SOCRATES THE STOIC?

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1. Introduction

In Plato's *Euthydemus*, Socrates and young Cleinias agree, "None of the other things is good or bad, but of these two, one—wisdom—is good, and the other—ignorance—is bad." To some readers, this is the outrageous and characteristically Stoic claim that wisdom is the only good for a human being. Others, however, insist that the context qualifies the point, so that wisdom is the only good by itself or independently or unconditionally. They deny that Socrates could mean what he apparently says, that wisdom is the only good.

Stoicizing readers have not adequately answered the deniers. Many Stoicizers have been engaged in some larger project—often to explain Socrates' influence on the Stoics—

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1 *Euthd.* 281e3-5: τὸν μὲν ἄλλων οὐδὲν ὀνύτε ἄγαθον οὔτε κακόν, τούτων δὲ δεδομένων ἢ μὲν σοφία ἀγαθόν, ἢ δὲ ἀμαθεία κακόν. References to Plato's works are to Burnet's *Platonis Opera*, and translations are mine, though my translations of the *Euthydemus* borrow shamelessly from Sprague's rendering in Cooper's edition and my English for 281e3-5 steals from Long, "Socrates," 166.

2 See Annas, "Virtue as the Use of Other Goods," 55, and *Platonic Ethics, Old and New*, 45; Cooper, "Aristotle on the Goods of Fortune," 305; Ferejohn, "Socratic Thought-Experiments;" Irwin, "Epicurean?" and *Plato's Ethics*, 57; Long, "Socrates in Hellenistic Philosophy," 166-167; Rappe, "Tracking the Cynics," 293; and Striker, "Plato's Socrates."

3 Vlastos (*Socrates*, 228) pulls 'just by itself' from *auta kath' hauta* in 281d8-1, and insists that the qualification must be extended on pain of invalidity (230n97). I explain why it does not when I consider the argument in some detail in §3. Many others (e.g., Penner, "Socrates," 135) use 'in itself' to mean the same thing, although Vlastos finds 'in itself' objectionable because it suggests the intrinsic/extrinsic distinction and thereby suggests that all conventional goods other than wisdom are merely extrinsically good (*Socrates*, 305). 'Independently' fits the technical vocabulary of independent and dependent goods preferred by Brickhouse and Smith, *Plato's Socrates*, esp. 106-110. Perhaps the most popular qualifier is 'unconditionally': see, e.g., Santas, "Socratic Goods," *passim* (but "alone by itself" on 43); and Reshotko, "Virtue as the Only Unconditional—But not Intrinsic—Good," 332.
and for that reason they have not fully defended their reading. Others have defended their Stoicizing, but without, I think, sufficient attention to the deniers' case. Some who defend the Stoicizing reading appeal to material outside of the *Euthydemus*, which, as I argue below, plays into the deniers' hands. Others have come closer to the case that needs to be made but have stopped too soon and have failed to show how deep the deniers' misreading goes. In this essay, I address the deniers' case head-on, and I argue that the *Euthydemus*, as a whole and by itself, consistently and plausibly motivates and explores the Stoic claim that only wisdom is good.

But this exegetical thesis is merely my stalking horse. By taking the deniers' case more seriously and extending my Stoicizing interpretation to the *Euthydemus* as a whole, I aim to show how the dialogue calls into question three prominent assumptions that the deniers make, assumptions that reach far beyond the *Euthydemus* and that are made by more than just the deniers. First, the deniers misread Socrates' argument that wisdom is the only good because they misunderstand what makes a protreptic argument successful. I show that the *Euthydemus* both raises a difficult question about reasons one might have for radical change in view and suggests a sophisticated answer. Second, the deniers' philosophical doubts about the Stoic claim rest on a mistaken interpretation of Socrates' ethical theory. I show that the *Euthydemus* offers a more plausible picture of Socratic eudaimonism that accommodates the Stoic claim. Third, when the deniers rely on evidence outside the *Euthydemus* to cast doubt on the Stoicizing reading, they rely on a dubious methodological assumption about how to read Plato's Socratic dialogues. I argue that the *Euthydemus* calls for a different approach.

2. Facing up to Denial

The deniers' case comes in three parts. First, they cite other passages of the *Euthydemus* as evidence of goods other than wisdom. Their starring evidence comes from the argument that leads to the apparently Stoic conclusion. This argument begins with the premise that health and wealth and such are goods (279a4-b3), and as it continues,

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5 See Ferejohn, "Socratic Thought-Experiments," and Irwin, "Epicurean?"

6 See Dimas, "Happiness in the *Euthydemus*," and McCabe, "Indifference readings."

7 As noted by Vlastos, *Socrates*, 229. For another reply to alleged evidence for denying, see Annas, "Virtue as the Use of Other Goods," 57n10.
Brown, Socrates the Stoic? — 3

Socrates asserts that "if ignorance leads them, <the conventional goods other than wisdom> are greater evils than their opposites, to the extent that they are more able to serve the leader which is bad, while if prudence and wisdom <lead them>, then they are greater goods <than their opposites>" (281d6-8). Each of these assertions conflicts with the Stoic claim that only wisdom is good. But each is also a premise in an argument by elimination. On any reading, the argument begins with a list of putative goods and proceeds to eliminate many items on the list. On the Stoicizing reading, Socrates pushes the argument until every item on the list is eliminated except for wisdom. The deniers say that he has no warrant for going that far. I shall argue otherwise. But the preliminary point is this: explicit evidence that x is a good from an early stage of the argument cannot count against the explicit evidence that x is not a good from later in the argument. Although Socrates might fail to show that wisdom is the only good, and so charity might require us to assume that he does not mean to show that wisdom is the only good, nothing he says in the argument commits him to denying that wisdom is the only good.

Interestingly, nothing he says outside the argument commits him to the denial, either. In fact, after Socrates reaches his apparently Stoic conclusion, he respects it with great consistency. He immediately uses the word 'things' (πράγματα, 282a3) where a denier might expect to see 'goods' (ἄγαθοί), and he later takes care to discuss wisdom's beneficial use of wealth without allowing that wealth itself is beneficial. In fact, later in the dialogue, Socrates says plainly and without a qualification anywhere in the neighborhood that "Cleinias and I agreed that nothing is good except a kind of knowledge" (292b1-2).

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

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

10 Vlastos (Socrates, 230n99) inserts his qualifier 'by itself' here, too, on the grounds that Socrates is referring back to his earlier conclusion and his earlier conclusion must include the qualifier. This reading, which falls when Vlastos' reasons for qualifying the earlier conclusion fall, is seriously strained in any case. For on this reading, Socrates reports the earlier conclusion in a very misleading way, despite the fact that eleven pages of conversation have intervened. Moreover, on this reading, Crito is in fact misled, for after the unqualified reminder, he assures Socrates, "Yes, that is what you said" (292b3). Vlastos fails to explain why Plato would want Crito to be misled on this crucial point.
So the explicit evidence of the *Euthydemus* is perfectly univocal, and the deniers need another move. Accordingly, they point to other dialogues in which Plato gives us a similar Socrates who seems to accept the existence of goods other than wisdom. In effect, the deniers submerge the evidence of the *Euthydemus* into a larger set of evidence and argue that the best interpretation of several dialogues together requires denying the Stoic claim. I want to get clear about the costs of this approach. I will argue that it requires not merely reconsidering a passage or two in the *Euthydemus* but ignoring a central theme of the whole dialogue because throughout the *Euthydemus* as a whole Socrates carefully motivates and explores the Stoic claim that wisdom is the only good for human beings. To make this argument, I temporarily set aside the evidence from other dialogues. Only after the commitments of the *Euthydemus* as a whole are clear will I return to the evidence of other dialogues, and I will argue that the costs are too great to sustain the deniers' case.

Before then, I will also face the third part of the deniers' case. Many of them think that the Stoic thesis is philosophically hopeless, or at least that it is philosophically hopeless for Socrates unless he could anachronistically employ a variety of Stoic distinctions to develop and defend the thesis. But I argue that these doubts misconstrue the fundamental eudaimonist thesis of Socratic ethics as Socrates presents it in the *Euthydemus*.

3. The First Protreptic

3.1 Criteria for a Protreptic Argument

Some deniers think that Socrates cannot mean that wisdom is the only good because he does not have a successful argument for this conclusion. The skepticism about Socrates' argument, however, largely misses what is distinctive about it. Socrates is not

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

12 I thank Don Morrison and Sara Rappe for pressing this version of the worry.

13 As noted earlier, Vlastos (*Socrates*, 230n97) believes that the conclusion is invalidly inferred unless it is qualified. But even those who want to defend the argument without qualifying the conclusion have trouble with it. Irwin (“Epicurean?” 202) initially says its "faults seem to be recurrent, gross, and obvious," and then he invents for Socrates an account of happiness that makes "some of his moves less clearly illegitimate" (205). Similarly, Ferejohn ("Socratic Thought-Experiments") saves the argument only by dragging into it two principles that he divines with the inspiration of *Charmides* 174a-c. (Santas ["Socratic Goods"] happily borrows these principles [45-46], but he at least expresses doubts about whether Socrates actually accepts them [46].)
engaged in his usual mode of question-and-answer to test his interlocutor's beliefs, the mode that he and his interlocutors sometimes characterize as elenctic. Rather, he is trying to give an example of protreptic—protreptikê is a skill of (literally) "turning toward" and (metaphorically) exhorting—and the explicit point of this protreptic is to turn Cleinias from loving conventional goods toward loving wisdom, that is, philosophy (278d1-5, cf. 275a4-7). Socrates' elenctic arguments typically conclude that the interlocutor has inconsistent commitments. But this argument in the Euthydemus leads Cleinias not to the recognition that his commitments are inconsistent but to a positive conclusion that Socrates plainly embraces, namely, that Cleinias should love and pursue wisdom. Socrates' elenctic arguments might be implicitly protreptic, because Socrates might intend by exposing his interlocutor's ignorance to inspire the interlocutor's pursuit of wisdom. (Moreover, Plato might intend his representations of Socrates' elenctic arguments to have a protreptic effect on his readers.) But the argument in the Euthydemus is explicitly protreptic, its explicit conclusion the positive commitment to philosophy.

