Sex, Wealth, and Courage: Kinds of Goods and the Power of Appearance in Plato's *Protagoras*

In the *Protagoras*, Socrates discusses three distinct kinds of goods: (a) sensory or bodily pleasures, epitomised by the pleasures of food, drink, and sex; (b) longer-term, instrumental goods like wealth, health, or power; and (c) virtuous actions like courageously going to war. My aim in this paper is to show that a better understanding of how these differ allows us to give better answers to a number of the familiar interpretive questions these passages raise, chief among which is the interpretation of Socrates' account of the error we now call *akrasia*. There are in particular two areas where this invites us to reconsider existing views.

The first concerns the putative hedonism of 'the many'. It is often thought that even if they are unwitting hedonists, a reasonable summary of the many's conception of the good is that they truly value only pleasures of kind (a). I will argue that a more defining feature of their view is that they identify happiness with the possession of certain all-purpose means to a good life: goods of kind (b). Pleasure plays an important role in their conception of the good, perhaps even in a way that makes them hedonists of a sort, but they do not see the relationship of (b) to (a) as simply means to end (rightly, as it will turn out). Rather, they have fundamentally different attitudes to each, and independent reasons to value both. Socrates' account of *akrasia* draws on the many's inability to reconcile these different attitudes to (a) and (b) and, thus, their lack of any rational way to weigh one against the other, which leaves them vulnerable to the 'power of appearance' exerted by the former.

The second concerns the view of pleasure we find in the dialogue. Most commentators fail to recognise that the hedonism Socrates defends includes an implicit distinction between two kinds of pleasure. The many are right to think that (b), all-purpose means like wealth or power, are not good simply as a means to (a), sensory pleasures like eating or drinking. But they are wrong to assume that these self-evident pleasures—pleasures that exert the 'power of appearance'—are the only pleasures there are. Rather, goods of kind (c), virtuous actions, are independently pleasant, despite not appearing

so.[1] Again, this is important for Socrates' account of *akrasia*, since it makes room for different psychological effects from different kinds of goods or pleasures, without introducing non-rational passions. His account replaces the motivational push of non-rational appetites with the epistemic pull of the 'power of appearance' exerted by appetitive pleasures like food, drink, and sex.

The dialogue develops these distinctions slowly and subtly, over about ten or so Stephanus pages, with Plato's full view only becoming clear in the final few pages. A theme of this paper will be how often, in ways that are not always obvious, a part of this discussion cannot be understood until we understand the whole. To bring out the connections between its parts, I divide it into three passages and consider them in order in the three sections of this paper: the '*Reductio*' passage (351B–356A), where Socrates persuades the many of hedonism and offers a *reductio ad absurdum* of their view of *akrasia* (section 1); the 'Appearance' passage (356A–358D), where he gives an account of *akrasia* as a form of temporary ignorance caused by the 'power of appearance' (section 2); and the 'Courage' passage (358D–360D), where he argues that cowardliness is a form of (akratic) ignorance and courage a form of knowledge (section 3).

1 THE REDUCTIO PASSAGE: HEDONISM AND THE MANY

Socrates assumes an intellectualist psychology that entails that motivational conflict is impossible: desire and intellect invariably agree, since our desires can only motivate us towards what we judge best.[2] *Prima facie*, this is a highly

1 That there is a distinction between bodily pleasures and pleasures of virtue in the *Protagoras* has been argued, in different ways, by J. Moss 2014, and G. Rudesbuch 1999. Nonetheless, it remains a controversial claim, and I will offer new arguments in its defence.

2 It is generally agreed that Socrates defends at least a form of intellectualism about actions: we perform an *action* if and only if we believe it to be best (e.g., 358B6–D4). In recent years some have denied that this extends to desires: i.e. it is not that we never *desire* what we believe to be bad, but only that we never willingly *act* on such desires (see Devereux 1995, and Brickhouse and Smith 2010; cf. Reshotko 2006, ch. 4). The debate arises in part because the text makes few explicit references to motivational states, instead favouring behavioural language like 'pursue' (διώκειν) or 'go towards' (ἰέναι ἐπὶ). However, it makes few but not none: Socrates does discuss fear, and what he says makes it clear that his intellectualism is desire-deep. Fear is defined as an 'expectation of the bad' (358D6–7): a προσδοκία, or forward-looking belief. This suggests that fear must follow our evaluative beliefs, and this is confirmed a few lines later: 'it was agreed that *what one fears one holds to be bad*, yet no one goes towards those things which he holds to be bad' (358E2–6; my emphasis). Excluding the unlikely possibility that fear is unique among the passions, we can assume that Socrates would offer a similar analysis of other passions, like appetite or anger, which leads us to the conclusion that he believes our passions, as such, align with our beliefs about what is good and bad.

implausible, for the simple reason that it very much seems like we do experience motivational conflict, most notably in the familiar experience that we now call *akrasia*. Plato addresses this problem head on in the *Protagoras*, in the form of the following account of *akrasia*, attributed to 'the many':

> Often people who know the best action are not willing to do it; while it is possible for them, they do otherwise … because they are overcome by pleasure [ὑπὸ ἡδονῆς … ἡττωμένους] or pain or are being ruled by one of those things I referred to just now [sc. anger, love, or fear] (352D6–E2).[3]

Socrates responds first, in the *Reductio* passage, by arguing that the many's account of *akrasia* is inconsistent with a hedonism that they are, in some sense, committed to; and second, in the Appearance passage, by offering an alternative account of *akrasia* that is compatible with both hedonism and intellectualism. Here I examine the *Reductio* passage, and specifically what it tells us about the many's unusual attitude to hedonism. I will focus on the following claims (where (1) and (2) are the many's opening position):

1. 'Often a man, knowing the bad to be bad, nevertheless does that very thing, when he is able not to do it, having been driven and overwhelmed by pleasure' (355A7–B1)
2. 'Some pleasant things are bad and some painful things good' (351C3–4)
3. 'Bad pleasures' (e.g. 'food or drink or sex'; 353C6) are so called not because of the immediate pleasure they result in, but because they later result in certain bad things (where these bad things are given a non-hedonic description: e.g. 'disease and poverty') [from 3–5, parallel claims are made, *mutatus mutandis*, for 'good pains']
4. All such bad things 'are bad on account of nothing other than the fact that they result in pain and deprive us of other pleasures' (353E6–354A1)
5. If something is called a 'bad pleasure' this can only be because 'it deprives us of greater pleasure than it itself provides or brings about greater pains than the pleasure it contains' (354C7–D1)
6. 'Bad' and 'painful' are two names for the same thing (they are extensionally equivalent) and likewise for 'good' and 'pleasant' (355C3–B1) [so 'bad pleasures' are, expressed more clearly, either 'immediate pleasures that result in greater overall pain' or 'immediate goods that result in greater overall bad']

Since co-referring terms can be substituted *salva veritate*, (6) allows Socrates to restate (1) as follows, which he declares 'ridiculous' (γελοῖον):

3 Since fear is defined in terms of the bad, and the bad of pain, and it is likely that Plato has a similar analysis of anger and love, all three are cases of being overcome by pleasure or pain.

