based on a different or more sophisticated understanding of the psychology of pleasure. Yet this does not imply an increasing pessimism about the nature of pleasure itself. Instead, it reveals a sustained Platonic interest in the psychology of planning our lives for pleasure.

V Conclusion

There is a tendency, in the scholarly interpretation of *Protagoras* 356b-357e, to underplay the role of temporality in the argument. This results, in some analyses, in understanding Plato as saying that it is in the nature of pleasure to be susceptible to illusion, such that we should be wary of pleasure. I contend, by contrast, that the distortion affecting pleasure could equally well affect other goods, and that he is not cautioning us to be suspicious of pleasure, but rather to be aware of factors which make the act of fixing the value of prospective pleasure and pains more difficult, and the resulting need for careful prudential planning. His argument reveals that there is a mismatch between the perception of value in a given course of action, and the equality of concern we have for the value of pleasures and pains of all the parts of our lives. The reason for this mismatch is that we are temporal beings, and there is therefore some work to be done to gain a perspective on our lives which reflects our time-neutral value commitments.

Gaining this perspective, if indeed it can be done, involves having the right attitude to one's future self, in a way which makes the value of prospective pleasures and pains as psychologically effective as those which are temporally proximate.

One outcome of my reading is that it reveals Plato's moral psychology to be significantly more interesting, in this passage, than it is usually considered to be. It also connects this passage to other places in the dialogues where there is an interest in the value of consistency of character. For, one way in which one can be better at anticipating one's future affective responses is if one's character, and one's desires, are consistent over time. The question whether consistency of character yields consistency of desire is not made explicit here, but it does get picked up in the *Philebus*, which I will explore in Chapter One, and will consider again in Chapter Five.

CHAPTER THREE
JARS, SIEVES AND SOULS: THE MYTH OF THE WATER CARRIERS IN *GORGIAS* 492E-494A

I Introduction

At *Gorgias* 492e, in the context of a Socratic refutation of Callicles' hedonism, Plato introduces two myths in which leaky jars (πίθοι) serve as metaphors for the souls of tyrannical hedonists with insatiable desires.[105] While Socrates appears to hold that satisfaction consists in needing nothing, Callicles appears to hold that, since the aim is maximum satisfaction, we should maximise our desires and ensure we have the power to satisfy them. The first, minimising option, makes us need nothing, while the other, maximising notion, makes us maximally needy. Socrates offers the first myth as a vivid illustration of the life of maximal neediness:

> *S.* Then it's wrong to say that those who need nothing are happy.
>
> *C.* Of course. Otherwise stones and corpses would be happiest.
>
> *S.* But the life you speak of is a strange one too. For I tell you, I wouldn't be surprised if Euripides speaks the truth in those verses where he says, 'Who knows if being alive is really being dead, and being dead being alive?' And perhaps we too are really dead. For once I heard from some wise man that we are dead now, our body is our tomb; and that of our soul with appetites in it is liable to be persuaded and to sway back and forth. And a subtle man, perhaps some Sicilian or Italian, who told this story, played on the name, and because it was persuadable (πιθανόν) and impressionable called it a jar (πίθον), and called the foolish (ἀνοήτους) the uninitiated (ἀμυήτους), and said that in the foolish men that of the soul with appetites, the foolish, intemperate, and insatiable in it, was a leaking jar, because it couldn't be filled. This man indicates – contrary to you, Callicles – that of all those in Hades – speaking of the unseen (ἀιδὲς) this way – these are the most wretched, the uninitiated, and that they carry water to this leaky jar with another leaky thing, a sieve (κόσκινον). And so he's saying –

[105] While the term hedonist is normally used to refer to someone who holds a specific theory of the good, here I am using it more loosely, to characterise those who seek pleasure by putting into practice, figuratively, the theory that Callicles holds.

> so the man who told me said – that the sieve is the soul; and he likened the soul of the foolish to a sieve because it was leaky, since it could hold nothing, from its unreliability and forgetfulness.[106]

Callicles remains unpersuaded by this picture of hedonism, and elicits Socrates to try a second, from 'the same school' (ἐκ τοῦ αὐτοῦ γυμνασίου), this time with leaky jars for some, full jars for others, and no sieves in sight:

> *S*. Now this is all fairly strange. But he shows what I'd like to indicate to you, so that I persuade you, if I can, to change your mind, and instead of the insatiable and unrestrained life to choose the orderly life adequately supplied and satisfied with whatever it has at any time. But now do I persuade you at all to change your mind, and agree that the orderly are happier than the intemperate? Or even if I tell you many more stories like this one, won't you change your mind any more?
>
> *C*. You're nearer the truth there, Socrates.
>
> *S*. Come on then, I'll tell you another comparison, from the same school as that one. See now if you're saying something like this about the life of each of the two men, the temperate and the intemperate: – Suppose for instance that each of two men has a lot of jars, and one has sound and full jars, one full of wine, another of honey, another of milk, and many others full of many things. And suppose the sources for each of these things are scarce and hard to find, provided only with much severe effort. Now when one man has filled up, he brings in no more, and doesn't care about them, but is at rest as far as they are concerned. The other

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[106] *Grg.* 492e3-3c3, trans. Irwin (1979). Here is the Greek from the TLG (1903 repr. 1968):
Σωκράτης: οὐκ ἄρα ὀρθῶς λέγονται οἱ μηδενὸς δεόμενοι εὐδαίμονες εἶναι.
Κ: οἱ λίθοι γὰρ ἂν οὕτω γε καὶ οἱ νεκροὶ εὐδαιμονέστατοι εἶεν.
Σ: ἀλλὰ μὲν δὴ καὶ ὥς γε σὺ λέγεις δεινὸς ὁ βίος. οὐ γάρ τοι θαυμάζοιμ᾽ ἂν εἰ Εὐριπίδης ἀληθῆ ἐν τοῖσδε λέγει, λέγων—"τίς δ᾽ οἶδεν, εἰ τὸ ζῆν μέν ἐστι κατθανεῖν,τὸ κατθανεῖν δὲ ζῆν; καὶ ἡμεῖς τῷ ὄντι ἴσως τέθναμεν: ἤδη γάρ του ἔγωγε καὶ ἤκουσα τῶν σοφῶν ὡς νῦν ἡμεῖς τέθναμεν καὶ τὸ μὲν σῶμά ἐστιν ἡμῖν σῆμα, τῆς δὲ ψυχῆς τοῦτο ἐν ᾧ ἐπιθυμίαι εἰσὶ τυγχάνει ὂν οἷον ἀναπείθεσθαι καὶ μεταπίπτειν ἄνω κάτω, καὶ τοῦτο ἄρα τις μυθολογῶν κομψὸς ἀνήρ, ἴσως Σικελός τις ἢ Ἰταλικός, παράγων τῷ ὀνόματι διὰ τὸ πιθανόν τε καὶ πειστικὸν ὠνόμασε πίθον, τοὺς δὲ ἀνοήτους ἀμυήτους, τῶν δ᾽ ἀνοήτων τοῦτο τῆς ψυχῆς οὗ αἱ ἐπιθυμίαι εἰσί, τὸ ἀκόλαστον αὐτοῦ καὶ οὐ στεγανόν, ὡς τετρημένος εἴη πίθος, διὰ τὴν ἀπληστίαν ἀπεικάσας. τοὐναντίον δὴ οὗτος σοί, ὦ Καλλίκλεις, ἐνδείκνυται ὡς τῶν ἐν Ἅιδου—τὸ ἀιδὲς δὴ λέγων—οὗτοι ἀθλιώτατοι ἂν εἶεν, οἱ ἀμύητοι, καὶ φοροῖεν εἰς τὸν τετρημένον πίθον ὕδωρ ἑτέρῳ τοιούτῳ τετρημένῳ κοσκίνῳ. τὸ δὲ κόσκινον ἄρα λέγει, ὡς ἔφη ὁ πρὸς ἐμὲ λέγων, τὴν ψυχὴν εἶναι: τὴν δὲ ψυχὴν κοσκίνῳ ἀπῄκασεν τὴν τῶν ἀνοήτων ὡς τετρημένην, ἅτε οὐ δυναμένην στέγειν δι᾽ ἀπιστίαν τε καὶ λήθην.

> man has sources like the first man's that can be drawn on, though with difficulty. But his vessels are leaky and rotten, and he is forced to be always filling them day and night, or else he suffers the most extreme distresses. Now if that is how each man's life is, do you say that the intemperate man's life is happier than the orderly man's? When I tell you this, do I persuade you at all to concede that the orderly life is better than the intemperate, or don't I persuade you?
>
> *C*. No, you don't, Socrates. For that one who has filled up has no pleasure at all anymore…[107]

My aim here is to explain the dialectical purpose of modifying the image: why are there *two* myths of jars in the *Gorgias* rather than one?[108] Contrary to scholars who take Plato's

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[107] *Grg.* 493c4-494a5, trans. Irwin (1979). Here is the Greek from the TLG (1903 repr. 1968):
Σ: ταῦτ᾽ ἐπιεικῶς μέν ἐστιν ὑπό τι ἄτοπα, δηλοῖ μὴν ὃ ἐγὼ βούλομαί σοι ἐνδειξάμενος, ἐάν πως οἷός τε ὦ, πεῖσαι μεταθέσθαι, ἀντὶ τοῦ ἀπλήστως καὶ ἀκολάστως ἔχοντος βίου τὸν κοσμίως καὶ τοῖς ἀεὶ παροῦσιν ἱκανῶς καὶ ἐξαρκούντως ἔχοντα βίον ἑλέσθαι. ἀλλὰ πότερον πείθω τί σε καὶ μετατίθεσθαι εὐδαιμονεστέρους εἶναι τοὺς κοσμίους τῶν ἀκολάστων, ἢ οὐδ᾽ ἂν ἄλλα πολλὰ τοιαῦτα μυθολογῶ, οὐδέν τι μᾶλλον μεταθήσῃ;
Κ: τοῦτ᾽ ἀληθέστερον εἴρηκας, ὦ Σώκρατες.
Σ: φέρε δή, ἄλλην σοι εἰκόνα λέγω ἐκ τοῦ αὐτοῦ γυμνασίου τῇ νῦν. σκόπει γὰρ εἰ τοιόνδε λέγεις περὶ τοῦ βίου ἑκατέρου, τοῦ τε σώφρονος καὶ τοῦ ἀκολάστου, οἷον εἰ δυοῖν ἀνδροῖν ἑκατέρῳ πίθοι πολλοὶ εἶεν καὶ τῷ μὲν ἑτέρῳ ὑγιεῖς καὶ πλήρεις, ὁ μὲν οἴνου, ὁ δὲ μέλιτος, ὁ δὲ γάλακτος, καὶ ἄλλοι πολλοὶ πολλῶν, νάματα δὲ σπάνια καὶ χαλεπὰ ἑκάστου τούτων εἴη καὶ μετὰ πολλῶν πόνων καὶ χαλεπῶν ἐκποριζόμενα: ὁ μὲν οὖν ἕτερος πληρωσάμενος μήτ᾽ ἐποχετεύοι μήτε τι φροντίζοι, ἀλλ᾽ ἕνεκα τούτων ἡσυχίαν ἄγοι: τῷ δ᾽ ἑτέρῳ τὰ μὲν νάματα, ὥσπερ καὶ ἐκείνῳ, δυνατὰ μὲν πορίζεσθαι, χαλεπὰ δέ, τὰ δ᾽ ἀγγεῖα τετρημένα καὶ σαθρά, ἀναγκάζοιτο δ᾽ ἀεὶ καὶ νύκτα καὶ ἡμέραν πιμπλάναι αὐτά, ἢ τὰς ἐσχάτας λυποῖτο λύπας: ἆρα τοιούτου ἑκατέρου ὄντος τοῦ βίου, λέγεις τὸν τοῦ ἀκολάστου εὐδαιμονέστερον εἶναι ἢ τὸν τοῦ κοσμίου; πείθω τί σε ταῦτα λέγων συγχωρῆσαι τὸν κόσμιον βίον τοῦ ἀκολάστου ἀμείνω εἶναι, ἢ οὐ πείθω;
Κ: οὐ πείθεις, ὦ Σώκρατες. τῷ μὲν γὰρ πληρωσαμένῳ ἐκείνῳ οὐκέτ᾽ ἔστιν ἡδονὴ οὐδεμία…
[108] My reading necessarily involves taking the myths seriously. I am persuaded by treatments like those of Sedley (2009) 51-76, Rowe (2012) 187-198, and Edmonds (2012) 165-86, which understand Plato's use of myth as supportive of the arguments of the text, rather than supplementing what cannot be adequately expressed through argument, or undermining the arguments with appeal to theological reasons for reaching the same conclusions about actions. This point is made in reference to the water carriers myth in specific by Edmonds (2012) 182: 'The myth of the water-carriers, like the myth of judgement at the end, serves to amplify and clarify the arguments in the dialogue, not to present ideas ungraspable by reason or to supplement a deficient argument with threats of hell-fire hereafter'.

inclusion of two versions as a casual repetition, or slight manipulation, or indeed those who pass over it altogether, I will begin by arguing that the two versions are distinct, and that this is in fact deliberate and significant.[109] They are the result of a careful manipulation by Socrates, in which he develops a more precise counter-argument to Callicles than the first image includes. The two images together therefore make a different point than either version alone would.

I ultimately defend the claim that the inclusion of two versions of the myth represent a deliberate effort by Socrates to counter Callicles' model of hedonism. I do this, first, with reference to the history of the water carriers myth, arguing that we should take seriously Socrates' suggestion that life is really death in order to understand the force of the myth as it appears in the *Gorgias*. I will then examine the various elements of the myth in order to understand what they represent, and I will map out the elements of the metaphor as an argumentative theory, in part to explain the difference between the two versions of it, and to see what is unpersuasive to Callicles, and is therefore modified in the move from the first to the second. I argue that Socrates has argumentative grounds for proceeding this way, and that understanding these grounds allows us to better understand Callicles' supposed position. I will present three interpretive possibilities for understanding the move to the second version, and particularly for understanding what critique of hedonism this use of the water carriers myth makes, ultimately arguing for a hybrid of two of the options. The reading I defend will help to solve some puzzles about the myth; it will explain why it depicts the hedonist as thoughtless and forgetful, it will

[109] I will discuss specific treatments in section II, below.

help us decide whether there is a part-whole relation in the mechanics of the myth, as some scholars have maintained, and ultimately it will help explore what we can learn from this exchange about Plato's view on how successful a hedonist life can be on its own terms.

II The Myth of the Water Carriers

Eva Keuls defends a multifaceted reading of the water carriers myth in *The Water Carriers in Hades*, one which she claims Classical authors were sensitive to, including Homer, Aeschylus and Euripides.[110] This complex reading includes an appreciation of the contrast between seeing the water carriers' endless toil as damnation while also viewing it as a kind of continuation of the rhythm of life that their cycles of pain, frustration and insatiability provide.[111] The latter is in some sense preferable to the more common depiction of the dead in Hades as locked in time and exempt from experience.

The water carriers, by contrast to the dead, are observed to appear more lifelike on vase paintings as early as the 6th century B.C.E.[112] On some monuments the water carriers are not the unholy but the blessed, appearing 'incongruously happy' in paintings, the pouring of water into pierced πίθοι being a purifying ritual which provides catharsis.[113]

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[110] Keuls (1974) 29 n. 5. For other studies of the myth of the water carriers and the Danaids see Bonner (1902) 129-73, Cook (1964), and Waser (1901).

[111] Keuls (1974) 14 n. 5.

[112] Ibid. 16 n. 5.

[113] Ibid. 6 n. 5. There is reason to be suspicious of these 'incongruously happy' figures. Early Greek vase painting seems rarely to represent admired figures as smiling (depictions of the virtues, for instance, have at best a faint grin, and usually appear neutral), such that these

Keuls notes that 'in an occasional variant of the motif', an example of which is found in the *Gorgias*, we find both that the πίθος is leaking and that the water jugs have holes in them, and the latter are called sieves.[114] Keuls calls Plato's depiction a 'rather incongruous duplication of futility', and argues that this 'curious duality' serves to portray an ordeal of both initiation and punishment.[115] She further claims that 'Plato's metaphor becomes a little muddled, because first the πίθος stands for appetites of the soul and then the soul itself becomes likened to the sieve with which the uninitiated – alias-the-unenlightened – try to fill the πίθος'.[116] Keuls thinks the inconsistency in the allegory could explain why Plato introduces it so casually, as third-hand material.[117]

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representations could imply a kind of mindless joy. Indeed, the myth was eventually confounded with the myth of the Danaids, but the earliest evidence of this association is found in the Pseudo Platonic dialogue [*Ax*.] at 371e (cf. Keuls (1974) 44 n. 5).

The myth is also related to at least two other stories: the first being the myth of Tantalus, whose punishment is linked explicitly to water, and invoked at *Grg.* 525e1-2 in the escatological myth. The other is the story of King Sisyphus, whose underworld punishment of ceaselessly rolling a boulder up a hill is similarly fruitless, though perhaps more explicitly frustrating (on whom see Apollod. *Bibl.* 1.9; Hom. *Od*. 11.593-600; and Paus. *Desc.* 2.5.1.). Lucr. *De Rerum* III interprets the myth as making a comment on politicians who seek power which, since it is an empty object, is likened to the boulder. He represents this pursuit as the feeding of an ungrateful mind, filling it with good things which will never satisfy it. And he likens this to girls who, in the bloom of youth, pour water through a sieve, whose nature it is never to be filled, and calls this a life of fools which becomes a hell in itself, where those who live are half-dead. It seems that each of these themes are evoked, in the ancient mind, by the water carrier imagery.

[114] This version of the myth is also found in Lucr. *De Rerum* III, 1007-10, and an echo of it is in Sen. *Ep*. 99.5. It further appears in a joke told by Bion of Borysthenes, a Hellenistic philosopher, as reported by Diog. Laert. in *Lives* 4.7.50, and in Arist. *Oec*. 1.6.1 and 7.40, where he connects the πίθος idiom to bad household management (cf. Keuls (1974) 25-6, n. 5).

[115] Keuls (1974) 26-7, n. 5.

[116] Ibid. 32 n. 5.

[117] Ibid. 32 n. 5. A note on the source of this material: the question of which school the images come from is debated in the literature, since as Socrates offers the second story he says it is from 'the same school' (ἐκ τοῦ αὐτοῦ γυμνασίου) as the first. The themes of death and living when dead are, for example, known pre-occupations of the Pythagoreans. While I find that the debate about the attribution of the myth to one philosophical school or another is, in its current state,

It's true that there is a puzzling part-whole structure in the myth, since Socrates says both that a part of our soul is the jar, and the sieve is our soul, rather than another part of the soul. The sieve is instead used to fill another part of the soul. We should not, however, accept Keuls' claim that Plato's inclusion of both jars and sieves is either an incongruous duplication – a careless muddling of the received motif – or an *ad hoc* conflation of two versions of the original myth. The juxtaposition of the version which includes both jars and sieves next to a version which is just about jars shows that Plato is sensitive to the difference, and he is not unaware of the two senses in which the actions of the water carriers in the first version are futile. On any charitable reading we must assume that there is some important difference between the two stories, and some presuppositions of the first version which are removed in the second, which are assumed to be recognised by Callicles when he opts for the second. Further, we owe it to Plato to take seriously the part-whole structure he sets up in the first version of the myth, and not to assume that the distancing language surrounding Socrates' introduction of it gives us licence to write it off.

Keuls' worry about the muddling of the metaphor raises another worry, which is about how important we should take the move from the first to the second version of the myth

unhelpful for understanding how the myth is working in the text, it does expose Plato's emphasis on the sources of the myth. That Plato calls our attention to its derivation, which happens quickly and goes unchallenged, helps establish the playful element of swapping the content of the myth around in its second form. Such a play only makes sense if there is a familiar canonical version of the myth to play with – a shared understanding of the story that would be familiar enough to his audience that they could recognise when he is altering it, or at least introducing a known alternative that was in circulation, but importantly different to the first. Cf. Dodds (1959) 296-8, 303.

to be, and whether we should understand the two versions as very different at all. The major English commentaries on the passage (Dodds and Irwin) fail to treat the passage fully; with Irwin passing over it quickly, without bringing out the details which distinguish one version from the other, and Dodds failing to appreciate the full distinction between the two versions, since he describes the move from the first to the second as a case of Socrates picking out a single significant element from the first version (the leaky jar) and using it to enforce a conception of pleasure.[118] Though Dodds' commentary works through both versions carefully, phrase by phrase, he doesn't fully treat the argument, or suggest how we should understand the significance of the move to the second version of the myth. Whether as a result, or for independent reasons, the move between versions of the myth has not generally been of interest to commentators.

While the views of these scholars (Keuls, Irwin and Dodds) are more considered than the average reading, I expect many readers, even careful ones, to understand the presence of two versions of the myth as something like a casual repetition which essentially conveys one story. Although Socrates introduces the second story as 'another image' (493d5), there is a tempting, weaker reading which understands this to be in the sense of a re-description of the first, with some differences of emphasis. In contrast to this weaker reading, I aim to show that we lose something important if we fail to appreciate the important differences between the two myths, and that re-visiting the myth puts us in a position to develop a stronger reading, and to appreciate how

[118] Dodds (1959) 296-8, 304-5 and Irwin (1979) 195-198.

deliberately and carefully written the passage is, and how rich and nuanced is its imagery. In fact I will argue that the move from one myth to the other marks a turning point in Platonic moral psychology.

The way Plato writes the passage, with the short interlude between the two versions, reveals that he changes the image deliberately: in the second version sieves are left out, and this very clearly marks off the element of the story that is relevant in the choice offered to Callicles.[119] But what do sieves symbolise? Below I will explore the options for what the key elements of the first myth represent, and the reasons why the second version is altered in very particular ways.

III Elements of the Myths

In order to appreciate the differences between the two versions of the myth, and the criticism of hedonism implied by the first, we need to see what the components symbolise. This is especially crucial for the main elements of the first myth: death, water, jars, and sieves.

III.i Death

[119] This is not the only difference between the two versions in the *Grg.*, and I will discuss others below, but it is the most significant change to the mechanics of the image.

I have suggested that the way to start unlocking the myth is to take seriously Socrates' suggestion that life is really death, evidently quoted from Euripides.[120] Much of the force of the water carriers myth comes from the observation that Callicles' version of the best life is in fact δεινός, a strange or terrible thing, a hell on earth.[121] Dodds notes that the characterisation of asceticism as a kind of living death, or death in life, was a popular motif in Greek antiquity, citing Sophocles' *Antigone* 1165, and Aristophanes' *Clouds* 504.[122] This version of the myth, then, represents a very deliberate inversion of a familiar portrayal when it depicts not asceticism but hedonism as a living death, rather than the most εὐδαίμων life, thereby positioning the hedonist life as closer to the terrible life of stones or corpses than Callicles would prefer.[123] We might even think that Plato's audience, familiar with renderings of water carriers as both blessed and cursed, would be in a good position to appreciate this new association of the dual interpretations in the context of the critique of hedonism: the life we (or at least

[120] Cf. Eur. *Phrixus*, fr. 833. According to Edmonds (2012), 180 n. 39, Sext. Emp. attributes this well-known tag to Heraclitus (*Pyr.* 3.230; Heraclitus fr. 62, 88).

[121] δεινός (572b4, 590a6) is notorious for being ambiguous between fearful or terrible, on the one hand, and something like strange or remarkable, on the other. It can also mean 'clever'. It is possible that Plato expects his audience to be sensitive to all these possibilities, which would sit nicely with the ambiguities of the myth itself.

[122] Dodds (1959) 299 n. 9. In the latter, the forgetful (ἐπιλήσμων) Strepsiades is afraid of becoming half-dead (ἡμιθνής) if he joins Socrates' school, and asks for a honeyed cake to keep himself mortal as he learns with him (line 504). The deliberate inversion I claim to find here, then, can be read as an attempt to turn a familiar criticism of Socrates' way of life into a criticism of his interlocutor. Indeed, part of the construction of his version of the water carriers image shows Socrates responding to a challenge to distinguish the life of limited desires from the life (if it can be called such) of a corpse, since the first version of the myth must pick up on Sisyphean imagery, and be designed to show Callicles an image of why this life would be so exhausting, in contrast to the calm (ἡσυχίαν, 493e7) figure depicted in the second version.

[123] This is reinforced by the the σῶμά σῆμα pun of 493a3.

Callicles) expect to be the most pleasant, the most blessed (εὐδαίμων), is revealed as the most cursed.

Callicles' hedonists are cursed with insatiable desires and are essentially characterised by need, creating an image of those whom Callicles calls most alive, who are in fact indistinguishable from the futile, toiling dead of Greek mythology.[124] In the final, eschatological myth, Polus and Gorgias are criticised for being unable to describe a life that is different from the depictions of Hades (*Gorgias* 527a5). Reading backwards, Plato's appropriation of the water carriers myths serves to show how Callicles' hedonism, though avoiding life as a corpse, is nonetheless a depiction of a living death – an inversion of a criticism usually applied to asceticism, which is here cleverly attached to hedonism.[125]

[124] Following Bernardete (2009) 75, and Ranasinghe (2009) 105. Cf. Ranasinghe, 105 n. 15: '…the natures of these men are so devoid of content that they might as well have been dead'.

[125] The trope of life as death, and the interchangeability between the two is used repeatedly by Plato, for example in the frames of *Rep.* and *Prot*. Here in the *Gorgias*, we might wonder how exactly death is being used to motivate an attack on Callicles' view, and whether there is a tighter conceptual connection between his breed of hedonism and death, which Plato takes this myth to signal. It's striking, on a surface reading, that Socrates meets death with death. This gets picked up in the discussion of the separation of body and soul at the point of death (524b3), which in turn recalls the image of pleasure nailing the soul to the body at *Phd*. 83d. A hedonistic lifestyle is being depicted as an embodied death, in which there is a problematic attachment between body and soul (with the σῶμά σῆμα pun of 493a3), instead of the separation of soul from body which we would expect.

III.ii Water

In addition to being a myth about the afterlife, the depiction of a life where physical replenishment involves only 'watery' objects yields an intrinsic connection between the water carriers and death. In the first version of the myth, pleasures are depicted not just as water, symbolically, but as *watery* – they are cast as inheriting the qualities of water, in the sense of fluidity and flowing, though not in the sense of being diluted. Additionally, Callicles and Socrates emphasise the importance of the inflow and outflow of pleasure, and they liken desire to thirst (494a-b).

The comparison between water and pleasure is problematic. We might wonder, for example, if water would be considered common and therefore worthless, given its abundance (in ancient Greece, if not now), such that a comparison of pleasure to water would constitute an inherent criticism of it as an object. However, the supply of *drinkable* water in ancient Greece was scarce and precious. Further, we need only think of the *Euthydemus* to appreciate that the association between water and pleasure is more nuanced, for Plato and his audience. There Plato quotes the beginning of Pindar *Olympian* 1, in which 'water is cheapest, though best (ἄριστον)'.[126] Indeed, in the part of the *Critias* where the topography of the ideal city is described, water sources are depicted as key (for example at 115c), and water itself has the connotation of being politically dangerous. There is literary precedence for Plato attributing to certain forms of water dangerous or problematic properties. But even internal to the water carriers

[126] *Euthyd*. 304b3, trans. Lamb. Pindar uses the same verb.

myth, the punishment the carriers endure is to move water but never retain it, such that water is clearly of value – it's what they cannot hold and therefore suffer over.[127]

However, it's only explicitly the water carriers themselves – that is hedonists themselves – who hold the water to be valuable. It's not obvious that they are pitiful because of their failure to retain an object which anyone other than themselves would prize. Furthermore, the water in question is in the underworld, and we know from classical sources that the water in Hades carries a negative connotation.[128] The specific

[127] One might worry that my interest in the liquid in the metaphor is misplaced, in that the image of water-fetching and pouring is a usual facet of the original myth, and the metaphor of desire-satisfaction as filling is pervasive, and it is used as much by Callicles as by Socrates (for example at *Grg*. 492a). Further, liquids are retained in the second version of the myth, in which jars are filled with milk, honey, and wine, which are staple items for storage and conceivable objects of desire. One might think that it is unclear that hedonists think that water *per se* is valuable, as opposed to the satisfaction of a desire, wherein a greater desire yields a greater satisfaction, and in which what it takes to satisfy the desire is a function of the desire itself.

In taking Plato's use of this myth seriously, I also take seriously his choice of water as a symbol of pleasure in the first version. That this is a familiar image for his audience does not undermine the care he can be thought to take over invoking watery pleasures in the context of a critique of hedonists who seek the flowing of pleasures, or unlimited *filling*, rather than *being filled*. The interlocutors don't just pick up ἀποπίμπλημι as a colloquial term for desire fulfilment but rather interrogate the idea of filling one's desires by imagining desire-satisfaction as a process of literal filling. Callicles' own adoption of ἀποπίμπλημι (492a2) for desire satisfaction speaks to the relevance of the image: he buys in to the depiction of the pleasure his hedonists are after as fluid. He is instead at pains to clarify that desire-satisfaction, for him, is not aimed at filling and storing, but at filling and re-filling, involving greater and greater inflow and outflow (ἐπιῤῥέω and ἐκροή, 494b2-3-4). He embraces the liquid description in a way which cannot be explained by the pervasiveness of the filling metaphor alone. This enthusiastic adoption of the liquid image of pleasures explains why the second version of the myth includes liquids, too: Socrates has no need to adjust elements of the myth which Callicles does not reject, and his assumed acceptance of the pleasure he is interested in being depicted as liquid is evidenced by its appearance in the second myth.

[128] Greek and Roman examples, which only scratch the surface, include: Apul. *Met.* 6. 13; Hes. *Theog.* 775; Hom. *Il.* 3. 368; 14. 271; Nonnus *Dion*. 9. 135; Ov. *Met.*; Verg. *Aen.* 6; Paus. *Desc.* 8. 17. 6-8; Pl. *Phd.* 112e; *Rep.* 387c; Sen. *Her. F.* 762; Stat. *Theb.* 1. 46 and 4. 520; Strab., *Geography* 8.8.4,

use of underworld water in the myth, then, implies that there is a problem with the object it represents, namely pleasure, or at least pleasures of a certain kind. The second myth is one in which jars are filled with milk, wine and honey, but no water – water is gone, but liquidity is retained. Further, we are no longer in an underworld setting in the second version. These mark important shifts, since the element which symbolises pleasure, and two elements which carry with them negative connotations, are left out. The connection between water and death further supports the idea that this particular myth was anything but arbitrarily chosen.

III.iii Jars and Sieves

Afterlife punishment myths as allegories for moral truths are a familiar Platonic device, both in the *Gorgias* and elsewhere (for example *Phd.*, *Rep.*), where they are used to communicate views about appetites and desire.[129] Here in the *Gorgias*, the central images are the jars and sieves, and clarifying what they represent is the key to illuminating the import of the passage.

The task of translating the jar and sieve metaphors into philosophical or argumentative theory is made harder by the puzzling part-whole structure Keuls points to, since Socrates says both that a part of our soul is the jar (493a7), and that the soul of a fool is a

and 14. 2. 7; and Verg. *G.* 4. 471. The water in the myth is not explicitly described as the water from an underworld river, for example, but the underworld context is enough to make readers suspicious of this water. See also the description of underworld rivers at *Phd*. 111c4-114c8, including one which is likened to a river of mud in Sicily, at 111e.

[129] On which see Sedley (2009) 53 n. 4.

sieve (493c1), rather than that it is another part of their souls. More specifically, the part of our soul with appetites[130] is called a jar (πίθον, 493a7), and in the foolish[131] the part of the soul with appetites is a perforated jar[132] because it is insatiate.[133] The wretched in Hades, according to the myth, will carry water to their leaky jar with another leaky thing, a sieve.[134] So the sieve is a soul,[135] with the next line reinforcing this identification. It looks, then, as if, in the first story, the sieve is the soul of the intemperate, and the jar is the part of the soul where the appetites are located. But this makes the mechanics of the metaphor awkward, since it means that the soul is described as being used as a tool to try to fill a part of itself.[136] I think we need to take this idea seriously and literally, and I will return to it below.

In the second myth, it's striking that Socrates starts out by talking about the two lives (βίοι, 493d7) of two men (οἷον ἀνδροῖν) who possess jars (from the εἶεν at 493c8), rather than whose souls *are* jars. The πίθοι of the second version of the myth can only be soul parts rather than whole souls, since they are described as numerous and belonging to

[130] τῆς δὲ ψυχῆς τοῦτο ἐν ᾧ ἐπιθυμίαι, 493a4.
[131] τοὺς ἀνοήτους, 493a7.
[132] ὡς τετρημένος εἴη πίθος, 493b2.
[133] διὰ τὴν ἀπληστίαν ἀπεικάσας, 493b2-3.
[134] φοροῖεν εἰς τὸν τετρημένον πίθον ὕδωρ ἑτέρῳ τοιούτῳ τετρημένῳ κοσκίνῳ, 493b6.
[135] τὸ δὲ κόσκινον… τὴν ψυχὴν εἶναι, 493c1.
[136] The structure of Socrates' first version of the relation between sieves and jars might be considered especially problematic if we think it requires a version of tripartition. Below (n. 150 and n. 155) I will suggest that this tension is evidence of the need for the complex psychology we see in a linked passage in the *Rep*. I suggest the awkwardness of this passage is due to the fact that we need tripartition in order to progress the discussion, and here Socrates neither has that as a resource, nor does he have an interlocutor receptive to that theory, since Callicles' under-developed views cannot bear the weight of this complexity.

the men. But the relation between the men and the jars is different than in the first myth, since their *possession of* the jars is emphasised over their *identification with* the jars.