I do not want to oversell this contrast. Socrates can and sometimes does use an "elenctic" argument not only to test the interlocutor's commitments but also to lead the interlocutor in a particular direction toward particular positive commitments (e.g., Euthyphro 11e-14c), and (as we shall see) Socrates' explicitly protreptic argument in the Euthydemus includes reasoning that reveals inconsistencies in the conventional commitments that that Cleinias accepts at the argument's start. Nevertheless, Socrates' explicit purpose is not to test Cleinias' commitments or even to test them in such a way as to nudge Cleinias toward loving wisdom. He wants to offer some words that induce Cleinias to love wisdom. And not just any words will do. Socrates does not offer a harangue against those who fail to love wisdom or an encomium of those who do. He offers an argument, step-by-step, in five stages.14

Because this argument is explicitly protreptic, it clearly faces the problem of changing someone's view from one set of commitments to another.15 This problem is made even more clear by the gulf between ordinary values and "philosophic" or wisdom-loving

14 For some discussion of the kinds of logoi that are explicitly characterized as protreptikoi, see Slings, "Introduction," 59-164.

15 Cf. Harman, Change in View. This point is related to "the problem of the elenchus" that has been so prominent in the literature about Plato's Socratic dialogues. Both concern the limitations of deductive argument. But the problem of the elenchus concerns Socrates' warrant for believing that elenctic deductions can prove one set of beliefs instead of another. The point I am raising concerns the novice's warrant for exchanging premises that express ordinary values for those that express philosophical ones. Attention to the elenchus as if it were Socrates' sole method of philosophizing—and with a rather narrow construal of what elenchus is, to boot—has perhaps obscured his use of protreptic and other perspectives on the limitations of deductive argument.
values. From the standpoint of ordinary values, many of the philosophers' central commitments are false. From the standpoint of philosophic values, many commitments expressing ordinary values are false. So one cannot construct a sound argument from premises that express ordinary values to a conclusion that expresses philosophic values. Hence, deductive soundness cannot be the appropriate criterion for a protreptic argument's success.

Socrates is aware of this. At least, he realizes that it is not easy to give reasons for someone to change his views, and he offers a deep response to the problem that is both psychologically realistic and normatively plausible. Plato announces all of this with the very first question that Socrates puts to Dionysodorus and Euthydemus. After Socrates learns that the brothers claim to teach virtue (273d8-9), he notes that a demonstration of this would be no small task (274d6-7), and he asks the brothers whether they can teach virtue to anyone or only someone who is already persuaded to study with them (274d7-e3). This shrewd query both highlights the difficulty of effecting change in view and suggests one way in which one might do so. Socrates suggests that if one makes oneself the sort of teacher with whom another person wants to study, then one makes it easier to effect change in that other person's view. The reader of the Euthydemus might accordingly notice Cleinias' entrance in the drama: he sees Socrates from some distance, and rushes over to sit next to him (273b1-2). But just in case the reader nods, Plato gives another indication of Cleinias' respect for Socrates. When the boy is stumped by the first question that Euthydemus asks him, he turns to Socrates for help (275d5-6). Cleinias wants to learn from Socrates. He is already disposed to accept a change to Socrates' view, and Socrates suggests that this might be a reason why he could persuade Cleinias to change his view.

This reason to change one's view is both psychologically realistic and normative plausible. That is, it is plausible that people do take themselves to have a reason to value such-and-such when they realize that someone they respect values such-and-such. And it is plausible that people should take themselves to have a reason to value such-and-such when they realize that someone they respect values such-and-such. Just as we have reason to accept the testimony of testifiers we trust and reason to follow the advice of advisors we admire, so too, we have reason to adopt the values of evaluators we respect. None of these reasons is conclusive, of course; each is open to further testing. Moreover, there are complications to be entered. Perhaps, on reflection, our trust, admiration, or respect was misplaced, or limited to one domain irrelevant to particular testimony, advice, or evaluation at issue. Strictly speaking, one has reasons to accept the testimony, follow the advice, or adopt the evaluation if one has reasons to trust the testifier on this question,
admire the advisor on this matter, and respect the evaluator on this issue. But none of these complications need make us doubt that Cleinias has some reason to accept values that Socrates expresses, just because Cleinias respects Socrates.

I do not suppose, however, that this reason should by itself suffice to convince Cleinias to change his values, nor do I think that this reason explains why Socrates' protreptic argument would be successful as opposed to Socrates' life as a protreptic example. Rather, two additional conditions need to be met. First, Socrates needs to give Cleinias some reasons to doubt the ordinary views with which he comes to Socrates. If Cleinias doubts his ordinary views, he should be open to considering rivals, including the rival views that belong to Socrates, the man he so respects. Cleinias can hardly do more than this to justify the change in view. But we can assess the argument with one last condition. If this is a good protreptic argument, its conclusion should be tenable. This is not to say that Cleinias must be able to understand all that can be said on behalf of Socrates' philosophic values as soon as he comes to incline toward them. But we should judge Socrates' argument harshly if Socrates could not give a consistent and plausible defense of his philosophic values.

In what follows, I study the five stages of Socrates' protreptic argument to show that it meets these two conditions. In sum, then, Socrates' argument gives Cleinias reasons to doubt the ordinary values, Cleinias' admiration for Socrates gives him reason to incline toward Socratic values, and Socrates can coherently defend his Socratic values. So Cleinias is justified in changing his view, and the protreptic is successful.

3.2 The First Stage (278e3-279c4)

The first stage of the argument articulates the conventional starting-point. Socrates begins with two claims that he represents as obvious: everyone pursues happiness or success (278e3-5), and one is happy or successful if one has many goods (279a1-4). These are not, in fact, obvious to everyone. The second claim, in particular, will be rejected.

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16 Socrates says only that all people desire eu prattein ("to do well"), but the ensuing argument assumes that eu prattein ("to do well"), eupragia ("good action"), eudaimonein ("to fare well" or "to be happy or successful"), and eudaimonia ("success" or "happiness") are equivalent. (Compare Aristotle, EN 1095a18-20.) Socrates applies this ecumenical approach to terminology also to wisdom, invoking sophia ("wisdom"), phronesis ("practical wisdom" or "prudence"), episteme ("knowledge" or "understanding"), and techné ("skill" or "art" or "craft") interchangeably before asking what knowledge or skill this special wisdom is. These equivalences are important. The first reveals Socrates' commitment to happiness or success as something one does, not something that happens to one, and the second reveals Socrates' commitment to including at least some general features of skills (or arts or crafts, technai) in his account of wisdom.
in stage three of the argument, and so Socrates presumably does not take it to be obvious. But Socrates and Cleinias treat these claims as obvious to the ordinary point of view. They next produce a list of things that are conventionally recognized as good for us (279a4-c2), including material external goods (wealth), bodily goods (health, good looks, and other bodily needs), social goods (noble birth, power, and honor), virtues of character (temperance, justice, bravery), and intellectual virtue (wisdom). They cap off the preliminary stage by agreeing that this list of conventional goods is exhaustive (279c2-4). This sets up the argument: Socrates will eventually eliminate every member of the conventional list of goods except for wisdom, and thus leave only wisdom as a good.

The strategy requires that the first claim be defensible. If happiness is not the appropriate target, then it will be useless to reflect on it in order to pare down the list of goods by which we become happy. There is, I think, little trouble here, at least if we are willing to take eudaimonism seriously.

The strategy also requires that the initial list of conventional goods be exhaustive. This could be cause for consternation. The list does not include pleasure or the welfare of others. Are these not good for me? Doubtless, they are conventionally good for me, but Socrates can safely assume that they are already on this list, pleasure in every use of conventional goods and the welfare of others in justice. Cleinias, perhaps, does not see this, and so there might already be some gap between what Cleinias is well positioned to defend and what he in fact accepts. If he has already accepted a claim that outstrips the

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17 Socrates treats the virtues and wisdom as more controversial claimants to the list of conventional goods, and seeks Cleinias' special endorsement. So Socrates and Cleinias clearly have in mind the conventional evaluation of virtues and wisdom. Do they (and Cleinias in particular) also have in mind the conventional conception of the virtues and wisdom? This is important, as Socrates goes on to argue that these virtues are not goods (281e3-5 with 281c6-7). If the argument addresses the virtues as they are popularly conceived, i.e., as character-states apart from wisdom, then it is not hard to understand why he would do this. (So Annas, "Virtue as the Use of Other Goods," 59n17.) But if he suggests that Socratically-conceived virtues are not goods, then things are much more complicated. Either we have to take him to be assuming complicated counterfactuals—he is considering Socratic temperance, justice, and courage as they would be were they apart from wisdom (see Vlastos, Socrates, 228n92)—or we have to take him to be a bit baffled. The former view would have Socrates recognizing a residue of the virtues apart from knowledge of good and bad, and it raises questions about why Socrates does not make things more explicit, as he does at Meno 88b1-6 (see Santas, "Socratic Goods," 47n27). The latter view will seem disappointing unless we embed our account of the Euthydemus into a very particular developmental story and appeal to the Meno for satisfaction (see Ferejohn, "Socratic Thought-Experiments"). I favor the simpler reading: Cleinias thinks of virtues as ordinarily conceived character-states, as the distinction in the list between the virtues and wisdom suggests. Note that Socrates concludes his first protreptic display with the bare claim that Cleinias must love wisdom (282d1-2), and not that he should love wisdom and care for virtue, which is what Socrates was explicitly shooting for. Despite the fact that he is entitled to the stronger conclusion on a Socratic account of the virtues, he prescinds from stating it, perhaps because he does not want to confuse Cleinias, who has the ordinary conception of the virtues in mind.

reasons he could give directly for it, his reasons would have to be indirect, dependent upon his respect for Socrates. That is not to say that he has accepted anything irrationally, and the claim he has accepted is in fact supportable.