7. 'Someone does what is bad, knowing that it is bad, when it is not necessary to do it, having been overcome by good things', where, since it is a mistake (355D4–6), the bad outweighs the good (355D1–E3) [And likewise substituting 'pain' for 'bad' and 'pleasure' for 'good': 355E6–356A1]

Which of these claims do the many believe prior to the argument—i.e. which represent what most people in fact believe—and which do they come to accept only as a result of the discussion? It seems likely that they begin by believing (1)–(3) and disbelieving (6) and (7). But their attitude to (4) and (5), which are the claims that tie the good and bad to overall pleasure and pain, is not as easy to pin down: it appears to be neither outright belief nor outright disbelief.

When Protagoras resists hedonism on the grounds that one ought only to 'take pleasure in honourable things', Socrates replies: 'surely you don't, like the many, [2] call some pleasant things bad and some painful things good' (351C2–3). That is, this claim is what the many would, as Protagoras will (351C7–E7), cite to explain their opposition to the hedonism entailed by (4) and (5). Consonantly, the many's account of *akrasia* assumes that the good and the pleasant are distinct and competing ends, as we expect from a common-sense account: sometimes when we believe we should do good things, we fail because we are overcome by pleasant things. Socrates' strategy, then, is to show the many that they have misunderstood *akrasia* by showing them that they are mistaken to reject hedonism. Specifically, he introduces (4) and (5) to persuade them that they are mistaken to think that (2) is a reason to reject hedonism: their 'bad pleasures' turn out to be just all-things-considered pains. So far, it seems they disbelieve (4) and (5).Yet when Socrates describes the many's behaviour, he implies that they have an existing commitment to (4) and (5). From their agreement to (4), he concludes 'so then you pursue the pleasant as good and avoid pain as bad' (354C3–5). Naturally (4) could not be used to draw a conclusion that applies to their actions prior to the argument—as this conclusion clearly does—if it is not something they believe prior to the argument. The same can be said of the following curious passage:

> If you have any other end you look to whenever you call suffering pain itself good, other than the one I suggest, you will be able to tell us what it is—but you won't be able to. (354D7–E2; a parallel claim is made about pleasure, 354D1–3; cf. 354E7–355A5)

Here Socrates makes two claims. First, he asserts the many's commitment to (5) (and, thus, (4)): they have no end other than pleasure or pain that they look to whenever they call a pain bad or pleasure good. Second, he claims that the many are *unable* to deny this first claim. If it were something with

which they already consciously and explicitly agree, it would be strange to insist that they are unable to disagree, as if to remind them that belief isn't voluntary.[4] Rather, it seems that the many are surprised by Socrates' description of their behaviour and initially inclined to resist it, perhaps recognising that it is inconsistent with their professed views about the pleasant and the good. Socrates is entitled to insist that they will be unable to resist it (rationally, at least) because, if it is true, resisting it would require them to point to an end that they look to other than pleasure or pain—and that is, *ex hypothesi*, exactly what they lack.

So the many wish to deny (4) and (5), and thus hedonism, and yet are somehow committed to them—how should we explain this attitude? The text allows for more than one plausible suggestion. The answer that is likely to come to mind first is that (4) and (5) are claims the many believe unconsciously. But I believe there is a better answer, one that takes its cue from a similar attribution of belief in the *Gorgias*. Socrates claims that Polus believes that doing injustice is worse than suffering it, despite Polus' insistence that he believes the very opposite (474B2–7). It seems Socrates means that 'doing injustice is worse than suffering it' is not believed unconsciously, but implied by *other* beliefs that Polus holds, beliefs that he is more deeply committed to than his belief that doing injustice is better.[5] If we apply a similar account to the many, they do not literally have pleasure in mind when they call health, wealth, or power good; rather, Socrates' point is that if the many reflected on what they *do* have in mind, namely, a life that is good overall, they'll find that their beliefs about the pleasant and the good entail that this could be nothing other than a life that is pleasant overall. Since the many never ask themselves what they mean by 'a good life', and they value health, wealth, and power only as all-purpose means to a good life, they simply *lack a view* about what specific ends contribute to this life. But to survive rational reflection, their rejection of hedonism must be supported by a belief in some end other than pleasure that makes life good. Since the many have no such belief, reflection will show them that the only good they recognise as an end is pleasure and, thus, they must conclude (short of scepticism) that a good life is nothing more than a pleasant life.[6]

Why do they not consciously or explicitly believe (4) and (5)? This question is easier to answer: they fail to reflect on why they value good things like

4 Nor is the idea that they'll be unable to *revise* their beliefs: if they were avowed hedonists, at this point in the discussion they have no reason to revise them.

5 See G. Vlastos 1994, 23.

6 On this reading, the many are not hedonists, strictly speaking. A number of authors reach this conclusion, usually citing the fact that they need to be persuaded to accept hedonism. See Hackforth 1928, 41; Irwin 1977, 304n13 (cf. 104); and Ferrari 1990, 133n26.

'health, good condition of bodies, preservation of cities, power over others, and wealth' (354B3–5) or bad things like 'disease and poverty' (353E3–4). It is crucial to recognise that these are good or bad only instrumentally—they are never treated as ends, by either Socrates or the many. It is true that health is an intrinsic good in other dialogues and that wealth and power might be desired as ends by misers or tyrants, but what they have in common is that they are commonly thought to be all-purpose means to living well, and this is their role in the *Protagoras*. Socrates describes them as good insofar as they 'result' (ἀποτελευτᾷ) in pleasure and his challenge to the many is to name any other end they look to when they call them good: obviously if the many thought that, for example, power was an end in itself, they would be able to say that it is simply power, not the pleasure it results in, that they look to when they call power good. So the many value such things as health, wealth, and power as means without any explicit or conscious grasp of the end—other than something very general like 'a good life'—to which they are means. As a result, they reason as far as, for example, 'cautery, though immediately painful, is good because it leads to health', which appears to contradict hedonism, but fail to take the further step of asking themselves why they value health. On examination, Socrates argues, they will find that this is perfectly consistent with hedonism, since the only explanation they will be able to offer for health's goodness is the pain it relieves and pleasure it promotes.

'The many' represent not only the popular view of *akrasia*, but also the typical akratic agent.[7] Accordingly, we should expect the error that leads the many to mistaken views of hedonism and *akrasia* to have a bearing on their propensity to *act* akratically. Specifically, I am going to argue that they act akratically as a result of their unequal grasp of what appears to be two distinct groups of desirable (or undesirable) things: (a) immediate pleasures like food, drink, and sex (or pains like cautery) and (b) longer-term goods like health, power, or wealth (or bad things like disease). Since it doesn't require reflection, the many have a clear grasp of why pleasure is desirable and why, if they don't have harmful effects, some pleasures are good: namely, the simple fact that they are pleasant. But they have little or no grasp of why they value goods of kind (b): they assume (perhaps on the basis of experience or received wisdom) that things go well when one is healthy, powerful, or wealthy without having engaged in the reflection needed to recognise that the only constituent of 'going well' that they will be able to point to is pleasure. In short, my suggestion is that the many's shallow understanding of the

7 See, e.g., 353C4–7: 'this happens to *you* in circumstances like these: you are often overcome by pleasant things … while knowing they are ruinous' (my emphasis).

value of goods of kind (b) explains why their commitment to them often wavers in situations where they compete with the more easily understood value of pleasures of kind (a). Simple as this reading might sound, I am going to argue that it requires us to revise a number of common assumptions, especially assumptions about the positive account of *akrasia* introduced in the Appearance passage.