There are other notable differences between the myths. For instance, Socrates introduces the first version of the myth as second-hand, remembered from some time in the past, and borrowed from some Sicilian or Italian (493a5), repeatedly referring to the parts of the myth as those which this unknown person told him (493b2, b6, c4). He also calls it strange (ἄτοπος, 493c4). We could contrast these evident distancing moves with Socrates' ownership of the second version (evidenced at 494a4-5), though he also says that both are from the same school.[137]

Another difference, and the most evident, is that sieves are missing from the second version, which suggests that it's only the intemperate who can have sieves.[138] In the first myth, we're told that the uninitiated (ἀμυήτους) who are also the foolish (ἀνοήτους, presumably a pun on the former) have a sieve-like soul because it cannot hold anything due to its unreliability and forgetfulness.[139] Why is Socrates entitled to say this? Is there

[137] ἐκ τοῦ αὐτοῦ γυμνασίου, 493d5. While I think we are meant to notice these distancing moves, I don't take them to mean that we shouldn't take the first myth seriously. That Plato has chosen it as a representation of the pleasure-seeking life, even in a critical vein, must show that it captures something he at least thinks is potentially pertinent. While the inclusion of the myth could be dialectical, we shouldn't minimise it by saying so. What is offered to Callicles in the first myth is a possible characterisation of the life of a hedonist, and this still commits Plato to some picture of that kind of person's moral psychology. For the contrasting view see Hirzel (1877) 11, Lorenz (2008) 248, Blank (1991) 27 n. 7. Inwood (2009) 48-9 adds that it's possible to take the myths as not true, according to Socrates, while still holding that he thinks that acceptance of the moral content of a myth could affect our lives for the better.

[138] Though we might wonder whether we all start out as intemperate.

[139] δι᾽ ἀπιστίαν τε καὶ λήθην, 493c1, following trans. Irwin (1979).

support for the claim that the soul of the hedonist is unreliable and, more contentiously (given the seeming total absence of argument for this claim), forgetful? What's the problem with the hedonist's soul that allows for this sieve-like depiction, and which Plato is pointing to when he uses this metaphor? Having explored the symbols in the two versions of the myth, and some of the differences between them, we are in a better place to answer some of these questions, and to start to understand what the move from one to the other symbolises. In the next section, I will introduce what I take to be the three main interpretive possibilities, and begin to unpack the claims about unreliability and forgetfulness.

IV What is the Critique in the First Myth?

In this section I seek to clarify how we should understand the critique of hedonism illustrated by the first myth. In that first version, it seems that there is a problem with either the tool (sieve) used to extract resources (water), or with the object extracted (water), which means that the hedonist goes perpetually unsatisfied. This implies that the hedonist depicted in the first version is either pursuing the wrong end (drinking water/ taking pleasure) or is using the wrong means (a sieve/ a stupid and forgetful soul or soul part) to pursue their end. If drinking water were the right object to pursue, a sieve would be the worst possible tool. So what is the exact target of the criticism of hedonism in the first version? And, how are we to understand the move from the first to the second version, and the importance of there being two versions at all?

In remaining unpersuaded by the picture of hedonism Socrates offers in the water carriers myth, before he moves on to a second version which excludes sieves, Callicles could be doing something quite simple: his quick dismissal at 493d3, 'τοῦτ᾽ ἀληθέστερον εἴρηκας, ὦ Σώκρατες', could amount to no more than a distaste for being associated with fools. His concise discharge of the account, and the lack of any kind of explanation for it, favours this reading. If sieves and stupidity are linked, as they seem to be, then he simply rejects a picture which includes sieves. Indeed, in the second story, the leaky jars are still tied to intemperance,[140] which Callicles does not accept as a vice, but they are not connected with foolishness.

Another possibility is that Callicles' quick dismissal indicates that he is unwilling to accept any story which is introduced with the aim of persuading him that the orderly life is happier than the undisciplined life. If so, his dismissal would not indicate an issue with any specific aspect of the first version of the myth, but rather the general argumentative thrust which is in fact shared by both versions.

But the key to understanding what's at stake in that rejection, or failure of persuasion, and why this is an appropriate allegory for revealing a criticism of hedonism which Callicles will buy into at least enough to engage with, is understanding what the argumentative grounds of the stupidity claim are, and how that relates to the depiction of the pleasures Callicles chooses to pursue as watery. Though Callicles will fail to be persuaded by either version, Socrates must at least have thought the second to be

[140] τοῦ ἀκολάστου, 493d7.

potentially less dismissible by him. In other words, even if it's true that Callicles' dismissal indicates a more general distaste with being associated with fools or an unwillingness to accept the superiority of the orderly life, we can still ask the question why Socrates alters the myth in the way he does, which involves picking out specific, potentially objectionable elements of the first myth, which are altered or omitted in the second.

It's important that I clarify what I mean by Callicles' failure to be persuaded by the first version of the myth, and what can be understood from that rebuff and the move to the second myth. Ultimately Callicles rejects both versions, so it would be misleading to suggest that he is unpersuaded by the first version and rejects it *in favour of* the second, and thus finds the second more attractive. It helps to distinguish between:

1. Callicles' reasons for finding the first image unpersuasive (and his brief response really only leaves room for speculation here, to the effect of 'why would a hedonist like him be unimpressed with it?', given what else he says);
2. Socrates' interpretation of why Callicles would be unpersuaded by the first image – we have more evidence of this, implicit in the way in which he alters the image in the second version, which must, if he is arguing in good faith, be responsive to what he thinks will be more appealing to Callicles; and perhaps
3. What Plato's readers are invited to think about when presented with these images, and the space that's left for us to consider what someone with views like these would or would not be persuaded by.

My analysis will say something about the first of these considerations, which is motivated by Callicles finding the second version of the myth less easily dismissible, and his feeling compelled to engage with it more. That interpretation is based simply on him giving more than a one-line response to the second version. That's not to say that Callicles endorses the second myth – his increased engagement could in fact demonstrate that he objects to it more, and that he feels more of a need to make explicit why he's not persuaded. In some sense we might think it must be worse, because Callicles is after the flowing in and out of pleasure, and the second version doesn't even include that in the organised man's life.

My main emphasis here will be the second consideration: how Socrates responds to what he understands to be the reasons for Callicles' failure to be persuaded by the first myth, and how he then constructs the second myth in response to that. I have maintained that Callicles and Socrates share an understanding of the canonical version of the myth, one which is also shared by an ancient audience, and that this shared understanding allows for an appreciation of the way in which Socrates alters it, and an appreciation of the critique of hedonism it deploys. I don't think we can assume that Callicles engages with that critique in any manner more specific than remaining unpersuaded by it. But that weaker rejection, and the way Socrates alters the image in response to that, is enough shared ground to motivate my reading.

I will now offer three alternate suggestions for ways of understanding what is at stake when Callicles is offered the choice of the two stories, remaining unpersuaded by the first and its sieves, only to then be offered the second and its jars – any of which would

give some content to the association between sieves, forgetfulness and foolishness. Callicles could either be thought by Socrates to:

A) reject the complaint that the pleasures of drinking water are the wrong ends, or

B) reject the complaint that, granted that drinking water is the right end, sieves are the wrong means, or

C) reject partition in the soul.

Note that the mechanics of the first myth are such that water reaching the jars is symbolic of pleasure reaching the appetite. Callicles holds that water flowing out of the jars is unproblematic, and in fact good, but he must not hold that the water failing to reach the jars is at all is acceptable. So while the end pursued in the first myth is water, Callicles focuses on the drinking of it rather than the retention of it. He doesn't need it to be retained by the appetite, but he does need the hedonist to be depicted as reliably getting the water (which stands for pleasure) to the jar (which stands for the appetite).

I will elaborate on these three possibilities listed above out of order, beginning with option C, because it is the option I think we can most easily reject. But I will first discuss the evidence which speaks in its favour.

IV.i The Possibility of the Rejection of Partition in the Soul (Option C)

Option C explains Callicles' quick dismissal of the first version of the myth with reference to its use of psychic partition, and understands Callicles as resistant to any picture of the soul which includes this (on Socrates' understanding). In moving from the

first to the second version, we move from a focus on the interaction between soul parts to a focus on lives, and the difficulty of provisioning jars where supplies are limited and hard to get. If Callicles fails or refuses to recognise psychic partition in the soul, it makes sense that the first version of the myth would fail to engage him.

We might find evidence of Callicles' distaste for psychic partition at 491d-e, for example, where he fails to make sense of Socrates' talk of someone ruling themselves[141] and claims that no one can be happy who is enslaved to anything. Instead, at 492a, the better type of person needs to have the power to serve their appetites, and to fill them with whatever they desire. While we might wonder what part of the person it is that does the serving and the filling, this doesn't seem to interest Callicles, who talks in terms of a whole person serving the appetites, as though the appetites are all there is. When he does talk of restraint, it is not internal restraint, but rather the rules (νόμοι) and speech and blame of the masses (492c6-8). If this is right, it would suggest that Callicles' main reason to reject the first myth is that it portrays the tyrannical hedonist he is interested in as failing to have the power to successfully pander to their appetites, which he denies.

Conversely, we could read Callicles as focused on avoiding contradicting himself, a phenomenon he implicitly recognises, and as set against self-restraint – not because he holds a developed view of the soul which makes this impossible, but because he takes self-contradiction as shameful and self-restraint as foolish, and is at pains to avoid what

[141] This argument is strikingly similar to the one which lays the groundwork for psychic partition in *Rep.* IV, 430e6-31b7.

he and his lot consider shameful, unmanly behaviour (evidenced at 483a1, 487b4, 487d5, 487e5, 494c4, and 494d3-5). It seems Callicles could be eager to avoid self-contradiction without denying soul parts. When he talks of the man who lives by nature growing his appetites and not restraining (κολάζειν) them, he is not talking about restraint as an impossibility, but rather contrasts it with the best choice (492a1). He clearly recognises that some will internalise the νόμοι and restrain themselves when he says that 'they set up a master over themselves' (492b2). He speaks of how the unrestrained man must have the power to serve his appetites (492a2-3), and of how he shouldn't restrain them himself (492d6-e1). He doesn't say that talk of doing so is incoherent. Rather, he seems eager not to leave his *logos* inconsistent, and to show that self-restraint is unwise. And he seems comfortable talking casually in terms of internal tension.

As such, even a weak or under-theorised unitarian view of the soul is difficult to pin to Callicles.[142] So option C doesn't look like a promising way to explain the move from the first to the second version of the myth. However, it does highlight that there is an issue of who is leading who – what part of a person does the serving and what part the filling – which remains relevant even if we don't think Callicles' attitude to this tension is what motivates his failure to be persuaded by the first version of the myth, even on Socrates' understanding of Callicles' reaction.

[142] I do not feel the need to come down one way or the other on the controversial question of whether Socrates in the *Grg.* advocates a complex psychology, or one which includes good-independent non-rational desires. It is enough for my purposes to establish that any alleged resistance to psychic partition we might see Callicles display can just as easily be read as a desire to avoid contradicting or restraining himself, paired with an unwillingness to accept that someone with desires of the kind he endorses will be psychologically impaired in the way the first myth suggests.

IV.ii Means or Ends (Options A or B)

I now turn to consider options A and B, and whether either of them provides a satisfactory explanation of the critique Socrates makes in the first version of the myth. With option B, the water carriers myth, as used in this context, represents a criticism of the means the hedonist uses to get their watery pleasures: using a sieve to get the object of desire to one's appetite is stupid if that object is liquid. The move to the second account, where no sieve is involved, speaks in favour of this option, where the intended critique would be that there is something wrong with using the directing parts of the soul to get appetitive pleasures. What could this be? Since it would not be so stupid to use a sieve to get more solid objects like cake, for example, we need to rely in part on an account of why the hedonists' pleasures are watery or liquid.[143]

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[143] A fourth possibility would involve using sieves as purifying devices to achieve catharsis, recalling one of the interpretive possibilities for the role of sieves in the myth described in section III. Callicles' rejection could then be a rejection of the possibility or need for purification or catharsis. There may even be a nice connection between catharsis and forgetfulness. However, the text gives us no explicit connection between purification and foolishness, and while any of these possibilities requires work on the part of the reader, this reading seems to require more reconstructive creativity.

A fifth possibility is that the first version of the myth is constructed in a way which imitates Gorgias' style, while the second version is a re-telling of the same story but in a plainer style. This reading is motivated by the repeated talk of the myth being borrowed from some Sicilian or Italian (493a5), the use of repetition itself being characteristic of Gorgias' sophistry, and the first version being generally more complex and harder to engage with, in a way which could be written to mockingly imitate. But while the second version uses somewhat plainer language, it doesn't read as being in a markedly different style. As such, this interpretive possibility feels unsubstantiated, and unhelpful in understanding the content of the two versions.

A sixth possibility is that Callicles rejects any use of mythical analogy by Socrates, and that his response does not indicate a distaste for the water carriers myth specifically. The exchange between Socrates and Callicles at 493d3 can be read as evidence for this possibility, if we take Callicles' response to target the form of the first myth, rather than its content. Socrates' next line, in which he asks Callicles to let him tell another tale from the same school (493d5), might be a plea to let him do so despite it being in that same form. On this reading, Callicles' better

One way of fleshing out option B is to emphasise Socrates' awareness of Callicles' confidence that he can secure resources without the soul, with just the body alone, and that this would suggest that he is likely to reject sieves as means. Indeed, in Callicles' engagement with the second version of the story, and the rejection of its sealed jars, Callicles reveals that for him pleasure always involves the body and replenishment. But while some bodily involvement might well be necessary for pleasure in his view, in remaining unpersuaded by the description of his hedonist as ἀνοήτους he could be showing that he is also interested in the role of the directing, deliberative soul – he would not be satisfied with a purely bodily picture, where bodily means seek bodily ends (or, at least, Socrates could be responding to what he takes to be a rejection of this type on Callicles' part). It's also very likely the case that some psychic involvement is necessary for pleasure on Socrates' account, such that any shared understanding of the criticism depicted in the myth, where no explicit exception is made, must include both of these assumptions. So there seem to be some initial problems with understanding Socrates to be responsive to the version of Callicles' objection described by option B.

Having rejected option C, and identified some problems with option B, I now want to consider option A, according to which the way to read the *Gorgias* is to understand the

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engagement with the second version of the myth at 494a5 would have to show him getting over his issue with myth, since he notes that Socrates fails in the second attempt, but the reasons he gives are to do with the content of the myth, rather than the form. I think there is something to the rejection of myth in Callicles' first response, but that Socrates' interpretation of why Callicles would be unpersuaded by the first image must also be about its content, since he uses myth again in his second attempt, changing only the content. The fact that Callicles is more responsive to the second attempt also suggests that there is something in the content of the first myth he is reacting to, rather than its mythical form alone.

water carriers myth as making a point about the objects at which hedonism aims, whereas the second version, the one which is pursued, is unconcerned with objects.

With option A, the criticism of Callicles' hedonism that Socrates, and perhaps Callicles, would understand the first version of the myth to represent would be a critique of watery pleasures as the right ends to strive for. It's clear that the fact that they will always seep out of the sieve-like part of the soul, and never reliably fill it, is not a problem for Callicles. After all, he isn't seeking to be filled, as the second story shows us, but is rather seeking the process of filling and re-filling, a rushing past of pleasure.[144] This option would chime well with the forgetfulness of the sieve, which recalls the Hades myth at the end of the *Republic* in which souls that are about to be reborn drink from the river Lethe, whose water no vessel can hold (*Rep.* X 621a2), to rid themselves of their underworld memories.[145] There is something in the nature of water and drinking which ties in with forgetfulness. But why might water drinking be an appropriate metaphor for the Calliclean hedonists' pleasure?

[144] See *Grg.* 494a6-8 where he rejects filling. The appetites of the hedonists are ἀπληστίαν – they are characterised by boundless or insatiableness (493b2), and they cannot reach fulfilment (πλήρεις at 493e1). The noun ἀπληστία is 'insatiate desire, greediness, whether of food or money' according to LSJ. The classical uses refer to both insatiability and boundlessness of desire. Alternative translations of ἀπληστίαν such as 'faithlessness' or 'lack of conviction' are helpful in that they show the richness of the term, which may pick up some of the sexual overtone of the passage, given its connection to rituals of purification, including sexual purification. For my purposes 'boundlessness' or 'insatiability' sufficiently capture the core sense.

[145] This again suggests a connection with purification. It would be a nice play on purification if Plato turned it into a kind of forgetfulness, making the positive into the negative.

One candidate answer to this question would be that the pleasures at stake in this passage are specifically tied to the body, and that there is a connection between that which is bodily and that which is tomb-like and fleeting, such that underworld water is an appropriate image. However, it's not clear that all of Callicles' preferred pleasures are bodily. For example, his interest in maintaining his reputation, which emerges from the refutation of Polus, is a pleasure that is not directly physical. Indeed, when Socrates asks Callicles whether it's hunger, thirst, eating and drinking that he's referring to in defending his objects of desire, he says yes, but also having *all the other desires* and being able to satisfy them, too.[146]

However, the desires Callicles emphasises do appear to be for pleasures which are not independent of the body, and which are fleeting, and impermanent. This is evidenced by the σῶμά σῆμα pun (493a3), on Socrates' part, and by Callicles when he casts all desires in appetitive terms (494c2-3), and defines virtue and happiness as being well supplied with luxury, intemperance and freedom.[147] The desires he advocates for aren't for physical pleasures alone, but the pleasures included, though wider in scope, are all

[146] *Grg.* 494c2, trans. Irwin (1979). Here is the Greek from the TLG (1903 repr. 1968): λέγω, καὶ τὰς ἄλλας ἐπιθυμίαςἁπάσας ἔχοντα καὶ δυνάμενον πληροῦντα χαίροντα εὐδαιμόνως ζῆν.

A TLG search of ἐπιθῡμία (a 'desire' or 'yearning' in the LSJ) reveals that the Platonic and Aristotlelian uses are sometimes to refer specifically to bodily pleasures, but that the term doesn't refer strictly to bodily desires, only those in some way tied to the body. In *Rep*. IX each part of the soul has its own ἐπιθῡμία, which makes it difficult to narrow the scope of the term. Plato seems to lack a generic noun for desire, such as Aristotle's ὄρεξις.

[147] τρυφὴ καὶ ἀκολασία καὶ ἐλευθερία, 492c4.

related to the body, and cast in terms of replenishment, with the brave man ministering (ὑπηρετέω, 492a1) to them.

While this helps us to see that the nature of these pleasures is problematic, it also shows that it is not the main focus of the critique: the interlocutors do not interrogate whether these pleasures are bodily, or explicitly exclude those which are non-bodily. Rather, the association between pleasure and water is mainly for the purpose of showing that there is something wrong with the sieve, and the soul it represents. The cause of the evanescence of pleasures used to gratify the appetites is that sieves can't carry much of anything, so water (pleasure) disappears – it flows out since it cannot be retained, even long enough to reach the appetite. The focus of the passage is the imperfection of the sieve as vessel, though that imperfection is relative to the type of content it aims to handle. As such, the watery nature of the objects is not irrelevant – they are fleeting and somehow polluted by their association with the body.

Keeping the part-whole problem in mind, it's clear that in this passage the sieve represents something else – some other part which goes beyond this raw appetitive drive. It could represent the toiling hedonist's rational part when it is made to serve the appetites, which are represented by the jars, as some scholars have thought, but it needn't be so – all we know is that it is the directing part, and the source of action.[148]

[148] Linforth (1944) 295-314, for example, argues for the sieve as representing the rational soul, but it's not clear from the context. Why does Plato fail to name it, and instead leave the account deliberately vague? You might think that if it were to be named as the rational part that would complicate Socrates' ἀνοήτους claim. That's not to say that it would be a direct contradiction, since one could have intelligence but not use it well, but simply that this is not the conversation

The appetite plus this other aspect of the soul are depicted as ganging up in service of desire satisfaction. In the case of fools, both the part concerned with the bodily (πίθος) and this other psychic element (κόσκινον) are subject to depletion and replenishment, so that the figures in the myth being called ἀνοήτους at 493a says something about their souls.[149] That which is entombed is bodily yet somehow lifeless – part of the underworld – leaving a sense of these pleasures as problematic by nature, though for reasons which are under-developed in this context.[150]

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he wants to have with the first version of the story. Reading the omission this way suggests that Socrates is directing the tone of the conversation more than we would perhaps otherwise appreciate.

[149] Wolfsdorf (2013b) 46-7 considers the claim that this section of the *Grg.* depicts psychic replenishment in addition to corporeal replenishment, since in the case of fools the sieve represents a psychic component, but finds that evidence to come down on either side firmly is lacking.

[150] For a discussion of the theme of the body as the prison-house of the soul, in relation to this passage in the *Grg.*, see Pender (2000) 165-7, and Linforth (1944) 296 n. 31. One gets the feeling, reading this passage, that the dialectic is constrained by how under-theorised Callicles' view is. One might, for instance, read parts of *Rep.* IX as a development of this argument, facilitated in large part by the more complex psychology of the latter. There appears to be a connection between these two passages, backed-up by their shared vocabulary: in both cases the claims come from some unidentified wise person (σοφῶν in *Rep*. IX, 583b2, and the same in *Grg*. 493a1); in each case the appetites of the hedonists are ἀπληστίαν (in *Rep*. 586b1, in *Grg*. 493b2); and in each case cannot reach fulfilment (πληρώσει in *Rep*. 585a2, and πλήρεις in *Grg*. 493e1). Further, there is shared imagery: those who live with mere 'phantom pleasures' (φαντασμάτων πρὸς ἡδονῆς, *Rep*. 584a11) are depicted as animals, focused only on feeding their insatiable desires, which are likened to a vessel with holes: 'For the part that they are trying to fill is like a vessel full of holes, and neither it nor the things they are trying to fill it with are among the things that are' (*Rep*. IX, 585e3-586b2, trans. Grube/Reeve). One who is set on getting these phantom pleasures is liable to co-opt the parts of the soul into pursuing a pleasure that is alien (ἀλλοτρίαν) to them (587a3). These unjust souls can't ever be filled because that part of themselves which they try to fill, the appetitive part, isn't the kind of thing that can be filled.

In *Rep.*, unlike *Grg.*, intellectual pleasures are explicitly marked off, and the brute desires of the appetitive part are thematised. This allows Plato to elaborate on the problems inherent in bodily pleasures in a way which is not possible in the context of *Grg.*, where no such psychological complexity is developed. This suggests that the *Rep.* passage is 'reading' the *Grg.* passage – that

IV.iii Means and Ends: A Hybrid Option

While option A (where the critique is aimed at pleasures as the wrong end) was looking promising, we can now see that the focus of this passage is the depiction of a vessel which cannot hold water because of some quality of the vessel, rather than a focus on the qualities of the water.[151] If the metaphor holds, then the criticism of the water not reaching the jars because of leaky sieves amounts to a problem of pleasures not reaching the appetitive part of the soul, instead of a problem of them flowing out of the soul as quickly as they go in. A rejection of the model based on a rejection of the watery, intangible nature of the object of desire wouldn't capture the problem, which is that on this picture the real issue is that the pleasure never gets where it needs to be, namely to the appetite, because of a fundamental flaw in the tool used to transport it. In other words, then, option A starts to look unpromising, at least on its own, and we have a reason to reconsider the viability of option B, despite its problems, in which the critique is aimed at sieves as the wrong means.

Could it then be that Socrates grants the Calliclean hedonists their ends, the watery pleasures, but wants to show that the way they go about attaining those ends (using sieves) is stupid? It's not clear that Socrates' way of life could accommodate such a concession. If he were to concede that the problem is with means rather than ends, he would implicitly endorse the idea that reliably bringing about a goal which isn't itself

Plato is casting an eye back to the exchange with Callicles when he develops the complex psychology we find in *Rep.*

[151] See Linforth (1944) 303 n. 31.

up for debate is an acceptable life choice.[152] But φρόνησις is both for doing means-ends reasoning *and* for determining the right ends, such that an indifference to ends becomes part of the Socratic criticism of rhetors.[153] On the other hand, that doesn't rule out the possibility that Socrates is arguing dialectically here – showing that there's something wrong with the opponent's view even on his own terms, and focusing on means to the exclusion of ends in this instance.

Reading A could, however, be consistent with a more moderate version of what I have called Socrates and Callicles' shared understanding of the content of the original myth. It's not clear that Socrates must think that Callicles is right in holding that he does get what he wants with rushing rather than filling – he could instead hold that the way the water carriers go about it means that they don't get what they want. When Callicles remains unpersuaded and is presumed to reject the complaint that sieves are the wrong means, or that a great outflow is a problem (494b4), Socrates is merely represented as setting aside the argument about the conception of pleasure, not giving it up.

It's plausible that reading B correctly represents what Callicles is assumed to reject, but that this doesn't imply that there isn't also an issue with objects. The A/B options, then, represent a false dichotomy. A version of each of those two readings could ultimately be compatible: in the second version of the myth there is wine, milk and honey, but no

[152] This picks up the debate about τέχνη thematised throughout *Grg*.

[153] See, for example, the indifference to ends I take to be evinced at 459c-d, 465a-d and, most clearly, 467d. More could be said about how indifference to truth, or indeed to τα πράγματα relates to indifference to ends, but that falls outside the scope of this piece.

water. In engaging with the second but not the first, Callicles hasn't said he's happy with water, but this is consistent with complaints about a sieve as a means, too.

I therefore suggest that a version of both options A and B are right, after all: that Socrates alters the image in the second myth in response to a perceived rejection, by Callicles, of the complaint that sieves are the wrong means, but that the reason they are wrong is relative to the problematic nature of drinking water as an end. It seems that the problem of means, represented by sieves, is primary in the *Gorgias*, while yet the problem of ends (aiming at watery pleasure) relative to means still lingers.

Callicles could be understood, by Socrates if not by us, to want a story wherein his hedonist gets what he wants and is not depicted as forgetful or mindless, as represented by having a sieve-like soul. When he remains unpersuaded by the first story, he could be taken to deny that he must accept the critique of the hedonists' cognitive abilities which is built-in to the image. The second myth is offered by Socrates because it removes from the more traditional version the elements which Callicles is perceived as unlikely to accept, and it allows Socrates to refine his counter-argument to Callicles further. Unlike the first, the second myth does not assume that an agent with unsatisfiable desires will suffer from the cognitive defects the first myth depicts. The second version renders Callicles' choice clearer but, Socrates hopes, renders Callicles' position less appealing and less plausible. In that modified version, the two imagined agents desire the same objects and possess the same cognitive abilities relevant to their odds of fulfilling those desires – the objects are no harder for the one to obtain than for the other. What differentiates the two in this instance is that only one has leaky jars

which need constant refilling. Now, which does Callicles prefer?[154] The choice offered to him is no longer concerned with the cognitive abilities of hedonists.

V Jars, Sieves and Souls

We're now in position to bring these strands of argument together and draw some conclusions about how to understand the critique, the meaning of and justification for the mindlessness and forgetfulness claims, the status of the alleged part-whole problem, and issues of personhood and identity which this passage forces us to consider.

With this reading in place, the instability that this image of sieve-like souls depicts needs further elucidation, since the soul of the fool being treated as unreliable and forgetful is key to this reading of Socrates' understanding of Callicles' failure to be persuaded by the first myth. It seems that a conative instability is represented by the deteriorated vessels, which suggests a mark of cognitive instability when the figures in the myth are labelled as mindless and forgetful. The soul which is made to serve its appetitive part is not fit for purpose, and it is depicted as forgetful. Even if Socrates accepted the flowing nature of pleasures being aimed at in the first myth, the image of

[154] I am grateful to a reviewer for pushing me on this point, and for helping me to better articulate the argumentative import of the choice offered to Callicles in the second myth. As they put it:

> Callicles imagines that his ideal agent will be able to satisfy his desires *di' andreian kai phronēsin* 492a1–2 but in the first myth the water-carriers cannot fill the jars not only because the jars leak but also because of a deficiency in their own abilities, presumably shown by the sieves and the comment: *di' apistian kai lēthēn* 493c2–3. Socrates has not yet shown that anyone with unsatisfiable desires will necessarily be subject to these other psychological defects so Callicles is quite free to reject this comparison. The second myth does away with as many as possible of such elements and is therefore dialectically more successful.

them flowing away *before* they even get to the appetite makes a different criticism. So what licenses Socrates to depict the soul of the hedonist this way?

At 501a5 Socrates gives a clue when he describes the ἐμπειρία of pleasure used by those who seek it, comparing it more to cookery than to the τέχνη of medicine, in a familiar analogy. These people go to work without having investigated the nature or cause of pleasure, pursuing it irrationally and thoughtlessly, relying on what is routine habit, and a preserved memory of what usually results, rather than an account of why or how it has come about. Without the nature or cause of pleasure in mind, the tool they use to seek it, the soul, is flawed, in the sense of being ignorant. And the way in which it is flawed seems linked to the fact that they are trying to fill the appetitive part: the leakiness of their minds is related to the leakiness of the part it is focused on filling. As such, it's not just that sieves are the wrong means, but that minds are, or become, sieve-like when they are geared towards filling insatiable appetites. The pursuit of an end one is ignorant of is linked to the quality of the soul, or soul part, doing the pursuing.

This helps with the question of the part-whole puzzle Keuls alludes to, which stems from the claim in the first myth that a part of our soul is the jar, and the sieve is our soul, rather than another part of the soul, and in which the sieve is instead used to fill another part of the soul. The soul is used as a tool to fill itself. This is only a puzzle if we think the way Socrates puts it cannot be taken literally and seriously. If, on the other hand, we take earnestly the image of the soul of the foolish being made to serve their appetitive part, but it being flawed in the specific sense that it is not fit for purpose, a powerful critique of hedonism is revealed. It is aimed firmly at the sieve, representing

the soul of the foolish, and its perforation, representing its unreliability and forgetfulness, which is linked to its activity, and the nature of its appetitive part. Specifically, it shows that the person who is serving their appetites when the body is insatiable, made possible with the image of it as a tomb, is not serving it well. It acts without the cause or nature of pleasure in place to inform its actions, and it pursues an unstable object in an unstable way. It's the conative critique – the part of the image in which Socrates takes aim at the hedonist's ability to pursue and attain their end – which is then left out of the second myth.

The relationship between the appetitive part of the soul and the rest of this person's soul is depicted as a kind of passive and active function, and could be helpfully compared with Aristotle's account of artefacts and producers in *Physics* 2.1-3: like the doctor *qua* doctor and doctor *qua* patient analogy, here there is a part of the soul that goes out and gets pleasure and a part which receives it. This is the sense in which the sieve is related to the part it fills. The soul is entombed in a body and, like in the case of the sick doctor, it is ministering to itself. But in doing so, the pleasure-seeker is using an unreliable tool to bring about that end. The soul's ministering to the appetitive part is without art, without a λόγος of pleasure, and the critique here in the first myth, which then gets dropped, is that it is therefore doomed to fail.

We might naturally think that there is a disanalogy between seeking health and seeking pleasure, or medicine and hedonism, in that we are in important ways helped in medicine by *not* being our own doctors – by having some critical distance from our own symptoms and suffering, being able to consider them objectively, and not being

hampered by the effects of disease when diagnosing and treating. With pleasure-seeking, on the other hand, it seems crucial that we 'be our own doctors', so to speak – that the same person who feels pleasure and takes pleasure is the one who sets the agenda and goes out and gets it, since they know best how to direct action to that end. Socrates seems to open the possibility that this kind of partiality can be deeply harmful, and that the objectivity of something like the art of medicine is necessary. There is also a critique of the ability of this person's memory to preserve what is necessary in order to reliably bring about their ends – when it comes to appetite, it stores only the memory of what usually happens (501b1), not the reason why, understanding of the cause, or an account. And either the soul's pursuit of an end without the aid of an account seems to have a deleterious effect on it, or it only does so because it is already flawed, such that the qualities of what the soul or mind serves and the qualities of the mind itself are interconnected.

When Callicles fails to be persuaded by this first story, then, he could be understood or assumed to deny that he has to accept a mindless hedonism – that the pursuit of appetitive pleasures has to be done in this flawed fashion; when Socrates accepts that and pursues the second version, he also implicitly accepts that this version of hedonism, with less intellectual ornament, isn't needed – a stronger version of hedonism, wherein the hedonists are mindful, is offered instead. It is Socrates' move away from this first critique which is most interesting. With little prompting he offers, in the second myth, a new counter-argument to Calliclean hedonism. There the hedonists can extract the resources they want, but they still have a problem: they're after the wrong ends given those means. Interrogating Callicles' failure to be persuaded by the first myth, and what

Socrates does in response to it, has thus revealed a more nuanced version of the choice of myths: a dialectic which grants to the hedonist a stronger version of their position than we would otherwise appreciate arises from this exchange, or at least doesn't force Callicles to engage with a version in which the hedonist is depicted as mindless. Still the shift away from the first myth feels like an aporetic moment, where the conversation hints at more than it makes explicit.