But other features of the first stage do not have to be ultimately supportable. In fact, as I have indicated, the second claim will be shown to be false, as will, of course, the list of conventional goods itself. Much of what Cleinias and Socrates say in the argument is jettisoned as they shift from the ordinary to the philosophical point of view.

3.3 The Second Stage (279c4-280b3)

Next, Socrates "recalls" and seeks to eliminate one pretender to the list of conventional goods. The conventional goods are those things that are conventionally thought to cause or constitute happiness or success. But everyone thinks of good fortune as a cause or constituent of success, too, and that is why everyone thinks of good fortune as a great good. Socrates, by contrast, insists that good fortune is redundant with wisdom. He maintains that wisdom causes happiness and so has no additional need of good fortune. In fact, he declares, wisdom is good fortune (279d6).

Socrates does not expect Cleinias, who is still tied to conventional values, to assent to this identity claim. That is why Socrates introduces it with ironical deprecation (dépou); why he asserts playfully that "even a child would know" it; and why he kids about Cleinias' amazed reaction to it (279d7-8). But by announcing that wisdom is good fortune, he introduces his extraordinary, Socratic values. If, as I am arguing, his conclusion is that wisdom is the only good, it should be no surprise that he recognizes no good fortune except that of being wise. Merely by announcing his thesis, Socrates nudges Cleinias toward it, since Cleinias admires Socrates and wants to agree with him. But at this point, Cleinias is too far from Socrates' extraordinary values to know what he might be assenting to.

So Socrates instead pushes Cleinias toward the weaker claim that wisdom suffices for success or happiness, that it does what good fortune is conventionally thought to do.\(^{19}\) He begins with a few cases to suggest that the wise enjoy more good luck, that is, more successful or happy outcomes, than the unwise (279d8-280a5): the wise ship-captain succeeds more often than the foolish one, etc. Now, these cases do not establish any convincing reason for Cleinias to believe that wisdom causes happiness or success. Surely, on the ordinary view of things, wisdom does not bring success in every case: sometimes,

\(^{19}\) See also Reeve, *Apology*, 137-138n39, against Kraut, *State*, 211-212n41. For an attempt to deflate the identity claim and take it seriously at this point in the argument, see Reshotko, "Virtue," with response by McPherran, "Socrates and Irwin."
Despite being wise, one needs some good luck. But the examples do cast doubt on thought that sometimes finds expression in ordinary values, the thought that the wise are powerless in the face of fortune. The wise would not have more success than the unwise if they did not have some power to effect success, some power to do what good fortune is said to do. So the examples suggest that good luck, too, might fail to bring success in some cases: sometimes, despite being lucky, one needs some wisdom. Because wisdom makes some causal contribution toward happiness or success, the examples prepare Cleinias to accept, as he wants to accept, Socrates' unconventional claim that "wisdom everywhere makes humans fortunate" (280a6, note the ara).

Socrates bolsters this claim with a second, very different consideration (note the gar at 280a7): "wisdom would never make any mistake but must do right and be fortunate, for otherwise it would not be wisdom" (280a7-8). I take this to be an analytic claim for Socrates: wisdom by definition causes right action and good fortune. So understood, Socrates is not providing any reason to suppose that wisdom guarantees good fortune as these are ordinarily understood. He is instead using special concepts of wisdom and good fortune to assert that the one guarantees the other. He introduces a possibility, without developing it or giving any reason for accepting it. His purpose is to signal that Cleinias needs to go much further than to think that wisdom brings about success as success is ordinarily understood. He suggests, in fact, that success or fortune should be identified with right action, something that wisdom does suffice to bring about.

But Cleinias does not notice the shift, or if he does, it does not give him pause. He is only too eager to go along. Socrates as much as admits that Cleinias is not yet justified in agreeing when he says he cannot recall how Cleinias agreed with him that wisdom suffices for success, without any additional need of good fortune (280b1-3).

But it would be a mistake to suppose that the protreptic is undone by Socrates' failure at this point to give Cleinias a better reason to think that wisdom suffices for

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

21 He here makes an explicit introduction, but the associations were implicitly introduced earlier (contra Chance, Euthydemus, 58), when Socrates says that "some god" gets this conversation going, through the mechanism of his daimonion (272e1-4), and that the ability to teach virtue that Dionysodorus and Euthydemus profess (273d8-9) is a "gift of Hermes [hermaion]" (273e2). These claims associate god-sent fortune with the pursuit of wisdom and wisdom, respectively. For attention to these claims, I am grateful to McPherran, "What Even a Child Would Know." I am wary, however, of McPherran's further claim that Socrates' conception of fortune is akin to Stoic providence.
success. First, Cleinias' misguided beliefs about good fortune are not an obstacle to his conversion to philosophy. Socrates seeks to instill in Cleinias a single goal of wisdom by eliminating other goals such as wealth and fame. Good fortune is not a practical goal—it is not something one can pursue, however fervently one might wish for it—and he practical payoff of the protreptic will be the same if Socrates can persuade Cleinias that wisdom is the only conventional good other than good luck that is really a good. Moreover, only after the protreptic and after Cleinias has pursued wisdom will he be in a good position to comprehend how wisdom might suffice for happiness. Until then, Cleinias accepts conventional views about value, which are precisely the views that give support to the ordinary claims about good fortune. He does not need a new argument from the same premises. He needs new premises.

The second stage of the argument introduces Socratic values and shows Cleinias' willingness to be converted. It does not effect a justified conversion, but its failure to do so does not pose any problems.

3.4 The Third Stage (280b3-281b4)

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

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

This is simple to outline, but not easy to justify. The chief question is, what counts as the correct use of a conventional good?

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22 So, too, Brickhouse and Smith, *Plato's Socrates*, 119-120n31, who cite Ferejohn ("Socratic Thought-Experiments"), though I cannot find the exact location. Ferejohn, "Neither ProtoStoic Nor Pollyanna" is admirably clear about the point.

23 This is supported by argument: a person is happy by the possession of conventional goods only if they are beneficial, and conventional goods are beneficial only if they are used and used correctly. This seems to apply to every item on the list of conventional goods and thus to wisdom itself. So wisdom will have to use itself correctly. (See also Ferejohn, "Socratic Thought-Experiments," and Brickhouse and Smith, *Plato's Socrates*, 130.) I see no problem with this consequence: Socrates emphasizes that happiness requires activity.
Some of Socrates' examples naturally lead to the thought that correct use is successful production of some separate benefit: the carpenter needs to use his tools correctly to produce the benefit of a house (280c8-d1, 281a2-4), and the person who possesses food needs to use that food correctly to produce the benefit of nutrition (280c1-3). But this cannot be Socrates' whole point, for wisdom is not necessary for this kind of correct use. With some tools and some luck, a band of amateurs could build a solid house, and I am quite sure that I can successfully down a meal without satisfying Socrates' demands on wisdom and even without much luck.25

Socrates' argument is more plausible, though, if he supposes that the correct use of a conventional good also requires use at the right time, to the right extent, for the right purpose, and in relation to the right things. There is good reason to think that he does have this more demanding model in mind. After all, Socrates must and does insist that wealth, health, and beauty need to be directed by knowledge for correct use (281a6-b1), and so we have to ask what Socrates recognizes as the correct use of these conventional goods. It is harder to apply the productive model in these cases.26 But consider wealth. I suppose that Socrates must require the right intentions in the correct use of wealth, and that he must require of the right intentions that they, at least, could survive elenctic examination. I also suppose that this is enough to see why Socrates might suppose that wisdom is necessary for correct use. If wisdom is needed for security in the face of ongoing elenctic examination, if security in the face of ongoing elenctic examination is needed to justify one's intentions, and if justified intentions are needed for correct use, then wisdom is necessary for correct use.

Quite apart from Socrates' association of justification with surviving dialectical examination, there are reasons to suppose that one needs a coherent set of commitments about how to use conventional goods in order to use them correctly. First, a particular use of a particular conventional good is the right use at the right time only if there is not some other use (perhaps of some other conventional good) that has a stronger claim, and so the

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

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

26 One wants a clear picture of happiness as some goal-state to be produced. As Ferejohn ("Socratic Thought-Experiments," 111) complains—among many others—there seems to be "no positive test which certifies wisdom or anything else as being conducive to eudaimonia." Perhaps the desire is misplaced.
ability to use conventional goods rightly requires a broad understanding of how this particular use here and now fits into an unfolding pattern of uses of conventional goods in past, present, and future circumstances. Can someone pick out the fitting piece without knowing the whole pattern? It seems quite unlikely. Second, and more importantly, if correct use requires not just the right thing at the right time but also the right purpose, then knowledge is clearly required. A fool might do what the wise would do from time to time, but the fool cannot do what the wise would do for the right purpose because the right purpose is (plausibly enough) the fully justified purpose and the fully justified purpose (plausibly enough) requires knowledge.

