


10-1-1980

Socrates and Hedonism: Protagoras 351b-358d

Donald J. Zeyl

University of Rhode Island, donaldzeyl@gmail.com

Follow this and additional works at: <https://orb.binghamton.edu/sagp>

 Part of the [Ancient History, Greek and Roman through Late Antiquity Commons](#), [Ancient Philosophy Commons](#), and the [History of Philosophy Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Zeyl, Donald J., "Socrates and Hedonism: Protagoras 351b-358d" (1980). *The Society for Ancient Greek Philosophy Newsletter*. 119.
<https://orb.binghamton.edu/sagp/119>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by The Open Repository @ Binghamton (The ORB). It has been accepted for inclusion in The Society for Ancient Greek Philosophy Newsletter by an authorized administrator of The Open Repository @ Binghamton (The ORB). For more information, please contact ORB@binghamton.edu.

Zeyl. N.O. 1980
Philol

SOCRATES AND HEDONISM: PROTAGORAS 351b-358d

Donald J. Zeyl

University of Rhode Island

October 1, 1980

An ancient quarrel persists among students of Plato's Protagoras between those who claim that Socrates himself holds the hedonistic thesis on which he bases his argument against akrasia (I shall call them "prohedonists"), and those who deny the claim ("antihedonists") 1). Few will deny that the matter at issue is basic to the interpretation of Plato's early dialogues and hence to the reconstruction of the philosophy of Socrates, and until it is resolved, Socrates' place in the history of moral thought will remain unclear.

The challenges which either camp must meet are well known and considerable. If Socrates does sincerely accept hedonism in the Protagoras, how is his hedonism here to be reconciled with his claims about the supreme importance of virtue and the perfection of the soul, and in particular with his attack on hedonism in the Gorgias? 2). If, on the other hand, Socrates does not seriously represent himself as a hedonist in the argument, why does he use hedonism as a premise in an argument whose conclusion he surely takes seriously, and why does he allow his interlocutors to take him as believing that premise in all seriousness? If a new case is to be made on either side of the issue it must be made on the basis of a close reading of the text, on a plausible account of Socrates' aims and strategy in the argument, and on a consideration of objections to both sides. In this paper I shall present such a case. I shall argue for the antihedonist interpretation by showing that it is consistent with a natural, unconstrained reading of the text; that it is accounted for by a plausible reading of Socrates' aims and methods in arguing against akrasia; that major objections to it can be satisfactorily answered; and that major objections to a prohedonist account cannot. If I am successful in each aspect of the case, the ancient quarrel can, I believe, be brought to an end.

I

I shall begin by examining closely those passages within Prt. 351b-358d in which the hedonistic thesis is introduced or reasserted and which have been or could be taken to support a prohedonist account. In the examination I shall limit my attention strictly to the issue of pro- or antihedonism. I readily sacrifice elegance to accuracy in the translations:

(a) 351b3-e7:

"Do you say, Protagoras," I said, "that (1) some men live well and others badly?" He assented. "Then does it seem to you that (2) a man would live well if he lived in distress and suffering?" He demurred. "(3) What if he should live a pleasant life to the end? Doesn't it seem to you that he would have lived well like that?" "It does," he said. "Therefore (ara) (4) living pleasantly is good and unpleasantly bad." "(5) As long as he lived in the enjoyment of praiseworthy things (tois kalois)," he said. "What, Protagoras? Surely not you too call (6) some pleasant things bad and painful things good, as the many do? I mean, (7) aren't they good in that respect in which they are pleasant- disregarding anything else that may come from them? And again, aren't painful things bad to the extent that they are painful?" "I don't know, Socrates," he said,

"whether I should answer so unqualifiedly as you ask, that (8) all pleasant things are good and all painful things bad; it seems to me safer, not only with respect to my present answer, but also all the rest of my life, to answer that (6') some pleasures are not good and some pains are not bad, though some are, and thirdly, some (sc. pleasures and pains) are neutral, neither good nor bad." "(9) Don't you call 'pleasant'," I said, "the things which partake of pleasure or which produce pleasure?" "Indeed I do," he said. "Then this is what I mean, (7') whether things aren't good to the extent that they are pleasant; I'm asking whether pleasure itself is not good." "As you frequently say, Socrates," he said, "let's examine it, and if our examination appears reasonable, and pleasant and good should turn out to be the same, we shall be in agreement; if not, we shall dispute it then."

I shall represent the numbered sentences and phrases by the following statements:

1. Some men live well, others badly.
2. A man lives badly if he lives in distress and suffering.
3. A man lives well if he lives a pleasant life to the end.
4. Living pleasantly is good; living unpleasantly is bad.
5. Living pleasantly is good only if one lives in the enjoyment of praiseworthy things.
6. Some pleasant things are bad; some painful things are good.
7. Pleasant things are good in the respect in which/to the extent to which they are pleasant; painful things are bad in the respect in which/to the extent to which they are painful.
8. All pleasant things are good; all painful things are bad.
9. All things which partake of or produce pleasure are pleasant.

The discussion in this passage proceeds as follows: Protagoras agrees that 1, 2 and 3 express his views. Socrates infers 4 from 2 and 3. Protagoras denies 4 in its unqualified form; he will accept it only if it is qualified as in 5. Socrates links 5 to 6, a view which he attributes to the many. He proposes 7 as the view which Protagoras ought to accept instead of 5, and represents it as contradicting 6. 8 is Protagoras' version of 7, and 9 is presented as an analytic truth. 6' and 7' are merely repetitions of 6 and 7.

The discussion begins with Socrates securing Protagoras' answers to three questions, and inferring a conclusion from those answers. We need to determine both the significance of the questions and the conclusion, and the extent to which they can be taken as indicative of Socrates' own view.