This reading brings out the problem of personhood inherent in the myth, for how is it that we are made to serve a part of ourselves, and which of these is us? In thinking that bravery is, in large part, the courage to let your desires grow and grow, this image forces us to ask *who* is being courageous. For, if you simply are your desires, the question of what subject is being courageous is a non-starter – the jars belong to no one.[155]

[155] Because of this, I suggest that the discussion in *Rep.* 9, 583b2-585a5, which is so intertextual with this exchange, is in part borne from a need to posit tripartition of the soul in order to advance the discussion with someone like Callicles. It seems no accident that these passages are talking to each other, or perhaps that the *Rep.* passage is a development of the conversation from this *Grg.* passage, in the sense that it could be read as constituting an explicit improvement in the answer to Callicles – a place where the questions lurking behind the move from the first version of the myth to the second can be fully engaged with. A figure like him is of the right type to at least partially inspire the need for psychic division, and that division would certainly seem to answer some of the worries of the *Grg.* in providing a better answer to someone who holds his views. So while I have denied that Callicles has theorised a unitarian view of the soul, still his stance encourages us to consider how second-order attitudes about desires can form, and plants the seeds of one of the cornerstones of Platonic psychology.

Though it is outside the scope of this paper, more could be said on the relationship between desire and reason as it is developed in *Grg.* as versus in the *Rep*. See, as a starting point, Kahn (1987) 92.

This reading also exposes the importance of the underworld setting of the myth for both interlocutors: Socrates says he believes we are all dead. While Callicles has the added problem of explaining the difference between his depiction of life and the Greek motif of death, Socrates can't entirely deny the claim that we're already in a tomb, and the connection between the bodily and death will underlie the dialogue right up until the final myth of judgement. I hope to have shown that understanding the role of the water carriers myth in the dialogue helps us to appreciate all of these aspects of the discussion.

VI Conclusion

Plato's use of the myth of the water carriers in the *Gorgias* is neither a casual repetition nor a makeshift conflation of two versions of a canonical story, but rather a careful and deliberate manipulation of a familiar narrative, designed to raise issues with how a hedonist can get the pleasure they seek while maximising their desires. The exchange between Socrates and Callicles illustrates that while there is a problem with the nature of bodily pleasures, there is also an issue with souls that administer bodily pleasures to the appetite unrelentingly, resulting in its corruption and cognitive deterioration. But Socrates has not yet done enough to show that having insatiable desires entails that a subject suffers psychological defects, so he is pushed to offer a different image where the insatiability of a subject's desires is the target of his critique.

The cognitive distortion inherent in the insatiable hedonist's life is set aside for the time being. Plato does not force the discussion to stay on the issue of faulty souls, but instead produces an alternative in which the hedonist agent is neither mindless nor forgetful. I

suggest that the move from sieves to jars, or from one version of the myth to the other, marks a significant turning point, both in the dialogue and in the development of Plato's views. From the simpler critical engagement with the challenges hedonists face in planning their lives, represented in the *Protagoras* and the first myth here in the *Gorgias*, we now witness Plato recognise the possibility of a more mindful hedonism, and a type of hedonist prudentialism which is depicted as making use of intellectual tools. The recognition of a more intellectual hedonist prudentialism is developed in *Republic* IX and in the *Philebus* – both because of the promise it offers, and the difficulties it raises.

Socrates positions the discussion in the underworld in order to characterise this type of hedonism as lifeless, and he lays the groundwork for the argument of *Republic* IX. While the discussion there may be considered a more productive dialogue about the effects of different types of pleasure on the soul, facilitated by the establishment of psychic tripartition, the arguments in the *Gorgias* offer unique insight into Plato's clever use of myth to raise important doubts about the appropriate role of subjectivity in a hedonists' life planning.

CHAPTER FOUR
BOTH SIDES NOW: PERSPECTIVE AND ILLUSION IN THE ACCOUNT OF PLEASURE IN *REPUBLIC* IX

I Introduction

In *Republic* IX, at 583b2, Socrates launches what he describes as the 'the greatest and most authoritative (μέγιστόν τε καὶ κυριώτατον) of the overthrows: an argument that will show that the pleasures of lives other than that of the philosopher are not as true (παναληθής) or pure (καθαρά) as those of the philosophical life.[156] These lesser pleasures are likened to a shadow-painting (σκιαγραφημένη), as Socrates claims to have heard from some wise person.[157] They are not just less pleasant than most people think they are: the quite extraordinary claim made in this argument is that they are not pleasures at all.

This third argument depends upon a claim about the role of perspective and comparison in the experience of pleasure and pain: that what precedes an experience can make it seem like a true and pure pleasure or pain, but that this is illusory – a

[156] Trans. Grube/Reeve (1992), with my amendment. I follow Scott (2015) 78 in reading κυριώτατον as 'the most authoritative', in this context, rather than 'the most decisive'. The Greek of Burnet (1903).

[157] σοφῶν. This mirrors the second-hand account of 'lower' pleasures in *Grg*. 493a1, in the sense that it is also relayed by some σοφῶν. The connection between the two passages is made stronger by further shared vocabulary: in each case the appetites of the hedonists are ἀπληστίαν: boundless or insatiable (in *Rep*. 586b1, in *Grg*. 493b2), in each case they cannot reach fulfilment (πληρώσει in *Rep*. 585a2, and πλήρεις in *Grg*. 493e1), and in each case the image of an attempt to keep a vessel watertight is invoked (στέγω in *Rep*. 586b3, and στεγανός *Grg*. 493b2).

misjudgement of the nature of these would-be pleasures and pains.[158] The argument makes use of the testimony of those who make judgements about pleasures and pains from the perspective of suffering (583c2-584a10), and an image of ascent and descent (584d1-585a5) to express the idea that we can be fooled into thinking we are experiencing what is truly pleasure or pain because of our inexperience of the truest, purest versions of these affections. The conclusion of the argument is that the organisation of the soul of the philosopher ensures that it alone enjoys the pleasures that are best (βελτίστας) and truest (ἀληθεστάτας, 587a10) – a life which is, famously, 729 times more pleasant than that of a tyrant.[159]

Here I will focus on the role of perspective and its ability to generate illusory feelings in the argument. My textual focus will be the first part of the third argument Socrates gives in defence of the philosophical life as the most pleasant (583c2-585a7), in which the sufferers (τῶν καμνόντων, 583c10), those in ill health or in pain, mistake the experience of a relief of pain or illness for a pure pleasure, because of an illusory

[158] The link between the argument coming third and it being the greatest and most authoritative seems to be an implicit reference to Greek wrestling, in which the third of three falls where an opponent's shoulders touch the ground is the one which wins the victory. The argument from pleasure, then, is conceived of as the one which wins the whole contest. See Poliakoff (1987) 23 and notes. Since the task of showing that the just life is the pleasantest, as opposed to the happiest, is not one which Socrates has explicitly set out to undertake, we might wonder why he is motivated to make these claims, and then label this as the most decisive overthrow. It could relate back to book II, 357a-358a, in which Socrates locates justice in the class of things valued both for themselves and for their consequences, while yet he is at first interested in showing that justice is best even when stripped of its consequences. The book IV argument could be a more rounded attempt at showing that the consequences of the just soul further add to the benefit justice brings.

[159] 587e2. On the question of how we should understand the claim of numerically specific superiority of the life of the philosopher, see Woolf (forthcoming).

appearance of pleasure this change elicits. I will first motivate the analysis by showing that the issue of perspective and its effect on affective judgement is of enduring relevance (with reference to Redelmeier and Kahneman, 1996) and by identifying the target of Plato's argument as a very basic assumption about our infallible judgement of our own affective states (section II). I will present the passage (section III), followed by James Warren's reading of it, which involves defending a close parallel between books V and IX (section IV). I will then argue against the assumptions underpinning Warren's reading (section V), and instead suggest an alternative way of framing the argument, which involves taking a stance on how to understand pleasures and pains as φανήσεται (appearances), which is a concern Warren himself highlights. I will consider a veridical interpretation of appearances (section VI), but ultimately defend a non-veridical reading (section VII). I will conclude with some remarks on what this reading contributes to our understanding of the passage, revealed by comparison with Aristotle's treatment of similar issues in *NE* VII (section VIII).

II Plato's Radical Question

One might think that one of the domains of judgement safe from distortion is one's own pain. At first pass it seems intuitive that:

a) we are infallible judges of when we are in pain,

b) we can accurately recall when we were in pain, and

c) we can accurately compare different experiences of our own pain.

In fact it's crucial that we should be able to do each of these, so that we can make good decisions about which experiences to prefer and which to avoid. It turns out, though, that our memories of painful experiences are subject to significant distortion.

In an experiment conducted by psychologists Redelmeier and Kahneman (1996), patients were asked to rate their level of pain in real-time throughout one of two types of uncomfortable procedure (colonoscopies and lithotripsies), and then asked to report on how painful they recall the procedure having been one hour, one month, and one year later.[160] The reports were then compared, in order to judge consistency and accuracy. The resulting analysis shows that patients' retrospective recollection of pain differed drastically from their real-time reports, and in particular ways: patients tend to privilege 'peak' and 'end' pain more than other moments, and they neglect to take into proportionate account the duration of comparably moderate pain.[161] Strikingly, the findings suggest that these distortions occur as judgements about pain are still being formed, in the minutes immediately following a procedure, rather than through a process of gradual forgetting in the days, weeks, and months after.[162] The researchers suggest that peak and end pain may be privileged in memory because they are generally more convenient measures of comparison. However, they go on to show that when it comes to making medical choices, this 'convenient' distortion can result in choosing to undergo or repeat procedures which, when experienced, are significantly more painful, because of a misleading view of them as less painful, a view which

[160] Redelmeier and Kahneman (1996) 3-8.
[161] Ibid. 4.
[162] Ibid. 7.

corrupts the patients' ability to accurately anticipate what they will feel.[163] What goes for medical choices, we might reason, also goes for the many other decisions which involve judgements about future affective experiences based on a recollection of past affective experiences.

Redelmeier and Kahneman note that studies prior to theirs suggested that the memory of pain is largely accurate.[164] However, those studies compared immediate retrospective evaluations with delayed ones, and did not include real-time assessments (reports by patients during the painful procedures). Redelmeier and Kahneman were the first to hypothesise and demonstrate that it is the comparison between the momentary experience of pain (when it is felt) and the recollected pain (immediately after entering the relief state) which reveals the distortion. Their work has been very influential, providing ground-breaking evidence for what came to be known as 'the peak–end rule'. But their research makes an assumption about our access to our own pain which the researchers never question. In this way, Plato may prove to be more radical.

In *Republic* IX, 583c2-585a7, Plato observes the difference which perspective makes when it comes to judging pain and pleasure, and he argues that this leads to distortion of a particularly dangerous kind. Specifically, he observes that judgements made *during* or after painful experiences can cause us to judge there to be true pleasure and pain in experiences which in fact contain none, and to orient our lives to seek out the mere semblance of pleasure, and to avoid the mere likeness of pain. He does this, I will argue,

[163] Ibid. 7.

[164] Ibid. 6-7, citing Hunter et al. (1979); Erskine et al. (1990).

by introducing a more basic and radical question than even Redelmeier and Kahneman are prepared to ask: whether we are infallible judges of our own pain in real-time, when we are in pain (and likewise for when we are experiencing pleasure).[165]

Plato's observation is more sweeping than that of Redelmeier and Kahneman. While the latter show that there is a mismatch between experienced pain and remembered pain, thus questioning claims (2) and (3) above, Plato questions the infallibility of our present experiences of pleasure and pain (claim 1). Though the two accounts have in common the idea of misreporting by misremembering, Redelmeier and Kahneman do not question the fallibility of our real-time perception of our own pleasure and pain. In fact, their argument relies on that assumption, since the basis for the claim that more distant memories are less distorted than more recent memories is that they diverge less from what people report at the time, which they take as an accurate benchmark. I will argue that Plato questions this deeply held assumption when he has Socrates argue that there is an aspect of pleasure or pain which we don't grasp by appearances alone, but rather have to have the right evaluative framework in order to apprehend.

Having framed the question I take Plato be asking, I will now turn to the passage.

[165] By characterising Plato as more 'radical' here, I mean that the target of Plato's question is a more fundamental assumption, and that our abandonment of it would have more fundamental and far-reaching implications.

III The Argument of 583c3-585a7

For the purposes of this discussion, I will divide the first part of the third argument for the superior pleasantness of the philosophical life into three further parts.[166] In part A, 583c3-584a10, Socrates relates the hedonic judgements of those suffering illness or pain, as part of an argument establishing that there is an intermediate state of calm between pleasure and pain, and that when pleasure and pain are juxtaposed with the calm middle, this generates untrue appearances. In part B, 584b1-c10, Socrates contrasts these pleasant and painful experiences with two examples which don't arise from the cessation of pain: the pure pleasures of smell, and the pleasures and pains of anticipation. In part C, 584c10-585a7, he introduces a structural analogy to illustrate the epistemic state of a person making hedonic judgements from a particular perspective. Here is the first part:

Part A:

> Soc. Tell me, don't we say that pain is the opposite of pleasure?
>
> Glau. Certainly
>
> S: And is there such a thing as feeling neither pleasure nor pain?
>
> G: There is.
>
> S: Isn't it intermediate between these two, a sort of calm of the soul by comparison to them? Or don't you think of it that way?
>
> G: I do.
>
> S: And do you recall what sick people say when they're ill?
>
> G: Which saying of theirs do you have in mind?

[166] I use 'argument' rather loosely here, to indicate the discussion between Socrates and Glaucon.

S: That nothing gives more pleasure than being healthy, but that they hadn't realized that it was most pleasant until they fell ill.

G: I do recall that.

S: And haven't you also heard those who are in great pain say that nothing is more pleasant than the cessation of their suffering?

G: I have.

S: And there are many similar circumstances, I suppose, in which you find people in pain praising, not enjoyment, but the absence of pain and relief from it as most pleasant.

G: That may be because at such times a state of calm becomes pleasant enough[167] to content them.

S: And when someone ceases to feel pleasure, this calm will be painful to him.

G: Probably so.

S: Then the calm we described as being intermediate between pleasure and pain will sometimes be both.

G: So it seems.

S: Now, is it possible for that which is neither to become both?

G: Not in my view.

S: Moreover, the coming to be of either the pleasant or the painful in the soul is a sort of motion, isn't it?

G: Yes.

S: And didn't what is neither painful nor pleasant come to light just now as a calm state, intermediate between them?

G: Yes, it did.

S: Then, how can it be right to think that the absence of pain is pleasure or that the absence of pleasure is pain?

G: There's no way it can be.

[167] Or: 'becomes equally pleasant to them' (τότε ἡδὺ ἴσως, 583d10).

> S: Then it isn't right. But when the calm is next to the painful it appears pleasant, and when next to the pleasant it appears painful. However, there is nothing sound in these appearances as far as the truth about pleasure is concerned, only some kind of magic.
>
> G: That's what the argument suggests, at any rate.[168]

The first step is to get Glaucon's agreement, with 'do we not say' (οὐκ… φαμὲν, 583c3) that pain is the opposite of or distinct from[169] pleasure. There is also a neutral state that is neither pleasure nor pain, but an intermediate[170] between the two, found in the middle,[171] and described as a calm[172] of the soul.[173] Socrates then introduces two examples of reports of the experiences of people when they are suffering, in which the relief of that suffering is reported to be a pleasure: the sick person who says that it wasn't until they were ill that they realised that health is the most pleasant state, and the pained person who says that nothing is more pleasant than the cessation of their suffering (583c-d). It is from the position of illness or pain that they first develop an inflated view of the relief state, and elevate its status to that of most pleasant, instead of praising enjoyment.[174]

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[168] *Rep.* 583c3-584a10, trans. Grube/Reeve.
[169] ἀποκρίνω, 583c1.
[170] μεταξὺ, 583c7.
[171] μέσῳ, 583c7.
[172] ἡσυχίαν, 583c7.
[173] Cf. *Phileb.* 32e, 42d ff., where the existence of a neutral state is not taken for granted.
[174] τὸ χαίρειν, 583d9. The uses of ἡδονή and χαίρε in the argument look to map roughly onto pleasure as such (for ἡδονή) and taking or experiencing pleasure (for χαίρε), though it is not necessarily the case that every use is technical. The best way to see the distinction is to look at the uses of χαίρε. At 583c5 χαίρειν is opposed to λύπη in order to distinguish an intermediate state that sits between them, where we might expect ἡδονή. On the other hand, at 583d9 τὸ χαίρειν is distinguished from ὡς ἥδιστον, where the former is what those in pain mistakenly think relief and freedom from pain to be (some feeling of delight or elation which contributes to the illusion), while the latter is what it in fact is. Then at 583e1, χαίρων is what comes to an end when the comparative relief stops being effective. This emphasises the active nature of 'taking' delight,

Glaucon suggests that this may be because, at such times of suffering, the calm state becomes equally pleasant,[175] and this stillness is greeted with affection. It is as if what might normally require some greater, positive thrill can be achieved, in these cases, by the relief of pain alone. But that same state of calm will be painful to these same agents when they cease to feel it as pleasant (picking out the feeling with χαίρων), according to 583e1-2.[176] This fact is part of the evidence for the claim that the calm intermediate state will, at different times, be both pleasant and painful.

Socrates elicits agreement, at 583e, that the neutral middle state which was agreed to be between pleasure and pain, will be painful at some times, and pleasurable at others, and hence, at times, be both painful and pleasurable.[177] Since it is not possible for something which is neither pleasant nor painful to become both pleasant and painful, the neutral state is neither of these. The generation of pleasure or pain in the soul is a kind of motion or change,[178] whereas what is neither is a kind of calm of the soul, intermediate between the two. The absence of pain is not pleasure, nor is the absence of pleasure

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since it is the agent's attitude towards this comparison that seems to generate or at least importantly contribute towards the feeling, and the feeling itself is some positive, felt thrill. At 584a4-8, it is agreed that the absence of τὸ χαίρειν cannot rightly be called pain. There is something that is true pain, and the mere feeling of being comparatively worse off, which can seem like pain, is mistakenly thought to be that thing. At 585e1 χαίρειν is what we experience when we are filled with true and real pleasures. It again picks out the positive feeling, which is distinct, in this argument, from pleasure itself. The language helps to distinguish between what a hedonist might be after (the feeling of delight), and what Socrates is trying to show they should be after (true pleasure), and how one can be confused for the other.

[175] τότε ἡδὺ ἴσως, 583d10.

[176] καὶ ὅταν παύσηται ἄρα, εἶπον, χαίρων τις, ἡ τῆς ἡδονῆς ἡσυχία λυπηρὸν ἔσται, 583e4-5.

[177] ὃ μεταξὺ ἄρα νυνδὴ ἀμφοτέρων ἔφαμεν εἶναι, τὴν ἡσυχίαν, τοῦτό ποτε ἀμφότερα ἔσται, λύπη τε καὶ ἡδονή, 583e4-5.

[178] κίνησίς, 583e10.

pain. Rather, it only appears[179] painful when next to or compared with the pleasant, and pleasant when next to the painful. But these illusions[180] do not relate to the truth of pleasure.[181]

Here the importance of the neutral intermediate state becomes clear: it is the existence of the neutral state which shows that when it comes to pleasure and pain, the mere absence of one does not generate the presence of the other. The appearance of the neutral middle as pleasant or painful is described as some kind of magic[182]at the end of part A.

To drive the point home, Socrates turns, in the second part of the argument, to examine pure pleasures[183] – those pleasures that do not come after pain,[184] so as not to confuse pleasure with what is felt when pain ceases, or to confuse pain with the cessation of pleasure (584b1-2).

Part B:

> Soc. Take a look at the pleasures that don't come out of pains, so that you won't suppose in their case also that it is the nature of pleasure to be the cessation of pain or of pain to be the cessation of pleasure.
>
> Glau. Where am I to look? What pleasures do you mean?

[179] Φαίνεται, 584a7.
[180] Φαντασμάτων, 584a9.
[181] πρὸς ἡδονῆς ἀλήθειαν, 584a9-10.
[182] γοητεία τις, 584a10.
[183] καθαρὰν ἡδονὴν at 584c1.
[184] ἡδονάς, αἳ οὐκ ἐκ λυπῶν εἰσίν, 584b1.

S: The pleasures of smell are especially good examples to take note of, for they suddenly become very intense without being preceded by pain, and when they cease they leave no pain behind. But there are plenty of other examples as well.

G: That's absolutely true.

S: Then let no one persuade us that pure pleasure is relief from pain or that pure pain is relief from pleasure.

G: No, let's not.

S: However, most of the so-called pleasures that reach the soul through the body, as well as the most intense ones are of this form – they are some kind of relief from pain.

G: Yes, they are.

S: And aren't the pleasures and pains of anticipation, which arise from the expectation of future pleasures or pains, also of this form?

G: They are.[185]

The example we get are the pleasures of smell, which are worth noticing because they generate a great intensity of pleasure from no antecedent pain, and leave no pain when they cease.[186] Though we get no others, we are assured that there are many other examples of pure pleasures around (584b4), and that, therefore, we should not be persuaded that pure pleasure is a cessation of pain, or that pure pain is the cessation of pleasure.

[185] *Rep*. 584b1-c10, trans. Grube/Reeve.

[186] *Rep.* 584b. Other instances where smells are described as pleasures which do not arise from pain include *Tim.* 65a, *Phileb.* 51b and 51e, and Aristotle's *EE* III.2 (1230a36-1231b4). Cf. *NE* 1118a4ff.

On the other hand, most of the pleasures that get to the soul via the body,[187] and the most intense of them, are reliefs from pain. Included amongst pleasures and pains of this type are the pleasures and pains of anticipation, which arise from the expectation[188] of pleasures and pains, becoming pre-joy or pre-pain.[189]

We then pass to the third part of this argument with the introduction of the imagery of ascent and descent, which we are told describe the kind of thing the pleasures and pains of anticipation are, and what they most resemble[190]:

Part C:

> Soc: Do you know what kind of thing they are and what they most resemble?
>
> Glau: No, what is it?
>
> S: Do you believe there is an up, a down, and a middle in nature?
>
> G: I do.
>
> S: And do you think that someone who was brought back down below to the middle would have any other belief than that he was moving upward? And if he stood in the middle and saw where he had come from, would he believe that he was anywhere other than the upper region, since he hadn't seen the one that is truly upper?
>
> G: By god, I don't see how he could think anything else.
>
> S: And if he was brought back, wouldn't he suppose that he was being brought down? And wouldn't he be right?
>
> G: Of course.

[187] διὰ τοῦ σώματος ἐπὶ τὴν ψυχὴν, 584c4.

[188] προσδοκίας, 584c9.

[189] γιγνόμεναι προησθήσεις τε καὶ προλυπήσεις, at 584c10.

[190] μάλιστα ἐοίκασιν, 584d1.

> S: Then wouldn't all this happen to him because he is inexperienced in what is really and truly up, down, and in the middle?
>
> G: Clearly.
>
> S: Is it any surprise, then, if those who are inexperienced in the truth have unsound opinions about lots of other things as well, or that they are so disposed to pleasure, pain, and the intermediate state that, when they descend to the painful, they believe and are really in pain, but that, when they ascend from the painful to the intermediate state, they firmly believe that they have reached fulfilment and pleasure? They are inexperienced in pleasure and so are deceived when they compare pain to painlessness, just as they would be if they compared black to grey without having experienced white.
>
> G: No, by god, I wouldn't be surprised. In fact, I'd be very surprised if it were any other way.[191]

Here Socrates introduces an image to clarify the nature of these cases, which he says most resembles the up, down and middle that is found in nature.[192] We get a description of what a subject would believe to be true at various stages of a journey on this metaphorical ladder which runs from down below to the top, via the middle. A subject who is brought from down below to the middle would believe himself to be moving upwards, and, from the position of the middle looking down to where they started, they would believe themselves to be in the upper region, given that they have known nowhere higher (584d4-9). If they were then brought back to where they started, they would think they were being brought down, and this belief would be true.[193] There is an emphasis on both how the agent perceives their affective status at each point, and the epistemic conditions which give rise to this perspective – an ignorance caused by inexperience.

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[191] *Rep.* 584c10-585a7, trans. Grube/Reeve.

[192] *Rep.* 584d1-3.

[193] ἀληθῆ οἴοιτο, 584e1-2. Presumably, the truth of this belief is accidental, since at this stage they don't have the whole picture.

The reason this would happen to the subject is that they have not experienced what is truly is up, down, and in the middle.[194] As such, those inexperienced in the truth have unsound opinions generally, and their disposition towards pleasure, pain, and the in-between state is such that when they descend in the direction of the painful they believe themselves to be, and really are in pain, and when they ascend from the painful to the in-between they intensely believe that they are reaching fullness and pleasure. The subject is inexperienced in pleasure,[195] and so is deceived into seeing painlessness only in relation to pain, just as one who is ignorant of white would if they only saw grey in comparison to black (585a4).

This is the argument in outline. In part A we get a loose yet compressed argument, and in parts B and C we get examples and metaphors which elaborate on that argument. The key claims of the loose argument of part A can be re-stated as follows:

1. Pain is the opposite of pleasure (583c3-4).

2. There is a neutral state which is neither pleasure nor pain, between the two, found in the middle, and described as a calm of the soul by comparison to the other two (583c5-8).

[194] τοῦ ἀληθινῶς ἄνω τε ὄντος καὶ ἐν μέσῳ καὶ κάτω, 584e5. The ἄνω/ μέσῳ/κάτω language here inevitably reminds us of the cave imagery of book VII, 514a–520a (in addition to the language of descent of the opening lines of the dialogue). We are therefore invited to form comparisons between the epistemic situation of the cave-dwellers and those of the sufferers.
[195] ἀπειρίᾳ ἡδονῆς, 585a5.

3. When suffering, agents often praise (ἐγκωμιάζω) the cessation of suffering, painlessness and relief as most pleasant (583d6-9).

4. When the delight of the agent freed from pain comes to an end, the rest after the pleasure will be painful (583e1-2).

5. Thus (from 3 and 4), the middle state (ὃ μεταξὺ) will at times become either (ἀμφότερα) pleasure or pain (583e4-5).

6. It is not possible for that which is neither (μηδέτερα) [pleasure nor pain] to be either [pleasure or pain] (583e7).

Alternative claim: It is possible for that which is neither [pleasure nor pain] to *appear* as either pleasure or pain (from 584a).

Here Plato could be arguing for either of two claims:

a) What is sometimes pleasant and sometimes painful can't be unqualifiedly pleasant or painful.

b) What is allegedly sometimes pleasant and sometimes painful can't *ever* be either pleasure or pain, but can only ever appear (non-veridically) to be pleasure or pain.

According to (a), people are mistaken in thinking that some states that in fact are pleasant and painful on different occasions are pleasant or painful, unqualifiedly. Their error is one of over-generalising. According to (b), they are mistaken in thinking that these states are ever pleasure or pain. The appearance of being pleasant or painful is illusory in these cases, in the sense that there is an apparent connection between being

pleasant and being pleasure, and it is only apparent. Their error involves being unable to tell these cases apart from experiences of true pleasure or pain. I will ultimately argue for reading (b), but for the time being I will set this aside and present James Warren's reading of the argument, as a way of starting to get clarity on which of these alternatives makes better sense of the passage.

IV Warren's Reading

In 'Socrates And The Patients: *Republic* IX, 583c-585a', James Warren confronts commentators who have criticised Socrates' argument on the grounds that he either inflates a point unfairly, or gets the phenomenology wrong by claiming that someone might mistake the absence of pleasure for pain, or the absence of pain for pleasure.[196] Critics such as Urmson (1984) claim that Socrates is wrong to think that there is error or illusion involved in these judgements at all, and they argue that Socrates has insufficient grounds for claiming that these types of pleasure are unreal. Warren, on the other hand, argues that the mistake, if there is one, is made by Socrates' supposed interlocutors, and that, in exploiting their view, he produces a dialectical argument which convincingly forces some interlocutors to accept that, aside from pleasure and pain, there is also an intermediate state of calm. Warren consequently considers Socrates' view to cleverly establish his alternative explanation for the phenomena by adopting the evidence of his opponents in favour of his own account of pleasure and pain.[197] He suggests that the passage is 'either overlooked or thought to be deficient in some way', and defends the

[196] Warren (2011) 120, n. 12 citing the views of Annas (1981) and Urmson (1984).
[197] Warren (2011) 114, 120.

contrasting view that 'it is a careful and persuasive piece of philosophical argument and does not deserve the negative critical evaluation it receives'.[198]

I take it, then, that one of Warren's motivating concerns with this passage is to defend its importance in face of criticism or dismissal, and I agree that this should concern us. In fact, I think that concern is deeper still: we might at first be tempted, for example, to think that this argument can be conceded as weaker, and perhaps given up, because Socrates has other, more serious arguments to fall back on – arguments from book V for the same overall conclusion, namely the superiority of the life of the philosopher over other contenders. But I think we can go further in defending the importance of this argument: after all, Socrates calls it the 'the greatest and most authoritative[199] of the overthrows. It is the third of three falls, which I suggest is an implicit reference to Greek wrestling. In Greek wrestling it is the third of three falls, where an opponent's shoulders touch the ground, that wins the victory.[200] The argument from pleasure, then, is conceived of not as a supplement to the others, but as the one which wins the whole contest.[201] So I think we have good reason, taking this label seriously, to look for a way of reading this argument which reveals its importance to the *Republic* as a whole. But I find Warren's way of reading it more forced that other alternatives, and in what follows I aim to show why that is so. In doing so, I argue that the stronger reading demonstrates

[198] Ibid. 114.

[199] μέγιστόν τε καὶ κυριώτατον, 583b2.

[200] Warren notes the connection to wrestling on pp. 113-14, n. 1, but doesn't draw out this point.

[201] On which see n. 158, above.

the unique and crucial role that the argument for the superior pleasure of the philosophical life plays in the overall argument for that life's supremacy.

Warren reads two parts of Socrates' third proof for the philosophical life as the most pleasant as addressing two different audiences: the first stretch (583c-585a, which is what I have, and will continue to focused on) being aimed at the view of people represented by the patients or sufferers ('τῶν καμνόντων', from 583c10); and the second stretch (585a-587c) aimed at characterising true pleasures, using the psychology and metaphysics from other parts of the *Republic* in a way which the first, 'dialectical' part does not.[202] For my purposes I will focus on Warren's assessment of the first, 'dialectical' part of the argument, and specifically his framing of it as a parallel to the argument which begins at 473c in book V, which takes place in section II of his paper.

Warren says: 'In many ways, the closest parallel to the third proof in *Republic* IX is the more famous stretch of argument at the end of *Republic* V…', i.e. the discussion, between Socrates and Glaucon, of the lovers of sights and sounds.[203] The bulk of this part of Warren's paper can be read as a defence of this parallel, which I take to be defended in five main ways:

[202] Warren (2011) 115-16, 118-122.
[203] Ibid. 116.

1) by setting up the patients of book IX as opponents with firm views who do not accept Socrates' metaphysics, in a way which parallels the lovers of sights and sounds of book V – I will call this the 'targeting' aspect;

2) by claiming that both passages take the form of offering pairs of arguments in which one part is 'dialectical', in a particular sense, and one part is dependent on the metaphysics of forms – I will call this the 'dialectical' aspect;[204]

3) by insisting on a thematic connection between the two passages because of their use of the language of health and illness – I will call this the 'thematic' aspect;

4) by claiming that the patients in book IX think that healthy people fail to recognise the pleasure they experience and think that they are in a superior epistemic position to judge these matters, in a way which implicitly parallels the position of the lovers of sights and sounds, who are in a dream-like state from which they are difficult to persuade – I will call this the 'perspectival' aspect;

5) by characterising the principle Socrates uses to pinpoint the error of the lovers of sights and sounds as formally parallel to the principle he uses to pinpoint the error of the patients – I will call this the 'formal' aspect.

[204] In casting doubt on this aspect of the parallel Warren defends, I nonetheless recognise that some of the motivation for using the term 'dialectical' in his analysis may be in response to Gail Fine's use of it in her analysis in Fine (1990). I thank my examiners for pointing this point, and my remarks on Warren's use stand despite this potential line of influence.

I will now elaborate on these five points, and in the next section I will offer reasons to doubt each of these ways of establishing the parallel, and I will suggest that the parallel is unfounded.

With respect to the first 'targeting' point, Warren sets up this argument of book IX as one in which Socrates aims to establish the existence of the intermediate state in the face of opponents who deny it, which, on his reading, is what explains why Socrates resists importing heavier metaphysical and psychological baggage here, and focuses instead on using the imagined interlocutors' own view against them.[205] This 'dialectical' approach, as he calls it, is a parallel with the book V argument, which also avoids assuming acceptance of the metaphysics of Forms, since it aims to convince specific interlocutors – the lovers of sights and sounds – who do not accept that view.[206] Warren describes Socrates in book IX as defending his view against a set of opponents who maintain a different view, claiming that 'they make two claims': first 'they insist' that the state of being healthy is the most pleasant possible, then 'they argue' that the value of health is only recognised when it is absent. He describes them as 'the objectors' and as 'opponents' who deny that there is an intermediate state.[207] He talks about 'the patients' thesis' and characterises the reports of sick people as 'their premise'.[208] He even speculates about whether these objectors have a particular philosophical allegiance.[209]

[205] Ibid. 115-16, 118-122.
[206] Ibid. 116. See also Fine (1978).
[207] Warren (2011) 115, 118, 116.
[208] Ibid. 121-122.
[209] Ibid. 118.

The second, related way in which Warren sets-up the parallel between books V and IX, which I have called the 'dialectical' aspect, is by claiming that both passages offer pairs of arguments where one of the pair is based on the prior acceptance of the metaphysics of Forms, and the other is 'dialectical' in the sense that it is intended to persuade even those who eschew such metaphysical commitments.[210] In book IX the term 'dialectical' demarcates the stretch of argument Warren takes to be aimed at the patients, which is designed to address those who, like them, cannot be assumed to have commitments to the Forms, or any of the metaphysical baggage which comes with such a commitment. It is dialectical, then, in a specific sense – it is aimed not just at those who lack metaphysical commitments in general, but who have specific views, and where Socrates is careful to argue using starting premises which do not contradict those views, especially by assuming the metaphysics of Forms. This is in contrast to the second stretch, which relies on the audience being sympathetic to such commitments.[211] This, Warren claims, is in parallel to the 'third wave' argument of book V.