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

But this quite obviously depends. It depends in part on what is required for a person to attain wisdom: if the attainment of wisdom requires the secure acquisition of a baseline amount of conventional goods, then there is no trouble in assuming that wisdom will have conventional goods to use correctly. In addition, it depends in part on what is required of correct use: how much success is required of a use for it to be successful? Finally, it depends upon what is required of happiness: if happiness requires acts of great material generosity, then it seems difficult to deny a role to fortune, but if happiness requires correct use of whatever fortune tosses our way, then there is no difficulty at all.

One natural approach to the protreptic at this point is to assign to Socrates some detailed commitments on these questions. Some scholars think that he is defining happiness down, and wise use is merely adaptive to any possible circumstances. Others think that he is assuming the possession of some minimal amount of conventional goods (other than wisdom). This second camp divides in two. On the one hand, although

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27 See Striker, "Plato's Socrates," 244-246.
28 See Irwin, "Epicurean?" Brickhouse and Smith (Plato's Socrates, 114-117) object, cogently, that there must be some limits to adaptiveness for Socrates (he would not adapt by harming another, e.g.). This objection might render the revised adaptationist account redundant with some specifications of the second position I outline above.
29 See Ferejohn, "Socratic Thought-Experiments," 115n25. Ferejohn goes on to insist that happiness does not require any particular conventional goods other than wisdom, and this is contestable. Moreover, there can be contests over how demanding the required minimum of conventional goods is. (To what extent is Socrates responsive to conventional requirements on happiness?) But these disputes are less important for my purposes than the one I highlight next.
happiness requires a minimum of conventional goods, wisdom (and whatever is required to have acquired wisdom) might guarantee the possession of the minimum. On the other hand, happiness might require a minimum of conventional goods that is dependent upon fortune. The last of these positions is inconsistent with what Socrates says in the first protreptic, for he says that wisdom suffices for happiness (281b2-4, 282a4-5, 282c8-d3), and so there is good reason not to attribute it to him in the Euthydemus. But between the first two positions—each of which encompasses a range of possible specifications—does Socrates give any indication of a clear commitment?

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

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

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

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

32 Brickhouse and Smith (Plato's Socrates, especially 117-119 with 119-120n31) depend upon the Vlastosian expectation here. They are impressed by the explicitness of Socrates' pronouncements in the Crito and Gorgias about the debilitating effects of bodily disease. The debate about those passages is now epic. I just want to note how explicit Socrates is in the Euthydemus. In addition to his conclusion at the end of the third stage (281b2-4), quoted below, Socrates says to Cleinias at the end of the first protreptic, "Wisdom... is the only thing to make a person happy and fortunate" (282c9-d1, with 'wisdom' carried over from c8); he says to Dionysodorus and Euthydemus at the end of the first protreptic, "Or if you do not want to do that, from where I left off demonstrate to the boy whether he should possess every knowledge or some single knowledge in order to be happy and a good man, and what this is" (282d8-e3); and he says to Crito, in characterizing the wisdom Cleinias should seek, "This political skill must make people wise and give them knowledge if it would be the skill that benefits them and makes them happy" (292b7-c1).
will retain ordinary reasons to resist the Socratic scheme of value. So it should be obvious that Socrates' argument in the protreptic cannot completely persuade Cleinias all at once. Socrates can merely get Cleinias to see a possibility in an attractive light and invite Cleinias to test it against its rivals.\(^\text{33}\)

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

Moreover, all of these protreptic reasons can motivate us the readers to conclude that "knowledge [i.e., wisdom], then, it seems, provides people not only with good fortune but also with good action [i.e., happiness] in every possession or action" (281b2-4).\(^\text{34}\) Socrates links the possibility that he introduced in the second stage with its companion claim that he has motivated in the third, for the same scheme of values that promises the sufficiency of wisdom for happiness also promises the sufficiency of wisdom for good fortune (success). If we adopt this scheme of values and the commonplace that happiness is good fortune, then we will assent even to the outrageous claim that wisdom is good fortune, and we will accept as sound the argument of the third stage.

Indeed, the third stage of the protreptic is so successful (as protreptic) that we might wonder why Socrates does not leave well enough alone.\(^\text{35}\) If Cleinias is persuaded that wisdom is necessary and sufficient for happiness, then surely Cleinias will love wisdom. But there is a problem. If there are other things that make their own independent contributions to happiness, then Cleinias might spread his love around a bit. Socrates does not want that to happen. So he goes on to argue that nothing other than wisdom makes its own contribution to happiness. Nothing other than wisdom is good.

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\(^{33}\) On this important point about the limited strength of protreptic argument, see also Annas, *Platonic Ethics*, 31-51, esp. 49.

\(^{34}\) For the terminology, see note 16 above.

\(^{35}\) Cf. Irwin, "Epicurean?" 203.
3.5 The Fourth Stage (281b4-281e5)

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

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

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

37 Socrates, 230n97.

38 Note that the very first erISTIC argument after the first protreptic can be read as though it drops qualifiers (283b4-d3), and this sort of fallacy recurs frequently (see esp. 295a-296d).
the question to infer that the other conventional goods are not goods by themselves from the claim that the other conventional goods are not goods by themselves!\(^{39}\)

There is a better explanation of Socrates' inference. Instead of inserting qualifiers into his conclusion, one needs to make explicit two tacit premises. Socrates starts from the claim that the other conventional goods are not good by themselves. I suggest that he means that they do not have in themselves the causal power of benefiting; all benefiting is provided by wisdom. It is not hard to see how he might arrive at this point. Once he has said that other conventional goods never benefit without the presence of wisdom, then he has two possible explanations available. One is that special compounds of wisdom plus other conventional goods have causal powers of benefiting that neither part has on its own. The other is that wisdom has the causal power of benefiting, and the other conventional goods have none. Socrates might well opt for the second, since he has asserted that wisdom suffices for happiness (281b2-4; cf. 282a4-5 and 282c8-d3).\(^{40}\) If he does understand the point that other conventional goods are not by themselves good as the claim that other conventional goods have no causal power of benefiting, then he is halfway home. He now needs to assume only that the causal power of benefiting is required of goods.\(^{41}\) From these two premises it follows that the other conventional goods are not goods. Only wisdom has the causal power of benefiting; only wisdom is good for a human being.

### 3.6 The Fifth Stage (282a1-d3)

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

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\(^{39}\) Vlastos does not and could not say that 281e3-5 is not inferred at all, for Socrates says that it is (281e2-3). So Vlastos must mean that 281e3-5 is inferred exclusively from 281b4-d2 (and not from 218d2-e2). But then he should admit that Socrates speaks in an awfully misleading fashion at 281e2-3, where he certainly seems to say that he is going to make a new inference (note especially the own). See also the similar response to Vlastos offered by Long, "Socrates in Hellenistic Philosophy," 167n62.

\(^{40}\) I do not think that Socrates has to opt for the second explanation—attributions of causal efficacy are always a bit dicey, and the metaphysics of wholes and parts admits of multiple approaches—but it is easy enough to see why he would and why he would forgo the metaphysical niceties required to provide a fuller defense of his option. Moreover, this is enough to explain the plausibility of the argument to Cleinias.

\(^{41}\) I suppose that Socrates considers this point true by definition. Socrates and Crito presuppose the connection at 292a7-10, for they immediately agree that the kingly skill which is the candidate to be the wisdom that was earlier called the only good must be beneficial. It is no objection to say that Socrates talks in the first protreptic as though a good might not be beneficial (280b7-8), for there he is using the term 'goods' provisionally.
false. Wealth in the presence of wisdom no more benefits than leather in the presence of cobbler produces a shoe. Cobbler makes the shoe, and wisdom does the benefiting. More strangely, perhaps, it also turns out that the wise use of wealth is, strictly speaking, not good. Wise use of wealth (or whatever one uses wisely) is caused by what is good; it is the effect of benefiting. But it is not itself good.

Given this, Cleinias must also rethink what happiness is. He surely rejects his initial view that happiness is the possession of what is good, because he came to see that one has to use a good and not merely possess it to be happy. Now that he accepts that wisdom is the only good, perhaps he should recognize that the use of wisdom is what happiness is. To put it another way, happiness is acting well. Socrates encourages this thought throughout the argument by using a variety of terms interchangeably with 'happiness' (eudaimonia), including 'being happy' (eudaimonein), 'acting or faring well' (eu prattein), and 'good activity' (eupragia).

The second consequence of the first protreptic's conclusion is this: Cleinias now should see reason enough to continue to inquire philosophically. He is ready for the take-home message of the whole protreptic argument, which Socrates delivers in stage five. Cleinias, like everyone, wants to be happy. But now he should see not only that wisdom is necessary and sufficient for happiness, but also that it is the only thing with the power of effecting happiness. So Cleinias should devote himself wholeheartedly to the pursuit of wisdom.

But it is not obvious how he should go about pursuing wisdom. What exactly is this wisdom that is the only good? How can Cleinias acquire it? Is it teachable? These are the very questions that Socrates raises, and they constitute the third way in which the first protreptic's conclusion is significant. The conclusion that only wisdom is good points toward some further questions that require answers.

Like Cleinias, I have an interim conclusion. If my recap of all five stages is correct, there can be no doubt that the conclusion of this protreptic argument is that wisdom is the only good. This is the conclusion toward which Socrates works, and the only claims he makes that are inconsistent with it are provisional claims that express conventional values meant to be discarded by Cleinias with his turn toward philosophic values. Moreover, Socrates motivates this conclusion. There are gaps in his account, questions Cleinias might

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42 I came to this way of putting the point while reading Annas ("Virtue as the Use of Other Goods," 55), but I do not blame her if it is wrong. Note that if we were to indulge in the metaphysical niceties that the Socrates of Plato's Socratic dialogues avoids, then we might call the cobbler's leather and the wise person's wealth mere necessary conditions and not causes of benefit (cf. Phaedo 99a-b).
ask. But the protreptic is broadly successful. By reasonable argumentation, Socrates brings Cleinias to see the weakness of conventional values and to entertain wisdom-loving values. Socrates does not—and cannot—present a full case for philosophy, and Cleinias moves more quickly than he ought toward accepting what Socrates says because of his admiration. Such is the limitation of protreptic argument: it calls for a wholesale change in view, and one only very rarely has conclusive reasons to make such a wholesale change. Socrates knows that Cleinias is persuaded largely because he wants to be persuaded (cf. 274d6-e3 and 280b1-3), and he knows that Cleinias is only incompletely persuaded. Neither of these facts makes Cleinias unreasonable.