2 THE APPEARANCE PASSAGE: IMMEDIATE AND LATER PLEASURES AND PAINS

Socrates' account of *akrasia* comes in response to a possible objection to his first argument: 'but Socrates, there is a great difference between the immediate pleasure and the pleasant and the painful at a later time' (356A5–7). His reply is that the only *real* difference is the difference revealed by a calculation as impartial and objective as weighing: 'you put the pleasures together and the pains together on the balance scale, both the near and the far, and say which of the two is more' (356B1–5). However, if one lacks an art as objective as weighing, as the many do, there will indeed *appear* to be a difference:

> Do things of the same size appear to you larger when seen near at hand and smaller when seen from a distance? … If our well being depended on this, doing and choosing large things, fleeing and not doing the small ones, what would we see as our salvation in life: the art of measurement or the power of appearance? Appearances cause us to wander in confusion and make us shift back and forth many times about the same things and regret our actions and choices between the large and the small. Measurement makes the appearances powerless, by revealing the truth, and makes the soul stable, abiding by the truth, and saves our life. (356C8–E4)

Though this is highly elliptical, we find here Socrates' own account of the experience that the many mistakenly call 'being overcome by pleasure'. It is a kind of temporary ignorance suffered by those who fail to see through false appearances. In bare outline, it has the following stages:

S1 Other things being equal—that is, in normal, unchallenging epistemic circumstances—a person holds the true belief that it is better not to φ (e.g. eat cake before 11 AM or shirk one's military duties)

S2 But when they have an opportunity to φ, this assessment is challenged by the 'power of appearance' exerted by immediate pleasures or pains associated with φ-ing (the appearance of a delicious cake or dangerous battle) and they are persuaded that it is better to φ—thus, they φ

S3 Shortly after they have φ-ed they revert back to their original true belief that it is better not to φ and, thus, they regret their action

Clearly a full and plausible account of *akrasia* must say more. For one, as stated, there seems to be no conflict in S1–S3: the putative akratic simply changes his mind. This and similar problems have received a great deal of attention, and my principal aim is not to add to these discussions.[8] Rather, my aim is to understand the conception of the good that leaves the many susceptible to *akrasia*. In the language of the Appearance passage: why does lacking the 'art of measurement' make one vulnerable to the 'power of appearance'? I will begin with accounts of the 'power of appearance' and the 'art of measurement', and then argue that to understand these fully, we need to go back to the *Reductio* passage and, in particular, to Socrates' description of the many's attitudes to (a) immediate pleasures like food, drink, and sex (or pains like cautery) and (b) later results like health, power, or wealth (or bad things like disease).

2.1 *The 'power of appearance'*

Everything Socrates says about the 'power of appearance' is said through an analogy with perceptual illusions: 'to sight, things of the same size appear [φαίνεται] larger when near, smaller when distant'. The many say that there is a difference between 'immediate' (τὸ παραχρῆμα) pleasure and pleasure 'at a later time' (εἰς τὸν ὕστερον χρόνον), and Socrates response seems to be, very roughly, that just as spatially near things can falsely appear larger than equal but distant ones, temporally near pleasures can falsely appear more pleasurable than equal but distant pleasures.

These 'appearances' are neither beliefs nor dependent on beliefs. This is, first of all, implied by Socrates' analogy: to say near objects appear larger is just to say that this is how they are presented to the senses, or how they look, irrespective of what one believes. There are two reasons to think that this is not an accidental feature of the analogy. First, the appearance of immediate pleasure or pain 'makes' (ποιεῖν, 356D5) our beliefs shift back and forth—this is its δύναμις, its power—and it does so by contradicting our initial assessment. The appearance is what *causes* us to overestimate the value of immediate pleasures, and it could not play this role if it is what we *already*

8 A common and plausible response is that, during S2, the akratic experiences a kind of 'will I, won't I' conflict where they vacillate between opposing beliefs about what is best (they 'shift back and forth many times about the same things') and—since we always desire what we believe to be best—corresponding opposing desires. Thus, it is a 'diachronic' conflict: a conflict between opposing desires that occurs over a (short) period of time, without conflict at any instant of time (with 'synchronic' conflict). For a defence of this reading, see Terry Penner 1997, 1996, and 1990. A question that receives less attention is: why does this putative akratic revert to their original belief after the action (S3)? I offer an answer below, p. 19.

believe (our belief that *p* cannot explain why we come to believe not-*p*, or even, for that matter, why we believe *p*). Second, the art of measurement is said to make the appearance ἄκυρον, without 'power' or 'authority' (κύρος). Of course, it would lack authority if it no longer existed, but describing it as ἄκυρον would be an unusual way of saying this (compare saying of a dead king that he 'lacks authority').[9] Rather, the art of measurement makes an appearance ἄκυρον by taking away not the appearance, but the appearance's power to control our judgements. And it is easy to see why: appearances control our judgement only if we judge by appearances, but the art of measurement gives us an alternative, accurate way of judging.[10]

If not beliefs, what are appearances? For example, are appearances of pleasure or pain *sensory* experiences just like the appearance of magnitude or are they 'appearances' only in some related or analogous sense? Neither the *Protagoras* nor any neighbouring dialogue has any explicit discussion of the nature of appearances, and I believe we must remain agnostic. But in line with this agnosticism, I take the analogy at face value and, where I find no evidence to the contrary, assume that there are no important *dis*analogies between appearances of size and pleasure.[11] This, together with an eye on the explanatory work they are expected to do, is sufficient to propose a number of substantial principles that govern appearances. So far we've seen that to say that it appears to us that *p*, is to say that *p* is something that is presented to us as the case, irrespective of what we believe. Drawing on Socrates' analogy, we can suggest two further plausible principles. First, having it appear to one that *p* involves little or no cognitive work, and believing that *p* requires only an act of assent to the appearance. Judging by appearances, then, is a way of acquiring beliefs that demands little or no reasoning or reflection. Second, if it appears that *p*, this is a *pro tanto* reason to believe that *p*. Thus, in the absence of a specific reason to mistrust an appearance, we will assent to it: other things being equal, if it appears to us that *p*, we will believe that *p*. These are straightforward claims, but they are all that is needed to conclude that if it is in fact the case that not-*p*, but it appears that *p*, this

9 Compare *Crito* 50B4, where ἄκυρον describes the effect that Socrates' escape would have on the court's verdict, which would not be to annul or change it, but to undermine its authority. Bobonich 2007 appeals to this example and similarly concludes that in the *Protagoras* the appearance persists even for someone with the art of measurement, though he nonetheless thinks that the appearance is a belief: see p. 55 with n. 27.

10 The *Philebus* presents the same analogy—'does it happen only in sight that seeing objects from afar or close by distorts the truth and causes [ποιεῖν] false judgement? Or does not the same thing happen also in the case of pleasures and pains?' (41E9–42A3)—but is explicit that the relevant false appearances are independent of our judgement (42A7–C3).

11 Contrast Rudesbusch 1999, 26. I am, however, sympathetic to Rudesbusch's claim that misleading appearances are presented by sensory pleasures in particular.

appearance will, other things being equal, determine what people believe. This is the 'power' that appearances have—the power to determine what we believe.