In assenting to 1 Protagoras makes it clear that he is prepared to evaluate lives as good or bad. "Living well" (eu zen) is a standard synonym for "doing/faring well" (eu prattein) and "being happy" (eudaimonein) ³). He thus has some criterion or criteria by which he judges lives as good or happy, and his answers to 2 and 3 reveal what these are. In his answer to 2 he states that living a

(predominantly) painful life is sufficient for not living well, and living a (predominantly) pleasant life is sufficient for living well. 4). These answers and their implications bear close attention.

If being a pleasant life is a sufficient condition for being a good life, it will follow that a predominance of pleasure in any life is sufficient to qualify that life as a good one, no matter how slight the predominance, and so also with a painful life. Although this view does not disallow the possibility that factors other than pleasure and pain may contribute to the goodness or badness of a life, such factors, no matter how abundantly they are present in a life, do not avail against pleasure and pain to make even a marginally pleasant life bad, or a marginally painful life good. Since such factors cannot contribute to the goodness or badness of a life commensurably with pleasure and pain, it is doubtful that 2 and 3 are intended to allow for them. Further, the conjunction of 2 and 3, with the reasonable assumption that a life predominates either in pleasure or in pain, will entail that being a pleasant life is the only sufficient condition for being a good life, and being a painful life the only sufficient condition for being a bad life, and it will further follow that living (predominantly) pleasantly is both a necessary and a sufficient condition for living well. In his answers to 2 and 3 Protagoras thus shows that he is committed to a hedonistic eudaemonistic theory: living pleasantly defines or constitutes living well or happily. 5).

In 4 Socrates infers from Protagoras' answers a thesis about the relationship of living pleasantly to what is good, and of living unpleasantly to what is bad. 4 must then be understood in a suitable sense so that it does indeed follow from 2 and 3. Living pleasantly has indeed been shown to be good, and living painfully bad, but to be so in a strong sense: they are, respectively, a necessary and sufficient good, and a necessary and sufficient evil. 6). If a theory about what is good in this strong sense is a theory about the defining conditions of living well or being happy, then the theory implied in 2-4 is nothing short of evaluative hedonism.

Socrates has reason, therefore, to take Protagoras' answers to 2 and 3 as committing the sophist to hedonism, and he does so explicitly in 4. Is there any suggestion that 2-4 express Socrates' own view? Some commentators, relying on the fact that Socrates customarily expresses his own views as questions to which he invites the interlocutor's assent, claim that 1-3 may be taken as expressions of a view he means to endorse, whether sincerely or ironically. 7). But this will not work here: Socrates' questions do not simply have the form, "p?", but the form, "do you think (say) that p?". Socrates wants to elicit Protagoras' views, rather than to express his own (cf. legeis, b3; dokei soi, b4; ou... soi dokei, b6,7), and his questions provide no evidence for his own views on the matter. They are simply diagnostic. As we shall see in the next section, Socrates has some interest in obtaining Protagoras' views about the relation between pleasure and the good.

Protagoras rejects 4 as a statement expressive of his view, at least in its unqualified form: it is not living pleasantly as such (cf. haplos, c7) that constitutes living well, for if it were (one might imagine him thinking), someone who lived as a catamite (cf. Grg. 494e) would live well. Shrinking back from this, Protagoras emends Socrates' conclusion in 4 to read that it is living in the enjoyment of kala only that constitutes living well.

The qualification amounts to a surrender of the view that pleasure as such is sufficient for living well, and his subsequent admission that some pains are good 9) suggests that he gives up the view that it is necessary as well. Only praiseworthy pleasure (the pleasure derived from experiences or activities which are kala) counts in determining the goodness of a life. He is thus admitting a standard of value other than pleasure, and one by which pleasures themselves are approved as good or disapproved as bad, so that only praiseworthy pleasures are good, i.e., make a contribution to a good life. Disgraceful pleasures are presumably bad. If so, then his view is that pleasure is as such neither good nor bad:

only praiseworthy pleasures are good, only disgraceful pleasures are bad, and pleasures neither praiseworthy nor disgraceful are neither good nor bad (cf. d4-7).

Socrates proceeds to associate Protagoras' view with a view which he assigns to the many 10), viz., that some pleasures are bad and some pains are good. On the interpretation of 5 just given this association is justified to the extent that 5 does indeed entail the first conjunct of 6. By accepting 6 as a whole (see n. 9) he accepts a view which is wholly incompatible with 4. 5 and 6 are not statements which, in Socrates' view, Protagoras ought to accept. He rather insistently recommends 7 instead. 7 must then be read in a way that will make evident its incompatibility with 6. Now in 5 Protagoras maintained that a life is a good one to the extent that it consists of praiseworthy pleasures and not merely to the extent that it consists of pleasure as such. It is the import of 7 to affirm what was denied in 5. So 7 insists that it is merely qua pleasant that anything (including a life) is good, and thus that the restriction on 4 imported by 5 is improper. 11).