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

4. The Second Protreptic

In the first protreptic, Socrates has brought Cleinias to accept, at least temporarily, that only wisdom is good. He closes by offering Euthydemus and Dionysodorus the chance to continue the discussion by exploring questions about what this wisdom is. In particular, he offers, "Show the boy what is next, whether he must acquire all knowledge or whether there is some single knowledge which he must get to be happy and to be a good man—and what this knowledge is" (282e1-4). But Euthydemus and Dionysodorus do not immediately address this question, but instead offer more of their usual eristic jousting, none of which gives Cleinias any clue about what wisdom is. So Socrates has to resume the discussion where he left off (288c6-d4). But in this second protreptic scene, Socrates and Cleinias—and Crito, who fills in for Cleinias when Socrates shifts from reporting the previous day’s conversation to conversing with Crito—fail to identify the wisdom that Cleinias should seek and instead fall into perplexity (aporia, 292e6, 293a1; cf. 291b1-c2).

My first aim in this section is to show how this happens. The perplexity depends upon the Stoic claim, and thus gives further evidence of the extent to which the

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43 The second protreptic scene is partly reported in dramatic narrative (288d5-d8) and partly reported and then rehearsed in conversation with Crito (290e1-292e7). I am mainly interested in the single protreptic with Cleinias that Socrates reflects on in these diverse ways.
**Euthydemus** is serious about this claim. My second aim is to identify how Plato hints at an escape from the perplexity. He does not suppose that one needs to reject the Stoic claim.44

When Socrates and Cleinias begin their attempt to identify wisdom, Socrates has narrowed the terms of the search without explaining why. Earlier, he had asked whether wisdom is all knowledge or just some particular knowledge (282d8-e4). Now, he assumes that it must be some particular knowledge (288d9-e1). He does not justify this restriction, but he comments on it later (292c7-10). With the field narrowed, Socrates and Cleinias cast about for some specific knowledge that would be beneficial. Specific knowledge should have a specific object, but using results from the first protreptic, Socrates argues that knowledge of a specific object often fails to be beneficial because it fails to know how to use its object (288e2-289b4). His examples are fantastic versions of money-making and medicine: even if we had knowledge of finding gold or of making people immortal, we would not have beneficial knowledge unless we knew how to use gold and immortality.

At an impasse, Socrates narrows the search a second time. He suggests that they need some knowledge that knows both how to produce and how to use what it produces (289b4-6). The plausibility of this restriction seems to depend upon the assumptions that the sought-for knowledge is a skill, art, or craft (technê) and that a skill has a particular "product" (ergon). But the requirement of a "product" should be understood broadly. A skill's "product" does not have to be fabricated; it might be skillfully acquired or otherwise realized. Socrates and Cleinias go on to discuss several skills that are like hunting in that they acquire their "products" rather than fabricate them (see esp. 290c1-3). They do not talk about dancing, but dancing is a skill that neither fabricates nor acquires a "product."45

This second restriction hardly helps Socrates and Cleinias to discover the particular wisdom that Cleinias should pursue. They eliminate lyre-making, flute-making, the art of making speeches, and the art of generalship on the grounds that they do not know how to use what they know how to produce.46 But they come close to finding the desired skill when

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44 The second protreptic scene is much less often discussed than the first. Especially helpful exceptions include Annas ("Virtue as the Use of Other Goods," 60-64), Striker ("Plato's Socrates"), and Menn ("Physics as a Virtue," 6-7).

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

46 Two of the eliminations have repercussions worth noting. First, the elimination of the art of making speeches allows Socrates to take some digs at unnamed rival(s). Cf. 304d2-306d1. On the identity of the rival discussed in the later passage, see Guthrie, History IV, 282-283. Second, Cleinias' elimination of generalship also throws out hunting, fishing, geometry, astronomy, and calculation on the grounds that all of these have to hand over their products to some other skill for correct use (cooking in the case of the first two, and dialectic in the case of the last three). The sophistication of Cleinias' remarks prompts Crito to jump in. Crito doubts that Cleinias (290e1-2)
Cleinias introduces the art of politics as the skill that uses what generalship produces (namely, captured human beings). The two consider the possibility that the art of politics is the desired wisdom, where the art of politics is conceived generally and identified with the 'kingly' art (291c4-5). Now, Socrates finds it clear enough how the political skill uses things correctly: it uses all things in the polis correctly (291c9-d3). But he wants to know what the product of the political skill is (291d7-292a3). Crito (who is now rehearsing the inquiry Socrates originally made with Cleinias) struggles to answer this question (292a4-6) but quickly agrees that the kingly art must be beneficial (292a7-10)—it has been proposed as the special wisdom and the special wisdom is beneficial—and that therefore its product must be a good (292a11-12). But nothing is good except some sort of knowledge (292b1-2). So both the kingly art itself and the product of the kingly art are the same, namely, beneficial knowledge.

This is the puzzle. Socrates seems to find the beneficial only in productive wisdom, and he can understand its productivity only insofar as it produces wisdom in others. There is nothing for wisdom to do but make others wise, and there is no clear picture of what the wisdom is that is to be produced (292d1-e2).

or Ctesippus (291a1) could have said all this, and assents to Socrates' suggestion that perhaps a "superior being present" uttered it (291a2-7). This is usually taken to indicate a little game that Plato is playing in order to signal his own responsibility for the ideas Cleinias uses, for this particular characterization of mathematics and dialectic suggests Republic VII. (See, e.g., Reeve, Apology, 132-133n31.) This seems right, but it is not clear what follows: possibly unitarianism about the dialogues (see Shorey, Unity, 76-77), possibly a proleptic reading of the Euthydemus (Kahn, Plato, 208-209 and cf. 321-325), possibly just a recognition that Plato could write a Socratic dialogue in his maturity. See also note 74 above.

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

This is not the way the passage is standardly read (as by, e.g., Annas, "Virtue as the Use of Other Goods," and Striker, "Plato's Socrates"), but the evidence is pretty clear. Socrates (who does not presuppose that he and Crito have the kingly art, surely) asks for the kingly art's product "for us" (291d7; cf. 292a11); he discusses possible products that the kingly art provides to "the citizens" (292b5-c1; cf. 292c4-5); and then he characterizes the beneficial knowledge as the knowledge "with which we will make other persons good" (292d5-6, emphasis mine; the point is repeated at 292d8-9). Nor should this totally shock those who hold the Vlastosian expectation: consider the suggestion in Republic I that the ruler's art is to benefit the ruled. Note that if we take these textual hints seriously, then there might well be a difference between the productivity of the wisdom qua kingly art (produce wisdom in others) and the productivity of it qua knowledge beneficial to oneself (which is not discussed). And if that is right, then there are, strictly speaking, two puzzles here: the first is the puzzle of providing content to the product of the kingly art, and the other is the puzzle of providing content to one's own beneficial knowledge. I treat them as such, though, of course, the puzzles are closely related.
One might seek to escape the puzzle by rejecting Socrates’ second restriction. If the sought-after wisdom is not a productive art, then no problem arises about what it is supposed to produce. But this does not remove the entire perplexity. Even if the kingly art does not need to produce good effects in others, it still needs to guarantee correct use to be beneficial at all. How can it guarantee correct use unless it is knowledge of what is good? And how can it be knowledge of what is good if it is the only good? In that case, wisdom would have to be knowledge of itself, and it is far from clear what this could be.

What is one to make of this lurking puzzle? There are several possibilities. One might suppose that Plato is genuinely puzzled, and that there is no solution in sight. But there is a cost to this reading. I take it that Plato wants his readers to think that Socrates provides a better protreptic to philosophy than Dionysodorus and Euthydemus do. This seems to me to militate against the suggestion that the text is supposed to leave its readers genuinely clueless about what wisdom is. For if I am genuinely clueless about what wisdom is, then I have not been successively encouraged to pursue anything at all, and if Socrates has not encouraged me to pursue wisdom better than Dionysodorus and Euthydemus, then Plato’s dialogue fails to achieve one of its principal objectives.

So one might think, instead, that there is a solution lurking if we only reject the Stoic claim that wisdom is the only good. But this is another initially attractive response that cures the disease only to kill the patient. It is true that the puzzle depends upon the Stoic claim, and true that the puzzle disappears if the Stoic claim is rejected. But this maneuver also undermines the objective of showing how Socrates offers better protreptic than Dionysodorus and Euthydemus. For if the Stoic claim is supposed to be rejected, then the results of the first protreptic are thrown up in the air—what is the value of wisdom exactly?—and the true nature of wisdom is none the clearer.

A more popular and promising response is to insist that Plato has a solution to this puzzle in another dialogue. In the Republic, Socrates considers those who say that the good is wisdom (phronesis), and he says, “those who believe this cannot identify what this

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49 See McCabe, "Developing the good itself by itself."

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

51 In Socratic Perplexity, Matthews accords aporia great importance to Socrates and to Plato’s developing conception of philosophy, and one upshot is a wariness toward interpretations that insist on resolving all of Socrates’ puzzles. One might also be inclined to take this particular aporia to be genuine on the grounds that the Charmides ends with a related puzzle about knowledge of knowledge. But I think otherwise, and Matthews unfortunately does not discuss the aporia of the Euthydemus’ second protreptic scene.