Warren employs the term 'dialectical' repeatedly, to characterise places where he takes Socrates to rely only on premises that he is confident his interlocutors will accept, and where Socrates refrains from importing psychological or ontological commitments established in the conversation between him and Glaucon, for example, up to this point in the *Republic*.[212] He identifies the points at which this transition from one intended

[210] Ibid. 116.

[211] Ibid. 116.

[212] Ibid. 113, 114,120, and especially 116.

audience to the other happens in each of the two arguments. In the first, he notes: 'The distinction is marked in *Rep.* V by Socrates noting that Glaucon will readily agree with the first argument (475e6-7) and inviting Glaucon in the second argument now to answer on behalf of the lover of sights and sounds (476e7-8).'[213] In book IX it is marked by the ἡγῇ at 585b11, which tells us Socrates is addressing Glaucon personally, 'clearly marking a transition from one form of argument to another and from one set of imagined interlocutors to a new and more knowledgeable discussant.'[214] This reinforces the parallel Warren defends between the patients and the lovers of sights and sounds, and the claim that the patients are a specific set of dialectical opponents with fixed views.

The third way in which Warren defends the parallel between books V and IX is by highlighting the use of the language of health and illness in both, and the connection between ill health and compromised opinions, as part of what he calls 'thematic connections between the discussions in books V and IX'.[215] I have called this the 'thematic' aspect. While Warren doesn't belabour this point, it is another way in which he sees these two passages as pulling in the same direction, which supports the overall parallel.

[213] Ibid. 116, n. 5.
[214] Ibid. 117.
[215] Ibid. 117.

The fourth way is to understand the patients as holding a view ('…they think…', 117; '[t]he objectors to Socrates' view argue…', 118) that healthy people fail to recognise the pleasure they experience, and that their own illness puts them in a superior epistemic position to judge pleasure – a position which they cannot be persuaded to abandon. I have called this the 'perspectival' aspect of the parallel. Warren connects this idea explicitly to Glaucon's speculation, at 583d10-11, about whether health becomes pleasant when we are sick.[216] There is also an implicit parallel to the view of the lovers of sights and sounds, who are unable to see the nature of the beautiful itself (476b), and who are difficult to persuade (476d-e), perhaps because they are living in a dream-like state (476c) from which they cannot easily be persuaded without revealing to them that they are not in good health.[217] The lovers of sights and sounds implicitly believe themselves to be in a superior epistemic position to those who would try to convince them otherwise, as Warren puts it: '[t]he patients, like the lovers of sights and sounds in *Republic* V, are potentially troublesome for Socrates since they present themselves as having a competing claim to the possession of a privileged vantage point on an important philosophical matter'.[218]

This is connected to Warren's idea of the patients holding a firm set of views, where one of their views is that illness shows us that health is pleasant, which we are unable to see from a position of health. Hence he says:

[216] Ibid. 118.
[217] οὐχ ὑγιαίνει, 476e2.
[218] Warren (2011) 135

> The patients further insist that they are themselves the true arbiters not just of the proper hedonic evaluation of a state of health but of the general nature of pleasure and pain… According to the patients, a healthy person is a worse judge than a sick person, precisely because his continuing state of health leads him to fail to notice the pleasure he is experiencing.[219]

As mentioned, he goes as far as to speculate about the possible inspiration for the objectors' views, citing connections between 'their views' and the view of Heraclitus and Anaxagoras.[220]

On Warren's reading, then, it is the patients who first introduce the possibility of hedonic mistakes:

> …it is clear that the supporters of the alternative view themselves introduce the idea that it is possible to be mistaken in the estimation of one's hedonic state. They assert that healthy people are in general mistaken about their hedonic state since, although most healthy people do not think they are experiencing the highest pleasure, the experience of sickness reveals the truth. The intermediate

[219] Ibid. 119.

[220] Ibid. 118-19. If we can look to Aristotle's *NE* VII as being influenced by this passage, this would give us reason (additional to those I give in section V, below) to resist speculation about representations of historical figures here. Aristotle's discussion quite clearly uses the example of ordinary convalescing people, and doesn't mention Heraclitus or others who have held a view like this. Warren acknowledges some connection between the texts by citing *NE* VII on his p. 124, n. 17.

> state which healthy people think they are in is deceptive since they fail to notice the amount of pleasure they are really experiencing.[221]

The healthy people are barred from appreciating the pleasure of their state by virtue of not having the background of pain or illness which would reveal its true value by contrast, according to this reading of the patients' view. The source of the healthy people's error would be a lack of the relevant perspective from which to judge the correct hedonic status of the pain- or illness-free state – a perspective which can only be achieved by those who are currently, or were very recently, ill or in pain.[222] The patients would thus be expressing scepticism about a healthy person's infallible access to the pleasure of their healthy state.

The fifth way in which Warren draws a connection between books V and IX is by portraying the principle Socrates uses to pinpoint and correct for the error of the lovers of sights and sounds as formally parallel to the principle he uses to pinpoint and correct for the error of the patients. I have called this the 'formal' aspect. This is introduced in a footnote:

> The principle that something which on occasion appears F and on occasion appears not-F must be in itself neither F nor not-F has been used previously, notably at 479a-d… Socrates insists only that while neither X nor Y, 'quietude' sometimes *appears* X and sometimes *appears* Y and therefore can *be* neither X nor Y. (583e7 and 584a7-10 make this contrast clear.) Furthermore, the opposing view he wishes to reject is that 'quietude' always is pleasant although it only sometimes appears so (and, it is agreed, sometimes appears painful).[223]

[221] Warren (2011) 118.

[222] Ibid. 115-16.

[223] Ibid. 121, n. 14, emphasis in the original.

Warren claims that the principle at work in Socrates' argument at 583e7 is the same one we get in book V. On Warren's reading, in response to the patients' claim that the pleasure of health will cease to be pleasant when prolonged, Socrates gets them to concede the extended claim that the cessation of pleasure can be painful.[224] This allows Socrates to attribute to the same state the possibility of appearing pleasant at some times, painful at others, and therefore being neither of the two in fact.[225] In doing so, according to Warren, Socrates has embraced Glaucon's suggestion that rather than understanding health as apt to become pleasant only when one is sick, instead the change is one of appearance, and it is just that health only *appears* pleasant from the perspective of illness, rather than that it becomes so.[226]

Warren homes in on the principle behind Socrates' defence of the existence of the intermediate state based on the claim that it needs to be posited in order to explain how the same state can *appear* pleasant at some times and painful at others, and so it must *be* neither, and says of this state that 'it is to be contrasted with genuine pleasure'.[227] The attribution of an appearance is linked to perspective and comparison, which generate opinions which can be either true or false.[228] An opinion about whether the intermediate state appears pleasant or not pleasant is generated by the comparison between one's occurrent state and one's previous state. But the patients' own account of their

[224] Ibid. 121.
[225] Ibid. 121.
[226] Ibid. 119.
[227] Ibid. 121.
[228] Ibid. 122.

experience is not that our assessments of pleasure and pain are comparative or perspectival, on Warren's reading, but rather that it is from a certain perspective (i.e. of suffering) that reliable judgements about the pleasant nature of the healthy state can be made.[229] What the patients take to be a privileged epistemic position, Socrates claims is a position of epistemic vulnerability. As such, there is a sense in which the intermediate state is neither pleasure nor pain, on the Socratic analysis as read by Warren, but appears (rather than is) to be one or the other, at different times. He takes this argument to make use of the same principle as the argument of 479a-d.

This is a confined point, and the way in which one would have to read the book V argument in order to defend this parallel is not developed in Warren's paper. But I think it's worth speculating about how one would have to read that earlier argument in order to see it as parallel, as a means of judging whether this aspect of the overall parallel between the two books is well founded. I will now briefly consider such a speculative reading, for the purposes of this assessment.

At 479a-d, which Warren alludes to, Socrates addresses the lover of sights, and forces them to admit that there is nothing which appears beautiful which will not also appear ugly, or appears just which will not also appear unjust, or appears pious which will not also appear impious, and the same with doubles, bigs and smalls, lights and heavies, etc. Each will at times appear one way, and at times appear the opposite. In that case the

[229] Ibid. 122.

examples are described as ambiguous or half-way (ἐπαμφοτερίζειν). They can be neither stably (πάγιος) while really being both.[230] The conclusion with respect to objects of sight, at 479d4, is to consider them in the middle (μεταξύ) of being and not being, and a member of the category of the opinionable, a wandering intermediate grasped by an intermediate power.[231]

Since in the earlier argument Socrates says that intermediates can be neither (οὐδέτερος, 479c5) stably, why, in the later argument, does he feel equipped to say that, in the case of the intermediate state appearing at once F and at once not-F, it must be neither (μηδέτερος, at 583e7)? Warren's reading implies that it trades on the same distinction between 'being' and 'appearing' he sees in book IX. In the case of the objects of sight, the reason why they can't be pinned down and are said to participate in opposites is because they appear F in one way, not-F in another. With respect to any property such as beauty, justice, smallness, etc., objects in the world will not be purely one or the other, but rather always participate in both, and therefore cannot be said to stably or really participate in either, or in neither.

The attribution of one property or another, in the book V discussion, is explicitly linked to opinion. But the opinion is always both right in one sense, and wrong in another. The book V discussion doesn't straightforwardly say that the lovers are mistaken overall. It

[230] *Rep.* V, 479c3-4.
[231] *Rep.* V, 479d4.

could well be read as saying, rather, that things really are those two ways, and it's in the nature of opinion to grasp only one of them at a time. Taking the contrasting appearances of book V in a non-veridical sense, instead of something like a doxastic or phenomenological sense, is unpromising. As such, it would be worrying if, by virtue of accepting the parallel, we were forced to make the principle (that something which on occasion appears F and on occasion appears not-F must be in itself neither F nor not-F) fit both arguments.

If it is to fit both arguments, it must do so in a more nuanced way, i.e. by taking 'appearance', 'being' or 'neither' in different ways on the two occasions. There is a danger here, I think, of taking the claim about the parallel use of this principle to mean that the way in which the lovers of sights and sounds are 'mistaken' is in parallel to the way the patients are mistaken. The lover of sights believes in beautiful things but denies the form of Beauty, and is for that reason said to be dreaming (476d), and not healthy.[232] The person who experiences pseudo-pleasure is unhealthy and under illusion in a different way, in that they believe they have experienced true pleasure when they have not, and are therefore said to be experiencing magic and illusions – much like the compelled and the victims of magic at 413c, who change their mind because of pain, suffering, pleasure or fear. It would thus be tempting to think that the patients and the lovers of sights and sounds are both mistaken, and both in the same way, e.g. that they

[232] οὐχ ὑγιαίνει, 476e2.

both take an imitation of something to be the real thing. Below I will argue against this fifth, 'formal' aspect of the parallel, along with the other four.

V Against the Parallel Between Books V and IX

The parallel between books V and IX is tempting. It helps make sense of why, in both cases, Socrates refrains from leaning on the metaphysics of Forms; it connects two instances of the use of the language of illness to describe epistemological failure; and, if the parallel between the nature of the principle that lies behind Socrates' argument in both cases is correct, it would fill in the picture of how Socrates is thinking about the nature of the illusion the patients experience, and, perhaps, hint at how it might be overcome – how they might, like the lovers of sights, be persuaded to see the truth. But there are problems with the parallel as Warren defends it. Here I will present the case against reading the argument of book IX as in close parallel to that of book V.

I described above how Warren sets up the patients as 'opponents' with a strong commitment to a set of views, as the 'targeting' aspect of the parallel. But it isn't clear that when Socrates invokes the views of the suffering he is thinking of a particular set of rivals with well-formed opinions. In asking Glaucon whether he recalls what sick people say (λέγουσιν at 583c10) when they're ill, and whether he has heard people in pain praise (ἐγκωμιάζουσιν, 583d9) relief, and say (λεγόντων, 583d4) that there is nothing more pleasant than the cessation of their suffering, it's more natural to think of him as invoking the attitudinal reports of average people. Warren's translation of

λέγουσιν as 'claims' at 583c10, while perfectly allowable, unfairly suggests that the ill are putting forth firm views, where the more neutral rendering 'say' allows the context to guide the force of their statements.[233]

The more natural way of taking Socrates' question is as a request for confirmation of the very mundane observation that sick people report certain things in their experience when they're sick. This is also true of Socrates confirming with Glaucon that we find people in pain praising the absence of pain and the relief from it as most pleasant, rather than praising enjoyment. It is not obvious that this is a well-formed view of some set of rivals, as opposed to the observation of a familiar scenario in which those undergoing the experience are not engaged in theorising about their position.[234]

[233] A comparison with book V, 476e helps bring this out: there Socrates explicitly asks Glaucon to adopt the role of interlocutor on behalf of the lovers of sights and sounds. By comparison, the λεγό verbs of book IX are embedded, and suggest that these statements are attitudinal reports rather than premises.

[234] Even if we did grant that these reports could represent the views of some set of rivals, it's then not clear why we should think the lovers of sights and sounds are the best parallel. Why, for example, shouldn't we instead think of the pupils of sophists, such as those represented at *Soph.* 232a ff.? That comparison would pick out different features of the two sets – very roughly: the susceptibility of both the patients and the pupils based on their youth and inexperience (evidenced at 585a in *Rep*. IX, for example); the fact that both are deemed unhealthy in some sense; the idea that they are both vulnerable to some kind of deception based on inaccurate appearances, and that a change in perspective changes their evaluations; the use of the metaphor of optical illusion and magic in each, etc. This alternative shows some of the problems with the method of looking for a parallel – depending on which elements of the passage we focus on, the parallels suggest different emphases, and encourage us to read the passages in different ways – ways which may unhelpfully draw our attention away from the context and content of this passage as it stands.

Warren argues that the transition from addressing these opponents to addressing Glaucon personally is marked by the ἦγῆ at 585b11, in aide of establishing the 'dialectical' aspect of the parallel.[235] But while it might be tempting to think of the section which precedes this as 'dialectical' in this sense, and the section which follows as licensing metaphysically-laden talk, there are reasons to be doubtful. Firstly, the transition does not feel as emphatic as this, and does not require us to upgrade the phenomenological reports of sick and pained people to a set view which they are pictured as actively defending.[236] Second, the latter half of the passage doesn't feel so metaphysically-laden by comparison to the latter half of the book V passage. In book V the sight lovers are depicted as formidable opponents with strong views, who take the authority of poets as ultimate, whereas what we recognise in the patients doesn't require anything like this dialectical baggage.[237] The second part of the book IX passage can all be read as working on the level of *eikasia* and *pistis*, and doesn't obviously move to the level of Forms in the way that book V does. Thirdly, it's not obvious that the first part of the book IX passage is free from metaphysically-laden talk. The characterisation

[235] Warren (2011) 116-17.

[236] Scott (2015) 77 suggests that the second part of the argument, from 585b-588a (which contains the 'true filling' argument) is the only place where Forms are made use of in the defence of justice in the *Rep.*, the 'long road' otherwise having been abandoned. However, this view does not require a commitment to understanding the patients as opponents with firm views, in the way Warren does. Socrates could avoid importing his metaphysics into the first part of the argument even if it is addressed to the average person, who would not be assumed to share in the metaphysics of the middle books.

[237] *Rep*. V, 476b, cf. 600e-601b. In fact, while the position of the sight lovers is more clearly attributed to some specific group than that of the patients, it's not obvious that the sight lovers don't simply represent a more theoretically circumspect version of the mob, running around to Dionysiac festivals (476d). They seem to have an identifiable point of view, but it doesn't look extreme, and could instead be thought of as a refined version of the view of the many. Their denial of the Forms is merely implicit, not explicit. As such, even Warren's division of the book V argument into two distinct parts is not without its problems.

of the coming to be of pleasure or pain as a type of motion at 583e10, for example, wouldn't normally be something we could take for granted.[238] The quick agreement about it not being possible for that which is neither to become both, in the line before, would also seem to invoke metaphysical principles that can't be assumed to be shared by your average interlocutor. Metaphysics seems to leak into this first half. As such, the line between these two halves does not feel as firm as Warren's reading suggests. In fact the inversion of the evidence which Socrates enacts is all the more striking if it starts from an appeal to the very recognisable experiences people have, and ends in the very surprising conclusion about these experiences being illusory. To set these phenomenological reports up as the claims of a set of dialectical opponents is to lose or minimise some of the impact of the argument.[239]

The 'thematic' connection between books V and IX, marked by the shared use of the language of health and illness, is interesting. It's a nice observation that both discussions position epistemic failure as a kind of psychological illness, and attempt to rehabilitate incorrect opinions by discussion and argument is portrayed as a curative process. However, there are two reasons to be sceptical of this connection. The first is that health and illness talk is not exclusive enough to these two arguments in particular to establish

[238] We know that Aristotle, for example, doesn't subscribe to it.

[239] In place of this strong sense of 'dialectical', I suggest something closer to an endoxic sense is at work in this passage. What's being described are the phenomenological experiences of ordinary people, and while these might be invoked either by Socrates in addressing the kinds of claims certain types of hedonists (in the loose sense) make, or by hedonists themselves, the phenomenological reports themselves are evidence in an argument, and are not doctrinal, or arguments in themselves.

the close connection Warren wants. The analogy between health, justice, virtue, and a natural and controlled ordering of the soul on the one hand, and illness, injustice, vice and various disturbances or disfigurements of the soul on the other is rife in the *Republic*, starting at 444c-e, where it is firmly established. Calling something unhealthy is a general marker of identifying a disordered soul in the text, and not a specific reason, independently, to take these two arguments as parallel.

The second reason to be worried about the thematic connection is that this language is used quite differently in the two contexts: in book V the lovers of sights and sounds are metaphorically unhealthy, and are clearly not suffering. Calling them οὐχ ὑγιαίνει at 476e is in service of showing that their *doxa* is compromised, and it does not suggest that they are pained by a physical illness. This aligns with other Platonic uses of illness as a metaphor for a disordered soul, in the *Republic* and elsewhere.[240] By contrast, τῶν καμνόντων of book IX are literally suffering.[241] In fact, this passage is quite unique in invoking the accounts of those who are factually sick and in pain. To downplay this is to risk robbing the argument of some of its force. Overall, the comparison between the

[240] An obvious example is *Soph.* 232a17, for example, and others are not hard to find.
[241] Warren acknowledges this (117), but doesn't find it problematic for his parallel since, in addition to physical illness and pain, the patients are also characterised by unhealthy opinions. If we think that Aristotle is drawing on this passage of the *Republic* in his discussion of what sick or suffering people take to be pleasant in *NE* VII, for example, this would be further evidence for taking their illness as literal.

book V and book IX uses of the language of health and illness reveals more of a contrast than a link between them.[242]

Connected to the idea of the patients as opponents with firm views is the 'perspectival' claim which says that one of their views is that healthy people fail to recognise the pleasure they experience, and that this is a parallel to the claim of epistemic superiority of the lovers of sights and sounds. Warren argues that it is the patients who first introduce the possibility of hedonic mistakes by insisting that it is only from a position of pain or illness that someone who experiences pleasure can recognise it as such, which implies that there are cases where the pleasure of health goes unrecognised.[243] This is a reading of 583d1, where Socrates reports that those who suffer were not aware that the cessation of suffering is the most pleasant (ἥδιστον) until they were ill. But to say that relief from and absence of pain is most pleasant in some particular context (from the perspective of suffering) does not imply a belief that relief from and absence of pain is most pleasant outside of that context. That would require the patients to think that how they perceive pain cessation when suffering is evidence of the nature of pleasure *per se*.

[242] If we're looking for thematic connections between books V and IX we may be better served by looking at the shared language of hunger, food, and eating, for example, found in book IX at 582b and 585b ff., and in book V at 475c. But with that anchoring point, too, we would need to establish whether the images are used in the same way in both contexts, how literal or figurative each is, etc.

[243] Warren (2011) 115-16.

When I am suffering with tonsillitis, for example, I might think that nothing would be more pleasant than some relief of the pain in my throat, and I might even think that I ought to be more grateful of my good health at times when it obtains. But this does not mean that I drastically revise my view of the nature of pleasure based on such occasions, and that I think that at times of health I have lost touch with reality by failing to recognise and experience the pleasure of health. It is perfectly consistent for me, or the patients, to fail to think that illness shows us that health is pleasant for someone who isn't ill. Rather, thinking that it is from the perspective of ill health that health becomes pleasant is consistent with having no strong view about the nature of pleasure outside of that context, or how this evidence bears on it.

Warren recognises the possibility of this 'weaker position' of the patients, where our assessments of pleasure and pain in general are recognised as often being comparative or perspectival, but rejects that this is their starting point.[244] He holds instead that Socrates' argument for the existence of a neutral middle state is set against that of opponents who deny its existence. My own reading of the argument, on the other hand, is that Socrates can establish his case for a neutral middle state without attributing to suffering people the implausible claim that their observations while suffering are taken, by them, to be evidence of the misleading and deceptive perspective of healthy people. Instead he is appealing to a very common, recognisable experience – a perspectival change which many of us will be familiar with, in the way that Glaucon is. The patients

[244] Ibid. 122.

are not, therefore, a good parallel for the lovers of sights and sounds, if that parallel implies a firm stance involving a claim to epistemic superiority with respect to the nature of pleasure when compared with healthy people. This is important to the argument, because taking the patients as opponents instead of as examples weakens the Socratic position.

The 'formal' aspect of Warren's parallel highlights the importance of Socrates' introduction of the language of appearances (marked with φαίνω terms) of pleasure and pain into the book IX argument, at 584a. Here Socrates claims that when the middle state is next to the painful it appears pleasant,[245] and when next to the pleasant it appears painful. What is the nature of the transition to talk of appearances at this point in the argument, and how are we to understand what kind of appearances they are? Socrates says that there is nothing healthy[246] in these appearances concerning the truth of pleasure,[247] and calls them phantoms or illusions.[248] They are, in other words, *mere* appearances, as opposed to the real thing. This makes it reasonable to conceive of him as thinking of these appearances as non-veridical in book IX – contrasting the real thing with an illusory appearance.

[245] παρὰ τὸ ἀλγεινὸν ἡδύ, 584a7-8.
[246] οὐδὲν ὑγιὲς, 584a9.
[247] πρὸς ἡδονῆς ἀλήθειαν, 584a10.
[248] τῶν φαντασμάτων, 584a10.

The 'formal' parallel with book V is far from obvious, though, since it depends on how we understand the idea that the same principle, that something which on occasion appears F and on occasion appears not-F must be in itself neither F nor not-F, applies in both passages. How to read *phainesthai* in book V is generally debated, and 479a-d – the passage Warren cites in support of the parallel – is especially difficult to read in a way which takes *phainesthai* as non-veridical.[249] There Socrates addresses the lover of sights (479a1 ff.), asking whether the many beautiful things will not also each appear (φανήσεται) ugly, or the just things unjust, or the pious things impious. That the many Fs of this argument are both F and not-F (as opposed to merely that they appear F and not-F) is the reason why they cannot be *the* F, or what F is essentially. If the argument employed a non-veridical use of *phainesthai*, such that the many things merely appear F

[249] Unfortunately the grammar of this passage is unhelpful in determining whether *phainesthai* should be read as veridical or non-veridical. The verb *phainesthai* (appear) used with a participle may mean 'appear' in the veridical sense of 'to be manifestly so' or similar, while with an infinitive it is taken in the non-veridical sense of 'to seem to be so'. But the use at 584a is present indicative, so neither of these observations help determine the sense in which it is intended in this passage (the same is true of the use in the passage cited below, in the *Phd.*, on which see Irwin in Fine (1999) 152-3).

Notomi (1999) 92-4 presents a thorough and compelling argument for doubting whether the participle and infinitive constructions can be used to distinguish what he calls the 'positive' and 'negative' renderings of *phainesthai*, which should make us re-think whether we can draw such distinct lines even with grammatical clues. The 'positive' rendering traditionally signifies a fact about the world; the 'negative' expressing doubt, and both can be found in Plato, who refers to both unreliable and deceptive appearances, and obvious facts when they are revealed. Notomi argues that scholars have neglected the positive usage, taking appearances as inherently deceptive, and in contrast to reality, for Plato. He also shows that there are cases of the infinitive use which imply that some appearance *may not* be real, such as to indicate uncertainty rather than falsity or deception. He therefore proposes a third, 'neutral' sense of *phainesthai* which indicates that 'something appears to be so, but it may not be so' (93). He insists that our determination of the sense of *phainesthai* be made on philosophical rather than purely grammatical grounds, given this variation in use. So, even if we had more to go on from the grammar, how to take *phainesthai* is still a philosophical question in our passage.

and not-F, this would not be evidence for the distinction between Forms and tokens, since Leibniz's Law could not be employed.[250] Indeed, if Socrates intended a non-veridical reading of the appearance of beauty and ugliness at 479a ff., for example, it's not clear that he would be entitled to talk about their 'being' at 479c, nor that these examples would support the conclusion at 479d about things in the middle between what is not and what unmixedly is. The unsuccessful candidate for beauty in that argument might well not be to do with appearing versus being, but rather with a certain property.

I am not here claiming that all uses of *phainesthai* in book V are veridical, nor that Warren takes them to be. He doesn't aim to provide an interpretation of that passage at all. But, by introducing the principle he takes as parallel, he opens the door to speculation about how this principle would work in the book V account, and specifically how it would work if it were working in the same way as it seems to in the

[250] Leibniz's Law of the indiscernibility of identicals. This same issue comes up in the context of the equal sticks and stones argument of *Phd.* 74a9-c6, where it would be just as difficult to make sense of the argument if *phainesthai* were read in a non-veridical sense, e.g. if the argument there was that Forms must be posited in order to explain how one thing can non-veridically appear both F and not-F. Instead, the argument there is more naturally read as a claim that while the equal sticks and stones can appear both equal and unequal, the Form cannot bear these contrary properties (74b7-9). That the Form must be free of this compresence of opposites is only established if the appearances here are veridical, since some sensible appearing both F and not-F non-veridically does not show that a Form cannot be sensible, nor does it require positing a Form which has properties that no sensible can have in order to explain the property. So if a stick appears equal to another stick but not to a third, but the appearance of inequality between the first and third sticks were a mere misperception, that would be poor evidence in support of positing a Form of Equality. That is not to say that one could not argue that the equal can't appear non-equal in the non-veridical sense, but if Warren were to depend on such a claim it would have to be spelled out and defended. For more on the argument of the *Phd.* and a reading of it as establishing that Forms cannot be sensible, see Irwin (1995) 154-7.

book IX account. That speculation, as described above, takes us in a direction which is far from obvious. As a way of explaining what is going on in book IX, I suggest that drawing a parallel with this principle in book V is more confusing than it is helpful, because of how difficult it is to determine the epistemological sense at work in book V. There is a danger of trying to elucidate an obscure passage by comparing it to an even more obscure and contentious passage. I take this to be true not only of the 'formal' aspect of the parallel, but more generally.

Much of Warren's reading of this passage gets us thinking along the right lines, but the parallel he draws is ultimately too deep, and ends up distorting the passage. It also fails to appreciate some of the important aspects of the passage, such as its use of the attitudinal accounts of the ill and pained in a uniquely non-figurative way. Further, it unfairly restricts the argument as aimed at a specific set of opponents with explicit views. This is an unnatural reading of the passage, and one which obscures the force of Socrates' argument, because it fails to recognise that the real target is much more general, in that the experiences Socrates describes are ones which many of us will identify with. Read this latter way, the target of the argument is anyone who might doubt that the philosopher's life has the advantage of greater pleasure because they fail to see that the pleasures of the non-philosopher are so fundamentally deficient. This seems to be the position not just of tyrannical souls, but of many average people, as well as people who have many different theoretical attachments. In any case, the target is much wider and, read that way, the argument is more striking.

Understanding the argument as making use of evidence from very mundane experience provides a different basis on which Socrates can establish the neutral middle. It changes the way we understand the method and scope of the passage. It also avoids the need to spend time speculating about whose specific, historical views these might be. Finally, abandoning the parallel allows us to avoid using difficult and contentious material from book V to try to shed light on book IX, which is methodologically contentious. For all of these reasons, I suggest the parallel is unhelpful and should be abandoned.

Taking a step back, we might wonder about how much Warren is relying on these parallels, and what damage it does to his overall reading if they fail. I take it that the parallel is fundamental to Warren's reading. His paper begins by casting the whole third section as 'a neat dialectical argument against a potentially troubling set of opponents', and then reads the whole of the section in light of this dialectical framework.[251] In his conclusion he says of these opponents that 'they need to be answered', suggesting that the urgency of understanding Socrates' moves here is based on Warren's own way of understanding the dialectic, and blocking other reasons for the importance of the argument.[252] I have shown that there is reason to look for other ways in which to understand the importance of this argument, and who it is aimed at.

[251] Warren (2011) 113.

[252] Ibid. 135.

VI A Veridical Reading of *Phainesthai* in *Republic* IX

I have said that at 583c3-584a we get a loose argument which concludes, at 584a, with the claim that that which is at times pleasant and at times painful cannot be either pleasure or pain, and that Plato could be arguing for either of two claims here:

> a) What is sometimes pleasant and sometimes painful can't be unqualifiedly pleasant or painful.
>
> b) What is allegedly sometimes pleasant and sometimes painful can't *ever* be either pleasure or pain, but can only ever appear (non-veridically) to be pleasure or pain.

As a reminder, according to (a), people are mistaken in thinking that some states that in fact are pleasant and painful on different occasions are unqualifiedly pleasant and painful. Their error is one of over-generalising. According to (b), they are mistaken in thinking that these states are ever pleasure or pain. The appearance of being pleasure or pain is always an illusion in these cases, and they can't tell these cases apart from genuine ones. To understand Plato's argument in this passage, and what it tells us about his view of pleasure, it is crucial to understand how he depicts the error made in the example which sits at its heart, and what sense of 'appearance' describes the experience of those who misjudge their own affective experiences.

In this section I will set-out reading (a), and consider what the advantages and disadvantages of this reading are. Doing so involves reading *phainesthai* as veridical in

the book IX passage, because it grants that when something appears pleasant on certain occasions, that appearance is real rather than false. The mistake the over-generaliser makes is not one of being misled that this pleasant thing is pleasant, but rather mistaking a type of experience (relief from or absence of pain) for pleasure, thus treating it as emblematic (indeed defining) of pleasure, when in fact it is not. The reading therefore assumes that the appearances are veridical. Here I will consider how the argument of parts A, B and C would work if *phainesthai* were read in this way.

At 584a (the end of Part A, above) Socrates and Glaucon agree that the absence of pain is not pleasure, nor is the absence of pleasure pain. Rather, the absence of pleasure only appears[253] painful when next to or compared with the pleasant, and pleasant when next to the painful. But these illusions[254] do not relate to the truth of pleasure.[255] If we were to read *phainesthai* as veridical here, why should we think that the appearances of pleasure are φαντασμάτων which do not relate to the truth of pleasure, and are correctly described as a kind of magic (γοητεία)?

If *phainesthai* were intended in the veridical sense, Socrates would mean that the absence of pain is not pleasure but appears and is pleasant, and the absence of pleasure is not pain but is painful. This would draw a distinction between what is pleasure versus what is pleasant, and what is pain in contrast to what is painful. The problem could be

[253] Φαίνεται, 584a7.
[254] Φαντασμάτων, 584a9.
[255] πρὸς ἡδονῆς ἀλήθειαν, 584a10.

one of over-generalisation involving misjudgements, e.g. if someone relieved of pain were to judge that all freedom from pain or calm were not only pleasant but a marker of pleasure itself. In that case, they would be mistaken because, in fact, that same calm can also be painful. In other words, they mistake a pleasant experience for pleasure itself, and make claims about the nature of pleasure based on this limited experience. On this reading, calling these misjudgements φαντασμάτων indicates over-generalisation of judgements, where φαντασμάτων describes the sufferers' active use of these appearances to form or alter their view of pleasure, as opposed to it describing an illusion they passively perceive. They take these experiences to say something about pleasure *per se*, in an unqualified way.

Why might Socrates describe this as a kind of magic or witchcraft? The noun γοητεία is contrasted with the truth about pleasure at 584a10, which implies some kind of falsity. It is also found at *Phileb.* 44c8, where Socrates uses it to describe the view of the enemies of Philebus, who call what Philebus and his friends call pleasure mere refuges from pain, and who hate the power of pleasure, and think it so unhealthy (οὐδὲν ὑγιές, mirroring the οὐδὲν ὑγιὲς of *Rep*. 584a9) that its appeal is a γοήτευμα (charm, spell, or trick), rather than pleasure. The context bears a striking resemblance to the subject of our passage, and the sense in both passages is that the subject is under some spell associated with the unhealthy power of pleasure. At *Symp.* 202e9-203a1, γοητείαν sits alongside sacrifice, ritual, incantations and soothsaying[256] in the description of how spirits convey

[256] τὰς θυσίας καὶ τελετὰς καὶ τὰς ἐπῳδὰς καὶ τὴν μαντείαν πᾶσαν καὶ γοητείαν.

messages between mortals and the gods. Here the sense is more overtly mystical, and does not imply illusion or being misled, but rather something which needs interpreting, perhaps, and is open to misinterpretation. What is consistent between these Platonic uses is the sense of the *possibility* of being misled or misinterpreting.