Why does Socrates urge 7 against Protagoras' profession of 5 and the general view of the relation between pleasant and good which it implies? It is universally assumed, certainly by prohedonists 12), but also by antihedonists, whether they take Socrates to be asserting hedonism ironically in 7 (13) or not asserting it there at all 14), that Socrates represents 7 as his own view. This assumption is never argued, and it is open to challenge. To understand Socrates' use of 7 we need to recall the earlier steps in the argument. In securing Protagoras' assent to 2 and 3 Socrates had reason to take the sophist as committed to hedonism, and he explicitly did so in 4. But Protagoras shrank from accepting hedonism outright by proposing 5, and thus he will not stand by the implication of his earlier answers. So now Socrates has reason to object to Protagoras' proposal of 5 and the non-hedonistic view of the relation of pleasant and good which it entails as stated in 6, not because he thinks that 5 and 6 are false, but because they are inconsistent with the sophist's earlier answers. Protagoras is vacillating between two views about that relation, a hedonistic one to which his actual evaluations commit him, and a non-hedonistic one which alone his scruples allow him to accept explicitly. In urging 7 upon him Socrates is pressing his interlocutor to be consistent: if Protagoras' "real" position is revealed by his answers to 2 and 3, then his disavowal of 4 is a fainthearted concession to the unpopularity of hedonism as a theory. Socrates' association of 5 with the apparent non-hedonism of the many plays on the sophist's contempt for the masses on whose approval his reputation and livelihood nevertheless depend. 15).

The attempt to make Protagoras consistent helps explain, then, Socrates' sponsorship of 7. But it does not explain it completely. Consistency could equally have been achieved if Protagoras had been allowed to retract or modify his answers to 2 and 3 to make them compatible with 5, and this line would probably have been more welcome to Protagoras. Socrates may have reasons to take advantage of Protagoras' (probably unguarded) answers to 2 and 3, i.e., reasons to extract an explicit commitment to hedonism from him (as I shall argue in the next section), and if so, then his attempt to make Protagoras a consistent hedonist rather than a consistent non-hedonist will be explained in a way which does not require his own endorsement of 7. 16).

(b) 353e5-354a1:

"Then isn't it evident to you, gentlemen, as Protagoras and I are saying, that these things are bad for no other reason than that they terminate in pains and deprive one of other pleasures?"

I have italicized the crucial clause in the sentence. At first glance, and outside of its context, it seems ambiguous. It could indicate (a) that Socrates and Protagoras themselves claim that immediately pleasant things are bad because

they result in greater pains. In this case Socrates is unambiguously declaring that he and Protagoras are hedonists. On the other hand it could indicate (b) that Socrates and Protagoras claim that it is evident to the many that these things are bad, etc.

There are quite decisive reasons in favor of (b). Against (a) is the fact that on its reading Socrates would be identifying not only himself, but also Protagoras as a hedonist, when the sophist has previously resisted the imputation of hedonism to him. Even if Socrates has reason to think that for all his disclaimers Protagoras is at heart a hedonist, surely he cannot represent him as such to others in his presence. In favor of (b) is the fact that it fits well in the immediate context. In the preceding lines (d6-e4) Socrates and Protagoras have been discussing between themselves what the many would say if asked a certain question; that is, they have been predicting how the many would answer. Here they are being asked that question directly, and the prediction is being tested. What "Protagoras and I are saying" was just said at d6-e1. 17).

(c) 356b3-c1:

"If you weigh pleasant things against pleasant things you should always take the greater and the more;... you should do that action in which (pains are exceeded by pleasures)..."

The injunction given here (18) is Socrates' response to an objection (356a5-7) to the preceding argument which showed that the position of the many on akrasia is absurd. (19). Socrates disallows the plea that one pleasure may be preferred to another simply because it is nearer in time. He is thus strictly enforcing the hedonistic principle, which his opponents have accepted, that the only factor which makes one pleasure preferable to another is difference in quantity (355d6-e2; 356a1-5). The injunction has force only against those who accept the hedonistic principle on which the preceding argument against akrasia depended, and so provides no independent evidence in favor of prohedonism.

(d) 357a5-7:

"Since the salvation of our lives has turned out to consist in the right choice of pleasure and pain..."

One might think that Socrates commits himself to the truth of the statement contained in this clause, especially in the light of his contrast between this account of "the salvation of our lives" and the two clearly counterfactual accounts mentioned earlier (at 356c8-e4 and e5-357a5). An antihedonist account would require the present instance to be counterfactual as well for Socrates. But Socrates is here merely recalling the application of the result of the akrasia argument to choice and action (356a8-c3; cf. (c) above), which has force only against those who accept the premises of that argument. As before, Socrates is not including himself among those against whom the argument has force, though equally he takes no pains to dissociate himself from it. (20).

(e) 357d3-7:

"For you too have agreed that those who go wrong in choice of pleasures and pains go wrong through lack of knowledge, -and these are goods and evils, - and not merely of knowledge, but of that which earlier we agreed was knowledge of measurement."

The hyphenated clause, though given in oratio obliqua, represents the view of the many, and need not be taken as expressing Socrates' own view.

(f) 358a1-b6:

"This would be our answer to the many. And I ask you, Hippias and Prodicus (let the argument be shared by you), whether I seem to you to be speaking truly or falsely." It seemed quite emphatically to all that what had been said was true. "You agree, then (ara), I said, "that the pleasant is good and the painful bad." Prodicus smiled and gave his assent, and so did the others. "What about this, then, gentlemen," I said, "aren't all actions that aim at painless and pleasant living praiseworthy (kalai)? And the praiseworthy accomplishment good and beneficial?" They all thought so.

In the sequel to the argument with the many which begins with this passage Hippias and Prodicus are drawn into the discussion. They are asked whether they, too (as well as Protagoras, whose silence implies consent) accept as true "what (Socrates) has been saying". The sophists express their emphatic approval of Socrates' argument. They immediately acknowledge that in accepting that argument they accept the thesis basic to it, that the pleasant is (the) good (21) and the painful (the) bad. Thus they take Socrates as not only having represented the position of the many correctly but also as sharing their hedonism. (22). Like Protagoras earlier, Hippias and Prodicus are prohedonists.