52 See especially Goldschmidt, Dialogues, 79-80; Kahn, Plato, 325; McCabe, ”Developing the good itself by itself;” Schofield, Plato: Political Philosophy, 150-155.
wisdom is, but are forced in the end to say that it is wisdom of the good" (Rep. 505b8-10). But this is a "ridiculous" (505b11) account of the good: "They say that it is wisdom of the good, as if we understood what they are saying when they utter the word 'good'" (Rep. 505c2-4).\(^{53}\) The solution, in the Republic, is to recognize a sharp distinction between the unqualified Good—or what goodness is—and things that are qualifiedly good, such as wisdom. Once one sees this move, one can maintain that wisdom is the only good for a human being and still recognize that there is something else to goodness, something else to know in order to say what the object of wisdom is. But this is to see that wisdom requires knowledge of more than human goods. It requires a grasp of what goodness universally is.

I do not for a moment disagree with this. The Form of the Good does solve the puzzle in the Euthydemus’ second protreptic scene. But for reasons I have already stated concerning Plato's objectives in writing the Euthydemus, I think it would be problematic if the dialogue gave no hint of its own solution to the puzzle. The value of the dialogue as an incitement to Socratic philosophy would be diminished if it did not offer resources to solve the puzzle and complete the exhortation to pursue wisdom. Moreover, I think that the dialogue does give its own hints towards a solution that complements the Republic's introduction of the Form of the Good.\(^{54}\)

Notice that the puzzle arises in part because Socrates restricts the search for wisdom by rejecting the possibility that it is "every or all" knowledge. He does this sneakily and without any attempt to justify the move. On the heels of the first protreptic, he had mentioned that wisdom could be "every or all" knowledge or it could be a special sort of knowledge (282d8-e4), but in the second protreptic, he simply assumes that it is a special sort of knowledge (288d9-e1). He returns to the contrast briefly, at just the point that he and Crito are seeking to understand the kingly art's production of good. He asks if the kingly art provides "every or all knowledge, cobblerly and carpentry and all the rest" (292c7-9). Crito understandably says no. But what if Crito were to balk at Socrates' way of construing the alternative to specific knowledge? They need to know what the content of wisdom or the kingly art is, and they can find no specific content that is not puzzling. But what if Crito were willing to say that wisdom is knowledge of everything? I do not mean everything that is knowable or even everything that is known by someone or other. Rather, I mean that the political art must know everything that a person needs to know in order to know anything.

\(^{53}\) Cf. Plutarch, Comm not chp. 27, and Sextus, M XI 186-187.

\(^{54}\) Contra Kahn, Plato, 325 and 208-209, who thinks that the dialogue itself gives no help in solving the puzzle.
This approach to knowledge is suggested by the Socratic practices that must be part of what attracts Cleinias. Socrates examines himself and others to test whether their commitments are coherent. Those who fail to show coherent commitments are thought not to have knowledge. So coherent commitments—elenchus-proof commitments—are at least necessary for knowledge. Socrates appears to believe the following. For me to know that \( p \), I must know a reason for \( p \). And to know a reason for \( p \), I must know a reason for that reason. And so on. If the considerations I adduce to justify my commitments fail to be mutually supporting or, worse, fail to be consistent, then I do not have knowledge. For me to know that \( p \), I need to know a huge range of other things that are implicated in the justification of my belief that \( p \). That is why I need to know everything (I need to know) in order to know anything.

How much knowledge is this? Well, one might think that some domains of knowledge are separate enough that one might possess a coherent set of commitments about, say, cobblerly that is utterly consistent with one’s other commitments and sufficiently rich to warrant the conclusion that one knows cobblerly even if one does not know about, e.g., medicine. But one might also think that there are some domains of knowledge that one must know in order to know anything. One can hear Socrates saying that knowledge of cobblerly requires knowledge of good and bad shoes which in turn requires knowledge of good and bad. So one might need to know quite a lot in order to know anything, even if one does not need omniscience.

With this account, Socrates and Cleinias could escape the perplexity about what wisdom or the political art is. Wisdom, the only good, is knowledge of everything a person needs to know to have a coherent, elenchus-proof set of psychological commitments. So the wisdom or political art that Socrates and Cleinias fail to identify is architectonic. It is not an art of some special domain, but rather the art of how to govern the other arts. At first glance, this would appear to be an alternative to the proposal that the Good itself is the special object of political expertise. But that is not true, because the Good is itself an architectonic property. According to the Republic, all the unqualified properties that are the special object of knowledge are what they are and are knowable because they are good. Knowing them requires knowing the Good, and knowing the Good requires knowing them. And that makes knowing the Good resemble an architectonic expertise and not a special grasp of some particular domain. The Euthydemus' suggestion and the Republic's provide complementary solutions to the puzzle of the second protreptic scene.\(^{55}\)

\(^{55}\) Contrast Schofield, Plato: Political Philosophy, 136-193, especially 154-155. I concede that it helps to have an account of what goodness is, and so the Republic makes progress beyond the
So the Euthydemus succeeds as a protreptic dialogue, as a free-standing incitement to philosophy with its own account of how Socrates provides a better invitation to philosophy than Dionysodorus and Euthydemus do. Of course, the success of the Euthydemus requires some work of the reader. But the resources are there. Socrates’ characteristic practices suggest the account of knowledge that he and Cleinias fail to articulate. And the account is not merely embedded in the character of Socrates. It also does implicit work in the first protreptic by helping to to explain the distinction between use and correct use (see discussion in §3.4 above). In addition, the second protreptic’s strange deflection of the possibility that wisdom is all knowledge hints at the reader to consider it. The scene that follows the second protreptic turns up the volume of the hint. Euthydemus offers to reveal what the knowledge is that Cleinias and Socrates are puzzled about, or to show that Socrates already possesses it (293b1-2). He then proceeds to argue thus: because Socrates knows something (293b7-8, c1-2), he is a knower (c2-3), and because it is impossible for anything to be other than what it is (b8-c1), he must, as a knower, know everything (c3-4). This is a sophistical argument. But it is not far from an account of knowledge that Socrates’ practice of examining others suggests. Socrates does think, I maintain, that to know that $p$ requires being a knower and that being a knower requires knowing everything one needs to know in order to justify one’s belief in $p$ (and one’s belief in all the beliefs that justify one’s belief in $p$, and so on). As often in the Euthydemus, there is a philosophically sophisticated and valuable point lurking under the sophistry of the eristic display.

5. Eristic

There is one last consideration in favor of attributing this conception of wisdom as all knowledge to Socrates in order to solve the puzzle of the second protreptic scene. The attribution helps to solve another mystery. About two thirds of the Euthydemus are filled with displays of what Socrates calls eristic wisdom (272b9-10). Many others have not been so kind. Indeed, Socrates notes that most people would be more ashamed to refute others eristically than to be refuted (303d2-5). According to Crito, an esteemed writer of speeches calls eristic “worthless” and “ridiculous” (305a6-8), and Crito himself calls public

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Euthydemus. My claims are two. First, the Euthydemus does not need the Form of the Good to dissolve the puzzle of its second protreptic. Second, the solution that the Form of the Good provides in the Republic does not fully replace what the Euthydemus offers but adds a complementary wrinkle.
engagement with it "worthy of reproach" (305a8-b3). But Socrates shows remarkable patience, in public, for the eristic arguments of Dionysodorus and Euthydemus, and he even asserts that he wants to learn "the eristic wisdom" (272b9-10; cf. the more ironic 272b1-4). The mystery is, Why does he indulge eristic?

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

If we take Socrates to be sticking to wisdom as the only good and advocating the pursuit of wisdom as an elenchus-proof set of attitudes, then we have an explanation. For one way in which one can fail to survive examination is by failing to master the dialectical art, broadly construed, but failing to make the proper distinctions and by falling into fallacy. So happiness requires attention to eristic, requires mastery of the eristical tricks. To drive this point home, Plato has some of the final eristic arguments in the dialogue concern the

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


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

59 This point is lost on the ancient reading according to which the dialogue is just supposed to turn us away from eristic (see, e.g., Diog. Laert. II 49-51, and cf. II 30). But one should not suppose that the ancients were necessarily better readers than we. Those who held this reading of the Euthydemus also said that the point of the Gorgias was to turn readers away from rhetoric (Diog. Laert. II 49-51), which is far too simple a reading to be attractive.
very questions of Socrates' protreptic discourses, the need for goods, what is appropriate to the skilled, and the possession and use of conventional goods (299a-303a). In other words, I suggest that Socrates is motivated to take eristic seriously for just the reason that Zeno of Citium takes sophisms seriously. It is reported that Zeno "compared the skills of dialecticians to those just measures that measure not wheat or any other worthy thing but chaff and crap" (Stobaeus II 12,2 Wachsmuth). Zeno was not denigrating the dialecticians; having a good crap-detector is no paltry thing. Indeed, it is necessary to have the argumentative skills of the eristics and dialecticians if knowledge is, as Zeno and the Stoics hold, "stable, firm, and unshakeable by reason or argument." Unsurprisingly, Zeno "ordered his pupils to study dialectic since it is able to solve sophisms" (Plutarch, Stoic rep 1034f), and he responded to the dialecticians' puzzles with Solutions and Refutations (DL VII 4). Something very much like this, I suggest, is also why Socrates shows interest in eristic in the Euthydemus. For Socrates believes that wisdom is the only good, and he acts as though surviving refutation is at least necessary for wisdom.