Just before part A, at 583b5, Socrates calls the pleasures of those other than those of the intellect a kind of shadow painting.[257] In Classical art, σκιαγραφέω was a trompe l'oeil painting technique, the invocation of which may imply illusion more overtly, though again there is presumably the opportunity to see the painting for what it is, even while appreciating the effect. The possibility of being misled by the effect is at least implied.

On the over-generalisation reading, where *phainesthai* is taken as veridical, the sense of γοητεία would have to be something weak, such as charm, where certain experiences are so pleasing that it leaves it open to those experiencing them to misjudge them as paradigms of pleasure, instead of taking them in a qualified sense. At 584a1-8 Plato is careful to use the adjectives ἡδὺ (pleasant) and ἀλγεινὸν (grievous or painful), calling them appearances, and labelling those appearances unhealthy or unsound with respect to the truth of pleasure. The appearances are γοητεία in as much as they might suggest things about the truth of pleasure which would be inaccurate or, if the implication is that the problem is something elicited by the sufferer, that the appearances can be misinterpreted as suggesting something about pleasure. Perhaps these experiences are

[257] ἐσκιαγραφημένη, 583b5.

so charming they override the experience of pure pleasures such as those of smell, such that the agent no longer takes those to be the purest or most real pleasures, but rather takes pain relief as the ultimate, unqualified bearer of the term.

In what I have called Part B of the argument – the discussion of pleasures which are not preceded by pain – the over-generalisation reading would yield a version of the argument in which Socrates invokes these types of pleasure as examples of things we would want to call pleasures, but which are not reliefs from pain. So when he asks Glaucon to '[t]ake a look at the pleasures that don't come out of pains, so that you won't suppose in their case also that it is the nature of pleasure to be the cessation of pain or of pain to be the cessation of pleasure' (584b1-2), his point is that it is not in the nature of pleasure to be the cessation of pain since the pleasures of smell, for example, do not fit this description. It is as if to say, 'in case you're tempted by the example of how pain relief seems when you are in pain into thinking *that* is the very definition of pleasure, here is a reminder of things you call pleasures which are not like that, e.g. they don't involve pain at all'. Invoking this example would tell us not that relief from pain is not pleasant, but rather that whatever makes it pleasant must be something else, since there are these other pleasures which are not of that type but which are pure pleasures.[258]

[258] καθαρὰν ἡδονὴν, 584c1.

However, most of the affections that get to the soul via the body, the ones called pleasures[259] and the greatest[260] of those are some kind of relief from pain. On this reading, this frequency and intensity could be mentioned to help explain in what sense these pain releases are especially apt to be mistaken for paradigm examples of pleasure. The pleasures and pains of anticipation are also like this, in the sense that they form another example of affections which are not preceded by their opposite, and are another reason to think that the pleasures which arise after pain (and the pains which arise after pleasures) should not be used to make claims about pleasure *per se* or without qualification, since they are a particularly qualified kind, and not representative of all pleasure.

It's hard to see, on this reading, why Socrates would say that there is *nothing* healthy or sound[261] in the appearances of pleasure and pain that arise when next to calm since, if these appearances are pleasant and painful, this would require that pleasant and painful experiences can arise in a way that is completely divorced from pleasure and pain. Granted he does not say that there is nothing real or true in the appearances, but it is hard to see what reading of οὐδὲν ὑγιὲς we could apply that would not suggest some disconnect from the truth.[262] Drawing on the argument of Part A, the implication would

[259] λεγόμεναι ἡδοναί, 584c5.
[260] πλεῖστος, 584c5.
[261] οὐδὲν ὑγιὲς, 584a9.
[262] Even something as weak as 'nothing clear' would imply some disconnect from truth and honest representation. This is further supported by Socrates starting the argument, at 583b3, by calling the pleasures under discussion not altogether true or pure (οὐδὲ παναληθής… οὐδὲ καθαρά). Even if he means they are corrupted versions of pleasure, but are still versions, there would have to be something true about them.

be that the intermediate state can generate pleasant and painful experiences, and these should not be confused with the motion[263] of the soul which comprises pleasure and pain. In this case, it looks as though what the juxtaposition of calm and pleasure or calm and pain does is create a situation which can be misjudged as motion, and therefore feels pleasant or painful without a connection to pleasure or pain.

A first pass at a model for this phenomenon is what gets described as Cambridge change. These are changes in description rather than changes of property, and they can include relational changes.[264] An analogy to the generation of the illusion of motion, on this reading, would be the kind of account we would use to describe a case of sitting in a stationary train, seeing a neighbouring train speeding past, and mistakenly thinking the carriage we are in is moving. In this case, it is the perception of relative change (the relation between the stationary carriage and the fast-moving one) which causes the distorted perception that the motion is located other than where it really is. This is a familiar but powerful illusion, and, with our limited perspective on the event, it feels like real motion in our train. With the definition of pleasure and pain as motion of the soul, an illusion of pleasure or pain could be caused by an awareness of becoming better or worse off which can seem like motion or change, but somehow isn't, as it is caused by the subject's perspective, rather than a real motion or change. However we might want to think of the state of calm (ἡσυχία), it must be one in which anything the subject

[263] κίνησις, 583e10.

[264] Geach (1969) 71-2.

experiences is at most some kind of pseudo-motion, rather than real motion, since it is defined by its motionlessness.

However, the pleasant or painful thing must either be a motion or not. If it is a motion, what distinguishes it from the motions of a genuine pleasure? If it is not a motion, in what sense would it be pleasant or painful? On any reading it's uncertain whether motion is identical to pleasure or pain, or merely generates pleasure and pain. The key phrase at 583e could be taken either way, but is more naturally read as '… both pleasure and pain arising in the soul are a kind of motion',[265] because of the position of kinesis, as opposed to '… the coming to be of either the pleasant or the painful in the soul is a sort of motion'. Here again we would have to assume that the pleasant is divorced from pleasure to explain how an agent could have a pleasant experience (a veridical appearance) without any motion. But this would leave a crucial part of the argument woefully undefended.

In Part C of the argument we get the spatial analogy concerning movement upwards and downwards, which is invoked to further explain the pleasures and pains of part B. On the over-generalisation reading, how can we understand the idea that the agent gets things wrong because they are inexperienced[266] with the true upper region, which represents true pleasure? The term ἀπειρίᾳ can mean either ignorance, inexperience or

[265] καὶ μὴν τό γε ἡδὺ ἐν ψυχῇ γιγνόμενον καὶ τὸ λυπηρὸν κίνησίς, 583e9-10.
[266] ἄπειροι at 584e7, ἀπειρία ἡδονῆς at 585a5.

lack of skill. Depending on how we take ἀπειρία, this could mean either that the agent hasn't experienced true pleasure, or that they don't know which pleasures are true despite having experienced them. The explanation of why their judgements are off is either to do with lack of experience of true pleasures, or lack of recognition of true pleasures as true, at least in a way which endures. The latter reading would require it to be possible to experience true pleasures without recognising them as true, or at least without recognising the difference between them and mere pleasant experiences, in such a way that your judgement would be permanently recast as a result of that recognition.

At 584c1, the pleasures which are not the relief of some pain are used as a standard, and the comparison of pain cessations to these pure pleasures[267] is what reveals the potentially problematic nature of relief states. If it were possible for those who experience such pure pleasures to fail to grasp the difference between them and pain cessations, the argument here would fail, in the sense that it would not be true that ἀπειρία is the reason for the mistake. But the argument leaves open the possibility that one could experience these true pleasures, without these experiences fundamentally changing one's evaluative framework. We know this because the comparison between these true pleasures and other pleasant experiences needs to be called to one's attention, and there are apparently people who have had some experience of both (since the

[267] καθαρὰν ἡδονὴν.

pleasures of smell are taken as universal in this argument), and consider pain cessations superior, at least as they experience them.[268]

At 585a4, the ἀπειρίᾳ of true pleasure is analogised to ἀπειρίᾳ λευκοῦ - ignorance, inexperience or lack of skill in respect of white, which leads someone to judge grey in relation to black, and thereby misjudge it. On the stronger 'ignorance' reading of ἀπειρίᾳ, this would be akin to thinking that grey is the lightest shade around because you have not yet experienced the even lighter one, white. On the weaker 'inexperience' or lack of skill reading of ἀπειρίᾳ, this would mean that you have seen white, but when you later encounter grey in relation to black, you still take it to be the lightest shade, because you don't then have the white alongside it for contrast (due to your limited experience, or perhaps your misuse of past experience). Your past experience of white is one in which you either didn't recognise it as the lightest shade (which doesn't work on this analogy), or in which you didn't adjust your shade judgements in a way which takes this new, lightest shade into account by re-aligning all other shades in comparison to it, for the sake of future judgements (or in which that adjustment didn't have a lasting effect). This latter reading is possible, especially if the relief of pain has some special charm which overwhelms an agent in the moment they experience it. But the former reading, taking ἀπειρίᾳ as inexperience or lack of contact, is somewhat more natural

[268] It's possible that including the pleasures of smell amongst pure pleasures (καθαρὰν ἡδονὴν) is meant to indicate merely that they are purer than pain relief, in the sense that they don't involve antecedent pain, and that something like the intellectual pleasures invoked at 583b would have an even higher standard of purity. Still, given that smell is the example used in the argument, we must assume that it's one which is supposed to reveal a relevant difference, and we can therefore wonder what the epistemic impact of these two experiences is supposed to be.

given the analogy to white: once we are familiar with a spectrum of shades, we don't seem to lose the ability to perceive or judge shades on that spectrum in future, even if we are seeing only two examples on that spectrum. I might, for example, judge a wall to be white, and then re-think my view when a fresh coat of paint starts to go on and I see how greyed or yellowed the old paint is by comparison. But that is not a case which would naturally be described as ignorance of or inexperience with white. The case of comparing grey with black in ignorance of white is clearly meant to pick out a scenario in which one judges something as an extreme, on one end of the scale, in ignorance of an example which is even more extreme.[269] The question is only whether that ignorance is through lack of contact with that more extreme example, or inability to call it up when making judgements which do not explicitly include it.

This question about ἀπειρία also effects how we read claim 4 of the argument of Part A (as outlined above).[270] That claim says that when the delight of the agent freed from pain comes to an end, the rest after the pleasure will be painful (583e1-2). To motivate his claim that the middle state is neutral and motionless, Socrates needs to establish that this state can be misperceived in two ways: it can be perceived as pleasant when it follows pain, and it can be perceived as painful when it follows something pleasant. The reported experiences of agents who are inexperienced in true pleasure are used as

[269] Cf. Xen. Fr. B38 [DK21 B38 = Loeb D52; Herodian, *On Peculiar Speech* 41.5], which I take it works in a similar fashion, concerning the relativity of judgements of taste, and the limits of our knowledge from perceptual experience: 'If god had not fashioned yellow honey, they would say that figs are far sweeter' (trans. in Curd & McKirahan (2011) pp. 31-38).
[270] See pp. 151-2, above.

evidence that while the middle state can appear to be pleasure or pain, in fact it is neither of those. With the example of pain cessation and the move from illness to health we have had proof for the claim that the middle state will sometimes feel pleasant (583d). We then need evidence that the same middle state will feel painful, in order to show that claim 5 is true, and understand how to read claim 4.[271]

The two ways this could be accomplished (and the two ways claim 4 can be understood) are to imagine:

> a) an agent who has experienced true pleasure perceiving the neutral state as painful by comparison, or
>
> b) the same agent who has just moved from a state of deprivation, and at first experienced the neutral state as pleasant, now experiencing that same state as painful, because the effect of the comparison has worn off.

It is important to understand which of these alternatives Socrates intends because if he means the first, then we are supposed to understand someone who has experienced true pleasure still being susceptible to misjudgements about pleasure. If he means the second that is not ruled out, but the emphasis of the argument is different, in that it would show something new about the phenomenology of comparatively pleasant and painful experiences, the duration of the effect of affective comparisons, and the nature of the neutral middle state.

[271] See pp. 151-2, above.

Reading (b) would be a case of the neutral state appearing painful following the appearance of pleasure, rather than pleasure itself. If reading (b) were correct, it would suggest the non-veridical reading of *phainesthai*, in the sense that the agent would have to be understood as experiencing the neutral state as pleasant at one time, and painful at another, without those appearances having any connection to pleasure or pain themselves (given the second claim).

Reading *phainesthai* veridically restricts us to reading (a), because it is the agent's experience of the same state which changes, rather than the state itself changing, since on that reading they remain in the neutral middle state. And on a first pass, reading (a) of claim 4 looks plausible: the account of the neutral state as painful would be explained by an agent who has first experienced pleasure, and is then brought down to the neutral state, where the comparative deficiency of pleasure results in them perceiving that neutral intermediate state as a painful one. This seems to be how Gosling and Taylor understand the case at 583e1-2, which they describe as one in which someone 'finds it unpleasant when a pleasure stops'.[272] This account of how the neutral state could appear

[272] Gosling & Taylor (1982) 450. Perhaps it is ungenerous to think that this is the only reading open to Gosling & Taylor, when they could be speaking of pleasure more loosely, rather than insisting on the agent having experienced pure pleasure, which is precisely what Socrates ruled out as a starting point of the argument. But they do seem to be thinking of the agent as experiencing some kind of pleasure, as opposed to a mere pseudo-pleasure. Hence this criticism:

> In fact the only error which is involved in the description of the situation is one committed by Plato himself, rather than by those whom he is describing. For Plato overlooks the fact that it is possible to be pleased that one is no longer suffering distress, and even to enjoy freedom from distress. The man who banged his head against the wall because it was so nice when he stopped may have been imprudent, but he did not in any way misdescribe the aim of his activity. It is indeed a mistake to describe as pleasant a state which is neither pleasant nor unpleasant, but the invalids and others whom Plato

painful would be the parallel to the account that forms the evidence for the neutral state at times appearing pleasant. But it would be strange if this is what Socrates had in mind, since the person is described as ceasing to feel χαίρων, not ceasing to experience ἡδονή.[273] It also requires the imagined agent to be one who had experienced true pleasures. While this may seem unproblematic given that the pleasures of smell count as pure pleasures in this argument (584b6), if we take the description of the agent at 584d-585a to be a reading of these same cases, there they are described as ignorant of or inexperienced with true pleasure,[274] as discussed above. This is the reason why their mistaking of the comparative improvement for pleasure, and comparative worsening for pain, is unsurprising (585a) – they are ignorant of the extremes of the scale, so their orientation, and judgement, is off.

If we take the second image offered, starting at 584d, to be a reading of the same kind of cases as the first, as it appears we should, then we are helped by the addition of the language of movement between up, down and middle which Socrates introduces.[275] In

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describes do not make that mistake; they expect to find, and do find, a certain state enjoyable *just because* it is a state of freedom from distress. There is no misidentification involved here, any more than there is a mistake involved in finding a cool shady room pleasant just by contrast with the heat and glare outside (Gosling & Taylor, 1982, 450-1).

[273] See n. 174, above.

[274] ἀπειρίᾳ ἡδονῆς at 585a.

[275] The reason why we should take this extra image as a description of the same phenomenon is that Socrates is explicit in saying that it is. He invokes the image of up, down, and middle to illustrate the pleasures and pains of anticipation, at 584c. Just above this, he says that the pleasures and pains of anticipation are the relief of some kind of pain, and reach the soul via the body, which is why they are 'also of this form' (τούτου τοῦ εἴδους εἰσί, 584c6), e.g. they are of the same form as the pleasures and pains he has been discussing in the previous examples. Butler (1999) 288 n. 10, argues that these should not be consider anticipatory pleasures. His claim is that since the 'pre-enjoyings' (προησθήσεις at 584c10) are said to be the same (ταὐτὰ) as other

this second explanation of these cases, the final movement is described as one in which an agent is brought back to where they started (brought from the middle down), and in which they would think they were being brought down, and this belief would be true.[276] How would this person have a true belief? They would be right in the sense that their situation is worse, but only because the sense of betterment which contributed to their being pleased has 'expired', so to speak, and they now experience it as a worsening. They are being brought down, but not in the sense that where they are being brought down from is the upper region, as opposed to the middle. In other words, they're right that their situation has become worse, and that it is painful, but not that this downgrade means that they have travelled outside of the middle position in the first place. At 585e Socrates seems to affirm this reading when he states that 'those who are inexperienced

releases from pain, they cannot refer to anticipatory pleasures, since these are not releases from pain. In fact, according to Butler, anticipatory pleasures frequently intensify occurrent pain, giving the example of being thirsty and that thirst intensifying when one anticipates a thirst-quenching drink.

On my reading, below, the reason for invoking anticipatory pleasures in this argument is to provide another example of what one's current affective state can be compared to, and wherein that comparison contributes to one's perception of one or the other state as pleasant or painful. As such, the sense in which anticipations of future affections can be a relief of current pain is that if I'm in pain and I expect to be relieved of that pain, that anticipation may please me or it may pain me, but the important point here, and what makes it the same, is that I will mistake that anticipated relief for pleasure because of how it compares to how I'm feeling now. The anticipated pleasure is perceived as a pleasure because it is conceived of as a relief. It's not that the anticipated pleasure releases me from pain, but that I understand it, and its pleasure, *as* a release from pain. And pleasures that only seem pleasant as reliefs from pain are not pleasures at all, according to this argument. This also helps support Plato's choice of examples, which do not include replenishments such as thirst and hunger, in part because those are not the best examples of the expected releases from pain he has in mind. To this extent I can agree with Butler in saying that they are non-releases. They are anticipated releases, rather than occurrent ones.

[276] ἀληθῆ οἴοιτο, 584e2.

in the truth... when they descend to the painful, they believe truly and are really in pain…'[277]

Why does Socrates point out this true belief, although he seems more interested, overall, in characterising this person as ignorant or inexperienced? Perhaps he is being precise about what they get wrong by eliminating a possible alternative. It's not that this agent is wrong that they are worse off, rather they are mistaken in the particular sense that they were never as well off as they thought themselves to be, i.e. they were not previously experiencing true pleasure, and it is not a loss of pleasure that they have suffered. They lack the correct framework in which to evaluate their affective experiences, so they are correct, but only accidentally, in that being worse off would correctly describe both the situation they thought themselves to be in, and the situation they are in.

At the risk of complicating matters by using an image to explain another image, we can think about an analogous journey from debt to a break-even position. From the perspective of being in debt, the idea of paying off one's debt will seem like the greatest relief and pleasure. And when one does pay off one's debt, especially if the debt was great and stressful to hold, the break-even position will indeed be a pleasant relief. But, still in the break-even position, and without any funds, when the joy of that initial, comparative improvement wears off, one will feel pained by poverty – not the same

[277] Trans. Grube/Reeve (1992).

pain as debt, but the pain of having no funds, and being in a merely neutral position. Within that same break-even space, one can feel at once elated, and then depressed, without ever dropping back into debt, or gaining any funds. There is an affective yo-yoing between two contrasting attitudes to this same position, generated by what that position is being compared to. From that same position one might feel they have become worse off, despite not having suffered a real loss. One might have felt rich upon paying off the debt, but there were no riches, nor does this person necessarily know what it is to be rich, so their sense that they have suffered a loss of wealth is illusory but is experienced as being as painful as a real loss.[278]

There is an important difference which this analogy helps reveal. Unlike the debt and wealth analogy, where the fact of the matter and one's attitude to and affective experience of that fact come apart (such that one can feel either joy or sorrow at breaking even), with the case of pleasure and pain one's attitude to one's affective state forms part of that state. So, while one can feel either joy or sorrow at the break-even state without one's attitude changing the state of one's finances, whether one feels joy or sorrow about one's affective state seems to contribute to but be theoretically separable

[278] This still leaves a problem, though, since we are expecting to get proof that the middle state can feel painful, but that that pain is somehow illusory. But this argument implies that when the appearances of pleasures wear-off, an agent is in real pain. It does not show that the agent is in pseudo-pain, which would be an account of the middle position as a potentially painful-seeming one. The correlate from my analogy would be the debtless person feeling poor because they are not rich, but mistaking that poverty for debt, when in fact they are still in the neutral position. But the emphasis of the argument is on the perspective of the agent changing the apparent nature of the object of comparison, but not really changing its nature. So, it matters less whether the agent is in pain than that they were never 'in pleasure'.

from that state. This raises a question: does Socrates' claim at 584a about the appearances of the pleasure and pain being illusory and a kind of magic amount to a denial that the attitude which arises from comparisons can or should affect whether one is experiencing pleasure or pain? Further, does he also thereby deny the impact of one's attitude to one's affective state on that state? I will return to these questions in section VIII, after considering the merits of my alternative reading of the argument of book IX.

The attempt to read *phainesthai* veridically, and to explain the error one might make based on experiences of suffering in terms of over-generalisation from qualified pleasant experiences to judgements about pleasure as such, and unqualified, is less than satisfactory. It requires some rather forced interpretations, and leaves some crucial arguments unmade, as I have shown in this section. By way of an alternative, I will now offer a sketch of a non-veridical reading, and I will defend that reading.

VII Non-Veridical Affective Appearances and the Neutrality of the Middle State

Above I have suggested a second option for how to understand what happens when someone is experiencing the middle state as painful:

> b) the same agent who has just moved from a state of deprivation, and at first experienced the neutral state as pleasant, now experiencing that same state as painful, because the effect of the comparison has worn off.

On this reading *phainesthai* is taken non-veridically, such that the imagined agent first experiences something pleasant (*chairein*, to mark its true status as a mere pseudo-pleasure),[279] generated by the comparative improvement of their position, having been brought from below to the neutral position. Once in the neutral position, however, the delight generated by that comparison will eventually wear off and they will feel as if they are back in pain or illness, or have moved back down below. In other words, the neutral middle state will seem painful. The source of their error is not over-generalisation from some qualified cases, but rather taking non-veridical appearances of pleasure and pain as true, and being unable to tell them apart from true pleasure and pain. If this reading is correct, then the upshot of Socrates' argument would be to show that what is allegedly sometimes pleasure and sometimes pain can't *ever* be either pleasure or pain, but can only ever appear (non-veridically) to be. In other words, if the neutral middle can be either, it's really neither – and thinking otherwise, based on the experience of the state being pleasant or painful, is tantamount to falling for an illusion. In contrast to the more active picture of the sufferers' role in misjudgement on Warren's account, and the speculatively developed veridical reading above, on this non-veridical reading the error of the sufferers is correctly understood as a much more passive form of misjudgement.

On the non-veridical reading of *phainesthai* what we get is an image of someone who never gets above the middle line, but only thinks they do, and for whom the middle

[279] On which see n. 174, above.

state at one time feels like pleasure, at another like pain. At 585a Socrates claims that for someone inexperienced in pleasure, they can be, and are, deceived into perceiving painlessness only in relation to pain, and thereby mistake it for pleasure. This is the account of how the painless middle state gets mistaken for pleasure, which is part of claim 5. The correlate claim, that it gets mistaken for pain, could be established with an account of the pleasurelessness of that state being understood only in relation to pleasure, and therefore being misperceived as pain. The move from mistaking the middle state for pleasure to mistaking it for pain, on this reading, involves a kind of 'timing out' of the first which leads to the misperception of the second. So, after being in pain, the relief of pain feels so delightful that an agent takes it to be an experience of pleasure. But in fact there is no pleasure there, so the phantom pleasure quickly disappears, and the neutral state the agent is left in feels worse, because they perceive themselves to have lost pleasure, and they perceive pleasurelessness as pain, instead of as neutrality.

We can evaluate the argument only if we understand how Socrates is thinking about the middle state. What we have seen so far is that the middle state can feel either like pleasure or like pain (claims 3 and 4). Socrates takes this as evidence that the middle state will 'at times be either' (τοῦτό ποτε ἀμφότερα ἔσται) pleasure or pain (claim 5, at 583e4-5). Claim 6 says that it is not possible for that which is neither pleasure nor pain to be either pleasure or pain. Thus, claim 6 is in tension with claims 3 and 4, which jointly show that there is some state which can be either pleasure or pain (claim 5), and this is the one so far identified as pleasant, rather than neutral, by the sufferers as they

experience it. One of these claims needs to be thrown out. It is this sixth claim which gets denied, and the alternative suggested, where what is neither pleasure nor pain can appear as, rather than be, either. This presents two interpretive questions: with respect to claim 5, in what sense will the middle state at times be either pleasure or pain? With respect to claim 6 and its alternative, why, and in what sense, would it be the case that that which can appear as either pleasure or pain cannot in fact be either?

On the claim 5 question,[280] the Greek I translate as 'either' at 583e1-2 is ἀμφότερα, which some translators read as 'both'. Next to ποτε, this would give us 'at some times both'. This is a legitimate alternative, if we read 'either' in the sense of 'both of two' along with the LSJ. The sense seems to be that it is not possible for the neutral state to at some times become pleasure, at other times pain, and be in itself neither *or either* of those (e.g. it can't be neither in the sense that if it can become pleasure it must be pleasure; it can't be either in the sense that if it can also become pain it cannot be pleasure, and vice-versa). The alternative implied by the argument (at 584a) is that the neutral state's neutrality with respect to pleasure and pain can generate the non-veridical *appearance* of pleasure or of pain, but not the true affective states.

Contrary to this translation, James Adam suggests that ἀμφότερα here could be read alongside *Grg.* 497c ff., in which he understands Plato to argue that when we eat while hungry or drink while thirsty, we simultaneously cease experiencing pleasure and pain,

[280] See pp. 151-2, above.

such that the neutral state will become, or appear to be, both pleasant and painful at the same time.[281] But Adam concedes, in the end, that the rest of the argument here in the *Republic* would sit awkwardly with the simultaneity reading of ἀμφότερα. Leaving aside the interpretation of the *Gorgias* passage, Adam must be right, in his final analysis, that ἀμφότερα should, here in *Republic* IX, be understood as indicating 'either' in the sense of both pleasure at one time, and pain at another, rather than pleasure and pain at the same time.[282] This is the only reading which supports Socrates' overall argument for the neutrality of the middle state, since it is the alternative which explains the generation of contrasts and the role of aspect, which is Socrates' focus, as is shown by his invoking the case of someone suffering and then being relieved of pain, rather than someone experiencing a mixed pleasure (mixed with pain), as he does in other contexts.[283]

It is also the alternative which pays attention to Socrates' choice of examples, and this is a point I would like to dwell on for a moment. The reading I have given is one in which the sufferers are to be understood as remaining in a middle position, while taking that position to be better or worse because of a comparison with their previous position, and in which the comparative difference is so powerful that they take themselves to be in

[281] Adam (1902) 350. Adam also cites *Phileb.* 43d as support for the 'simpler' reading of ἀμφότερα as at one time pleasant, at another time painful.

[282] Butler (1999) 291 argues that Adam's preferred reading is incorrect, in that it takes the middle to appear sometimes one way, and sometimes the other, but not both ways, and therefore it would not generate the absurdity needed for Socrates' argument to work. On my reading, below, the middle state sometimes appearing F and sometimes appearing not-F is enough for this argument.

[283] E.g. *Phd.* 60b3, where Socrates uses ἅμα to indicate that he means at the same time.

pleasure or pain. If this is the right way to understand cases like this, it seems strange that the examples Socrates uses are illness and pain rather than the more intuitive examples of hunger and thirst, for instance. Hunger and thirst are clear cases where the middle state of satiety could be mistaken for pure pleasure when compared to hunger or thirst (especially extreme hunger or thirst). Further, the neutral state of satiety in these cases has a clear shelf-life, since we can remain only relatively briefly satiated, and would soon be hungry or thirsty again. It is not clear that illness and pain behave in the same ways, where after a certain while, if free of pain and illness, we drop back down into pain or illness. In fact, they seem to be good examples of just the opposite: states we can happily remain in without risk of immanent reversal. Why, then, are these the examples Socrates chooses? Gosling & Taylor analyse the example in the following way:

> At *Rep*. 583c10-d1, he observes that sick people say that nothing is pleasanter than being well, but that they did not appreciate before they were ill, how pleasant it is. He is plainly not implying that, as soon as they recover, they will once again recognize that being healthy is not in fact pleasant, but neutral; their point is that you don't appreciate good health properly until you've been ill. *That is to say, we must suppose that, when they are back in health, they will go on saying how pleasant it is to be well: that is, on Plato's view they will mistake the neutral state for pleasure not just in anticipation but when they are actually in it.* In two places in *Republic* IX Plato says explicitly that this mistake is made, whether by people who find it unpleasant when a pleasure stops (583e1-2), or by people who find it pleasant when distress stops (585a2-3), e.g. the man who banged his head against the wall because it was so nice when he stopped.[284]

Gosling & Taylor's claim is that once the sufferer has come up from the suffering state to the neutral state, we should imagine them appreciating their good health, and continuing to appreciate it, such that the neutral state is mistaken for a pleasant state not just in prospect, but when it is reached, too. While they must be right that there is a

[284] Gosling & Taylor (1982) 449-50, emphasis mine.

period in which the formerly ill or pained person misperceives the neutral state as a state of pleasure (which agrees with the non-veridical reading of *phainesthai*), it is important to recognise that this does not last. The third move in the imagined example, according to the reading I am arguing for, makes it clear that the comparison between the former worse state and the current better state is not everlasting, and that the psychological effect of the comparison wears off, such that the agent then misperceives the neutral state as pain, by comparison to what they had perceived as pleasure. This is the evidence that the middle state can feel like the lower.

On this reading, illness and pain are appropriate examples because they make a different point than hunger and thirst would. They allow Socrates to isolate the psychic component generated by the comparison between physical states, and specifically by a comparison of a current physical state to a previous or future one. Hunger and thirst would not make this same point, because when the comparison between being satiated and being hungry or thirsty once again emerges, there is both a physical and a psychological worsening. In the case of pain and illness, the worsening is *only* psychological, because the specific worsening at stake is the perceived loss of a pleasure that was never really there to begin with; there has been no correlate physiological change. Socrates is interested in isolating an important psychological aspect of certain somatic pleasures, to illustrate that the delight the comparison of states generates is illusory, and subject to wearing off, but that this wearing off is importantly different from what happens when we go from being sated to being hungry again, for example. It is different in the sense that it involves a judgement about our being comparatively

better or worse off. The phenomenology Socrates wants to insist on seems to be that even for those who are so impressed with the relief from pain that they take neutrality to be pleasure, and even initially feel it as pleasant, that will not last, and even if one was committed to appreciating the comparative pleasure of health, this commitment cannot sustain feeling it that way in the long run.

This analysis also helps explain why anticipation or 'pre-enjoyment' is included in the argument, and put under the umbrella of examples of pleasures which are either generated by a release from pain or perceived as pleasant because they are a release from pain. They are described as most intense, and are said to get to the soul via the body.[285] If the comparison between one's current state and one's previous state can generate pseudo-pleasure or pseudo-pain, so can the comparison between one's current state and one's possible future state.[286] In both cases, the difference between the two generates a feeling of being either better or worse off. And in both cases, there is a problem with the object of comparison. In cases like those we have been thinking about – pain and illness – the pleasure we think can be compared to the comparatively worse state we are in now isn't really pleasure. In the case of anticipated pleasure, the pleasure we expect to get may or may not turn out to be a pleasure, but from our current perspective it doesn't have the status of a pleasure.[287] The specific reason it doesn't have

[285] γε διὰ τοῦ σώματος ἐπὶ τὴν ψυχὴν τείνουσαι, 584c4.
[286] Warren (2011) 129 agrees that the presence of anticipated pleasures and pains adds to the argument by reminding the interlocutors that processes of comparison can involve future pleasure or pain, in addition to present ones. He reads the reference as invoking only anticipations of pleasure or pain cessation, rather than any kind of anticipation (129, n. 22).
[287] Compare the account of the falsity of anticipatory pleasures in *Phileb.* 36c-40c.

the status of pleasure in this argument is that its pleasant nature is only perceived as such in comparison to one's current state. So just as when the sufferer mistakenly thinks they feel pleasure when released from pain, they may also expect to feel pleasure if considering a future release from pain – and in both cases, the contribution of the comparison is distorting, and inflates the relief into a phantom pleasure, when the anticipated state would really be the neutral, motionless one. The objects of comparison suffer from slightly different problems, but both are similarly problematic as objects with which to compare one's current affective state, since the comparison generates an attitude to that state which itself generates or contributes to psychological pleasure or pain. In other words, if the comparison is such that it makes an agent misperceive a pseudo-pleasure as a pleasure, or at least leaves them vulnerable to doing so, Socrates has shown that there is a serious issue about the perception of pleasure and pain, in that it can seem veridical but in fact be subject to illusion.

There is an aspect of pleasure which is not entirely subjective, and there is room to falsely judge something to be pleasure which does not share in objective pleasure.[288] The metaphysics underlying the account suggests that we can experience as pleasant circumstances which are not strictly speaking pleasant, but merely seem that way due to what went before, or to what we anticipate. The Platonic line here would seem to be

[288] Aufderheide (2018) 67 seems to agree with this confined point.

that if something is a pleasure in the objective sense, then it would not appear pleasant relative to A but unpleasant relative to B.[289]

Returning to the question of how to understand the neutrality of the middle state the sufferers are in, we might wonder, still, why we should think Socrates is right to hold that something which can become either pleasure or pain (at different times) must in fact be neither. The idea seems to be that because the middle state can be either, it must in some important sense be neither. In other words, if some state S can be both x at one time and it's contrary, not-x, at another, its essence must be neither x nor not-x, since something which is essentially x could not be not-x some of the time. If S can be both x and not-x, then x would have to be an incomplete property, according to the compresence of opposites.[290] The argument only works if we agree that all cases of pleasure and pain appearances cannot be explained by S being both (pleasure and pain), or either one or the other (pleasure or pain); and that pleasure and pain are opposites. So, we cannot explain cases of pain as being generated by a state that is really pleasure, nor cases of pleasure as being generated by a state that is really pain.