The appearance of the bodily pleasures of food, drink, and sex offer paradigmatic examples. Food, drink, and sex appear pleasant, and pleasant things appear, simply *qua* pleasant, worth pursuing—they appear good. Considered just by itself, this is not false or misleading: just insofar as they are pleasant, they are indeed good. To see why such appearances are false, we need to move to an all-things-considered assessment of harmful food, drink, and sex, taking into account both immediate and later pleasures and pains. The crucial point is that all that appears is 'the pleasure it has in itself' (τῶν ἐν αὐτῷ ἡδονῶν, 354D1), the immediate pleasure. The later consequences of enjoying a bodily pleasure, which might involve, say, ill-health and, thus, pain, don't appear at all (in the sense of 'appear' described in this section).[12] For example, one cannot figure out that enjoying rich delicacies, delicious wine, or beautiful *hetaerai* might lead, in the long run, to greater pain by passively appreciating their pleasant appearances. Rather, one must cease to judge by appearances and instead engage in active reasoning about both what might result (e.g. ill-health) and whether and why it is good or bad (e.g. that it is bad because it causes pain). Judged solely by appearances, harmful food, drink, or sex will seem (all things considered) pleasant, even if they are in fact (all things considered) painful. They appear good, but are bad.

2.2 *The 'art of measurement'*

One line of thought about the 'art of measurement' is the following. The analogies Socrates uses, such as weighing and counting, suggest an arithmetic calculation of overall pleasure or pain: 'you put the pleasures together and the pains together on the balance scale … and say which of the two is more'. After all, when we think about the problems that measurement helps to solve, we are likely to think about the fact that it yields precise answers in areas where we must otherwise rely on rough estimates: for example, by eyeballing a length we might conclude that it's about a meter long, but by measuring find that it's exactly 78 cm long. Moreover, such a concern with quantitative precision might seem to fit the hedonism of the *Protagoras* well. For example, cauterisation will never appear inherently pleasant, but it might, say, falsely appear that its immediate pain outweighs the later pain of an untreated wound. So the akratic, one might think, does not make any fun-

12 Cf. Aristotle: 'an immediate pleasure appears unqualifiedly pleasant and good, on account of not seeing the future' (DA, 433B8–10).

damental mistake about *what* is pleasant or painful, but rather mistakes only the relative quantity of pleasure or pain.[13] This would seem to be exactly the kind of mistake that measurement addresses. Measurement is not a way of investigating what something is, but a way of answering questions of degree with precision: it answers questions of the form 'how *F* is this *F* thing?', but not 'what is *F*?' or 'is this *F*?'

On reflection, however, it would be worrying if it were as simple as this—simply a matter of getting one's hedonic sums right. The art of measurement is a kind of knowledge (357A1–2), and specifically knowledge of 'what is good and bad' (354C4–5): in other words, the kind of knowledge that preoccupies Socrates throughout the early dialogues. This leads us to expect something comparable to the usual Socratic investigation into the good and bad, where the challenge is not simply to know the quantity of goodness or badness possessed by agreed good or bad things, but to know what is good or bad in the first place—whether, for example, it is pleasure or virtue—and to do so in a way that, rather than being quantitatively precise, meets the austere requirements of being comprehensive and explanatory. The many's problem, moreover, is not a wide margin of error when calculating pleasure, but a failure to understand why the things they value are good: what they need is not the hedonic calculus, but practical wisdom that is informed by exactly the kind of explanatory understanding sought by a more familiar Socratic investigation. The 'art of measurement' must of course measure expected pleasure and pain and do so with the appropriate precision. But we should be realistic about what kind of measurement and precision this is. We should not expect it to be much like using a tape measure.

On examination, we find that Socrates' reasons for using the analogy of measurement do not commit him to anything stronger than the idea that practical wisdom is the art of discovering the truth about which actions are better or worse. One reason is to assert that the ends of action are *open* to measurement: they differ from each other only in being more or less, better or worse, not in some further way that might make them incommensurable (I discuss this in section 2.5). A second is to assert that knowledge is sufficient for right action: it is *just* a matter of measurement; there are no further considerations, like errant non-rational passions, that need to be taken into account. And a third reason is to show that practical wisdom needs to be *artful* like counting or weighing. That is, when it comes to judging which action is best, we can't rely on intuition and guessing, but need a deliberate and reliable method: in particular, an art that addresses the problem posed

13 With the exception of cases close to the threshold between good and bad, where one might label something 'pleasant' when it is, on examination, slightly more 'painful' overall.

by the 'power of appearances'.

This third reason is the most prominent. Consider the passage's basic structure: the many believe there is a difference between immediate and later pleasure and pain; Socrates believes the only real difference is the quantity of pleasure or pain, regardless of whether it is immediate or later; he then diagnoses the many's mistake: they rely on appearances when they need measurement. The problem being addressed is not that the many make rough guesses, but that they base their judgement on a spurious difference. Socrates explains why: there *appears* to be such a difference and the many are fooled by this appearance. Measurement addresses this problem not because it is more precise—though it is and that too is good—but because 'measurement makes the appearances powerless, by revealing the truth' (356D8–E1): that is, because it is a reliable method capable of distinguishing between appearance and reality.

It is important to notice that the analogy is not with measurement as it is used in, say, carpentry, but with measurement in the context of a specific thought experiment. Socrates asks us to imagine a world in which acting well depended on correctly judging size, pursuing large things and avoiding small things. In such a world, if we judged by perception alone we would constantly err, since sight is invariably prey to a specific optical illusion: 'to sight, things of the same size appear larger when near, smaller when distant'. Measurement, in contrast, would allow us to see through this illusion; reliably discriminate between apparent and real sizes; and, thus, choose correctly and live well. The relevant contrast in this analogy is not rough *versus* precise but illusion *versus* reality. The point is not that eye-balling sizes would lead to rough judgements that might be over- or under-estimates, but that it would lead to conclusions that bore little relation to the truth. Specifically, if we judged by perception alone, we could not distinguish between 'large' and 'close by' or 'small' and 'far away', so we would have radically mistaken views about size, believing that mole hills are larger than mountains. This suggests that the relevant error involves fundamental mistakes about what is pleasant and painful: we would be unable to discriminate between what's large—i.e. what's genuinely pleasant—and what's small—i.e. what's genuinely painful.[14]

Socrates concludes with the following caution: 'what exactly this art and

14 Note that a large–small scale has a lower bound, zero: nothing is smaller than sizeless. But a pleasure–pain scale is unbounded: zero has pleasure above and pain below. Since we are asked to imagine that living well depends on *pursuing* large things and *avoiding* small things (356D1–3; Plato uses absolute terms, τὰ μεγάλα and τὰ σμικρά, rather than comparatives), the two scales are aligned by making 'large' correspond to 'pleasure' and 'small' to 'pain'. This is often missed, perhaps because in the second, briefer analogy both pleasure and pain appear larger when near (356E5–7A3).

knowledge is, we can inquire into some other time; that it is knowledge is enough for the [present] argument' (357B5–7). That is, we should not expect the analogy to give us a good idea of what kind of reasoning is involved in knowing what is pleasant and painful. Rather, the point is only that knowledge of some sort—whatever knowledge this turns out to be—is necessary for living well, and that it is necessary for the same reason that measurement would be necessary if living well depended on choosing between large and small things: mere belief, while an adequate guide in the many areas where appearance and reality more or less coincide, is no guide whatsoever in an area where appearance and reality typically diverge. The 'art of measurement' is a kind of reasoning that reliably shows us the truth in an area where there is a consistent and recalcitrant disparity between the apparent and the real. Beyond this, we have no reason to expect it to be like counting or weighing in any surprising way: it will of course concern the greater and lesser (better and worse); be suitably exact (exact enough to allow us to reliably choose the best action, all things considered); and involve a systematic and reasoned method (for example, the Socratic search for definitions). These characteristics make measurement an appropriate analogy, but they are also characteristics that we would expect knowledge to have in any Socratic context.[15]

2.3 *'Immediate' and 'later' pleasures and pains*

The analogy with measurement tells us that knowledge is necessary for living well because we live in a world in which the good and bad, pleasant and painful, are often not what they appear to be. Clearly a great deal hangs on how we understand the difference between apparent and real value. I am going to argue that the difference is more significant than is usually recognised. One difference, which I'll turn to later, is between kinds of pleasures: the pleasures of (a), food, drink, and sex, which are immediately apparent, and the pleasures of (c), virtue, which are largely opaque to the many. First, however, I want to consider the apparent difference between 'immediate' and 'later' pleasure and pains, which causes the many to act akratically.