It does not follow, however, that they are right. Socrates' question here is again a diagnostic one: do Hippias and Prodicus think (cf. doko humin) that Socrates has offered a sound argument? Their affirmative answer does not imply that Socrates takes the argument to be sound; he may think that it is merely valid. And Socrates has good reason, as we shall see, not to discourage their reading of his position.

By not challenging Socrates' inference (as Protagoras had challenged another inference to the same conclusion, 351b7-c1) the two sophists and presumably also Protagoras, who does not repeat his former protest (23), must accept the hedonistic criterion for praiseworthy actions. Contrary to that protest (5 above), that to kalon is the measure which distinguishes good pleasures from bad ones, now that all pleasure has been accepted as good, all pleasures must also be accepted as kalai. The hedonistic criterion, coupled with the admission that what is praiseworthy is good and beneficial, is used later in the argument (at 359e5-360a5) to argue for the unity of courage and wisdom. Not only the many but also the sophists have overtly accepted hedonism, and their acceptance of it can be used by Socrates to support positions which he thinks they are wrong to deny.

The examination of the preceding texts has yielded the following results:

(1) In none of them are we required by a natural, unconstrained reading of the text to interpret Socrates' use of the hedonistic thesis as implying his own endorsement of that thesis. And (2) Socrates does not explicitly dissociate himself from hedonism, and does nothing to discourage his interlocutors from thinking that he holds it. It will now be our task to interpret Socrates' strategy in a way that makes sense of these results.

II

Any interpretation of Socrates' dialectical posture in this part of the Protagoras must relate that posture to Socrates' motives and tactics in the dialogue as a whole. Fifty years ago Grube argued convincingly, p. 203, that "the Protagoras is an attack upon the sophists as represented by Protagoras, the greatest of them," and Vlastos, 1956, pp. xxiv-xxvi and Sullivan, pp. 11-18 have given an account of his methods in carrying out the attack. Recently Klosko has argued forcefully, p. 126, "that the discussion in the Protagoras is meant to be read as a(n)... eristic

debate." If these readings of the dialogue as a whole are correct, as I think they are, the presumption is strong that they apply to the passage under study in this paper. Socrates will be less concerned to defend positions (which all agree are recognisably his own) with arguments which represent his own reasons for holding these positions, than to attack the contradictories of those positions as these are maintained by his opponents, and to do so by using the most effective means his offensive purpose and the conventions of eristic debate will allow.

The passage of the Protagoras from 351 to 358 bridges two attempts, unsuccessful and successful respectively, to argue for the unity of courage and wisdom. The passage contains an argument for a thesis which is used as a premise in the second attempt and accounts for its success. This is the psychological claim that "no one who knows or believes that other things are better than those he is doing and are possible to do, goes on to do them when he could do the better" (358b7-c1). 24). Protagoras and the other sophists must, then, be persuaded to accept this "Socratic paradox" if the final argument is to succeed. But by what arguments can they be persuaded?

Professor Vlastos has proposed an argument which supports the paradox, and whose premises consist of well known Socratic doctrines. 25). This is the argument:

(S1) If one knows that X is better than Y, one will want X more than Y.

(S2) If one wants X more than Y, one will choose X rather than Y.

(S3) All men desire welfare.

(S4) Anything else they desire only as a means to welfare.

(S3) and (S4) represent well known Socratic tenets, and their conjunction, according to Vlastos, entails (S1). 26). The conjunction of (S1) with (S2) (an apparently uncontroversial statement of the connection between desire and choice) entails the paradox: if one knows that X is better than Y, one will choose X rather than Y. 27)

Since Socrates has the resources to construct what he would regard as a sound argument for the paradox, one may well wonder why he resorts to another which he (as anti-hedonists will claim) regards as unsound, especially if the premise which he rejects is at first also denied by his interlocutor. Socrates takes some pains to get Protagoras to admit the premise, and though he is justified (as I have argued) in attributing it to the sophist, he must think that it is worth the pains.

Clearly Socrates thinks that the argument based on hedonism has greater cogency for Protagoras and the other sophists than the argument from (S1)-(S4). And it does.

Anyone who doubts or denies the Socratic paradox will regard the argument from (S1)-(S4) with suspicion just because it rules out the possibility of akrasia, and anyone who believes that akrasia does occur will have reason to doubt one or more premises in that argument. He will certainly reject (S1), and hence at least one of (S3) and (S4). (S4) is the likelier candidate for rejection. 28). The doubter will maintain that the occurrence of akrasia proves the existence of welfare-independent desires, and that the denial of akrasia on the basis of the alleged non-existence of welfare-independent desires merely begs the question against him. He may press his case by claiming, against (S1), that even though one knows that X is better than Y, one may still want Y more than X because, for instance, (one knows or believes that) Y is more pleasant than X. He thus claims, against (S4), that one's desire for pleasure is a welfare-independent desire.

There is only one way for Socrates to dismantle this defense, and this is by showing that the defender of akrasia is not entitled to his claim that one's desire for pleasure is a welfare- or good-independent desire. If that claim can be dismantled independently, (S4) and (S1) will not be challengeable, for then a conflict between a desire for X qua good and for Y qua pleasant is not possible.

If to desire Y for its pleasure is just to desire it for its good (cf. 354c3-5), then it cannot even be claimed that though Y is more pleasant, X is better.

This, I believe, is the advantage the argument from hedonism has over the argument from (S1)-(S4) against a hedonistic opponent. And against such an opponent only. 29). Conceivably Socrates might try to convert a non-hedonistic defender of akrasia to hedonism first, in order to exercise this advantage. Whether he would actually do so, even given the license of eristic convention, may be doubted. In any case he is not doing it in the Protagoras. He does not argue for hedonism against Protagoras' protest, nor against the many. He has, as we saw, good reason to believe that they are hedonists already, whatever their professions.