At 583c3-4 it is agreed that pain is the opposite of pleasure, but this could mean either of two types of opposite. On the weaker side there is opposition in terms of contraries,

[289] This in contrast to the Aristotelian claim that what is pleasant simpliciter is what pleases an agent while they are in the natural condition, when they are not in a state of lack of another unnatural state (for example illness, madness, morally depraved habituation, victims of abuse, etc.). See, for example, *EE* VI, 1148b15-35.

[290] See *Rep.* 436b for the notion of the incompatibility of opposites, there in the context of the soul.

where what is meant by 'A is the opposite of B' is that A and B cannot both be true in the same way and at the same time. 'Jane's temperature is 38 degrees C' and 'Jane's temperature is 37 degrees C' are statements which are opposed in this way. Strict opposition, or contradiction, on the other hand, is where A and B can't both be true or both be false.[291] 'Jane's blood type is O' and 'Jane's blood type is not O' are strictly opposed statements. This type of opposition involves the Law of the Excluded Middle, in which if one opposite is true, the other must be false. So, if it is true that 'Jane's blood type is O', it must be false that 'Jane's blood type is not O'. The middle position, in which Jane's blood type is neither O nor not-O, is logically excluded. Which of these types of opposition is applied to pleasure and pain in this part of the *Republic*?

At 583c5-6 it is agreed that there is such a thing as feeling neither pleasure nor pain. That means that for a statement such as 'I am feeling pleasure now', it being false does not guarantee that it's negation, 'I am not feeling pleasure now' entails that one is feeling pain now. One could be in the neutral middle position. This effectively excludes the possibility of pleasure and pain being strict opposites, since the falsity of one does not guarantee the truth of the other. Are they contraries, then? It seems that the appearances of pleasure and pain are, at least, given the way they are used as evidence for the neutrality of the middle, in what appears to be an application of the compresence of opposites. The evidence for the neutrality of the middle state is that it can appear as both pleasure and pain. In order to do that, the shape-shifting middle state must really

[291] On which see Arist. *Met.* 4.4-7.

be affectively neutral. This depends on a principle about states which can *appear like* (as opposed to *be*) both of two opposites (e.g. contraries). The principle here would be: if some State, S, can appear as either F or not-F, it must be neither F nor not-F. Let's call this the Principle of Opposed Appearances.

If pleasure and pain were not opposites, and were instead just different states, this argument would not rule out the neutral state *becoming* at once one, at once the other. In fact, even if they were opposites, but were accidental qualities, it is also unclear that the neutral state could not generate both. Consider the example of water with respect to its temperature, or its state. Water can be either gas (steam), or liquid, or solid (ice) at different times though it is, in its essence, none of these. These are accidental rather than essential properties of water. The reason that water can be either of two opposites (such as solid and not-solid/liquid) is that solidity and liquidity are accidental as opposed to essential properties of water. This would not be true of essential properties such as being chemically composed of two hydrogen atoms and one oxygen atom, for example.

For this argument to work, we must amend the Principle of Opposed Appearances in order to accommodate the idea that 'appearing as pleasure' and 'appearing as pain' are accidental properties of the neutral state. The new rendering would be: if some State, S, can appear as either of two opposed accidental properties, F or not-F, it must be neither F nor not-F essentially. But the water case shows that there is something missing, because that is a case of water *being* rather than simply *appearing* liquid at one time, solid

at another. It is a change of state, though the essence of water remains unchanged. This is unlike the pleasure and pain case, where it is the comparison of states that generates the appearance.

A more germane example would be cases of relative properties. Suppose I am short next to my brother, but tall next to my mother. It is in virtue of the fact that I am neither tall nor short essentially that I can be either or both. Properties such as 'tall' and 'short' are relative properties generated by comparison to some external standard or reference point, which might usually be an average (e.g. I call someone tall if they are taller than most people I encounter), and they are accidental. While 'being pleasure' and 'being pain' are not relative properties of pleasure and pain, perhaps 'being pleas*ant*' and 'being pain*ful*' are, where these indicate appearances. Could these be better understood as relative properties? The experience of the sufferers may be generated by one state appearing more pleasant than another, or more painful than another, but the appearance this generates is of one being in a state of pleasure or pain, rather than a relatively better or worse state. As such, amending the Principle of Opposed Appearances in a way which restricts it to relatives would be inappropriate, though these cases can be subsumed under the broader principle in virtue of relative properties being a species of accidental properties.

If this is the right way to think about the use of being pleasure and pain versus being pleasant or painful in the argument, then the application of the principle that if some S

can appear as either F or not-F, it must be neither F nor not-F essentially, is correct *only if* it is true that being pleasant and being painful are essential rather than accidental properties of pleasure and pain, respectively, and appearance is taken as non-veridical. If this is true, then in this argument Socrates has provided this principle as a reason to think that true pleasure and true pain cannot be mistaken for their opposites, and that only pseudo versions of these affections, which are misidentifications of the neutral state as either pleasure or pain, are subject to illusions, and pseudo-appearances can only be attached to the neutral state. He is not then denying that these neutral states are pleasant or painful, but he is denying that pleasantness or painfulness track the (objective) presence of pleasure or pain.

So, if the middle state can appear both as pleasure and as pain, it must be neither of these essentially (which gets Socrates his alternative). It must instead be something which is neutral, in the sense that it can be the bearer of accidental qualities such as 'appearing like pleasure' or 'being pleasant', and 'appearing like pain' or 'being painful'. This tells us something important about the way Socrates is conceiving of the middle state, and what it must be able to do.

That the middle state can be understood as pleasure and still do all that it is agreed that it can do is the claim which Socrates is indirectly attempting to show is absurd, and to which he offers the concept of a neutral middle as an alternative. I have argued that this is done by separately establishing that the middle state can appear as pleasure, then that

it can appear as pain, and then that there is some principle which says that if some state can be either pleasant or painful it must be neither pleasure nor pain, but instead must be something which can generate both of these opposing appearances. That which can be the bearer of the accidental qualities of 'pleasant' and 'painful' must be affectively neutral in an objective sense, because for a state of genuine pleasure, 'appearing like pleasure' can only ever be essential, and its opposite cannot be borne (and likewise for a state of pain).

On this analysis, pleasant and painful are opposites in the sense that they are contraries. The argument does not straightforwardly tell us what kind of opposites pleasure and pain themselves are, though, nor does it force a commitment to any view on that issue. Perhaps this is deliberate, on the part of Plato, if the non-veridical reading is right, because in a sense thinking about what kind of opposites pleasure and pain themselves are would be a different discussion. It is part of his point, here, that we are not talking about true pleasure and true pain in the analysis of these cases, except by contrast. We might think that a similar tactic is employed at *Phd.* 60b, albeit in a very compressed way, when Socrates wonders at the strangeness of 'what men call pleasure',[292] and how it relates to 'what seems to be its opposite, pain'.[293] One cannot help but notice the distancing language employed here, as if to less-than-subtly contrast what gets called pleasure and what seems to be its opposite, pain, from the real thing. The image of the 'Janus-face' of feeling pleasure and pain, and Socrates' own testimony about feeling

[292] καλοῦσιν οἱ ἄνθρωποι ἡδύ, *Phd.* 60b4.

[293] πρὸς τὸ δοκοῦν ἐναντίον εἶναι, τὸ λυπηρόν, *Phd.* 60b5.

pleasure in his leg, inevitably, as the pain of the shackles is relieved (*Phd.* 60c) demonstrate the connection between the passages, in terms of a focus on the movement between pain and pleasure, and the feelings which the comparison between the two generate. The interest in both passages, but more clearly the *Republic* passage, is the pleasant and painful feelings, which this argument shows are appearances, and can be thought of and analysed separately to pleasure and pain themselves. Thinking about these misleading appearances does not force us to think about pleasure and pain themselves in the same sense, in other words.

Despite this, the analysis does also imply something unique about pleasure and pain, if only by comparison. In distinguishing between *being* pleasure and *appearing as* pleasure, and pain and the appearance of pain, Socrates shows that there is an especially close connection between appearance and being when it comes to the true affections. Despite the claim I have made that 'appearing as pleasure' or appearing pleasant is an accidental quality of the neutral state, this does not seem to be true of its relation to pleasure itself. With respect to pleasure itself, 'appearing like pleasure' seems to be an essential property, and 'appearing like pain' is an essential rather than accidental property of being pain. The phenomenology makes clear that one cannot appear like its opposite, and this is the grounds on which we reject the neutral state as either. And it seems right that, with respect to pleasure, appearing pleasant should be an essential property since, if such an appearance were stripped away from pleasure, something essential about pleasure would be lost. While this holds about essential properties in general, appearances are not usually amongst essential properties. I would not be

surprised, for example, to find that while water really is composed of two hydrogen atoms and one oxygen atom, it frequently does not *appear* that way. Appearing pleasant and being pleasure are related in a way that is not so by virtue of an inherently close relation between being and appearance *per se*. Interestingly, this means that the metaphysics underlying Plato's account has it that it is the nature of the middle state, and the contribution of our attitudes and misjudgements, which lead to illusions of pleasure. True pleasure and true pain are not the source of these illusions, and are, in fact, a potential antidote to them, in the sense that experience of them (or, at least, of the very purest versions of them) has a way of preventing an agent from being fooled by the pseudo-versions.[294]

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[294] James Butler has a different understanding of what is going on in this argument, claiming that what I have called the loose claims of an argument in Part A are premises in a *reductio*:

> [I]f the quietude were sometimes pleasure and at other times pain, the *reductio* would not end in contradiction. For there is nothing absurd about something which is neither X nor Y sometimes being X and at other times being Y. For example, a man of average height is neither tall nor short. Yet, compared to a child the man is tall; compared to a professional basketball player, he is short. In the same way, then, there is nothing absurd about the quietude being pleasant at times when contrasted with pain and painful at other times when contrasted with pleasure. (Butler, 1999, 291).

I do not see the argument as well-formed enough to call it a *reductio*. Butler is right that there is nothing absurd in the middle non-veridically appearing pleasant at times and painful at others, but there are problems with it *being* either pleasure or pain, or with those appearances being attributed to states of pleasure or pain themselves. The middle can *appear* as both because, and only because, it *is* neither. Butler has used an analogy from 'being pleasure' to 'being tall', and 'being more pleasant than some x' to 'being taller than some x'. In both cases, it is the contrast which generates the attribution of some property. But there *is* something absurd about saying that because some F is taller than some x they are tall, if that claim purports to attribute to some F an essential rather than accidental (relative) property. And it is this slide between the accidental property of appearing pleasant, and the essential property of being pleasure, which Socrates blocks in this argument. Butler's suggestion is to understand the sense in which the middle state can sometimes be both pleasure and pain in a different way. He thinks that Socrates has in mind conflicting predictions about what future states of calm will be like, and produces an example involving an ill person anticipating the pleasant attention of their carer disappearing

Overall, then, reading appearances as non-veridical in this loose argument has a number of advantages: it makes better sense of the specific examples Socrates uses, including the discussion of anticipation; it takes seriously the importance of aspect and contrasts in the argument by connecting the fallibility of our judgements about pleasure and pain to the perspective we might be in when experiencing them, and our potential ignorance of true pleasure; it allows a stronger reading of γοητεία, in that the analogy to magic or illusion would be there to explain the possibility of taking our supposed pleasure and pain experiences as veridical when they can be non-veridical, and therefore taking our affective judgements as infallible when they are in fact fallible (similarly with οὐδὲν ὑγιὲς, which would describe non-veridical appearances rather straightforwardly); and it makes room for an important point about the relation between appearances and essences, which would not come out of a veridical reading. This reading also situates the source of error or illusion in the agent, and perhaps in the middle state, but, crucially, not in the nature of pleasure or pain themselves.

On balance I favour the non-veridical reading. In the final section of this chapter, I will consider the importance of the argument when read in this way by contrasting it with a section from Aristotle's *NE* in which he is interested in these same issues. I will therefore begin the last section with an examination of that passage, which helps home in on Plato's views more precisely.

when their illness subsides (Butler, 1999, 291-2). While this is an interesting possible conflict, on my reading Socrates does not need such an elaborate example to force his conclusion.

VIII Aristotle on the Apparent Pleasures of Sufferers

In the discussion of pleasure and pain which follows the account of *akrasia* in *NE* VII, Aristotle invokes the example of what sick or suffering people take to be pleasant as part of an argument against the perception of processes as candidates for the chief good. He says that these perceptions are not even pleasures, but only appear so (φαίνονται), and that they must be understood as qualified by their context. While Aristotle will ultimately use these other views as a foil against which to introduce and develop his own account of pleasure, a reader of *Republic* IX will not fail to recognise some elements of the argument he debates. The striking similarities between the two passages raise the possibility of Aristotle having one eye on Plato while writing this passage. If that is so, the question whether understanding what Aristotle means when he denies that the pleasures of the suffering are more than just apparent might help to clarify Plato's own view, at least in terms of clarifying the kind of view Plato may also be reacting to.[295]

Here I will present Aristotle's argument, and suggest that the way he characterises the position of the sufferers is helpful for understanding the view that Plato is worried about in *Republic* IX.

[295] I don't mean to imply that Plato is reacting to Aristotle in *Rep*. IX, necessarily, but rather that both Plato and Aristotle may be reacting to the same argument or view.

At *NE* VII.ii, Aristotle cites people who think that the pleasant can't be the good because it's a perceived becoming. At 1152b8-12, he distinguishes three positions people take with respect to pleasure and the good. I will mark these off as (a), (b) and (c) below:

> (a) Now some think that no pleasure is a good, either in itself or incidentally,[296] their reason being that the good and pleasure are not the same thing;
>
> (b) while others think some pleasures are good, but most are bad.
>
> (c) Further, there is a third one of these positions: even if all count as good, nevertheless it is not possible for the chief[297] good to be pleasure.[298]

He then gives what he calls a 'general' (ὅλως) argument that the good is not pleasure, which looks to be a report of an argument that people in one of these three positions gives:

> A general argument, then, for saying that [pleasure] is not a good is that all pleasure is a perceived process of coming to be in the natural state,[299] but no process of coming to be belongs to the same kind as the end to which it leads, as e.g. no process of housebuilding belongs to the same kind as a house.[300]

Of the three positions given, this argument looks to belong most naturally to type (a). This is so because Aristotle labels it an argument that pleasure is not good, or not a good,[301] rather than one which says that some pleasures are not good, as those in position (b) would say, or that pleasure is not the chief[302] good, as those in position (c) would say. As a result, scholars read this as an anti-hedonist argument, in which the chief good cannot be a pleasure or anything pleasant because it cannot be for the sake of

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[296] οὔτε καθ᾽ αὑτὸ οὔτε κατὰ συμβεβηκός.

[297] ἄριστον.

[298] Arist. *NE* VII.ii, 1152b8-12, trans. Rowe, in Broadie and Rowe, eds. (2002), with my divisions.

[299] ὅτι πᾶσα ἡδονὴ γένεσίς ἐστιν εἰς φύσιν αἰσθητή.

[300] Aristotle, *NE* VII.ii, 1152b13-15, trans. Rowe, in Broadie and Rowe, eds. (2002).

[301] οὐκ ἀγαθόν.

[302] ἄριστον.

something beyond itself.[303] However, at 1152b23, Aristotle picks up the argument about pleasure not being good because it is a process,[304] and this time aligns it to the position which says that pleasure is not the chief good, which looks like position (c):

> For saying that pleasure is not the chief good, the argument is that it is not an end but a process.[305]

That those who occupy position (c) deny that pleasure is the chief good does not make it obvious that they deny that pleasure is a good at all. Moreover, there is room for subtlety in the view that they are reacting to. By insisting on a distinction between a process and what it aims at with respect to pleasure, it may be that they are blocking the use of the pleasure of restoration in an account of what pleasure paradigmatically is, without denying that it is pleasant. This would help explain why Aristotle uses this as an example of qualified pleasure, which should not be taken outside of that qualification.

Aristotle continues by making a central distinction between what is good without qualification[306] and what is good for someone[307] at 1152b26, where the latter category can be more specific still, e.g. good not just for someone, but in a specific context, for a short time, etc. (1152b30). 'Others again', he says, 'are not even pleasures, but only appear so,[308] i.e. those that are accompanied by pain and are for the sake of healing, such

[303] For example Broadie (2002) 66. Cf. Aufderheide (2013).
[304] γένεσίς.
[305] Arist. *NE* 1152b23, trans. Rowe, in Broadie and Rowe, eds. (2002).
[306] ἁπλῶς.
[307] τινί.
[308] ἀλλὰ φαίνονται.

as the ones sick or suffering people[309] undergo' (1152b31, trans. Rowe). The evidence that these are only apparent pleasures is that there are also pleasures unaccompanied by pain and appetite, like the activities of reflection,[310] where the natural state is not depleted (1153a2).

People do not take pleasure in the same things when their nature is being restored as they do when it has been restored – so, for example, they enjoy bitter tastes when being restored which they would not enjoy while restored (1153a4-5). 'Hence it is not right to say', according to Aristotle, 'that pleasure is a perceived process of coming to be…' (1153a14, trans. Rowe). Some people think that an activity is a coming to be, but Aristotle is quick to disagree, and clarify that an activity of an unimpeded, natural disposition is distinct from any old process. The sense in which the pleasures of the sick are only apparent, then, is that they are only pleasant incidentally, since having a restored, healthy disposition is part of the good, and we have an appetite for being back in that state. Those pleasures are examples of pleasures τινί where both context (being ill or in pain) and time (while being restored) qualify the experience.

Are we to think, then, that Aristotle takes these qualified, apparent pleasures to not really be pleasures, or, rather, that they should not be invoked when giving an account of pleasure? The former view might encourage a kind of suspicion about pleasure

[309] τῶν καμνόντων.

[310] τοῦ θεωρεῖν ἐνέργειαι.

which seems at odds with Aristotle's ultimate enthusiasm for it, including for bodily pleasures. The latter, however, seems to be a very weak reading of 'apparent'.

What Aristotle tells us is that context and contrasts matter, and he connects this to the appearances of pleasure. At 1154a25 he takes up the challenge of explaining why bodily pleasures appear more desirable, and claims that this is so because they displace pain and, in doing so, gain intensity from the contrast with their contrary:

> The remedies get their intensity, which is why people pursue them, from the fact that they appear in contrast to their contrary (διὰ τὸ παρὰ τὸ ἐναντίον φαίνεσθαι). And indeed pleasure is thought not to be a good thing… while others are remedies for a nature that is lacking, and having is better than coming to be; but these occur in the process of restoration to completion, so that they are incidentally good. Again, bodily pleasures are pursued because of their intensity by those not able to enjoy other sorts of pleasures; at any rate, certain sorts of thirst they contrive for themselves. Now when they contrive harmless ones, no blame attaches to them for it, but when harmful ones, it is a bad thing; for not only do they not have other things to give them enjoyment, but to many what is neither pleasant nor painful is painful, because of their nature.[311]

This suggests that it is when juxtaposed with pain that restorative motions appear pleasant, and that there are people for whom the neutral position is painful, because their nature is never fully restored. It can be restored in one way but not another because we are complex rather than simple creatures:

> What I call incidentally pleasant are the remedial sort; for what makes a thing seem pleasant in this case is that one happens to be cured, thanks to the activity of the part that remains healthy… But in no case is one and the same thing always pleasant, because our nature is not simple…[312]

[311] Arist. *NE* 1154a30-b7, trans. Rowe, in Broadie and Rowe, eds. (2002).

[312] Ibid. 1154b18-22.

The incidental pleasures, then, are the curative ones, and the sense in which they are apparent is that their perceived intensity reflects the gravity of our background pain or suffering (how far we are from our natural state), as opposed to giving us information about the nature of the process or object we are taking pleasure in.[313] People who think of pleasure the way the sick or suffering do think of it as a motion – a perceived coming to be. But movement towards the neutral is sometimes pleasant and sometimes painful, depending on which direction you are coming from, and hence what the movement is being contrasted with. He identifies their mistake as one of locating pleasure in that process in an unqualified way. After all, Aristotle denies that we take pleasure in the process at all, in these cases. For while we may be able to take pleasure in a process as an intentional object, the process itself is not the subject of pleasure.

Aristotle's analysis is helpful for reading *Republic* IX because it shows that there are some known arguments which make use of the testimony of suffering people, and for those who take something like the position (c) he outlines, there is a concern that these views should not be used as evidence in an account of pleasure. Further, Aristotle provides an analysis of the pleasures of the suffering person in which their pleasures are 'apparent' because their intensity is generated not by the process, object or source, but by the contrast between the perceived pleasant thing and what it is a relief of, e.g. how great the pain or suffering is. It can be misleading in the sense that a very pleasant process, which seems like pleasure, may simply reflect an intense pain in the

[313] Even in processes of restoration, Aristotle identifies the pleasure to consist in the activity of the natural state. So, for example, when my tonsillitis clears up, the source of pleasure is my ability to swallow water easily, not the transition from swollen to non-swollen tonsils. I may notice the activity more when it has been absent for a time, and I have struggled to swallow.

background, and Aristotle does not seem to think that most people can distinguish between these, because they are never out of pain (1154b1-9). Without the experience of being out of pain and enjoying a single simple pleasure (reserved for a god, according to 1154b28), we humans have some work to do to distinguish restorative change or motion from the pleasure of unimpeded activity.

His analysis, then, is firmly centred on the appearances which the contrast between pleasure and pain as opposites generates, and the risk of this leading to views about the nature of pleasure unqualified if we don't have a pain-free example of pleasure to compare this to. His discussion helps sharpen the claims in *Republic* IX, by contrast, revealing places where he and Plato seem to be taking on the same or very similar questions, and providing subtly different answers. Aristotle's view seems more moderate: he insists that context and contrasts matter to how we understand pleasures, and even divides pleasures into two classes based on this. I have argued that Plato, on the other hand, denies that apparent pleasures are really pleasures at all, since on the non-veridical reading they are illusory in a sense that Aristotle's pleasure τινί doesn't capture. The non-veridical reading of Plato's argument understands merely apparent pleasures as failing to track true, objective pleasure.

Plato and Aristotle seem more in line with respect to the idea of the intensity of a restorative pleasure not giving us information about the object of pleasure. For Aristotle this is explicitly determined by how far we are from our natural state, while for Plato

the picture looks more complicated, in that the contrast can be generated by a comparison between one's current state and one's memory of one's past, healthy state, or one's anticipation of a future healthy state, and how long the contrast has been in place for once it is fully restored. But pain reliefs don't give us information about the nature of true pleasure. We are, however, encouraged by the *Republic* IX passage to think about what's distinct about true pleasures by contrast, and, strikingly, the passage suggests that pleasant feelings are not one of those things, since pseudo-pleasures can generate them, too (and likewise for pain and painful feelings).

Both Plato and Aristotle are thinking of this issue as related, at least primarily, to somatic pleasures and pains, but Aristotle is explicit that humans have a constant background of pain against which contrasts can arise, whereas Plato holds that there is a neutral state which seems to be commonly experienced. Though this discussion happens elsewhere, both are interested in juxtaposing these restorative pleasures with superior types of pleasure: unimpeded activity for Aristotle, intellectual pleasures for Plato.

But for Plato it looks as if the experience of intellectual pleasures is necessary to counteract the illusions these other pleasant experiences are subject to. The loose argument beginning at 583c3 implies that our approach to understanding pain cessations, and the pleasant feelings they can bring, has to be within a spectrum of pleasure and pain which is already in place, rather than with a view to forming one. It

suggests that there is a non-subjective aspect of pleasure or pain which we don't grasp by appearances alone, but instead must have the right framework to apprehend. And to get that framework right, it is crucial that the experience of pure pleasures, which sit on one end of the spectrum, be in place, otherwise we are apt to do the equivalent of what the imagined agent traveling up and down does in mistaking the middle for the top, or mistaking a pseudo-pleasure for a true one. The argument also suggests that the essence of pleasure is complex rather than simple, if it's right that there is a non-subjective aspect of pleasure, separate from its appearance of being pleasant. The appearance and the essence don't run contrary to each other in the case of pure pleasure, but they are at least hypothetically separable.

This analysis suggests that it is not inherent in the nature of pleasure to be illusory. Rather, lacking the experience of true pleasures, and an evaluative framework which includes the truest pleasures at one end, we might put ourselves in a position from which we are apt to mistake pseudo-pleasures for true ones. How does the lack of an evaluative framework cause this issue? If I'm in pain, and it's getting better, how is it that I get that judgement any more wrong as a result? According to this argument, the lack of an evaluative framework causes the issue because it creates the conditions under which an agent judges an improvement to be a pleasure, when it is not. It may be pleasant, and a genuine improvement by comparison to the previous state, but once the contrast with that state wears off, there is no pleasure there to sustain the feeling. In the long run the agent who mistakes a pleasant improvement for pleasure itself will be disappointed. If, by contrast, they had evaluated that experience of improvement within

a framework which included pure pleasure, they could have distinguished between a pleasant improvement and a pure pleasure. In that scenario, they might still experience the improvement as pleasant, but by not mistaking it for pleasure, they would have no expectation that it would endure.

The philosophical agent's attitude to their improved affective status would be different than the non-philosopher's. The non-philosopher is liable to add a positive attitude to their pleasant experience of improvement, which compounds with the pseudo-pleasure generated by the contrast, generating an experience which seems like a great pleasure. The philosopher is able to see the improvement experience for what it is and has the opportunity to experience the improvement as pleasant without that impacting their judgement of whether there is objective pleasure underlying the experience. They are therefore in a better position to guard against misjudgements, and to make prudential decisions on firmer grounds. They are in a superior position in at least two senses: they alone experience the truest, purest intellectual pleasures; and, in virtue of that experience, they alone are in a position to choose true pleasures consistently.

The implication of this argument is that experiencing intellectual pleasures holds the promise of rehabilitating us, at least to some degree, in terms of our orientation towards pleasure and pain, and our ability to discriminate between true and pseudo affections. This task is not one to be taken lightly, for, according to Plato's discussion, there is some reason to think that our introspective judgements about our own pleasure or pain are fallible without it. And if the soul of a philosopher is the only one which possesses such

an evaluative and affective framework, this argument would provide crucial support for his overall claim about the superiority of the philosophical life.

IX Conclusion

In this chapter I have defended a reading of the 'third fall' argument of 583c2-585a7 as an important defence of the superiority of the philosophical life, and evidence for the comparative inferiority of the tyrannical life. It is a different defence to what which we find elsewhere in the *Republic* because of its focus on pleasure. The conclusion of the argument, as I read it, is not just that philosophers have the most pleasant lives, but that what others take to be pleasures are often not pleasures at all. Only the philosopher, who has access to true and pure pleasures, has the right evaluative framework in which to judge their hedonic experiences accurately, and avoid making decisions based on an illusion.

In defending this reading, I claim that the sense in which the apparent pleasures of non-philosophers can be illusory is non-veridical, and that Plato's conclusion is that, in the absence of an evaluative framework which is reserved for philosophers, pleasant and painful experiences are liable to be falsely judged as pleasure or pain. In non-philosophers, this happens passively, contra the more active reading of Warren: it is an error which is not reserved for some specific set of people with theoretical commitments, but rather something which most people are susceptible to. The sufferers whose pleasures and really pseudo-pleasures are not some specific set of people with firm views, but rather all of us who might fail to see that the pleasures of a non-

philosopher are fundamentally deficient. The third fall provides an urgent injunction to the effect that even those whose aim is hedonic prudentialism need philosophy, and those who fail to recognise this are vulnerable to illusions. The source of these illusions is not pleasure itself, but rather our orientation towards it, and the evaluative framework in which we make hedonic judgements.

CHAPTER FIVE
THE JELLYFISH'S PLEASURES: MINDLESS PLEASURE IN THE TRIAL OF LIVES IN *PHILEBUS* 20B-21D

I Introduction

The beginning of the *Philebus* reproduces the experience of walking in on a heated conversation, partway through, and not having the opportunity to catch up on what you've missed. The interlocutors are already deep in discussion, and things are not going well: Philebus has backed out, and Protarchus has agreed to take over the hedonist's side of the argument, albeit reluctantly. We are of course invited to wonder what they have been talking about, and why Philebus is no longer prepared or able to take part. These ambiguities from the opening frame of the dialogue haunt the reader all the way through.

The central question of the *Philebus* is expressed at 14b, when Socrates characterises his conversation with Protarchus as an examination of whether we should say that the good (or what renders life happy for all humans, from 11d4) is pleasure, or wisdom, or some third thing – another state (ἕξις) or condition (διάθεσις, 11d) of the soul. At *Philebus* 20b-21d, the interlocutors pursue a novel means of deciding this question, gifted from the gods: a thought experiment in which they consider a life of knowledge stripped of any affect, and a life of pleasure stripped of the cognitive, in order to determine if either yields the perfect, desirable, and self-sufficient life they seek.[314] In the

[314] McCabe (2000, 130) also calls this a thought-experiment.

latter case, the interlocutors are surprisingly liberal about what's included in the cognitive abilities stripped away, and the passage ends with what some take to be a pejorative remark, that the life of pleasure alone is that of a jellyfish. This has prompted some scholars to cast the trial sequence as an offhand digression, culminating in an insulting simile.[315] Others tend to overlook the image of the jellyfish or, when they take note of it at all, characterise the animal's deficiency in terms of a lack of awareness.

While the bulk of scholarly attention paid to the *Philebus* is focused on later passages, most commonly those discussing false pleasures, my textual focus will be this early exchange, which lays the groundwork for the psychology of the later passages dealing with how pleasures are conceived, the connection between reason, memory, and anticipation, and the role of belief. This earlier part of the dialogue receives comparably little attention, especially in terms of the contribution it makes to the arguments about pleasure.

Contrary to scholars who take the trial sequence to be either digressive or primarily pejorative, I argue that the passage presents a clear argument that, if one strips cognition from the experience of pleasure, one ends up with a state which is not far elevated from that of a plant – this is the point of the comparison with the jellyfish that the passage ends with. I contend that the jellyfish is a carefully chosen image with significant philosophical resonances, used to construct a reductio of a certain kind of

[315] I will cite two prominent examples of the latter in section III.i.

assumption the interlocutors are making in the set-up of the trial, and to illustrate an important point about the minimal conditions of pleasure. Against readings which understand its deprivation as a lack of awareness, I argue that it is deprived specifically in terms of self-reflexivity, and that determining how Plato construes the cognitively liminal jellyfish is critical for reconstructing the argument.[316]

Here I first introduce the passage and its context (section II). I then argue that the simile of the jellyfish serves an important dialectical function (III.i), and I survey a range of classical sources discussing the jellyfish (III.ii). I next turn to the *Timaeus* in order to establish the cognitive and non-cognitive abilities Plato attributes to non-rational animals, and sea creatures in particular (III.iii). I use these two examinations to establish governing assumptions for the *Philebus* passage (IV.i). I survey a range of contemporary analyses of the jellyfish (IV.ii), before offering my own reading (IV.ii), and concluding (V).

[316] Modern translators of, and commentators on the *Philebu*s often use 'sea urchin' or 'mollusc' for πλεύμων. But this is problematic, since molluscs are a different phylum altogether, many of which are more complex, and some of which are known to be highly intelligent creatures, such as the octopus. Thompson, in his comprehensive *A Glossary of Greek Fishes* (1947) 203, lists the modern equivalent of the πλεύμων as the jellyfish. Leroi (2014) 395 also suggests that the πλεύμων likely refers to the jellyfish (*Scyphozoa*) but that it is also possible, as Voultsiadou and Vafidis (2007) 113 suggest, that it is the dead man's finger sponge (*Alcyonium palmatum*). While I will discuss the traits of this creature in detail below, I will translate πλεύμων as 'jellyfish' for the convenience of the modern reader, and since I find it the more likely referent, on which see note 332.

II The Trial of Lives in *Philebus* 20b-21d

II.i The Context

The immediate conversational precedent to the trial is a speech by Protarchus (19c-20a). In it he says that, alongside Philebus' pick of pleasure, amusement, enjoyment (ἡδονὴν καὶ τέρψιν καὶ χαρὰν, 19c7) and whatever else is of the same kind as his candidate for the best human possession (κτημάτων), Socrates has chosen reason, knowledge, intelligence, science (νοῦν, ἐπιστήμην, σύνεσιν, τέχνην, 19d1-5), and everything that is like them as his contender, 'so that they can be tested as they are lying side by side in our memory' (ἐν μνήμῃ παρακείμενα ἑκάτερα βασανίζηται, 19d2-3, trans Frede.) He then insists that since Socrates has promised an outcome to the interlocutors, and despite how hard these questions are, their inability to come up with an answer or solve the problem means that Socrates himself must do so.

Protarchus challenges him, at 20a, to either distinguish the forms of pleasure and knowledge by the method of collection and division (introduced at 16c ff.), or to find some other way to settle the present dispute – some other method of his choosing. He opts for the latter when, at 20b4, he recalls that some god (θεῶν ἡμῖν) had sent him a memory, either in a dream[317] or a past waking state, of some talk (λόγων) of neither pleasure nor knowledge being the good, but rather some third thing, different from and

[317] Compare the dream sequence at *Theaet*. 201e.

better than them both (20c). Pleasure is thereby 'stripped of victory' (ἀπήλλακται… τοῦ νικᾶν) because it is not the same as (οὐκ…ταὐτὸν) the good (τὸ ἀγαθὸν, 20c).[318]

Socrates thus declares that they no longer need to concern themselves with dividing the forms of pleasure (διαίρεσιν εἰδῶν ἡδονῆς). This seems to be because the method of division assumes that either pleasure or wisdom is good, and proceeds from that assumption to test one and the other by laying bare their kinds, and what sort they are (ὁποῖος ἐστὶ, 19c).[319] If the assumption that either one or the other of these is the first place winner of the contest no longer holds, the method is no longer so attractive, since, if there's something outside of either pleasure or wisdom that's good, this method wouldn't tell you what that is.[320] It is limited in that it is only a litmus test for whether a given contender for the good is the good; it doesn't tell you what's missing.