The analogue of near and far magnitudes is not, as is often assumed, simply temporally near and far pleasures and pains, at least in any straightforward sense. To see this, we need to look back to the *Reductio* passage. When investigating the many's attitude to what they call 'good pains', Socrates asks

15 For comparable non-literal views of the art of measurement see A. Price 1995, 24–26 and Rudebusch 1999, 89–91; contrast Ferrari 1990 who denies that the relevant knowledge is even analogous to measurement.

them:

> Would you call these things [sc. cautery, surgery, or military training] good for the reason that they provide intense pain and suffering in the present [ἐν τῷ παραχρῆμα] or because at a later time [εἰς τὸν ὕστερον χρόνον] they bring about health and good conditions of body and preservation of cities and power over others and wealth? (354B1–5)

Similarly, bad pleasures like harmful food, drink or sex 'are bad not on account of the immediate pleasure they provide, but because of what they bring about later, disease and things like that' (353D7–E1).

This is the very same distinction that we find in the Appearance passage: pleasures and pains that are 'present' or 'immediate' (παραχρῆμα) and those that are 'later' (ὕστερον). Although at this point the many do not yet realise that 'later' results like health, power, or wealth *are* pleasures, this is what they'll turn out to be. The choices described are also of the right kind: for example, resisting painful cautery despite believing that one ought to endure it for the sake of one's health is a perfect example of *akrasia*. And this is entirely unsurprising: what Socrates is discussing at this point is precisely the kinds of things that, from the many's perspective, are in competition when we experience *akrasia* (353C4–E1). There is no good reason to doubt, then, that only one distinction between the immediate and the later is being used throughout Socrates' discussion of *akrasia*.

There is one impression that this comparison immediately requires us to revise. If we consider the Appearance passage in isolation, it looks as if immediate and later pleasures are the same in kind. Of course, in one sense they are—they are both in fact pleasant. But it would be a mistake to think that what the akractic knowingly struggles between is something like the pleasures of food now against the pleasures of sex later. This is pleasure–pleasure *akrasia*: *akrasia* where both competing ends are explicitly valued by the akratic agent as something pleasant. This is to be contrasted with pleasure–good *akrasia*, like resisting painful cautery despite believing it is good for one's health: *akrasia* where only one of the competing ends is among the things that the akratic explicitly values as something pleasant (though the other might be implicitly or unconsciously valued as something pleasant). The literal examples of 'immediate' and 'later' pleasure and pains that we find in 353C3–354E2 clearly suggest pleasure–good *akrasia*. Specifically, it suggests a struggle between the two evaluative categories I introduced in section 1: (a) immediate pleasures like food, drink, and sex (or pains like cautery) and (b) later results that are not described, by the many, in terms of pleasure, such as health, power, or wealth (or bad things like disease).

Socrates' account of *akrasia* requires a distinction of this kind. Only a

person who consciously endorses hedonism could accept that every case of *akrasia* is a struggle between 'immediate pleasure and the pleasant and the painful at a later time' (356A5–7). But such people are rare. Socrates knows that the typical akratic—a typical member of the many—disavows hedonism and would, therefore, object to a purely hedonistic description of *akrasia*. So in the Appearance passage Socrates is not offering a description of how the akratic himself would describe the 'immediate' and the 'later'. Rather, he is drawing on the conclusion of his previous argument to give the appropriate *de re* description: although the akratic believes that the later goods like health that are 'overcome' by pleasure are themselves valuable for non-hedonic reasons, as a matter of fact they are valuable only for the pleasure they result in.

Socrates' aim is to give a correct account of the experience that the many call being 'overcome by pleasure', and this experience (the real experience, which they misdescribe) is not pleasure–pleasure *akrasia*. The many refer to the experience of a desire for pleasure overcoming something that is, they believe, *not* valued because it is pleasant. Thus, they see *akrasia* as a struggle between two distinct evaluative categories, the pleasant and the good, which elicit distinct kinds of desires: non-rational, pleasure-directed desires and rational, good-directed desires. True, Socrates convinces them that it is ultimately only pleasure or pain that they value as ends, but this does not licence us to conclude that the choice that they face is a choice between enjoying some pleasures like food, drink, or sex now or later. If we are to understand why *akrasia* occurs, the most relevant fact is not the truth of hedonism, but the many's failure to properly appreciate the truth of hedonism.

2.4 *True belief, appearances, and reason*

The akratic does not weigh like against like, but rather one kind of consideration against another: kind (a) against kind (b), the former 'immediate' and latter 'later'. The following passage is a good illustration:

> 'Do you hold, gentlemen, that this [sc. *akrasia*] happens to you in circumstances like these: you are often overcome by pleasant things like [(a)] food or drink or sex, and you do those things all the while knowing they are ruinous?' They would say yes. Then you and I would ask them again: 'In what sense do you call these things ruinous? Is it that each of them provides immediate pleasure, being pleasant in itself, or is it that later they bring about [(b)] diseases and poverty and many other things of that sort?' (353C4–D4)

This is the many's mistaken view of *akrasia*, but two corrections tell us what really occurs. First, they are not overcome by a desire for food, drink, or sex; rather, their beliefs are temporarily affected by the power of appearance

exerted by food, drink, or sex. Second, they do not *know* that these pleasures are ruinous, but rather have a mere *true belief* that they are ruinous, a state that, unlike knowledge, is vulnerable to the power of appearance. But Socrates and the many do agree on this: the tempting, (a), food, drink, or sex is ruinous because it later results in, (b), disease, poverty, or similar bad things.

This is the true belief examined in the *Reductio* passage and, as we saw in section 1, for the many it rests on shaky ground. They have an unequal grasp of (a) and (b). They understand, since it is obvious, why bodily pleasure or pain is worth pursuing or avoiding, but have a limited grasp of the value of things like health or disease: while they call them 'good' or 'bad', they have failed to reflect on why—with what end in view—they believe this to be the case. This is why they disavow hedonism and misinterpret *akrasia*, but it is also why they *act* akratically, since it is an unequal grasp of the reasons for (e.g. the pleasure of eating) and against (e.g. the badness of disease) an akratic action.

This disparity results from the fact that (a) and (b) present different epistemic demands: the former can be grasped through appearances alone, while the latter requires reasoning or reflection. From their appearances alone, it is easy for anyone to see not only that, but also why there is a reason in favour of pursuing food, drink, and sex: 'that each of them provides immediate pleasure, being pleasant in itself'. They appear pleasant, and pleasure is self-evidently worth pursuing, insofar as it is pleasant. But their appearance says nothing about their harmful consequences: neither that 'later they bring about disease and poverty' nor why these are bad, namely that their net result is pain.