If an argument from hedonism has greater cogency against a hedonistic opponent than some alternative argument Socrates will have good reason (a) to determine whether his interlocutor is a hedonist, prior to launching such an argument, and (b) to press his interlocutor, should he be found to use hedonistic criteria of evaluation but to be too confused or too timid to accept the theory implied by his evaluations, to accept that theory. Moreover, he will have good reason (c) to suppress his own disavowal of that theory. For if he openly questioned or rejected hedonism, he would lose the strategic advantage of his position: the locus of debate would shift away from the issue under discussion, that of supplying a scaffold to support the thesis of the unity of courage and wisdom. 30). Worse, he would be encouraging doubt in hedonism, and thus undermine his own argument against akrasia. 31).

That argument makes use of hedonism by taking advantage of the substitutability of "good" for "pleasant" (or "pleasure") and of "painful" for "bad", 32), and in this way shows that the thesis of the many that sometimes one does what one knows to be bad overall, because one is overcome by pleasure, to be absurd: how can one possibly credit the explanation given, that the agent did what he did because he wanted pleasure/goodness when one of the givens in the description of the act is the stipulation that the agent knew that he would get less pleasure/goodness from that act than from some alternative equally open to him? That is like explaining someone's informed choice of a less lucrative job by his desire for money. The "logic of explanation" is violated if the explanation offered to make an action intelligible conflicts with the description of the action it explains. 33).

Does the great logical advantage which Socrates gains from the use of hedonism in arguing against akrasia imply that Socrates accepts hedonism? It certainly need not. First, to get this logical advantage, Socrates does not need hedonism as such but a premise which will insure (a) that the goods of both the chosen and the rejected alternative are of the same kind, and (b) that it is by a good of that kind that the agent is said to be defeated. It is indeed hard to see what other identification of good will satisfy (a) and (b) so neatly, and so Socrates has good reason to use the hedonistic premise where he can. This, however, does not mean that Socrates himself accepts hedonism. If I can defend a view of mine by either of two arguments, only one of which I accept as sound but whose premises may be hard to defend, while I regard the other as valid, depending on premises some of which I do not accept, and I realize that the latter argument would have greater cogency against someone who does accept these premises than the former, I may have excellent reason (especially if the context is eristic) to use the latter argument to defend my view. This, I believe, is exactly the position of Socrates in the Protagoras.

III

It is time now to consider and evaluate some major objections to antihedonism and to press some objections to prohedonism.

(1) It is sometimes flatly asserted that prohedonism is required by a natural reading of the text, and that antihedonists do violence to the plain sense of the text. Thus Grote finds hedonism "directly stated" by Socrates, 34), a view that is echoed by Hackforth and Dodds 35), the latter characterizing antihedonist arguments as "more ingenious than honest." The motives of antihedonists are also suspect: "The commentators resort to this (sc. antihedonist) hypothesis, partly because the doctrine is one which (sic) they disapprove..." (Grote); "It is only because hedonism is a naughty view that there are reservations about saying that Socrates maintains it in the Protagoras." (Crombie, p. 240). "Scholars who resent the suggestion that Plato ever changed his mind have tried to paper over this crack in the 'unity' of his thought..." (Dodds). These allegations have by themselves no probative force whatever.

(2) A more substantial objection is derived from the observation that hedonism is not a position to which either Protagoras or the many claim to adhere; that position, it is claimed, is "forced" (Hackforth, p. 41) on them by Socrates, and if hedonism is not the position of Socrates' opponents, a defense of antihedonism which interprets Socrates' argument as ad hominem collapses. Why else should Socrates try to persuade them to accept hedonism, unless he thought that that view was true? 36). The objection is answered if it can be shown, as I have tried to do, that Protagoras and the many are, despite their disclaimers, hedonists, and thus opponents against whom Socrates' hedonistic argument against akrasia will be effective.

(3) It is frequently pointed out that Socrates continues to make profitable use of the hedonistic premise after the argument with the many is complete. Partly on the strength of this premise he argues for the unity of courage and wisdom, a thesis which he surely accepts. To recommend that argument as sound would be uncharacteristically "insincere" (Hackforth, p. 42), and would show him, implausibly, to be "arguing with conscious dishonesty" (Taylor, p. 209; cf. Gulley, p. 112). An appeal to Socrates' sincerity to limit the viability of antihedonism was made by Vlastos in 1956 (p. xl, n. 50; retracted in 1969), who stated that "it is most unlikely that Socrates would deliberately offer a false proposition as a premise for establishing his great proposition (that knowledge is virtue)... It would have encouraged the listener to believe a falsehood..." (his italics). It may be pointed out in response, however, that Socrates deliberately secures the sophists' conscious assent to the hedonistic premise after the argument with the many is over (358a1-6; cf. I(f) above), and is thus careful to solicit explicitly a license to carry over his use of that premise. I have tried to show that he has reasons to conceal his own view of that premise. Whether that concealment is morally justified or whether it makes him liable to the charge of insincerity or dishonesty will depend on what we take to be permissible within his strategy. We should be careful not to reduce Socratic irony to a moral fault, nor underrate the eristic character of the discussion in the Protagoras. 37).