II.ii The Set-Up of the Trial

Without further justification for why we should take seriously this god-gifted memory, the interlocutors proceed to set out the characteristics of the good, described by Socrates as some small (μικρός, 20c7) points. They agree on three points: that the good is

[318] Here we see an early equivocation between good and The Good.

[319] The argument looks something like this:

1. If every kind of X is good, X is good.
2. Division of X reveals every kind of X.
3. Each kind of X can be judged as good or not.
4. Therefore, division of X reveals if X is good.

[320] It's notable that Socrates doesn't mention wisdom at this point.

necessarily perfect (ἀνάγκη τέλεον), and sufficient (ἱκανὸν), and that every thinking being (πᾶν τὸ γιγνῶσκον) pursues and desires it (θηρεύει καὶ ἐφίεται), wishes to grasp it and acquire it (βουλόμενον ἑλεῖν καὶ περὶ αὑτὸ κτήσασθαι), and lacks interest in anything unconnected with the acquisition of the good (20d). The first two are similar, but Frede (1993, 14 n. 2) suggests that the distinction is between perfection as indicating that nothing further could be added to the good, and sufficiency as indicating that it lacks nothing. She doesn't provide further support for this, but her reading respects that the interlocutors note them separately.[321] For the purposes of this discussion, it will be sufficient to describe the three requirements in 20d9-10 as follows:

> The Perfection Requirement (PR): Every good thing must be perfect (τέλειος, 20d) in that nothing further could be added to it.
>
> The Sufficiency Requirement (SR): Every good thing must be sufficient (ἱκανός, 20d4) in that it needs or lacks nothing.
>
> The Desire Requirement (DR): Every thinking (γιγνώσκω) being desires and pursues (θηρεύω) the good, wants to acquire (κτάομαι) it, and doesn't consider (οὐδὲν φροντίζει) the pursuit of anything unconnected with the good (ἀποτελουμένων ἅμα ἀγαθοῖς, 20d7-10).[322]

[321] That said, by 22a, when the criterion gets applied to the first contender considered, only two requirements are discussed, and PR gets dropped in favour of SR and DR. There DR is characterised as that which is choice-worthy (αἱρετὸς). On the elision of these two criteria see also Harte (2014) 16, and Cooper (2003) 119-20; contrast Delcomminette (2006) 167. Compare also Arist. *NE* 1 7, 1097a-b; X, 1172b26.

[322] Φροντίζω (consider, reflect, give heed to) is what you concern yourself with. This is different from the other verbs we have had up to this point in the dialogue, and shows that we are to think about choice-making here, rather than about the good itself. This is what ordinary people pay attention to when making life choices.

The purpose of outlining these three requirements is that they will be used as the criteria of judgement in a trial of lives concerning first the life of pleasure, then the life of wisdom (φρόνησις, 20e2), which will be judged (κρίνωμεν) separately. This trial is designed to show that neither pleasure nor wisdom deserves first place in the contest for which is more responsible for the best human life.[323]

> Let there be neither any knowledge in the life of pleasure, nor any pleasure in that of knowledge. For if either of the two is the good, then it must have no need of anything in addition. But if one or the other should turn out to be lacking

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I've used the very neutral 'unconnected with the good' for ἀποτελουμένων ἅμα ἀγαθοῖς, but the more literal rendering would be something like things that 'complete the good'. This could refer to things that are produced at the same time as the good, or things which are productive, even if simultaneous with the good. However, the latter reading seems in tension with the SR.

Irwin (1995) 332 adds a fourth criterion, namely that it is lacking nothing and needs nothing added to it (20e5-21a2). He takes it to be a kind of summary of the first two conditions. For my purposes, it is sufficient to follow scholars who take this to be part of SR.

[323] Readers of the *Republic* won't fail to mark the resemblance between this trial and the trial of lives in *Rep*. II, presented as the ring of Gyges thought experiment at 359c ff. There are similarities both in the set-ups of the two trials, and in the way the trials proceed. In both cases there is an attempt to create an extreme separation between two lives: in the *Republic* between the just life and the unjust life (ἐὰν διαστησώμεθα τόν τε δικαιότατον καὶ τὸν ἀδικώτατον, 360e2), and in the *Philebus* between the life of cognition and the life of pleasure.

The unjust/just comparison, where each life is stripped of the other, seems to work better – we are more easily able to imagine a life where only one operates. That the unmixed lives here are hard or perhaps impossible to conceive of becomes part of the argument, as I will argue below.

Another source for the 'choice of lives' motif, which Plato was familiar with (since he quotes from it in *Grg.* 484c-486d and *Alc.* II (146a)), is Euripides' extant *Antiope* (frs. 183-188). There, two brothers, Zethus and Amphion, debate the merits of the life of the artist (who is overcome by sweetness, 'γλυκείας ἡδονῆ', at 187) versus the life of the man of action. In the *Gorgias*, Socrates adopts the role of Amphion by defending the choice worthiness of the intellectual over the practical life against Callicles cast as Zethus (*Grg*. 506b5–6). This establishes that characterising types of lives, and pitting them against each other, was already in the air in the fifth century (Euripides' dates are c. 480 – c. 406 bce), and that Plato is in the habit of cleverly and carefully making use of the theme for his philosophical purposes.

anything, then this can definitely no longer be our real good (ὄντως ἡμῖν ἀγαθόν).[324]

The mechanics of the trial involve considering a life of pleasure (ἡδονή) stripped of any knowledge (φρόνησις, 20e1-2), and vice versa, with the assumption that if either of the two is the good (ἀγαθός) then it must not need anything else. If either of these stripped-down lives should be shown to be in need of something (or, anything), then this would show that it is not a contender for the truly good (21a). The idea seems to be that, if X is good, a life of pure X and nothing but X will satisfy the three conditions (PR, SR and DR) which hold of the good. I will now focus on the trial of the life of pleasure alone. Here I will focus on the trial of the life of pleasure alone.

III The Jellyfish's Pleasures

III.i The Jellyfish as Simile

The jellyfish is introduced at *Philebus* 21c as part of the encouragement to Protarchus to see that the life he claims to be willing to live, and which he claims to be self-sufficient, would not be as he first envisions it. For he would be in possession of neither reason, nor memory, nor knowledge, nor true opinion (21b). The implication of this is that he would suffer from a series of deficiencies:

- ignorance of/ failure to know/have in mind (ἀγνοεῖν) whether he was enjoying himself or not (εἰ χαίρεις ἢ μὴ χαίρεις), because of his lack of any kind of wisdom (φρόνησις, 21b);

[324] *Phileb*. 20e-21a, trans. Frede (1993), with modifications.

- the inability to remember that he had enjoyed himself, because of his lack of memory (μνήμην, 21c);
- the inability to δοξάζειν (realise/believe/judge) that he was enjoying himself even when he was, because of lack of opinion or belief (21c);
- and the inability to calculate future pleasures, because of lack of the power to calculate (21c).

If all of these conditions held, he would be living the life of a jellyfish (πλεύμων, 21c) or other sea creature like it, rather than the life of a human.

Readers have wondered how, exactly, we're supposed to conceive of the life of pleasure without reason, as symbolised by the jellyfish's existence. Is the comparison to the jellyfish just an insult to the hedonist, or does it have more specific argumentative force? Frede notes that Plato has a habit of comparing the life of an 'uncompromising hedonist' to that of lower creatures, citing the χαραδριός of *Gorgias* 494b6, and she notes that here in the *Philebus* he chooses 'an even lower type of animal'.[325] Gosling suggests that '[t]he choice of jelly-fish and shellfish might simply be for the purposes of abusive description…', and infers that the jellyfish represents animal intelligence in general.[326]

[325] Frede (1993) 16 n. 1.

[326] Gosling (1975) 88. Sea creatures continue to be a derogatory image associated with hedonists. Witness Roger Crisp's (1997) example of the oyster life in his well-known 'Haydn and the oyster' example, used to illustrate the role of quantification in the utilitarian hedonic calculus of Mill. Interestingly Crisp imagines a sophisticated oyster with awareness, comparing it to a drunk human floating in a bath:

> The oyster's life is far less exciting. Though this is rather a sophisticated oyster, its life will consist only of mild sensual pleasure, rather like that experienced by humans when floating very drunk in a warm bath... (Crisp, 1997)

While we can't fail to appreciate the insults built into these images, it would be unfair to say that this was the main objective of the similes. In the *Gorgias*, the bird which evacuates as quickly as it takes in food is an appropriate image to evoke for the hedonist who is after flowing but not filling. It makes a specific point about the condition of fostering maximum need, and suggests that a life aimed at attaining pleasure will never succeed, since pleasure is never reliably retained. In the *Philebus*, we find another carefully chosen image. This time it is a πλεύμων or jellyfish, which is not just a lowly form of life, but one which lacks a specific cognitive ability. In order to appreciate the force of the image, I now turn to examine how the jellyfish was understood by ancient philosophers and scientists.

III.ii Classical Sources on the πλεύμων

I have suggested above that the image of the jellyfish be taken seriously, by which I mean that it be understood as carefully chosen by Plato, and importantly different to other images he could have used, and does use in other contexts. This is in contrast to interpreters like Frede (1993, 16) who takes the main purpose of the image as pejorative, and Gosling (1975, 88) who considers it both abusive and representative of animal cognition in general.

The image of the jellyfish is provided as a way of illustrating what we are left with in the final stage of deprivation in the trial of the life of pleasure. As such, it is an

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On the other hand J. M. E. McTaggart (1927: §869), the likely predecessor of Crisp's image, imagines an 'oyster-like life' with 'very little consciousness, and … very little excess of pleasure over pain', which is prolonged indefinitely.

important clue to how we should understand the conclusion of the reductio. We therefore have reason to be accurate about what is attributable to this creature, by the standards of Plato and other classical thinkers. I now turn to analyse the ancient understanding of this creature and its attributes.

In his *De Respiratione*, Aristotle notes that the referent of the term πλεύμων in certain authors is equivalent to the referent of the term πνευμά – an organ – in others.[327] In that context he seems to think of the creature as nothing but a sea-lung, the equivalent of an organ found in other, more complex creatures. This kind of reductive view of the animal and its abilities runs right through the ancient treatments. In *Historia Animalia*, Aristotle says that this creature arises spontaneously.[328] In *De Partibus Animalium*, he says that they differ only slightly from sponges or plants, and only in that they are unattached, but they lack sensation.[329] He then hesitates about whether sponges should be classed as plants or animals. On the one hand they resemble plants by being dependent on what they're stuck on, on the other they are fleshy and probably have *some kind* of sensation.[330] He seems to be worried about what kind, or what degree of sensation to attribute to them. We might reasonably think that this worry about sponges and other free-floating sea creatures which most resemble the πλεύμων, extends to a worry about the sensations of a jellyfish, too. He diminishes the jellyfish's complexity

[327] *De Resp*. 479a9.
[328] *HA* 548a11.
[329] *PA* 681a18.
[330] *PA* 681a25-29.

and abilities to such an extent that they are conceived of as barely better than, or different from, a sensationless sponge.

The picture gets filled in further from other sources. From Athenaeus we learn that the creature lacks joints, so we're picturing a fleshy mass.[331] From Theophrastus we get some confirmation that this creature is what we now call a jellyfish, since he notes that a sign of an incoming storm is the gathering of οἱ πνεύμονες in the sea.[332]

A number of sources tell us that Epicurus employed πλεύμων as a term of abuse against Nausiphanes (325 b.c.e.), a student of Pyrrho who is associated with Democritean atomism.[333] According to Diogenes, 'Epicurus used to call Nausiphanes a

[331] Ath. *Deip*, viii, 354a.

[332] Theophr. *De Sign.* 40. Apparently Theophrastus' report is largely correct, in that the moisture and humidity which precede storms is still known to attract blooms of jellyfish. By combining Theophrasus' account with Aristotle's description of the creature as unattached (*PA* 681a17-18, with *HA* 548a11 as related), we can see that the referent of the term πλεύμων is more likely to be the free-floating jellyfish than the dead man's finger sponge. The latter is a type of coral which, while it can sometimes break off and be found floating free, more usually grows and lives attached to bedrock, boulders, stones, and occasionally the shells of crabs and other creatures. An alternative suggestion, made to me by Alan Love, is that πλεύμων could refer to a sub-species of tunicate, which look particularly organ-like, are passive, and are especially hard to classify, even by contemporary biologists, because of their complex life-cycle. However, tunicate don't gather ahead of storms, which the πλεύμων does, according to Theophrastus. It could be that Aristotle simply grouped what is now known to be a tunicate with jellyfish, but this is speculative. For the purposes of this discussion I continue to refer to the πλεύμων as the jellyfish.

[333] Epic. *Frr*. 114, 236 [Usener]; Sedley (1976) 121. Cicero evidently doesn't think much of Epicurus' insults, including the one in question: 'Let Epicurus jest at this notion as he will — and he is a person who jokes with difficulty, and has but the slightest smack of his native Attic wit' (*De Nat.* Loeb Vol. XIX, 1. 17). This should perhaps help us appreciate the force of the insult, since it indicates that Epicurus uses this kind of humorous comparison infrequently.

jelly-fish, an illiterate, a fraud, and a trollop…'[334] According to Hesychius, the term implied obtuseness and insensibility, not weakness or pliability.[335] This reinforces that lack of intellect and sensation are the mark of this creature when invoked polemically. Sextus also refers to this same account of Epicurus' insult to Nausiphanes, reporting that he calls him a πλεύμων 'as being without sense'.[336] So at least by the time of these later reports, if not within Epicurus' own time, the term connotes lack of sensation, in a way which is more firm than in Aristotle's use. The term is insulting, but in this importantly specific sense of signalling insensibility.

From Aristotle we get a picture of a free-floating, waterborne creature which is not far from a plant-like filterer. It seems to lack intentionality in that it is described as floating rather than as self-moving, not being inclined to seek out food. It could have the power of touch, since that is common to all animals,[337] but its access to sensation is doubtful because of its problematic resemblance to sensationless plants and the creatures which resemble them, like sponges.

Turning back to the *Philebus*, what are we to make of what the πλεύμων can and cannot do? Does its purported lack of belief about and ignorance of enjoyment in the trial of lives passage pick up this ancient thread, and imply that it can't sense at all? Or is Plato

[334] Diog. Laert. *Lives* X.8, trans. Hick.
[335] Hsch. *Lex. s.v.*
[336] ἀναίσθητον, in Sext. Emp. *Adv. Math*. 1.3.
[337] Arist. *HA* 489a17.

more moderate, attributing to this creature some kind of sensation, some type of non-cognitive awareness, albeit with uncertainty about what type, or how much? To answer these questions I now turn to the *Timaeus*, in order to analyse Plato's understanding of the cognitive and non-cognitive abilities of non-rational animals.

III.iii The Cognitive and Non-Cognitive Resources of Non-Rational Animals

What abilities does Plato attribute to the jellyfish? One way to narrow down the options for what abilities Plato attributes to the jellyfish, as representative of the life of pleasure alone, is to understand which abilities, and particularly which cognitive resources, he grants to non-rational animals in general, and waterborne animals in particular. It is striking, after all, that the way in which Philebus' view is described at the very start of the eponymous dialogue is as a belief that what is good for *all creatures*, or *all lives*,[338] is to enjoy (χαίρειν) themselves, and to be pleased (ἡδονὴν) and delighted (τέρψιν), and whatever else goes along with those. He does not restrict the claim to either humans or even complex animals. Rather, he and Socrates are careful to note the claims which do and do not apply to animals or animal souls throughout the discussion (for example at *Phileb*. 32b9-36c2, 38e12-3, etc.). It is appropriate, then, that we, too, consider animal cognition, and what the animal examples in the text tell us about the role of cognition in the life of pleasure. While this is not a focus in the *Philebus*, it is a theme in the *Timaeus*. In this section I make use of that account in order to better understand the capacities of the πλεύμων.

[338] Construed broadly, πᾶσι ζῴοις.

According to the account of the generation of all living things in the *Timaeus*, even trees, plants and seeds have sensation.[339] By virtue of partaking in life they also partake of the third type of soul – namely appetite, the lowest type.[340] This type doesn't share in belief, reasoning or calculating ability, or mind, but does have sensation, both pleasant and painful, and, perhaps most surprisingly, desires, at least to a limited extent. It is by virtue of the fact that plants are passive and are not self-movers that they lack the capacity to discern or reflect on any of their own characteristics or generation.[341] Here plant sensation is explicitly connected with pleasure and pain in some way, as well as with desire, but yet plants are said to be deprived of belief. In addition, sensation is treated very minimally, as a necessary condition of bare awareness. The account implies that while plants have some relation to pleasure, there is a missing belief component, marked by an inability to take in or reflect on oneself. What does this belief component contribute, and what would pleasure and pain look like without it?[342]

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[339] *Tim*. 77a. On the question of whether plant sensation grants them intelligence in the *Timaeus* account, see Carpenter (2010). Carpenter notes that Plato grants plants perceptions of pleasure and pain, and desires. However, the plant case is described at *Tim*. 77b5-6 as αἴσθησις ἡδείας, which does not strike me as necessarily equivalent to pleasure. Instead it could be taken as something less than full-blown pleasure, perhaps implying a pleasure-apt thing, indicating that plants have a discriminating capacity whereby they distinguish sources of nourishment from things that will not contribute to their well-being. If pleasure is used in this source-sense here, it refers to the kinds of things congenial to the plant, with αἴσθησις picking out a kind of discrimination. On this reading, attributing αἴσθησις ἡδείας to plants is just a claim that plants discriminate between things that do and do not sustain then.

[340] *Tim*. 77b. The psychology of the *Timaeus* preserves the tripartite soul of the *Republic*, but transforms soul parts into three separate souls, each with its own location in the body (e.g. 90a).

[341] *Tim*. 77c.

[342] There is an interesting further question about how is it that this bare sensation should be accompanied by desire, even of a limited capacity, in the absence of belief. On this see Lorenz (2006) chs. 6 and 7, who argues for a conception of desire formation as accomplished by the appetitive soul in late Plato, even though it is deprived of belief (for example in the *Timaeus*). He

Earlier in the *Timaeus*, Plato discusses the causes of pleasures and pains attaching to affections, as well as cases of both perceptible and imperceptible affections.[343] This discussion arises in the context of animals with minds, since it explicitly describes *nous* as a key component of the operations. But it will be useful to understand how mindful sensation works, on his account, so that this can be contrasted with the mindless sensation of plants and the lowest animals. After all, Plato calls what the lower part of the mortal soul possesses 'irrational' or 'speechless' sensation.[344] And, as we shall see, he attributes this kind of soul to plants and very basic animals.

In animals with minds, or those which are at least practically sensible (φρόνιμος), the nature of pleasure is conceived of as an intense return to the natural condition, while pain is a violent movement away from it.[345] Mild or gradual affections, by contrast, are imperceptible.[346] The cause of an affection is described as an impression made on the relevant part of the body. If it is strong enough, it will get transmitted via particles until an identical impression can 'get to the mind and announce the quality of the agent'.[347]

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explicitly excludes the 'mollusc' from this account, however (102 n. 15), thus lending further support for the idea that this image is carefully chosen.

[343] *Tim*. 64a-65b.

[344] αἰσθήσει δὲ ἀλόγῳ, *Tim*. 69d4. This resonates with the speechlessness of Protarchus at *Phileb*. 21d.

[345] *Tim*. 64b. On the application of practical sagacity to animals, see Pl. *Stat*. 263d; in Arist. *HA* 488b15, *PA* 648a8, 687a8, *GA* 753a11.

[346] ἀναίσθητον, *Tim*. 64d3.

[347] *Tim*. 64b. The examples given for the regions in which these affections occur but fail to transmit are bones and hair (64c), the latter of which, at least, is a rather extreme case, given that we might think that it's unclear that hair receives affections at all. But it does help us to see that it is the sense of touch that is being thought of here. These hard, earthy organs which fail to transmit are contrasted with organs that are easily moved, softer, smoother, warmer, and lighter of weight, which are therefore good transmitters of affections, and tend to underlie full body

This description makes the transmission of affections sound worryingly propositional, but it need not be read as such. We are accustomed to speaking loosely of signals or messages being sent from the body to the brain, and thereby registering to consciousness, without assuming that this registration takes a propositional form, or the form of a judgement. It *is* crucial that there be some instrument to receive these signals, and thereby register them globally rather than just regionally. Indeed, the conditions under which a pleasure or pain fail to register are specifically described in the text as those in which the affection affects one bodily part, but fails to be transmitted onwards from there, and therefore stays regional, never getting to the mind.[348] The implication is that some complexity is required of a creature for any experience of pleasure and pain to be possible.

The generation of animals, and water creatures specifically, is described at *Tim*. 91e-92b. Wild land animals are said to have come from men who fail to avail themselves of philosophy or the study of the nature of the heavens, instead following the part in their chest – the lower, appetitive soul. The most mindless of these land animals are the limbless creatures that squirm on the ground. Below these come creatures which are the instantiation of the most mindless and foolish of men, who are no longer worthy even of breath, and are thus thrust by the gods into the impure waters of the seas: fish, shellfish, and all water-inhabiting creatures, whose extreme stupidity is justification for their

experiences of affections (64c). The jellyfish sits uncomfortably in either camp: its constitution is such that it should be the paradigm of receptivity, and yet these affections always fail to register.

[348] *Tim.* 64c. Compare the image of the trojan horse at *Theaet.* 184d (though the parallel is limited since there the soldiers appear to be conscious).

extreme habitat. Plato evidently did not think much of the cognitive capacities of marine life.

The normal procedure for registering sensations, pleasant and painful, would have them proceed outside of the bodily region immediately affected by the external stimulation. From this description, which calls sea creatures mindless, it is clear that their sensations would have nowhere to go: there is no central mind in place to receive and register any affection which is transmitted, and render it global. When Plato speaks of 'irrational sensation', I take it that he is thereby excluding plants and the lowest, waterborne animals from anything other than regional sensations, though these are still counted as pleasure-apt or pain-apt.[349] Further, plants at least are said to lack the capacity to discern or reflect on any of their own experiences.[350] A very basic animal which is plant-like might easily be tarred with the same brush.

Recall that for Aristotle, resemblance to sensationless plants suggests that the jellyfish is either sensationless, or its sensory abilities are questionable.[351] The later classical

[349] On which see note 339, above.

[350] *Tim.* 77c.

[351] We have already said that for Aristotle this creature's ability to sense is in doubt, in part because its status as a plant-like animal puts into doubt whether it would even have the sensation of touch. What is left is a kind of sentience, but a very different kind to the type the average animal would have. It has a nutritive soul, but the presence of a sentient soul (*aisthetikes psyches)* is in doubt, and without a sentient soul it would be 'like a dead thing or a dead part' according to *GA* 2.5, 741a6-29. The jellyfish can be conceived of as recoiling, or doing similar responsive actions, for example, but crucially lacking any kind of self-awareness as it does so.

accounts suggest even more firmly that the creature is known for its insensibility. Plato conforms to this trend by making the jellyfish's sensation questionable, but he does so in a manner different to Aristotle. Plato's account of plants grants them some regional registration of pleasant sensation,[352] but no ability to reflect on themselves, or to form beliefs, because of their lack of intellect.[353] Plants are described as completely passive, lacking self-motion,[354] just as the jellyfish is among animals. He also positions the jellyfish as a uniquely intellectually deprived creature. The source of the jellyfish's inability to access its own pleasures, on Plato's account, is its distinctive lack of self-awareness and sensory self-reflexivity. Its body parts experience the restorative process which underlies pleasure, but it is unable to form beliefs about it, and therefore to sense it *as* pleasure at the global level.

The missing belief component, then, seems to be a mark of mindlessness, and indicates that the ability to register regional sensations in the being as a whole is a key aspect of

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For Aristotle this creature would lack both a common sense (*koine aisthesis*, the faculty which allows for higher order perceptual thinking), and a *hegemonikon*: the jellyfish has no heart, on Aristotle's account, and since the heart is the primary faculty of sensation and the seat of the common sense (*PA* 666a17), this would rule out the possibility of it having the common sense. Its abilities would then be in contrast to other animals' higher order perceptual activity, the self-reflexive structure of which is described at *De An.* 3.2, 425b12-15, for instance. In the normal human case, self-reflexivity about mental states – the awareness that we have those states – is an essential and intrinsic feature of the states themselves (on which see *De Sens.* 437a26-9; 447a15-17). As such, bare awareness seems to be ruled out, since there is no room for awareness which is not accompanied by awareness of that awareness. For Aristotle on the necessary reflexivity of memory, a connection echoed in the 'stepped' reading of the *Philebus* argument, which I will develop in section IV.ii below, see *De Mem.* 452b26-8.

[352] αἴσθησις ἡδείας, *Tim*. 77b5.

[353] *Tim*. 77c.

[354] *Tim*. 77b.

what belief would contribute. It would presumably also underlie the ability of an animal to discern or reflect on their experiences, and hence contribute the reflexivity of sensation. This indicates that the experience of pleasure is itself complex: there is a regional somatic registering of a sensation (a movement towards or away from the natural condition), and then there is a global registration of that same sensation, in which the subject of it becomes aware of it, which aligns with belief formation.[355] The jellyfish is barred from the latter.

Two abilities are missing in animals which possess only the lowest type of soul, according to the *Timaeus*. The first is the ability to register sensations 'rationally' or in the mind, therefore registering sensations globally, insofar as it reaches 'the whole creature'.[356] The second is the ability to discern or reflect on one's own experiences, including affective experiences. Together, these two deprivations amount to a life of near insensitivity, where the subject is unable to register their sensations as pleasant or painful. The conclusion of the passage is that this life is effectively without affection, contrary to expectations (at least those of Protarchus). Plato anticipates the trend found in Aristotle and later ancient sources, but in a uniquely nuanced way.

[355] This complexity is also suggested at *Phileb*. 33e10-34a5, where Plato is explicit that there is no possibility of sensation without some bodily change affecting the soul, too. Cf. Carpenter (2010) 292.

[356] *Tim*. 64c3.

Plato seems to deny that there could be a non-cognitive experience of pleasure or pain that nevertheless reaches the level of subjective awareness. The minimal conditions for the awareness of pleasure require some level of cognitive ability, which is denied to the jellyfish specifically and notably, by ancient philosophers and scientists. In this sense classical thinkers differ from contemporary philosophers of biology such as Peter Godfrey-Smith who, in *Other Minds* (2017), suggests that there are many examples of animals that possess some degree of subjective experience (including primordial emotions like thirst, physiological pain, and the sensation of oxygen deprivation) which nonetheless fall short of full consciousness.[357] These sensations can supposedly be experienced even without a subjective, self-reflexive perspective on the world. They might be exactly what we imagine for a jellyfish, whose movements strike us as reactive and passive. But from our analysis, we can see that Plato draws a firm line between regional and globally registered sensation, and that the most basic version of *enjoyment* cannot be thought of as a primordial emotion which would survive cognitive deprivation. It cannot be experienced without a subjective, self-reflexive perspective, so cannot be experienced by the jellyfish. This stance is a natural development of the general ancient analysis.

The jellyfish's existence is extreme and particularly base. In response to Gosling, it is deprived even by general animal standards. An examination of the account of animal rationality and irrationality from the *Timaeus* has thus clarified that, however we

[357] Godfrey-Smith (2017).

understand the jellyfish, it must be within the scope of the specific and extreme cognitive constraints set out for creatures of this kind.

IV The Argument

IV.i Governing Assumptions

I will now draw from this exploration of the ancient understanding of the cognitive limitations of the jellyfish three governing assumptions for reading the trial of the life of pleasure passage (*Phileb*. 20b-21d).

The first is that any interpretation of the *Philebus* passage should respect the care Plato takes in his choice of image. The creature must have at least the *possibility* of the power of touch and sensation, not least because Plato chooses it for his example rather than a plant or a stone, which he is unhesitant to do in other contexts (i.e. *Grg*. 494a). Further, he does not include sensation on the list of functions this creature lacks, whereas he is careful to list a number of others. But we should be inclined to think, from Aristotle's account, and from the *Timaeus*, that there is a contemporary worry about whether these creatures lack sensation entirely, or rather have some kind of it. And it is precisely this worry that I think Plato wants us to have in mind when he invokes this creature in this context.

The specific example he names is this being which, in the minds of his near contemporaries, is a strange creature which defies easy classification as either plant or animal. In a contemporaneous dialogue, it is treated as a case of extreme cognitive deprivation, and an exception to the general account of animal cognition. So the questions of whether or not it is capable of the sensation of pleasure, and what the minimal cognitive conditions for the experience of pleasure are, are precisely those Plato wants us to have in mind when reading this passage. Interpreters should bear in mind that Plato has chosen an image which is not a stone or a plant, but which is *only barely or uncertainly* superior to or different from a plant in terms of its sensory faculties.

A second governing assumption is that the life being conceived of in this passage is not just a pleasant jellyfish life. It is, rather, explicitly described as one in which the subject has the greatest pleasures throughout (*Phileb*. 21a8-9, b3-4). The simile of the jellyfish is an image of a being that doesn't have to toil or hunt for food, but is well provisioned. It is an appropriate image to represent a life of maximal pleasure and minimal toil. We ought, then, to read the passage as a good-faith attempt to portray a life which, while stripped of the cognitive, is nevertheless maximally pleasant. The jellyfish's life ought to be read, ex hypothesi, as a life of *possible* pleasure. It cannot be that whatever the jellyfish lacks prevents it from having pleasure in some very obvious way, such as it would if we took it to be blatantly insensitive, in the way that a stone is.

The third governing assumption is that understanding the precise nature of the jellyfish's deprivation is critical for understanding the argument itself. When they take note of the jellyfish at all, modern commentators tend to characterise its deficiency in terms of lack of awareness.[358] My reading adheres to these governing assumptions, and provides a detailed analysis of the deprivation represented by the jellyfish, as an alternative to the existing accounts.

IV.ii The Reading Offered

In our passage, the life of pleasure alone is explicitly described as one in which the subject would enjoy the greatest pleasures throughout (*Phileb*. 21a9, b3-4).[359] But this

[358] I will briefly survey a few examples. Hackforth suggests that the creature lacks awareness and consciousness of the physiological replenishment, but he is also open to an alternative reading in which the creature is aware of the feeling, but not aware of it 'as' pleasure (Hackforth, 1945/72, 32). Gosling focuses on conceptual awareness, suggesting the jellyfish fails to realise it is experiencing pleasure due to its lack of conceptual judgement, and subsequent inability to recognise the truth or falsity of statements like 'I am enjoying myself', which is true of all non-language users, for Plato (Gosling, 1975, 88-9, 183-4). Similarly, Warren pinpoints the jellyfish's deprivation as the absence of the rational capacity which would allow it to form the thought 'I am pleased that P' (Warren, 2014b, 142-3). By contrast, Taylor characterises the deficiency as an inability to form second-order attitudes due to a lack of sentience, which prevents the jellyfish from forming a grateful feeling about its pleasure (Taylor, 1956, 36). Irwin claims that the jellyfish lacks awareness in terms of rational self-consciousness, and is thereby missing a way of relating to its own pleasures (Irwin, 1995, 333-4). His discussion suggests that this amounts to a lack of propositional awareness, or awareness 'that' I am pleased/I was pleased, etc. McCabe, too, sees the point about the jellyfish lacking a relation to its own pleasures, and understands its deprivation as a lack of consciousness, and lack of the continuity cognition provides over time (McCabe, 2000, 130-2). Whiting is an exception to those who focus on the jellyfish's lack of awareness, focusing instead on the creature's lack of self-consciousness, and its inability to make present-tense self-ascriptions of pleasure (Whiting, 2014, 26-7). My own reading, below, comes closest to those of McCabe and Whiting.

[359] Irwin, too, notes this as a starting assumption of the passage (Irwin, 1995, 334).

does not mean that the assumption is preserved all the way through the passage. I want to introduce an alternative reading in which, by the end of the passage, the life of pleasure alone is understood to be one which lacks subjectivity. On my reading, the passage is an argument in the form of a reductio of the assumption that a human life could be most pleasant without any cognition. The jellyfish image it ends with represents the failure of a life of pleasure alone to be most pleasant, and to be valuable, for the subject whose life it is. The conclusion of the argument is that a life is most pleasant only if it is somehow pleasant for the subject, and this requires cognitive capacities such as memory and thought, so that pleasure qua pleasure won't suffice to make a life best.

In support of this reading, I suggest that it is crucial to understand the different parts of the claims at 21b-c, and why we get all of them. The argument is set out very carefully, in what I suggest we understand as a series of steps or stages, in which first the more obvious, and more obviously *cognitive* capacities are removed. The argument then moves in ever more surprising and radical steps, each attributing greater deprivation to the life represented by the jellyfish.

The passage begins with a general counterfactual claim, marked as first by the πρῶτον, when Socrates asks whether or not Protarchus would be ignorant of or fail to have in mind whether he was enjoying himself or not.[360] This initially preserves self-reflexivity

[360] *Phileb.* 21b.

and self-ascription, since it asks him to reflect on whether he has this intelligence; in phrasing this as a question, there is a presumption of self-reflexivity. But, at the same time, in answering the question negatively, and establishing that he would have no way to find out if he was experiencing pleasure, it challenges our intuition about infallible access to our affective states, and suggests that self-reflexivity is stripped through the stages of cognitive extraction. I take this as a first, general description of the main three steps which follow it.