While it is not easy to spell out what can and cannot be conveyed by appearances, all that is required for our purposes is that the value of things of kind (b) cannot. One cannot, for example, understand why wealth is worth pursuing—what end it promotes and why this end is valuable—by attending to the appearance of a pile of money. Rather, one must engage in the right kind of critical reflection about why goods of kind (b) are good, which Socrates believes to be a challenging kind of systematic reasoning that is beyond most people's reach—the art of measurement. Central to this will be reflection on what kinds of ends should be pursued in a good life, and goods like health, wealth, or power are not themselves ends. (My claim is not that health, wealth, and power do not appear good, but that *their goodness* does not appear—that is, that their real value, what makes them worth pursuing, is not evident from their appearance alone. Nonetheless, it happens to be true that the many do not believe they are good simply because

this is how they appear to them. Maybe it could be argued that they appear to be good *qua* means, but it is important to recognise that there is no evidence that the many find wealth, for example, immediately attractive or good in itself, as a miser might.)

In summary: certain evaluative facts can be discovered only through the right kind of reasoning; others, such as the goodness of immediate bodily pleasures simply *qua* pleasant, are (in one sense) self-evidently presented by appearances, though (more importantly) are presented in a way that easily misleads, since their appearance only tells us a small part of what is needed to properly evaluate them and, thus, distorts our all-things-considered assessment. Going by appearances alone, we are liable to mistake 'ruinious' things for good things and *vice versa*. Since the many fail to reflect on their evaluative beliefs and lack the art of measurement, they fail to understand goods like health, wealth, and power. Nonetheless, they do sincerely believe that they are good, so they are left with a commitment to goods like health, wealth, and power that they are unable to explain or justify. Unsurprisingly, it is also a commitment that is subject to confusion and liable to waver.

2.5 *Instability, incommensurability, and salience*

Why is the akratic's true belief liable to be overturned by the appearance of immediate pleasure or pain? Firstly, because it is unstable. People act akratically when they fail, in the face of a contrary appearance, to maintain their true beliefs: whereas knowledge 'makes the soul stable, abiding by the truth', true belief is liable to 'wander' and 'shift back and forth' under the influence of the power of appearance. In the *Meno* true beliefs are said to be unstable and liable to 'escape from a man's mind' because, unlike knowledge, they are not 'tied down by an account of the reason why' (97E6–98A4). If Plato has a similar view of stability in the *Protagoras*, and there is little reason to doubt that he does, then the akratic has a true belief that is paradigmatically unstable: what his belief is missing is precisely an 'account of the reason why' such things as health, wealth, or power are good.

Why is it the lack of an 'account of the reason why' that makes the many's true belief unstable? In general, it seems plausible that understanding why *p* is true, especially an understanding acquired by a reliable method, gives one the kind of mastery over facts relating to *p* that extends to new evidence for or against *p*, including spurious counter-evidence like a false appearance that not-*p* (recall that discriminating between the apparent and the real is the central skill of the art of measurement). Conversely, if one has no account of why *p* is true, and especially if one's reasons for believing that *p* are

few, weak, or unclear, one will be less able to correctly assess new evidence and correspondingly more likely, *ceteris paribus*, to be fooled by spurious counter-evidence. This general assessment is borne out when we examine the specific true belief relevant to *akrasia* and the 'account of the reason why' that it lacks, namely, an account of why good or bad things of kind (b) are good or bad.Once the many have conceded hedonism, Socrates poses the following rhetorical questions: 'how else does pleasure outweigh pain, except in relative excess or deficiency? And is this a matter of one being larger and the other smaller, or more and fewer, or a greater and lesser degree?' (356A1–5). The conclusion to be drawn here, which is new to the many, is that the conflicting considerations in *akrasia* can be measured on a single scale, just like the larger and smaller. That Socrates argues towards the view that our evaluative ends are commensurable is often noted, but what receives less emphasis is the implication that this is not what the many initially believe. Socrates asserts it in order to address the fact that, to the many, these ends *seem* incommensurable: his aim is not to correct a mistake in the *way* the many measure, but to get them to appreciate that the conflict is *open to measurement*. As we saw in section 2.2, Socrates' distinction is not between artful and inartful measurement, but the art of measurement and not measuring at all.

The many's failure to appreciate that it is open to measurement explains why they see *akrasia* as a non-rational conflict. The many believe that in *akrasia* knowledge is 'dragged around … like a slave' and 'conquered' (κρατηθῆναι) or 'overcome' (ἡττᾶσθαι) by pleasure- or pain-directed passions (353B3–C7). Consequently, they see no point in trying to calculate their way out of this kind of conflict: the passions involved are, they think, insensitive to calculation, being passions that by nature push one towards a pleasure or away from a pain no matter what one's better judgement says. While the many are mistaken about this, it is a mistake that arises from their very real inability to use reason to resolve the conflict. To engage in the relevant kind of calculation—even to miscalculate—they would need to be able to assess the value of the competing considerations on a single scale, but from their standpoint, the competing attractions of the pleasant and the good are incommensurable. They lack the common measure needed to put what they consider pleasant and what they consider good 'together on the balance scale … and say which of the two is more'. Instead, what the many experience is a persuasive case for φ-ing (the appearance of immediate pleasure or pain) and a persuasive case for not φ-ing (that, say, it leads to disease or health) with no systematic way to compare them and understand why one is better or worse than the other. Thus, they experience the pleasant and the

good as the pull of two competing, irreconcilable ends—which they interpret as motivational conflict.

Without a common measure and, thus, a reliable decision procedure, how the potentially akratic's decision will go cannot be predicted on the basis of rational considerations alone. He might adopt any number of ways of deciding and be influenced by any number of rationally extraneous factors. Thus, sometimes he will abide by his true belief and sometimes—or 'often' (353c6)—he will go with the appearance. Here it is helpful to appeal to cognitive salience, as one of the extraneous factors that affects the akratic's decision. The attention we give to something often fails to be proportionate to the importance we place on it, usually involuntarily (it 'draws' or 'grabs' our attention). A squeaky chair in the library can distract us even if we sincerely believe we should ignore it. So, if attention is a finite resource, attention-grabbing pleasures and pains could monopolise our thought at the expense of less salient considerations, *even if* we believe the less salient considerations are more important. The akratic cowardliness that Socrates ultimately aims to explain is a good illustration: if you see a soldier trying to cut you with his sword, and are struck by a vivid image of your body being sliced, you might well pay insufficient attention to the thought that fleeing the enemy is dishonourable, allowing the appearance to control your belief and, thus, your behaviour (stage S2 of the model on page 7). But after you have run away, and your attention is no longer monopolised by the appearance, the considerations that were previously overshadowed can reassert themselves, causing you to regret your behaviour (S3).