(4) Irwin has argued, p. 106, that hedonism is indispensable to a non-question-begging argument against akrasia. A principle of "hedonistic prudence" which combines ethical and psychological hedonism is needed, he argues, to give backing to the Socratic doctrine that no one will choose what he knows or believes to be the lesser of the available goods. (cf. his 3., p. 105). Whether or not that doctrine is assumed in the argument, the suitability of the identification of goodness with pleasure to give backing to that doctrine and its usefulness in this argument is contingent on the fact that the opponent has already accepted a principle of hedonistic prudence. If the opponent had accepted some other identification of the good, then that identification would have served to give backing to the Socratic doctrine. That doctrine constitutes a general psychological claim about whatever one knows or believes to be the good, and the principle of hedonistic prudence is one case of that claim. It is because the many already accept the

principle that they must also accept the doctrine; but it does not follow that Socrates must accept the principle because he accepts the doctrine. It is only because the (theory-independent) explanation given of akrasia by the many is the agent's being overcome by pleasure that Socrates has an interest in mounting his argument on a principle of hedonistic prudence, as explained above; it does not follow that Socrates himself accepts that principle.

I have thus far argued that an antihedonistic reading of the Protagoras passage is fully plausible, and free from the objections that have been raised against it. Prohedonists may claim, however, that their reading is equally supported by the text (a claim which I do not contest) and explained by Socrates' aims in the argument which, in their view, would be to give a sound, non-question-begging argument against akrasia. To argue for the preferability of antihedonism to prohedonism we need to examine the implications of reading the Protagoras prohedonistically in the light of the evidence of other dialogues.

There are two related problems to which a prohedonistically read Protagoras gives rise. The first is the question of the consistency of the dialogue with other dialogues; the second is the question about the philosophical position of the historical Socrates or at least about Plato's belief about that position, or the position Plato took on the relation of pleasure and goodness at the time he wrote the Protagoras. On the first of these, all prohedonists have acknowledged that there is a problem of consistency, though some have minimized it. (38) The verbal similarities between the thesis supposedly endorsed in the Protagoras and that attacked in the Gorgias are considerable, however, (39), and so most prohedonists have given other accounts of the discrepancy. Few are as radical as Grote, who dismisses attempts to address this problem: "We have no right to require that (the dialogues) shall be consistent with each other in doctrine..." (p. 316). But although Plato does change his mind, sometimes drastically, he never does so without suggesting reasons for the change, and we have no such reasons in the present case. In the Gorgias (which I assume to be later than the Protagoras but still essentially "Socratic") hedonism is represented as the total antithesis of the Socratic concept of the happy life; Socrates is not represented as having second thoughts, as moving from an old position to a new one, but as implacably opposed to a position which he regards as wholly destructive for human happiness.

The position of the Apology and the Crito (both of which I assume to be earlier than the Protagoras) is of a piece with the Gorgias, and equally at variance with a prohedonistic Protagoras. The appeals to the supreme importance of virtue and the perfection of the soul seem inconsistent with the view that pleasure is the good. We might try to harmonize these appeals with that view by claiming that virtue and the perfection of the soul are necessary and infallibly sufficient means to pleasure and in that sense supremely important, and such an attempt has been made recently by Irwin. I can only say here that I do not think that the attempt is successful (40), nor do other attempts seem promising. There is an irreconcilable incompatibility between the claim that virtue and the care of one's soul is supremely important, and the claim that pleasure is the only ultimate good.

If the "Socrates" of the Protagoras is represented by Plato as a serious advocate of hedonism, then (a) (Plato believed that) the historical Socrates did (at one time) hold that view, or (b) Plato did himself (at one time) hold that view. It is unlikely that Plato would seriously ascribe to his dramatic "Socrates" anywhere in the dialogues a view with which neither he himself nor, so far as he would know, his master was in sympathy. Thus some have suggested that the historical Socrates was a hedonist. (42). If this is true, however, then neither the Apology and the Crito nor the Gorgias depict (what Plato believed as) the historical Socrates, or else (Plato believed that) Socrates changed his view. As to the former, surely the Apology and Crito are intended to portray the historical Socrates and we must not beg that question with the Gorgias. As to the latter, how are we supposed to chart this change in Socrates' view? By the dramatic dates of the

dialogues or by their sequence in composition? Further, the absence of any extra-Platonic testimonia for a hedonistic Socrates has persuaded one prohedonist commentator that the historical Socrates did not espouse hedonism. 43).

Alternatively, the hedonism is Plato's own, and a temporary flirtation. This is the view of Hackforth (p. 42) who thinks that it is Plato's attempt to make sense of the Socratic equation of virtue and knowledge, an attempt which he rejected when he came to write the Gorgias. There is, however, equally no evidence outside of the dialogues for this view as there was none for a hedonistic Socrates (cf. Gulley, p. 113), and it requires us to postulate equally unchartable changes of view to him: if he wrote the Apology and Crito first, then he was probably not a hedonist to begin with (assuming that these dialogues also represent Plato's own views at the time). At some time thereafter, when he wrote the Protagoras he was a hedonist, and some further time after that, when he wrote the Phaedo and the Republic (leaving aside the question of the chronological relation of the Gorgias to the Protagoras), he rejected hedonism. The most that can be said for a Platonic interest in hedonism at the time the Protagoras was written is that it might have been a "thought experiment", not something which Plato seriously believed, and perhaps this is all that Hackforth meant. But even this is unlikely if Plato makes "Socrates" the serious spokesman only for views seriously held by the master or by himself.

I conclude, then, that the weight of evidence is heavily in favor of the anti-hedonist case: it is thoroughly compatible with the text of the Protagoras; it is intelligible in the light of a plausible account of Socrates' aims; and it can meet objections to it whereas a prohedonist account creates more problems than it solves.