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

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

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

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

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

So the Euthydemus shows a deep commitment to the Stoic thesis. But this might not be good news. Indeed, there might be reason to avoid the Stoicizing reading if it is at all possible to do so. So the deniers suggest when they say that it is philosophically hopeless for Socrates to hold the Stoic thesis, either because the thesis itself is indefensible or because Socrates does not have the Stoic distinctions that make a reasonable defense possible. Thus far, I have attributed to Socrates no particularly Stoic distinctions or thoughts. That goods must causally benefit is Socratic orthodoxy; that wisdom requires an elenchus-proof psychology falls neatly out of Socrates' central mission. But the deniers might think that Socrates does not have the resources to make good on the Stoic thesis.

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

Now, I think that arguments of this form are problematic. That ρ is crazy is not, in general, a compelling reason to prescind from attributing ρ to a philosopher, especially a philosopher who is willing to outrage common sense. After all, the difficulty with the belief that wisdom is the only good is no reason to prescind from attributing it to the Stoics. Why not Socrates? It seems to me that unwillingness to attribute a crazy belief when the evidence suggests a crazy belief is not a virtue for an historian, but a handicap.

But perhaps the more important point is that the particulars of Vlastos' argument rest on a misunderstanding. Vlastos assumes that acting for the sake of the good requires acting so as to bring about the good as a consequence of one's action. On that assumption, if wisdom is the only good, then one has reasons to phi rather than psi if and only if phi-ing brings about more wisdom than psi-ing. In the absence of this reason, one is left flipping a coin, or following a momentary whim. But why assume that acting for the sake of the good is aiming to bring about the good? This "consequentialist" reckoning of acting for the sake of the good is not compelled by anything that Socrates says. Although he argues that only wisdom is good on the grounds that only wisdom has the causal power to benefit, this entails only that wisdom has the causal power to effect right use. There is no need to

65 I mean by acting on a whim acting not for the sake of a reason but for no particular reason at all. If one asks a person why she did what she did, and she says, "No particular reason," or "I just felt like it," then she acted on a whim. The renegade Stoic Ariston of Chios is not far from endorsing this picture, on some hostile interpretations.
suppose that right use brings about the good of happiness or some goods (only wisdom would count) as a further consequence; right use could constitute happiness.

Indeed, there are good reasons to attribute to Socrates the view that right use constitutes happiness. First, if right use does not constitute happiness—that is, if it brings about the good as a further consequence—and if only wisdom is good, then he would seem to face a version of the second protreptic's puzzle. Second, when Socrates wants to consider the power of wise use to bring about some separate benefit in the second protreptic, he focuses narrowly on the case of bringing about the separate benefit in other people, not in oneself. He does not explicitly require that wise use bring about a separate benefit in oneself. Third, if we attribute to Socrates the view that right use constitutes happiness, Vlastos' objection gets no grip.

To see this, we need to characterize Socratic eudaimonism more exactly. It is, on the current proposal, not the consequentialist thesis that one should act always to bring about one's happiness. Instead, Socrates holds in the Euthydemus that one should always instantiate one's happiness by acting wisely, where wisdom is a coherent set of attitudes. I call this, for shorthand, coherentist eudaimonism. So one should do what one's attitudes recommend if one's attitudes are coherent. If one desires to sleep in clean comfort instead of vomit and one's commitments are coherent, then one acts wisely and instantiates happiness by sleeping in clean comfort instead of vomit.

What if, a denier might worry, one desires to sleep in clean comfort instead of vomit but one's commitments are not coherent? Socrates has to deny that such a person acts perfectly wisely, with perfect justification, but nothing prevents him from allowing that there are degrees of justification, degrees of wisdom. So if one's desire to sleep in clean comfort instead of vomit does not immediately contradict one's other commitments on examination, then one has better reason to act on this desire than one would if the desire did immediately contradict one's other commitments. Although Socrates does not address this complication in the Euthydemus, there is reason to attribute the allowance to him because

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This view has consequences that the Euthydemus does not fully work out. First, as noted earlier, Socrates must distinguish between what produces benefits—that is, what is good, which is only wisdom—and the goal of all activity—that is, the good for a human being, which is happiness or success. This point can seem paradoxical: wise use is the good for a human being but not itself good. But there is nothing that forbids this thought, and in fact, the Stoics accept it with full explicitness. Moreover, the thought is fully consistent with the ordinary intuition that the good involves enjoying all goods, for wise use surely requires possessing all goods (=wisdom). Another complication concerns wise use as happiness or success. One might think, with the Stoics, that a given episode of wise use fully instantiates happiness or success, or one might insist, with Aristotle, that happiness or success requires such temporal extension that one episode of wise can only partly instantiate it. There were Socratics of both persuasions, and I see no evidence in the Euthydemus to attribute one or the other to its protagonist.
he needs it to explain why he is convinced that he is virtuous even though he believes that virtue is knowledge and that he lacks knowledge.67

But why, a denier might object, should we suppose that psychological coherence requires desiring to sleep in clean comfort instead of vomit? How can we tell what attitudes must be part of any coherent set? These are very good questions that are not directly addressed in the Euthydemus. The Stoics address them by insisting that nature guarantees that certain desires must be present in any coherent set of psychological attitudes. But the Socrates of Plato's Socratic dialogues never confronts the question of what guarantees that his interlocutors will have true beliefs that can be used to expose a contradiction with their false beliefs. Perhaps it is reasonable for Socrates to avoid confronting this question. Perhaps there is nothing more to say short of a massive program of empirical research or a developed providentialist tale about nature. The latter of these falls outside the scope of Socrates' interests and abilities, at least as Plato portrays them.68 But the former might plausibly characterize what Socrates actually does. He constantly examines those he meets, and he seeks to see which commitments can survive examination and which constantly fail to cohere. He does not promise to explain why we humans have to believe that suffering injustice is better than doing it if we want to be consistent with ourselves, but his empirical research has led him to believe that this is so.

So we might conclude that Socrates' proto-Stoicism in the Euthydemus is underdeveloped, but we should not at all doubt that Socrates is committed to the Stoic thesis in the Euthydemus. Socrates is generally committed to the assumption that his interlocutors have true beliefs in them that can be used to expose a contradiction with their false beliefs, and this assumption is enough to sustain confidence that those with coherent sets of attitudes will have true beliefs and reasonable desires. Whether Socrates explicitly sees this in any of Plato's Socratic dialogue is a question, but he is surely committed to it in practice. With that commitment, Plato could well think that Socrates could sustain the thesis that only wisdom is good.

7. Rethinking the Role of the Euthydemus

I conclude that Socrates in the Euthydemus is deeply committed to the claim that wisdom is the only good. To deny this simply by isolating Socrates' argument at 279-281 and qualifying his claim that wisdom is the only good is tantamount to failing to read the

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67 See Shaw, "Socrates and the True Political Craft."
68 Contrast Xenophon, Mem, I 4.5-18 and IV 3.2-18.
dialogue as a whole. But now we have to face the evidence provided by other Socratic dialogues. Presumably, Plato has some reason for writing some of his dialogues as Socratic dialogues, featuring a principal character Socrates who denies that he has knowledge and instead seeks and tests such knowledge in others. One plausible thought, which I call the Vlastosian expectation, is that these dialogues are linked because the character Socrates in them holds a consistent philosophical position. The Euthydemus makes trouble for that

69 I think that the distinction between Socratic and non-Socratic dialogues is much fuzzier than it is often taken to be, especially by those influenced by Gregory Vlastos. But I do not here require skepticism about this particular distinction, and the way I make it does not depend on contentious attempts to measure Plato's writing style or chronological hypotheses about his philosophical development. Socrates is not a primary character in the Critias, Laws, Parmenides, Sophist, Statesman, and Timaeus. As I understand it, the requirement that Socrates not see himself as a source of important knowledge rules out the Cratylus, Meno, Phaedo, Phaedrus, Philebus, Republic (at least II-X), and Symposium. (It is worth noting, however, that Socrates is keen to credit others (Diotima, priests, etc.) for his most remarkable claims in several of these dialogues.) If we exclude the allegedly Platonic dialogues whose authorship is widely contested and the Menexenus, an exceptional work whose position cannot be reasonably established as Socratic or non-Socratic by the three criteria I have offered, then the remaining, Socratic dialogues are the Apology, Charmides, Crito, Euthydemus, Euthyphro, Gorgias, Hippias Major, Hippias Minor, Ion, Laches, Lysis, Protagoras, Republic I (if we allow the separation), and Theaetetus. The last of these is perhaps controversial, but to exclude it, one has to suppose that the Socratic dialogues mean to be faithful to the historical Socrates and that Aristotle is right when he insists that the historical Socrates concentrated on ethical matters instead of metaphysics and epistemology. These are not unreasonable suppositions, but readers who fail to take seriously the obvious links between the Theaetetus' Socrates and the Socratic dialogues' Socrates run the risk of missing much that is going on in the Theaetetus (see esp. Sedley, The Midwife of Platonism). For my purposes in this essay, the classification of the Theaetetus is moot.