3 THE COURAGE PASSAGE: TWO KINDS OF PLEASURE AND PAIN

We have seen that the many believe that the bodily pleasures of food, drink, and sex are not the only good things; indeed, they think that these are often 'shameful' and 'ruinous'. They also believe that goods like health, wealth, or power are good for reasons other than the bodily pleasures they promote. So far, the many are entirely correct. Their error lies elsewhere. As we have seen, they fail to engage in the right kind of reflection about what makes life worth living and are content with the unexamined assumption that life goes well when one has enough health, wealth, power, and the like. But with the exception of bodily pleasure, sophisticated reflection is required to understand what gives life value—what ends are to be pursued. As a result, the only *end* that the many recognise is the obvious one, bodily pleasure. They make the same error that Aristotle ascribes to most people: 'the bodily pleasures have taken over the name because people most often aim at them, and all share

in them; and so, since these are the only pleasures they know, people suppose that they are the only pleasures' (*NE* 1153b33–1154a1). When they deny hedonism, what they fail to see is that it can be true that instrumental goods like health, wealth, and power are good only because they result in pleasures and also be true that their goodness has little or nothing to do with bodily pleasures like food, drink, or sex. The range of pleasures extends beyond bodily pleasures, and most importantly includes the pleasures of virtuous activity.[16]

3.1 *Hedonism and virtue*

The distinction between good and bad things of kind (a) and kind (b) is not a distinction between *sui generis* kinds of good and bad things. Examples like wealth or poverty are important because they are what the many are likely to cite as examples of uncontroversially good or bad things. Socrates himself is unlikely to think of them as unconditionally good or bad—he is unlikely to think that wealth and power are good even for an unjust tyrant. Most importantly, they are not ends, but good or bad instrumentally, since (or if) they result in net pleasure or pain. Consequently, what we find in the *Reductio* passage is an instrumental structure with *three* steps: 'good pains' of kind (a) lead to goods of kind (b) and these, in turn, 'end in (c) pleasure and the relief and avoidance of pain' (354b6–7). This invites the question: towards what pleasures, and the absence of what pains, are goods of kind (b) instrumental?

In the *Reductio* passage Socrates' aim is to show the many that they believe that something is good (or bad) if and only if its net result is pleasure (or pain). For the purposes of his argument, it makes no difference what pleasures and pains these are, but it is easy to assume that he is suggesting that the best life consists of a wisely chosen selection of pleasures and pains of kind (a). If this were so, Socrates' point would be, for example, that one shouldn't feast until one makes oneself ill, causing more bodily pain than pleasure; rather, a wise hedonist engages in healthy feasting, and submits to starvation diets if necessary, since this is what is needed to live a long life in which bodily pleasures predominate. This, one might think, explains why health is good.

But this is a very crude hedonism and one that is likely to strike us as not only implausible in its own right, but also an unlikely position to find

16 Rudebusch 1999 sees a similar distinction—apparent sensory pleasures versus the real pleasures of virtuous activity—in the background in the *Protagoras*, although he doesn't believe that the *Protagoras* itself provides the evidence needed to reach this conclusion.

Socrates defending. With only bodily pleasures in mind, it is difficult not to agree with Zeyl's conclusion that 'there is an irreconcilable incompatibility between the claim that virtue and the care of one's soul is supremely important, and the claim that pleasure is the only ultimate good.'[17] Virtues would be valuable only to the extent that they help us get pleasures like food, drink, and sex. This forces either an outright rejection of virtue's value or a radical revision of the traditional view of what the virtues are. In the *Gorgias*, Callicles defends a similar kind of hedonism and concludes that the traditional virtues should be rejected in favour of the 'virtues' consistent with self-serving tyranny, especially injustice. Whatever other differences there may be between these dialogues, Callicles' point applies here: if there are only appetitive pleasures, and virtue is defined as what allows us to get the greatest amount of pleasure, we have no reason to accept that there are other-regarding virtues like justice. Rather, it implies that if treating others unfairly gets us greater pleasure, we ought to—it is virtuous to—treat others badly. The response that injustice never does result in greater bodily pleasure is naïve at best.

Thankfully, Socrates, in an apparently calculated move, shows that he is not compromising virtue in this way. What makes it seem calculated is the aptness of the example: he chooses a virtue that not only has no *prima facie* link to bodily pleasure, but an instance of this virtue that often involves considerable bodily danger and pain—courageously going to war. Socrates argues that this is pleasant. If he were a crude hedonist, we would expect him to argue that going to war is instrumentally pleasant, like cautery, requiring short term pain, but resulting in greater pleasure overall. But Socrates makes a different kind of argument. Rather than working backwards from what is widely accepted to be pleasant, he works forwards from what is widely accepted to be honourable and good: if the good really is pleasure, then going to war must be pleasant, since it is honourable and honourable things are good.

> S: Is going to war honourable or shameful [καλὸν … ἢ αἰσχρόν]? P: Honourable.
> S: Then, if it is honourable, we have agreed before, it is also good, for we agreed that all honourable actions were good. P: Very true, and I always believed this.
> S: And rightly; but who would you say are not willing to go to war, war being honourable and good? P: The cowardly.
> S: If a thing is honourable and good, is it also pleasant? P: That was indeed agreed.
> S: So the cowardly, with full knowledge, are not willing to go toward the more honourable, better, and more pleasant? (359E4–360A5)

17 Zeyl 1980, 263.

Popular opinion would have it that going to war is unpleasant but honourable. If everything honourable is good, then hedonism requires us to revise this opinion: either going to war is not unpleasant or it is not honourable. A variety of hedonism that recognises only bodily pleasures and pains would suggest that we revise our view of what's honourable: either war, being unpleasant, is shameful, or what is honourable is not always good. The fact that Socrates argues for a revision in the opposite direction suggests that he has a different kind of hedonism in mind.

His argument is that going to war is honourable; honourable actions are good; and good actions are pleasant; therefore, going to war is pleasant. Some commentators have found this so counter-intuitive that they take it to be a *reductio ad absurdum*: the pursuit of pleasure so obviously *doesn't* lead to honourable actions, especially self-sacrificing actions like going to war, that Socrates must be subtly illustrating that hedonism is incompatible with virtue (and, thus, to be rejected).[18] I find this implausible. It stems from commentators' own incredulity at the alignment of honourable and pleasant actions, but there is no evidence that Socrates shares this incredulity. After all, he uses this argument to support a conclusion that he intends sincerely, the unity of the virtues. The claim that going to war is pleasant is surprising—and surely intentionally so—but what it reveals is a surprising truth about pleasure.

Specifically, the argument is introduced to put in question the assumption that the range of human pleasures extends no further than the pleasant physical sensations we get from things like food, drink, or sex. This is not an implausible claim: many of us will agree that we can take pleasure in a wide range of activities and experiences, ranging from lower physical pleasures to higher intellectual pleasures. It is also a claim that Plato defends elsewhere. In the *Republic*, for example, Socrates distinguishes between three kinds of pleasure—appetitive pleasures, pleasures of honour and victory, and intellectual pleasures—and argues that the virtuous man enjoys the most pleasure, while those devoted to appetitive pleasures live a life that is vicious and painful overall (580D–588A). And most importantly, it explains how Socrates can argue for hedonism and still maintain his commitment to the value of virtue. Even if one thinks that Socrates is not sincerely endorsing hedonism, hedonism is so deeply intertwined with the dialogue's uncontroversially Socratic claims that it could only be a useful falsehood if it nonetheless captures a significant portion of the theory of value that he does endorse, not least the distinction between the value of bodily pleasures and the value

18 See Weiss 1990, McCoy 1998, and Hemmenway 1996.

of virtuous action.[19]