The first stage of cognitive deprivation establishes that a person occupying this position could not remember that he had enjoyed himself, and that their pleasures could not be preserved from one moment to the next.[361] The imagined subject loses access to memories of pleasures of their past. The procedure the interlocutors are following in the thought experiment, described as one in which they test the two lives as they are lying side by side in our memory, is no longer one which this subject could participate in.[362]

The second stage marks an even more radical move, which is importantly different from the first, and from the general description, in its emphasis on belief: by removing belief or opinion, we are shown that he would be unable even to realise, believe or judge he was enjoying himself even when he was.[363] By removing an even more important

[361] *Phileb*. 21c.

[362] *Phileb.* 19d.

[363] *Phileb*. 21c. One might wonder, from the phrasing, whether there is still enjoyment here in the second stage. The presence of the participle, χαίροντα, suggests that there is. The standard English translation, 'But, not possessing right judgement, you would not realize that you are

capacity, Protarchus, as a representative figure occupying this position, is now imagined to be unable not just to access the fact of his enjoyment (characterised in the general claim), he has also lost his ability to form a judgement and to attribute enjoyment to himself. He has lost self-awareness as a subject of pleasure. It seems he could not even raise the question, let alone have a view on it.

Finally, in the third stage, we are to imagine him as being unable to calculate any future pleasures, or make any plans for himself.[364] He has lost access to the idea of himself as subject of possible future pleasures. There is no conception of self to attribute future plans to that is accessible to him.

Understanding the passage as this series of ordered stages of deprivation helps us to appreciate that this is an argument rather than a digression, and why the jellyfish is an appropriate representation of the most radically cognitively deprived life. Many readers

enjoying yourself even while you do' (Frede, 1999), claims that lack of δόξα leads to lack of awareness of enjoyment, but implicitly concedes that it does not lead to lack of enjoyment per se. One possible linguistic dodge (which I am grateful to Tad Brennan for suggesting) is to suggest that this phrase functions as a counterfactual conditional. If that were so, we could read it as emphasising the lack of awareness, while not entailing that enjoyment is compatible with lack of δόξα. It would instead imagine that one could have enjoyment without δόξα as part of a counterfactual scenario. Does the Greek permit this reading? The prostasis can be read that way unproblematically. But we would expect an 'ἄν' to mark the contingency in the apodosis, which we do not find. We could consider it as having dropped out. Or this could be explained by the apodosis being governed by the ἀνάγκη at the head of the sentence, by analogy to the rule Smyth recognises (1956, §2315 *ff.*) We could then read the phrase as meaning 'even if you *were* enjoying, you would not be aware of enjoying'. This is my preferred rendering.

[364] *Phileb*. 21c.

will approach the passage with the assumption that if you have a pleasurable experience, there may be room to be ignorant about it in theoretical terms, but there is no room for a failure to enjoy it: pleasure is inherently enjoyed. There is either pleasure or lack thereof, but no middle ground of ignorant pleasure, or ignorance of pleasure, in the sense of pleasure which fails to be enjoyed. Yet here Socrates seems to be trying to make room for just that, through the ἀγνοια claim of 21b, with the reductio ultimately showing that there is none. The question of whether pleasure has an essential cognitive aspect is exactly what is at stake, and the conclusion shows that its value is tied to the cognitive, despite an attempt to find an account of it as valuable which is divorced from the cognitive. The second step goes further: not only does pleasure have an essential cognitive component, but try to remove it, and we are left with a subject who is unable to access their own enjoyment. The pleasure doesn't disappear, but barely deserves the name, since it cannot be enjoyed.

I claimed above that the steps represent both increasingly radical and increasingly surprising deprivation. In support of the latter claim, I suggest that in addition to ordered steps, there is also dependency between them: each deprivation after the first is a result of the previous one, and in laying them out as a chain of dependent capacities, the hedonist interlocutor is surprised to learn that in giving up cognition, one is sacrificing much more than expected. The capacity removed in step two is lacking as an effect of the removal of the capacity in step one; the capacity in step three presupposes the capacity removed at step two. The second step is failure to believe one is enjoying oneself, because of a failure of δόξα. We need only think of the account of memory as

essential to belief formation in the *Theatetus* to appreciate that it would be fitting for this to be the result of the removal of memory in the previous step.[365] This seems to be the place where self-awareness is removed, and suggests that memory is required even for occurrent experiences of pleasure to be enjoyed. Finally, lacking the power to calculate[366] would be a result of these previous deprivations, since doing so requires remembering what did please us, and occurrent belief and self-awareness. The idea of using these two capacities to anticipate what will please us in future, and to plan for that, is taken up again in the account of the pleasures of anticipation at *Phileb.* 32c-34c; 38e ff., where the lower parts use images stored in memory to generate desires.

The argument starts as a good faith attempt to hypothesise a life of pleasure alone devoid of cognition, but the interlocutors find that when the cognitive elements are removed, pleasure as something recognisably good and choice-worthy goes with them. It is impossible to divorce pleasure from any cognitive involvement, as the attempt to do so rests on the false assumption that there is such a thing as pleasure that is self-sufficient and worth having all by itself. The argument shows exactly that you can't separate the value of the cognitive elements from the contribution they make. It is an early argument in support of the mixed life as not just preferable but essential.

[365] *Theaet*. 191e-194d, where δόξα involves matching perception with memory. I am indebted to a reviewer for pushing me on this point.
[366] λογισμοῦ δὲ στερόμενον, 21c5.

The jellyfish is a uniquely appropriate simile to invoke in this context. While it may have the life of most pleasurable states or conditions, in some quantifiable sense, it cannot enjoy them, because the cognitive deprivation described in this passage renders it insensible, in the way associated with this creature in antiquity. It therefore does not have a pleasurable and valuable life by the standards of the thought experiment. At any given moment, it would be true to say that the jellyfish is experiencing but not enjoying pleasures: there is a form of pleasure which is restoration, which this creature undergoes, and which is strong enough that it would normally please a living creature. But in a sense it does not have access to this, and it is unable to enjoy that pleasure. Felt pleasure, that which can be enjoyed, looks, on this picture, like a kind of proprioception that presupposes rationality. And pleasure which is experienced but not enjoyed, and not felt, is possible but not choice-worthy. From the jellyfish's own perspective there is no past, present or future self to attach it to, or conceive of. The question is therefore not whether it is experiencing the state or condition definitional of basic pleasure, but whether that renders its life pleasant, and happy. The answer Plato gives is that the locus of hedonic value is cognitive self-awareness.

V Conclusion

The crux of *Philebus* 21a-d is the question whether the enjoyment of pleasure does or does not have a self-reflexive component. I have argued that the reductio sets out to prove that pleasure worth having does have an essential self-reflexive component, and

that without this component a life may meet the technical requirements for pleasure, but this pleasure cannot be enjoyed, such that it fails to count as a pleasurable life at all, for its subject. In doing so, I have revealed the importance of the jellyfish image which represents the life of pleasure, and established it as neither purely pejorative nor general, but rather a precisely chosen image whose ancient philosophical resonance yields new insight into Plato's view of the minimal conditions for pleasure.

CONCLUSION
USE YOUR ILLUSION: PLATO ON PLEASURE AND PRUDENTIALISM

I Introduction

Plato has a sustained interest in pleasure, and represents Socrates in dialogue with hedonists repeatedly. Usually this is to critique them, and frequently it involves arguing not just that they seek the wrong life, but that they will fail to get the life of pleasure they do seek. In those critical moments, there are lingering questions: what exactly does Plato take to be the fatal flaw in the hedonists' plans, such that they are doomed to fail in their endeavour to plan a pleasurable life? And, given that flaw, why does he return to the subject of hedonist prudentialism recurrently? Is it pleasure and the source of the error in lives directed towards it which is flawed, or is it otherwise?

Here I engage with these interpretive questions by looking across the specific passages which are the focus of chapters 2-5, in order to understand what Plato's views are, and how they change and develop.[367] In the detailed in-chapter analyses themselves I argue that these anti-hedonist critiques are more successful, and careful, than scholars have previously thought. Here, by way of conclusion, I want to draw from them to propose an alternative picture of Plato's shifting view of the role of pleasure in prudentialism to the more sceptical ones available. Against existing characterisations of this development which understand it as increasingly pessimistic about pleasure (*pace* Moss), and where

[367] For the purposes of this analysis, I adopt the standard chronology of the dialogues. See n. 29 for more detail.

pleasure itself is a cause of the soul being overwhelmed or mislead, I argue for a different story of the development of Plato's thought. My analysis here in the conclusion will be confined to the passages already treated in the earlier chapters.[368]

Instead of becoming increasingly suspicious of pleasure, I contend that Plato develops an increasingly fine-grained conception of pleasure, becoming sceptical of only some types as he goes along, while becoming more enthusiastic about others. His focus shifts from looking for an art to correct our measures of pleasure and pain, to putting ourselves in the right position to accurately judge pleasures and what will please us – a position which, he is increasingly aware, is difficult to occupy. On this reading, a life aimed at certain types of pleasure is problematic – but the source of the problem is the role pleasure is made to play in that life, the type of pleasures aimed at, and the priorities of the agent whose life it is, rather than the nature of pleasure *per se*.

In providing an alternative to the reading which casts Plato's attitude towards pleasures as increasingly suspicious, I make room for a Platonic account of pleasure which holds certain types of pleasure in high esteem, shows a consistent interest in the proper role of pleasure in a good life, and makes room for the possibility of rehabilitating ourselves and our relationship to pleasure.

[368] This is done in the interests of space and focus, while recognising that there are other passages in the dialogues which could be fruitfully added. Nonetheless, the passages I have chosen are key moments where Plato treats the question of hedonist prudentialism, and wider considerations about the way we relate to and plan for pleasure.

II A Platonic Puzzle

Scholarly interest in the development of Plato's view of pleasure and the role it ought to play in prudential planning arises in part because of a puzzling contrast between the optimistic assessment of the *technē metrētikē* in the *Protagoras (*356b-357e), compared with the less optimistic assessment of our ability to evaluate pleasures and pains in later works (specifically *Grg.* 492e-493d, *Rep.* IX 583c-585a, *Phileb.* 20b-23a). Moreover, those later passages are frequently charged with missing the mark: failing to show why pleasure seekers will fail in their principal intention or, in the case of the *Philebus* passage, failing to provide an argument to this effect at all.[369] The refutation of hedonism in the *Gorgias* (495e-499d) generates a related worry, in that it seems to contain no argument against the 'enlightened' hedonism of the *Protagoras,* which a reader of the latter might reasonably have come to expect. This alleged omission has generated a long-standing debate.[370] One side of the debate says that there is a very simple argument against hedonism which would halt the Calliclean defence in the *Gorgias*, namely one which takes into account the future weighing strategy presented in the *Protagoras,* which leaves us wondering why the Socrates of the *Gorgias* does not present this argument.

[369] Examples of critical reactions to Plato's anti-hedonist arguments include (but are by no means confined to) Cross and Woozley (1964) 266-88, Santas (1979) 209-14, Annas (1981) 306-14, Taylor (1991) 180, 188-90, Gosling and Taylor (1982) 97-128, Reeve (1988) 306, Gibbs (2001) 33, Rosen (2005) 336-44, and Wolfsdorf (2013b) 70, 273.

[370] Contributions to this debate include Hackforth (1928), Vlastos (1956), Guthrie (1956), Sullivan (1961), Taylor (1976), Irwin (1977), Zeyl (1980), Gosling & Taylor (1982), Nussbaum (1984), White (1985), Kahn (1988), Rudebusch (1989 and 1999), Richardson (1990), Berman (1991), Russell (2005), Wolfsdorf (2013b), and Moss (2014).

Scholars do not have a satisfying answer to this perceived omission, but interpretive options include that the *Gorgias* is not aware of the argument of the *Protagoras*, that Socrates chooses to ignore it, that later dialogues return to a defence of hedonism,[371] that the *Protagoras* argument is misunderstood,[372] or because there is reason to think it would not be adequate, since the argument of the *Gorgias* is aimed at a different position.[373] The view I am labelling as the 'sceptical' view of Plato on pleasure and prudentialism is partly encouraged by this puzzle. Because if Plato becomes increasingly wary of pleasure as he writes the dialogues, and increasingly pessimistic about the ability of the measuring technique to do the evaluative work it is represented as doing in the *Protagoras*, this would help answer the question why the *Gorgias* and later works do not appeal to the technique. I will begin by extracting the features of the sceptical position, as a foil against which to develop my alternative account. I will do this dialogue by dialogue, for the *Protagoras*, the *Gorgias*, *Republic* IX and the *Philebus*.

III The *Protagoras*

Moss presents a strong version of the sceptical reading of Plato in her paper 'Pleasure and Illusion in Plato' (2006), which opens with a provocative statement: 'Plato is suspicious of pleasure.'[374] Her sceptical reading is strong in relation to the *Protagoras* specifically because, as we shall see, she is doubtful even that the optimism alleged to be

[371] Butler (1999 and 2003).
[372] Shaw (2015).
[373] Taylor (1976) 170.
[374] Moss (2006) 503.

there is in fact present, since pleasure is already characterised as inescapably problematic in that context.

Moss shares my concern with the question of why, if Plato is so mistrustful of it, he devotes so much attention to pleasure.[375] She suggests that all dialogues other than the *Protagoras* are strongly anti-hedonist,[376] and argues that '[p]leasure is dangerous because it is a *deceiver*. It leads us away with false appearances, bewitching and beguiling us, cheating and tricking us.'[377] It is this close connection between pleasure and illusion which forms the basis of her attribution of mistrust of pleasure to Plato. Here I will extract key features of this aspect of Moss' view, focused on the role of pleasure in prudential planning, and Plato's alleged scepticism about pleasure, which I will continue to label the 'sceptical view'.

The overall developmental story the sceptical view tells about Plato's attitude towards pleasures, as we look across the dialogues, is one of increasing distrust. In earlier dialogues, such as the *Protagoras*, Plato characterises an agent as pursuing vicious and harmful pleasures because they have been deceived by illusions. One part of us, our appetite, is 'inherently susceptible to illusion, and immune to the corrective effects of reasoning…'[378]. Yet the source of error is firmly attributed to pleasure itself, since

[375] Ibid. 503.
[376] Ibid. 503 n. 2.
[377] Ibid. 504, emphasis in the original.
[378] Ibid. 505.

illusions are described as 'generated by pleasant and painful things' and as 'inherent in pleasure'.[379] While the Plato who writes the *Protagoras* is relatively optimistic about the ability of reason to overcome the illusions inherent in pleasure, on the standard sceptical reading, he becomes ever more pessimistic about reason's ability to rule in this way.

The sceptical reading of the *Protagoras* tells us that there Plato suggests a special connection between the desire for pleasure and susceptibility to illusion.[380] Desires for pleasure are said to be a matter of perceiving a type of appearance, where objects of desire behave like objects of vision, and desiring pleasure is tantamount to a perception.

My Chapter Two, Tipping the Scales: Hedonism, Temporality & Illusion in *Protagoras* 356b-357e, is the place where I confront the detail of one of Moss' dialogue-specific analyses most directly.[381] There I detail my reasons for questioning Moss' analysis of the mistake Plato treats in that passage, and I offer an alternative. In particular, I argue in favour of the importance of temporality for understanding the passage and the argument. I claim that attention to temporality reveals that the source of distortion and illusion in those who succumb to the power of appearances is not the nature of pleasure, but rather the effect that time has on our value judgements, and the possibility of failing to identify with our future selves. Moss' reading of the passage includes a model of the

[379] Ibid. 505.

[380] Ibid. 509.

[381] See Chapter Two, section IV, above.

desire for pleasure as a perception. The initial optimism of the *Protagoras* is an optimism that this category of perceptions can be altered by the results of the rational process which is the measuring art. But Socrates undermines himself here, according to Moss, because while the measuring art might change the agent's judgement, it would have no effect on their distorted vision, leaving them still susceptible to illusion.[382]

As an alternative to Moss, I have defended a different model for how to understand the desire for pleasure as perception. Acknowledging that the perception model itself is promising, I suggest the weighing and measuring images of the passage in question provide detail which is essential to include in the model. What Moss represents as vision in the analogy is equivalent, in psychological terms, to anticipatory affective valuation. The way Plato details the passage has judgement already built into the model, rather sitting as a separate, secondary process. As such, it is implied that desire for pleasure can be informed and altered by the outcome of rational calculation. On this alternative model, the analogue of perception can be corrected for, and the initial optimism about the power of the measuring art is preserved and justified. The error agents make is one of incorrectly valuing pleasures and other commensurate goods, which situates the error with the agent, rather than situating it in the nature of pleasure or pleasant things. On my reading of this passage, the good valuer is not continually subject to erroneous and distorted perceptions. Instead, they see the same object as

[382] Moss (2006) 510.

before the application of the measuring art, but they see it in a new way. It is not without difficulty that they achieve this, but the possibility exists, on Plato's account.

Against the strongly sceptical reading of the *Protagoras* which understands the optimism there as unwarranted because of pleasure's inherent deceptiveness, I have suggested the optimism is warranted in one sense. It is warranted in that the description of the measuring art and its effects provide a promising means by which an agent can re-orient their lives, and correctly value the pleasure in their lives. But in another sense I agree with Moss' cautionary stance regarding the passage, because it is not *straightforwardly* optimistic, in the way that much of the commentary on this passage would suggest. For while the *Protagoras* passage reveals an initial interest in how we anticipate the pleasures and pains in our future lives, it also demonstrates a worry about how this can go wrong, and about the effects of that mistake. As a starting point for an understanding of Plato's views on pleasure and prudentialism, then, we find in this passage evidence of his motivation to provide or describe a means of self-correction agents can use to avoid errors of that kind. Instead of a naïve first pass at correcting what cannot be corrected, the *Protagoras* is an attempt to characterise one essential element of correctly judging pleasures, and to recognise the difficult work involved in doing so. It is neither pessimistic about planning a life with considerations of pleasure in view, nor naively optimistic, but rather a nuanced consideration of both the benefits and difficulties of gaining the right attitude to one's future self as a means of making good prudential decisions.

IV The *Gorgias*

According to the sceptical view, the *Gorgias* advances a correlation between those who pursue pleasure and those who are especially susceptible to illusion. The arguments in the dialogue also suggest that the illusion that pleasure in itself is good is particularly hard to dispel.[383] These claims in themselves are compatible with a less sceptical view, which says that while hedonists may be especially prone to be taken in by illusion, this doesn't commit us to there being a problem with the nature of pleasure itself. Rather, the source of error is in the agent who prioritises pleasure, or certain types of pleasure, over all else.

Moss goes a step further, in her version of the sceptical view, when she says that '… both dialogues [the *Protagoras* and the *Gorgias*] hold that people pursue harmful pleasures or avoid beneficial pains because they are taken in by *illusions generated by the pleasures and pains*.'[384] The emphasis is on pleasure and pain themselves as the source of illusions, rather than on the role that pleasures and pains are made to play in the life of the agent who pursues them, or the way in which they pursue these affections. Further, Moss states of the *Gorgias* that it 'suggests that the belief that pleasure is good (and pain bad) is often immune to argument.'[385] The implication is that these particular kinds of beliefs are immune to argument, rather than that the agents are immune. The emphasis

[383] Ibid. 512-13.
[384] Ibid. 513 n. 21, emphasis mine.
[385] Ibid. 514.

is on damaging dispossessed beliefs, rather than the role they play in the overall belief system of the agent who holds them.

In my Chapter Three, Jars, Sieves and Souls: The Myth of the Water Carriers in *Gorgias* 492e-493d, I give a different reading of the *Gorgias*. Though my analysis is confined to the myth of the water carriers, an alternative to the sceptical reading of Plato's view on pleasure and prudentialism in the dialogue is nonetheless suggested by the arguments in that important passage. My analysis shows that while there is a problem with the nature of bodily pleasures, there is also an issue with souls that administer bodily pleasures to the appetite unrelentingly, resulting in their corruption, and cognitive deterioration. The focus of the critique in this passage is bodily pleasures specifically, not all pleasures. Moreover, the source of the error described is as much the agent who pursues those pleasures as it is the nature of that type of pleasure itself. The problem identified with the means the hedonist agent uses to pursue bodily pleasures is primary in the argument.

This passage displays Plato's sensitivity to the relevance of an agent's behaviour on their ability to plan their lives in a way which integrates pleasures more or less successfully. He criticises those who pursue pleasure without having investigated its nature or cause. He is also willing to consider a version of the pursuit of bodily pleasures as conducted by a more rational agent, and the challenges this kind of person

still faces in pursuing their aim.[386] Rather than suspicion about pleasure per se, or even bodily pleasures, this suggests a burgeoning Platonic interest in the puzzles that the pursuit of pleasure raises regarding personhood and prudentialism.

V *Republic* IX

According to the sceptical view of Plato's developing stance on pleasure, the *Republic* is where the alleged relation of pleasure to illusion assumed in the *Protagoras* and the *Gorgias* gets developed into a full theory.[387] The tripartite psychology of the *Republic* facilitates the separation of the rational part from the appetitive, with the desire for pleasure being located firmly in the former, and the calculations performed by rationality having no impact on appetite or its desire. The ethics of the *Republic* thus condone and require the suppression of appetite, and the mastery of the desire for pleasure, as necessary for the pursuit of virtue.[388] Appetite is considered a poor tool in that pursuit, or any other, because it fails to distinguish the apparent good from that which is truly good.[389] The failure of communication between appetite and reason mean that appetite is conceived of as neither being able to calculate for itself, nor being responsive to the calculations of reason. This effectively rules out the possibility of

[386] I defend this reading in Chapter Three, section V, above.
[387] Moss (2006) argues for this on her p. 523.
[388] Ibid. 524.
[389] Ibid. 527. In Moss' formulation, this provides an alternative means of distinguishing between the objects of desire of reason versus appetite from what is dominant in the literature. Instead of those objects being conceived of as good-dependent or independent (after, for instance, Irwin 1977), here both reason and appetite are conceived of as pursuing the good. But while reason pursues the true good, appetite's inferior cognition causes it to pursue merely apparent goods.

appetite being informed by reason's conclusions. The only solution is for reason to rule over appetite. On this reading, there is no room for another type of relation between reason and appetite, such as, for example, appetite's desires being partly shaped and shifted by reason's conclusions. Moss describes the block on appetite's access to reason's conclusions in the *Republic* as follows:

> … such thoughts [calculations about relative sizes and distances, etc.] are clearly unavailable to a part of the soul that forms its beliefs simply on the basis of appearance. An object cannot simply *appear* to have good long-term consequences that on balance out-weigh its short-term drawbacks, or to be well-suited to the nature of the soul considered as a whole… to have these thoughts, one must at some point have engaged in some form of calculation. Therefore, while appetite may desire things *qua* good, it can never have the kind of thoughts about goodness that reason does.[390]

In my analysis of the *Gorgias*, I have already established that Plato licenses us to conceive of appetite's desires being informed by the results of reason's calculations without requiring that appetite be able to perform those calculations itself. I will now argue that the same is true in the *Republic*.

Implicit in the sceptical analysis of the *Republic* is a strong separation between the soul parts. They are described as discrete agents who don't share the same capacities, and have trouble communicating with each other. While the tripartition of the *Republic* encourages the distinction between soul parts to some degree, and uses this to explain psychological conflict, for instance, it's not clear that such severe separation is the right characterisation. After all, the three parts are three parts of one whole person, and that

[390] Moss (2006) 529.

person is able to notice conflict between the parts. The alternative of allowing the parts to become aligned (σύμμαχος) with each other and friendly (φίλος) to each other, and to the agent, is available.[391] While it might be right that only the rational part grasps what is good for the whole person, and across their lives as a whole,[392] the philosopher's appetitive part being suppressed is only one model for how that good can be rationally pursued. An alternative model is one in which appetite is informed by the conclusions of reason.[393] Moss recognises such a possibility when she notes that habitual engagement in calculations may generate appearances with complex characteristics borne out of those calculations.[394] But she does not develop a story around this possibility, and the sceptical view generally subverts it in favour of a view of appetite's existing beliefs as intractable.

In my Chapter Four, Both Sides Now: Aspect and Illusion in the Account of Pleasure in *Republic* IX 583c-585a, I analyse the argument which likens the pleasures of lives other than that of the philosopher to shadow-paintings. I argue that it depends upon a claim about the role of perspective and comparison in the experience of pleasure and pain: that what precedes an experience can make it seem like a true and pure pleasure or pain, but that this is illusory. As an alternative, I defend a reading in which pleasures and pains are taken as appearances in a non-veridical sense. To this extent I echo Moss'

[391] *Rep.* 589b3.

[392] Moss (2006) 529 n. 54.

[393] Plato's openness to alternatives is also suggested by the model applied to the oligarch at *Rep.* VIII, 554d1-3, in which appetite is controlled by means of compulsion and fear (ἀνάγκη καὶ φόβῳ, 554d2-3).

[394] Ibid. 529 n. 53.

claim about the *possibility* of illusions of pleasures. But what my reading insists upon, which the more sceptical reading does not emphasise, is that *true* pleasures do not produce illusions. Those who are subject to shadow pleasures are susceptible because of the way they orient themselves to pleasure, pain and the rest state between them, rather than because of the nature of pleasure itself. The attitude and misjudgements of agents lead to illusions. Further, the solution to these illusions which Plato suggests is the experience of true pleasures, which helps an agent develop an evaluative framework to judge pleasures accurately. Plato both recognises the difficulty of avoiding susceptibility to affective distortion, for this new reason of contrasts generating illusions, and, at the same time, suggests that it can be overcome. Again this shows him to be fascinated by pleasure, concerned about it playing the right role in our lives, and, here especially, enthusiastic about certain types of pleasures.

The element of this argument which characterises the philosopher's life as most pleasant ought to be taken seriously. This alone should force us to reconsider the idea that the desire for pleasure is so severely distrusted by Plato in this dialogue. For while the philosopher's primary aim is not pleasure, the fact of the philosophical life being the most pleasant is meant to be an important reason to consider it the best life overall.[395] Plato's stance is not one which is anti-pleasure per se. He includes the pleasures of the intellectual life as one of three main arguments for the superiority of the philosophical life, even despite the difficulties securing this pleasure, and avoiding merely apparent

[395] See *Rep*. 587e-588a, for example.

pleasures, involves. Moreover, experience of the true pleasures of the intellect are a kind of antidote to non-veridical, illusory experiences. As such, suspicion does not adequately characterise Plato's view of pleasure and prudentialism in this dialogue, or overall.

VI The *Philebus*

Moss succinctly summarises the sceptical view of Plato's changing attitude towards the role of pleasure in a life, looking across the key dialogues where this is discussed, as follows:

> Plato begins with the Socratic view that all desires, including desires for pleasure, are rational desires for the good. He notes in the *Protagoras* that when we desire pleasure we are particularly susceptible to the power of illusion, but nonetheless claims that our desires for pleasure are in fact rational, sensitive to calculation. Once he begins to offer explanations for the connection between pleasure and illusion, he rejects the idea that desires for pleasure are rational. Hence the more pessimistic stance of the *Gorgias*: reason will often fail to persuade someone that the appearance that a harmful pleasure is good is false. Hence also the explanation offered for this pessimism in the *Republic*: that in us which desires pleasure is not only prone to illusions, but also (*contra* the *Protagoras*) immune to the kind of reasoning that can dispel them.[396]

This view of Plato as increasingly pessimistic about our relation to pleasure and illusion affects not just how we read the moral psychology and ethics of these works, but the metaphysics, too. Moss claims that Plato 'argues that pleasure is *ontologically* inferior to the good', because it is impure and unstable.[397] But while this is true of some pleasures, the sceptical reading minimises the importance of the category of true, pure and stable

[396] Moss (2006) 532.

[397] Ibid. 532, emphasis in the original.

pleasures which Plato recognises, and attributes to the philosophical life. Moss recognises that arguments for the superiority of true pleasures exist in both *Republic* IX (583b-587e) and the *Philebus* (36c-50e), describing the true pleasures there as 'ontologically robust'. But she holds that 'most things people desire are not only ontologically inferior entities but are in fact only apparent pleasures, not really pleasant at all.'[398] She suggests that a full study of Plato's treatments of pleasure should account for this shift. I suggest, by contrast, that taking into account the role of true pleasures in prudential planning is essential as a starting point for understanding Plato's attitude.

In my Chapter Five, The Jellyfish's Pleasures: Mindless Pleasure in the Trial of Lives in *Philebus* 20b-23a, I focus on a passage earlier in the *Philebus* than the one which Moss cites. I argue that the trial of the life of pleasure in *Philebus* 20b-21d is neither a digressive, nor primarily pejorative, but rather a thought experiment containing an important argument in the form of a reductio of the hypothesis that a life could be most pleasant without cognition. It makes a careful argument for pleasure as inherently complex, and defends the need for and value of cognitive self-awareness in our experience of pleasure. It is an early argument in favour of the mixed life, and while the emphasis of the trial of the life of pleasure alone is to establish that the minimal conditions for it to be choice-worthy require cognition, the other trial shows something equally important. The trial of the life of intellect alone (21d-e) reveals that a life devoid of any pleasure or pain is equally unacceptable, and that the mixed life is not just

[398] Ibid. 533 n. 64.

preferable but essential (22a-b). The trial of lives passage is as much a defence of the importance of pleasure in a good life as it is of intellect.

The recognition of the importance of pleasure, and the way pleasure is integrated into our lives, runs right through the Platonic accounts. Looking across the four dialogues treated above, we see an increasing attention to the psychology of pleasure and pain, an intensification of the discussion of the difficulties of relating to and understanding pleasure and pain in our lives, and an increasingly fine-grained taxonomy of pleasure. The *Philebus* can be viewed as the culmination of this growing fascination. Here we find a sustained investigation of the ontology pleasure, and an explicit treatment of the types of pleasure used in other arguments, from bodily replenishments through to the firmer pleasures of the intellect. Plato's interest is not one-sided: while he attends to the many ways in which pleasure or apparent pleasures can play a harmful role in our lives, and in which we can relate to it inappropriately, he is emphatic about the contribution intellectual pleasures make to the good life, and positive about how our relationship to certain kinds of pleasures can be rehabilitated. This would not be possible if pleasure itself were fundamentally flawed, deceptive, or categorically false. I conclude by reiterating that suspicion does not accurately describe Plato's intellectual relation to pleasure and prudentialism. I offer as an alternative the suggestion that Plato is *fascinated* by pleasure.

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ABBREVIATIONS

Aelian (Ael.)

VH	*Varia Historia*

Apollodorus (Apollod.)

Bibl.	*Bibliotheca*

Apuleus (Apul.)

Met.	*Metamorphoses*

Aristotle (Arist.)

De An.	*De Anima*
EE	*Eudemian Ethics*
GA	*De Generatione Animalium*
HA	*Historia Animalia*
De Mem.	*De Memoria*
Met.	*Metaphysics*
NE	*Nicomachean Ethics*
Oec.	*Economics*
PA	*Partibus Animalium*
Phys.	*Physics*
[Pr.]	*Problemata*
De Sens.	*De Sensu*
De Resp.	*De Respiratione*

Athenaeus of Naucratis (Ath.)

Diep.	*Deipnosophistai*

Cicero (Cic.)

De Nat.	*De Natura Deorum*
Tusc. Disp.	*Tusculan Disputations*

Diogenes Laertius (Diog. Laert.)

Lives	*Lives of the Eminent Philosophers*

Epicurus (Epic.)

Fr.	Fragments

Euripides (Eur.)

Antiope	*Antiope*
Phrixus	*Phrixus*

Eusebius (Euseb.)

Praep. Evang.	*Praeparatio Evengelica*

Heraclitus
Fr. Fragments

Hesiod (Hes.)
Theog. *Theogony*

Hesychius (Hsch.)
Lex. *Lexicon*

Homer (Hom.)
Il. *Iliad*
Od. *Odyssey*

Lucretius (Lucr.)
De Rerum *De Rerum Natura*

Nonnus of Panopolis (Nonnus)
Dion. *Dionysiaca*

Ovid (Ov.)
Met. *Metamorphoses*

Pausanius (Paus.)
Desc. *Description of Greece*

Pindar
Olympian *Olympian Odes*

Plato (Pl.)
[*Ax.*] *Axiochus*
Alc. *Alcibiades*
Criti. *Critias*
Euthyd. *Euthydemus*
Grg. *Gorgias*
Laws *Laws*
Phd. *Phaedo*
Phileb. *Philebus*
Prot. *Protagoras*
Rep. *Republic*
Soph. *Sophist*
Stat. *Statesman*
Symp. *Symposium*
Theaet. *Theaetetus*
Tim. *Timaeus*

Seneca the Younger (Sen.)

Ep.	*Epistulae*
Her. F.	*Hercules Furens*

Sextus Empiricus (Sext. Emp.)

Adv. Math.	*Adversus Mathematicos*
Pyr.	*Outlines of Pyrrhonism (Pyrrhoneae hupotupōseis)*

Statius (Stat.)

Theb.	*Thebais*

Strabo (Strab.)

Geography	*Geography* (*Geographica*)

Theophrastus (Theophr.)

De Sig.	*De Signis*

Vergil (Verg.)

Aen.	*Aeneid*
G.	*Georgics*

Xenophanes (Xen.)

Fr.	Fragments

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