NOTES

1. An antihedonist interpretation is at least as old as Marsilio Ficino (1433-1499) quoted (with disapproval) by Grote, p. 314, n. 1. (All works cited are listed in the Bibliography below.) Prohedonists may differ about whether the historical Socrates should or should not be credited with hedonism, and antihedonists about whether Socrates adopts hedonism insincerely or ironically, or not at all.
2. Claims about virtue and the soul are found at Apology 28b; 29b-30b; 31b; 32a-e; 36c; Crito 47e-48a; 48b-49a. The attack on hedonism is at Gorgias 492d-500d.
3. Cf. Aristotle, Nik. Eth. 1095a18-20: "For both ordinary and sophisticated people ... understand living well and faring well to be the same thing as being happy." Cf. also Rep. 354a.
4. Assuming that no life is either purely pleasant or purely painful. Living pleasantly and painfully are thus matters of degree, as are living well and living badly. This will allow for a commensurability between degrees of living well and living pleasantly which will be important for interpreting some later statements in the argument. See n. 11 below.
5. I thus think that 2 and 3 are more immediately hedonistic than Taylor (p. 164) suggests. At first sight goods other than pleasure and evils other than pain are not ruled out, but if they are intended to have some weight in determining whether a life of exactly equal pleasure and pain (a mere theoretical possibility, surely) is good or bad, and can affect the degree of goodness or badness of a life beyond its degree of pleasure and pain, then surely a large quantity of such evils could suffice to make a slightly pleasant life bad, and a large quantity of such goods a slightly painful life good. But 2 and 3 do not allow this; hence it is likelier that they do not envisage goods other than pleasure and evils other than pain.

6. That is, a good whose attainment constitutes living well or being happy, and an evil whose incurrance constitutes living badly. The Euthydemus defines happiness as the possession of good(s), 278e; and the Meno identifies such possession as the object of desire, 77b-78b. 4 should thus be read as stating, not merely that living pleasantly is a good thing and living unpleasantly a bad thing, but that they are that good and that evil whose possession is constitutive of happiness or misery, as required by the interpretation of 2 and 3 given above.

7. On this basis Crombie (p. 240) settles for a prohedonist reading of the Protagoras and Sullivan adopts an antihedonistic view on which Socrates' sponsorship of hedonism is ironic or insincere (pp. 21-2).

8. The diagnostic reading of these questions is confirmed at 352a2-6. Using the image of the medical examiner, Socrates interprets the discussion at 351b-e as an attempt to determine how (Protagoras) stand(s) with regard to the pleasant and the good." (a7).

9. That some pains are good is stated in 6, a proposition which Socrates links with 5. Protagoras does explicitly say "that some pains are not bad" (at 6'), presumably thereby accepting 6.

10. This view is explicitly assigned to the many later (at 353cff.) where Socrates shows that though it appears to be a denial of hedonism it can be construed as consistent with hedonism, and it is only on such a construction that the many are allowed to maintain the view, given their hedonistic criteria of evaluation. Here, however, Socrates presses Protagoras to deny it, without allowing him to consider its hedonistic construction.

11. Thus 7 cannot be used to defend antihedonism by claiming that it allows pleasure to be a good, one of a plurality of goods, as Vlastos does (1969, pp. 76-8 and n. 24). In context, the purpose of 7 is not to state that pleasant things are good qua pleasant whereas other things may well be good qua something else, but that all pleasant things, whether they are praiseworthy or not, are good merely qua pleasant, and not qua pleasant in some specific way. Goods other than pleasure and evils other than pain have already been eliminated from consideration in the discussion (cf. nn. 5 and 6 above). The use of "kath' ho... kata touto" (c4) and "kath' hoson... (kata tosouton, to be supplied before kaka at c6)" suggests both a qualitative and a quantitative correlation between being pleasant and being good: things are good in the very respect in which they are pleasant, and to the very degree to which they are pleasant. Since other goods and evils do not play any part in the argument, 7 can be taken in a strong sense: things are good only in the respect in which, and to the degree to which, they are pleasant; bad only in the respect in which, and to the degree to which, they are painful. A more explicit way of asserting the identity of goodness and pleasure could hardly be found, and Protagoras is not confused (contra Vlastos, ibid.) in taking 7 to be a statement of that identity, at e4-6.