If this is right, then virtuous actions also afford a pleasure that outweighs that of food, drink, or sex. War not only brings hardship and injury, but also a very real possibility of death. In line with the traditional conception of courage, what Socrates calls pleasant is not fair-weather soldiering, but simply 'going to war', which is as likely to involve one's own death as one's enemy's. His argument is that courageously going to war is pleasant—*not* that it is courageous to go to pleasant wars.[20] This entails that courageously going to war, even if one will die, is more pleasant than cowardly avoiding it, even if one would have lived a long life of pleasant food, drink, and sex. This need not mean that one courageous act is more pleasant than a whole lifetime of lesser pleasures, but it probably does mean that surviving is not worthwhile if one is prepared to live a life of shame and vice, no matter how many lesser pleasures one enjoys. Again, this is in line with traditional views of virtue, while revising the traditional view of a pleasant life. It is also in line with what Socrates says about virtue elsewhere. For example, in the *Apology* he says that a good man should not 'take into account the risk of life or death; he should only look to this in his actions: whether what he does is just or unjust' (28B5–9).[21]

Courage in war brings out the contrast between the virtuous life and a life of bodily pleasure especially starkly, but the same argument can be applied to the other virtues: wisdom, justice, piety, and temperance. This follows from the unity of the virtues and from the fact that all the virtues are (on Protagoras's reckoning, but we can safely assume that Socrates agrees) 'as honourable as anything can be' (349E3–8) and, thus, by parity of reasoning, as good and pleasant as anything can be. The conclusion of Socrates' discussion of going to war, then, is that the virtuous life is pleasant and pleasant in a way different from, and superior to, a life devoted to bodily pleasures. This is a strong thesis, but not a surprising thesis to find in a dialogue in which Socrates is committed to both hedonism and virtue.

3.2 *Conclusion*

Socrates' account of courage suggest that the final end, what makes life pleasant overall, is virtue (or, at least, that virtue is its dominant constituent). The

19 For an account of how a sophisticated hedonism of this kind can, even if not fully endorsed by Socrates, fit into the dialectic of the *Protagoras* see J. Moss 2014.

20 Contra Weiss's reading, 2006, 63–67.

21 We find the same claim in the *Crito*, 48D3–5, and *Gorgias*, 511B1–512E5. See Gosling and Taylor 1982, 62–65, for an attempt to reconcile this with traditional hedonism.

Protagoras does not provide us with an account of the pleasure of a virtuous life.[22] But the fact that it is pleasant is sufficient for the point I wish to make. Virtue's pleasures are far from obvious; they do not 'appear' in the sense described in section 2.1. This is in part because, like cautery or military training, the *prima facie* features of temperate or just actions tell us little about these pleasures—on the contrary, they are likely to tell us only about their associated sensory pains. But it is also because, since Socrates believes that knowledge is necessary for virtue, to genuinely act temperately or justly, and thus experience their pleasures fully, one needs to already be practised in the kind of reasoning, the art of measurement, required to understand their role in a good life. Hence, unlike bodily pleasures, the value of virtuous action is not advertised by its appearance. In other words, virtue does not exert the power of appearance.

This is illustrated well in the coward's attitude to going to war. Socrates' account of cowardice is implicit but easily reconstructed. It is an application of his account of *akrasia* (indeed, the stated aim of discussion of *akrasia* is to 'help us find out about courage', 353B1–3). The many believe that people can be overcome by pleasure- and pain-directed passions like love, anger, and 'often fear' (352B5–8). They also think that fear is what distinguishes the courageous and cowardly: the former go towards and the latter avoid fearful things (359C5–7). Presumably the idea is not that cowards don't believe actions like going to war are honourable, and therefore good, but that they are simply too afraid to do them—they are *overcome* by fear. Socrates' response is the kind he developed in the *Reductio* passage: since honourable actions are, as such, pleasant, it is a mistake to think that the honourable and the pleasant can pull us in opposite directions. Once we recognise this, the popular conception of cowardice can be restated as the absurd idea that because of fear, which is an expectation of pain, 'the cowardly, with full knowledge, are not willing to go toward the more honourable, better, and more pleasant' (360A4–5). Like *akrasia* in the Appearance passage, Socrates denies they do so 'with full knowledge'. Rather, cowards fear going to war because, while they value courage, they do not understand the value of courage. They see the obvious physical pains of war—this is the side that exerts the power of appearance—but not that this is outweighed by the pleasure of honourable, and pain of shameful, action. In short: the coward judges going to war by its appearance, but the most important pleasures and pains are not immediately

22 Rudebusch 1999, argues that Socrates sees virtue as a 'modal' pleasure, an activity that is done in a certain way, rather than a 'sensate' pleasure, a sensation that accompanies an activity. Moss 2014, 313–316, argues that for Socrates what it is to find something pleasant is to find it good, so virtue's pleasure is a recognition of its goodness.

apparent, but rather can only be properly appreciated once one understands courage and its role in a good life.

The many, then, were half right and half wrong in their belief that there are two kinds of object of desire. They were right that value is not exhausted by the pleasures of food, drink, or sex and that they do not value 'later' goods like health or wealth simply because they lead to these pleasures. They were wrong, however, to conclude that this implies that there are two incommensurable, potentially conflicting kinds of object of desire, pleasant things and good things. They fail to see that all objects of value can be measured on a single hedonic scale because they lack an account of the value of goods other than bodily pleasures. They feel the pull, for example, of honourable action without having fully worked out where its value lies, namely that it is pleasant and good in itself. Thus, when forced to make difficult decisions like whether to go to war, they are liable, under the influence of its painful appearance, to choose the cowardly option while nonetheless, when their attention is not focused on its pain, feeling the shame of having acted dishonourably.

Two points in closing. First, it is not a coincidence that in the dialogue's paradigmatic misleading appearances are exerted by what are traditionally the paradigmatic objects of non-rational appetites—the pleasure of food, drink, and sex. One of my aims has been to show that Socrates' account of *akrasia* is intellectualist but nonetheless sensitive to the different psychological effects of different kinds of goods or pleasures. Thus, it can account for the variety of passions involved in *akrasia*: some are calm and considered, like a concern for one's long-term health or finances, and others urgent, impulsive, and unreflective, as appetites for food, drink, or sex often are. Crucially, Socrates agrees with the many that the latter are a distinct kind of human passion; that they are passions that have a characteristic object, namely bodily pleasures; and that they play an important role in explaining practical errors. He does not deny that appetites exist, but offers a new account of what they are, one that focuses on the psychological response elicited by their objects (and likewise for other putatively non-rational passions, like anger and fear).

Second, I hope I have shown that the question 'Does Socrates sincerely believe the hedonism introduced in the *Protagoras*?'—about which I've remained neutral—is not as pivotal as usually assumed. Whether the answer is yes or no, the *Protagoras* defends a typically Socratic view of the good and one that is hostile to pleasure in much the same way as other dialogues. The *Gorgias*, for example, is often sharply contrasted with the *Protagoras* because it has Socrates reject hedonism. Yet this difference turns out to be surpris-

ingly superficial. For one, they largely agree about pleasure. Both dialogues emphasise how bodily pleasures and pains are deceptive and error-inducing, appearing better than they really are and thus deceiving the majority who tend to uncritically accept appearances. And despite the fact that the *Gorgias*, since it treats pleasure as more or less synonymous with bodily pleasure, leaves no space for distinct pleasures associated with virtue, the significant ethical claims are the same in both dialogues: virtue is something good in itself (not merely instrumentally good); virtue is necessary for happiness; and contrary to appearances, the pursuit of bodily pleasure—even overall, long-term bodily pleasure—leads to unhappiness.[23]

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