70 More exactly, the Vlastosian expectation is that nothing Socrates sincerely says in a Socratic dialogue contradicts anything Socrates sincerely says in any Socratic dialogue. I do not know if anyone has explicitly adopted this expectation, though Penner ("Socrates," 123) italicizes his advice 'Never consider any one expression of Socrates' views in isolation from other expressions of Socrates' views' and to heed this advice he draws on a wide range of dialogues. My reason for highlighting the expectation is that many scholars make inferences and textual appeals that assume it. The label itself honors Vlastos, who seems to deserve the lion's share of the credit for advancing this way of reading the Socratic dialogues in recent decades, since so many of the interpreters who share this approach were directly influenced by him. As significant as the agreement about the Vlastosian expectation is, it is nevertheless limited in two important ways. First, those who share the Vlastosian expectation do not all agree with Vlastos' further claim that the Socrates of Plato's Socratic dialogues is the historical Socrates; for some reasoned resistance, see the reviews of Socrates, Ironist and Moral Philosopher by Beversluis and Kahn. I set this disagreement aside, as I am not interested in the historical Socrates here. Second, those who share the Vlastosian expectation do not all agree on the exact list of Plato's Socratic dialogues, as different interpretations require different dialogues to be kicked off the list of "purely" Socratic dialogues and onto the list of "transitional" dialogues that are infected with Plato's "developing" "middle-period" views. This I cannot ignore, for my reading of the Euthydemus could be accepted by a partisan of the Vlastosian expectation who is willing to treat the Euthydemus as a "transitional" outlier and not a "purely" Socratic dialogue governed by the Vlastosian expectation. Vlastos is right not to make this move, despite the fact that he considers the Euthydemus "transitional" (Socrates, 46-47). The move itself leaves residual worries: after all, the Socrates of the Euthydemus meets the initial criteria for the Socrates of a Socratic dialogue (unless we beg the question by insisting that one of the criteria for this Socrates is that he admit of goods other than wisdom), and so the question remains, Why does Plato put into the mouth of this Socrates the claim that wisdom is the only good? But I also reject this move because I think that there is a
thought. In some Socratic dialogues, Socrates plainly says that ill health—a bad physical condition—makes life not worth living (Cri. 47d-48a, Grg. 511e-512b), and the most natural reading of these passages is that bodily health is good for a human being.\(^{71}\)

One bold response would be to insist that Socrates consistently holds that wisdom is the only good despite the appearances in some other dialogues. This option, pursued by Richard Kraut,\(^{72}\) is much more promising than it initially seems. When Socrates says that life is not worth living with a ruined body, he clearly makes bodily health a necessary condition of happiness. But he need not be saying that bodily health is a good partly constitutive of happiness. He might think that a healthy body is necessary not as a good to be enjoyed by the happy but necessary for good action (=correct use), which is happiness.

But there are two worries. First, on this approach, Socrates speaks very misleadingly when he says that wisdom suffices for happiness. After all, wisdom needs a healthy body to effect good action. Perhaps a healthy body is a necessary condition without being a cause of good action, so that wisdom remains the sole cause of good action and in this way sufficient for happiness. But this reasoning is contentious, and the fine distinctions it requires are nowhere explicitly avowed in a Socratic dialogue.\(^{73}\) There remains a tension between the natural implication of Socrates' words in the Euthydemus and his claim that

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\(^{71}\) Vlastos cites different evidence when he wants to insist that Plato's Socrates recognized goods other than wisdom. His starring piece of evidence is Gorgias 467e (Socrates, 228-229, 305-306), but he also cites Gorgias 499c-500a, Lysis 218e, and Meno 78c and 87e (Socrates, 229). Annas ("Virtue as the Use of Other Goods") seems to agree that the Euthydemus is exceptional—"It is only in the Euthydemus that we find the radical conclusion drawn that virtue is the only real good" (55)—but she nevertheless tries to defuse the pressure that Vlastos' passages bring to bear by concentrating on Gorg 467e and arguing that it makes an instrumental/non-instrumental distinction, at cross-purposes with the Euthydemus' conditional/unconditional distinction (57). I do not think that this reply works. Annas' idea seems to be that health and wealth can be non-instrumental in the Gorgias and conditional in the Euthydemus, but Vlastos claims that health and wealth cannot be goods (of any sort) in the Gorgias and non-goods (of any sort) in the Euthydemus. Nevertheless, I think that Vlastos' passages are quite easily defused. In Gorgias 467e, Lysis 218e, and Meno 78c, "Socrates simply asks his interlocutor about commonly recognized goods, and nothing in the argument depends on his agreeing with the interlocutor that these are genuine goods" (Irwin, "Epicurean?" 212). (On Gorgias 467e, see also Brickhouse and Smith, Plato's Socrates, 110-111.) Meno 87e is a provisional claim taken from what is ordinarily believed, and it comes in for revision. Gorgias 499c-500a follows on Callicles' belated recognition of good and bad pleasures, and it is far from clear that Socrates recognizes any good pleasures that are distinct from virtue. (Rudebusch [Socrates, Pleasure, and Value, see esp. 145n6] seems to allow that there are, but I doubt that he should.) Nevertheless, my goal is not to urge a Vlastosian to accept that wisdom is the only good in all the Socratic dialogues. I have my doubts about the tenability of that claim, and more importantly, as will become clear, I have my doubts about the whole Vlastosian project.

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\(^{72}\) Citation of Socrates and the State. Cf. Diogenes Laertius II 31.

\(^{73}\) But see Diogenes Laertius II 78.
bodily health is necessary for happiness. Second, this approach might also make Socrates speak misleadingly when he says that bodily health is necessary. Opinions will differ about this, and much more careful consideration of the Crito and Gorgias is required to determine whether these dialogues are compatible with the Stoic claim.

A second response to our dilemma is to exile the Euthydemus from the favored list of Socratic dialogues that are supposed to manifest the consistent philosophy of Socrates. But this *ad hoc* maneuver needs to explain why Plato chooses to portray the same Socrates developing a different position. Typically, readings of this general sort say that Plato wants to show the continuity of his own mature philosophy with his youthful adherence to the doctrines of Socrates. That is, some dialogues form a transitional bridge from the purely Socratic to the maturely Platonic. But even if we grant for the sake of argument all of this reading's chronological assumptions, the reading does not work for this particular case, because the Socrates of the Republic does not endorse the doctrinal heresy that the Euthydemus manifests. The Euthydemus is not a transitional bridge from Socratic recognition of multiple goods to the mature Plato's insistence on just one good. So there needs to be another explanation of why Plato chooses to portray the same Socrates developing a different position.

One natural suggestion would be that Plato wants to explore more than one Socratic possibility. Perhaps Plato sees that some basic Socratic commitments can be theorized in more than one way, and he wants to explore these divergent possibilities. Call this option three. It rejects the *ad hoc* distinction between purely Socratic and "transitional" dialogues because it rejects the Vlastosian expectation that everything Socrates sincerely says in any

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74 In fact, the Euthydemus has proved entirely undatable. To the extent that there is a consensus about the order in which Plato wrote his dialogues, the consensus holds that he wrote his Socratic dialogues early, the six dialogues that avoid hiatus (Timaeus, Critias, Sophist, Statesman, Philebus, Laws) late, and the rest in the middle. This would suggest that the Euthydemus is early, and so some readers are content to leave it. (See, e.g., Vlastos, Socrates, 46-47: he thinks that the Euthydemus is among the last of the Socratic dialogues.) Other readers, however, think that the Euthydemus already shows signs of the middle period, and so they assign it to a "transitional" period (see, e.g., Irwin, Plato's Ethics, 12-13). Still others, impressed by the sophisticated positions underlying much of Dionysodorus' and Euthydemus' eristic argumentation and by Cleinias' breezy insistence that mathematical sciences are subordinate to dialectic (290b10-c6), raise more radical doubts about whether the Euthydemus is early at all (see, e.g., Crombie, Examination, 1:223, and Annas, "Virtue as the Use of Other Goods," 62), and some eminences have preferred to read it with the Theaetetus (e.g., Natorp, Platon Ideenlehre, 119-122) or even the Sophist (e.g., Sidgwick, "The Sophists," 306). (For a history of the dispute, see Ausland, "The Euthydemus and the Dating of Plato's Dialogues.") None of this chronological uncertainty should matter. The basic point remains that Plato's characterization of Socrates in the Euthydemus (whenever it was written) joins it to some but not all of the other dialogues. So the basic question remains, why did Plato write the Euthydemus this way, if the Socrates of the Euthydemus contradicts the Socrates of other Socratic dialogues on a basic ethical commitment? This question is not answered by any chronological hypothesis.
one Socratic dialogue is consistent with everything Socrates says in every Socratic dialogue. Instead, this approach recognizes a set of Socratic dialogues in which a single character Socrates explores his basic commitments in multiple ways.75

On this reading, the Socratic dialogues are exploratory and not doctrinal records of a single philosophy of Socrates. But their lesson need not be skeptical. Sometimes showing the viability of multiple approaches encourages skepticism about whether any one of them is right.76 But sometimes it is merely propaedeutic to developing the right view. And if the Socratic dialogues are propaedeutic, they might prepare the reader for a mature view that Plato already holds,77 or they might be experiments preparing the author to discover the best possible view. Nor does this general approach require contentious chronological assumptions. A Socratic dialogue could be propaedeutic even if it is not written before the Republic, if it is written for readers who will encounter it before the Republic or if it is written as evidence of an experiment that would lead a Socratic toward the Republic.

A reading of one dialogue cannot determine how to read all of them. But I hope that the question has been reopened. This is the third ramification of taking the Stoic claim in the Euthydemus seriously and of considering the grounds for denying the Stoic reading. The Euthydemus reveals sophisticated reflection on the problems of rational change in view. It offers a glimpse of eudaimonism quite at odds with the consequentialist picture of the Protagoras that is so widely projected onto ancient philosophers. And it challenges us again to rethink what Plato might have been doing when he wrote Socratic dialogues.

Sources Cited


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75 It is beyond the scope of this essay to identify more precisely the activities (e.g., examining others for knowledge) and commitments (e.g., do not harm others) that Plato took to be characteristic of Socrates, but of course, I cannot and do not think that the Stoic claim is among them.

76 For this reading of Socratic dialogues, see Grote, Plato, 1:361-407.

77 As Kahn believes: see, e.g., "Did Plato?," 39.


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Brown, Socrates the Stoic?