12. See e.g., Taylor, p. 166, sub 351c2-3 and 351c4.

13. See Sullivan, p. 21 sub fin.

14. See Vlastos, ibid.; cf. n. 11 above.

15. Protagoras' contempt for the many has been in evidence since 317a; cf. 352e3,4 and 353a7,8. His hesitation to dissociate himself from the views of the many (a hesitation explicable by what we know of his epistemology) is clear at 333c; cf. 359c.
16. The introductory clause at c4, "ego gar lego" cannot here be read as a statement expressing the speaker's view, for it introduces a direct question and not an indirect statement, as that reading would require.
17. Taylor (p. 176) misses this backward reference of the clause. He finds (b) "less attractive" than (a) but also thinks that "on either reading the sentence presents the difficulty that it asserts a unanimity between Socrates and Protagoras which is not justified by anything said previously." He does not say why he thinks that this is true for (b).
18. The gerundives express moral or prudential necessity, not psychological necessity. See Taylor, pp. 189-190; Dyson, p. 33.
19. I cannot here develop my view on the disputed question of the nature of the absurdity which Socrates claims to find in the position of the many. See n. 33 below.
20. In case one is tempted to think that Socrates does include himself by using the first person pronoun hemin in "... epanei hemin...", it should be pointed out that this dative is possessive and modifies he soteria tou biou, as it clearly does at 356e5.
21. It is not clear whether einai here indicates predication or identity. Identity statements about the good sometimes lack the article, as e.g., at Philebus 11b4. The absence of the article may be explained by the monistic tendency of Greek eudaemonism: if something is proposed as good in the sense that it provides the standard whereby other things are judged good, then given that tendency, it is the only such good or "the" good. This exclusive use of the predicate was already in evidence, I believe, at 351c1 (= 4 above). In any case, in the present passage the sophists' assent is taken as an acceptance of hedonism, for the assent is recalled at 360a3 as implying acceptance of the view that if anything is praiseworthy and good, it is pleasant.
22. This answers a question raised by Taylor, p. 201 sub 358a1-5.
23. The protest occurred at 351c1,2. Taylor (pp. 201-2) rightly concludes that Protagoras must have changed his mind during the preceding argument, at the point where the many were supposed to be persuaded that they accept no other standard of goodness than pleasure. Protagoras, however, need not have believed that Socrates was trying to prove the hedonistic thesis; he may simply have realized that he had no alternative standard of goodness to propose, whether on the many's behalf or on his own. As to the view that all pleasures are now also kalai (as well as good), Protagoras is now also committed to it: by distinguishing good, neutral and bad pleasures earlier at 351b-e according to whether they were praiseworthy, neutral or disgraceful, he endorsed the view that if a pleasure is good, it is praiseworthy. Now that he appears to accept the view that all pleasures are good, he must also accept the view that they are all praiseworthy.
24. Limitations of space prohibit further comment on the puzzling inclusion of belief in the statement of the paradox.

25. Vlastos, 1969, pp. 83-4. Vlastos makes the Protagoras argument depend on the argument from (S1)-(S4). On this see n. 33 below.
26. Two auxiliary premises are needed to get the entailment: (1) If X and Y are both means to one's welfare (= contribute to one's welfare) and one knows that X contributes more to one's welfare than Y, one will want X more than Y; and (2) X is better than Y iff, X contributes more to one's welfare than Y. These auxiliary premises may easily be granted Socrates, given the logical structure of his eudaemonism: if welfare is the only thing desired for itself (S3), then the degree of one's desire for anything else is commensurate with the extent of the contribution one believes the thing to make to one's welfare; and one's criterion for judging one thing to be better than another is just the difference in the extent of their contributions.
27. As Irwin has noticed, p. 308, n. 13.2, the argument from (S1)-(S4) is related to the argument at Meno 77b-78b. I am indebted to Irwin for an appreciation of the inadequacy of such an argument in the present context.
28. (S3) is never doubted by a Socratic interlocutor, and Socrates thinks that it would be silly to doubt it, Euthyd. 278e3-6; cf. Meno 78a4,5. It expresses the central thesis of Greek eudaemonism.
29. Given the explanation, "because the agent is overcome by pleasure", the argument is not effective against a non-hedonistic opponent who merely recognizes pleasure to be one good among others (contra Vlastos, 1969, pp. 86-7). The only way a non-hedonist could explain the agent's defeat by pleasure as a defeat by a good would be to say that this good differed qualitatively from that of the rejected option, as well as quantitatively. But Socrates expressly disallows any criterion other than quantity to determine the "worthiness" of the goods in question (355d6-e2; 356a1-5), and this a non-hedonist would not accept.
30. Note that Socrates does not take Protagoras up on his offer to "examine" the issue of the identity of pleasure and the good (351e3-7), and with good reason. If Socrates is not a hedonist then to argue for the identity explicitly would be to compromise his non-hedonism, and to argue against it would undermine his own argument against akrasia.
31. Protagoras' acceptance of the "power of knowledge" thesis (352c8-d3) is hardly consistent with his own non-cognitive view of virtue (his notion of "teaching" is quite unsocratic: it appears to be little more than social conditioning; cf. 322d-326e), expressed most recently at 351b1,2. He is persuaded by Socrates' rhetorical tour de force on behalf of the power of knowledge, which is not so much Socrates' own impassioned doxology to knowledge as a deliberate rhetorical (!) device aimed at securing Protagoras' assent to a position with which he ought to disagree. Note that in accepting it Protagoras appeals, not to the relation of that thesis to his other beliefs, but to his personal position and interest. In making "the many" bear the burden of views which Protagoras really ought to accept, Socrates creates an "alter tu" for Protagoras. This is an ingenious dialectical maneuver whose advantages should be obvious.
32. The legitimacy of the substitutions has been questioned by Taylor, pp. 180-181. The matter is rather more complex, however, than Taylor represents it.
33. This reading of the absurdity is close to that considered but rejected by Vlastos, 1969, p. 81, namely, that "the proposed explanans... belie(s) the explanandum." Vlastos rejects it because he thinks that the plurals ("pleasures",

"goods") in the "overcome..." clause suggests the presence of goods/pleasures of different kinds. The plurals are, however, better explained by the fact that in the formulations of the view of the many Socrates has in mind, not some single act, but a class of actions. Plurals also occur in the other parts of the formulation of that view: the agent does bad things, knowing them to be bad things, etc. Further, differences among kinds of goods/pleasures have been ruled out as irrelevant (see n. 29). Vlastos' own account of the absurdity leads him to construe the argument in the Prt. as dependent on the argument from (S1)-(S4). The absurdity, on his view, is that the many's explanation of akrasia characterizes the agent as choosing knowingly greater evils as the price for lesser goods. I believe that this is wrong (see also Taylor, p. 185; Irwin, p. 308 n. 12), for if the many's explanation of akrasia is an analysis found to be a knowing choice of greater evils, it is hard to see how it is on analysis supposed to be ignorance, as the argument requires. Even if Vlastos is right, however, it is not at all clear that the argument from (S1)-(S4) could be persuasive without begging the question.

34. Grote, p. 314. Cf. ibid., "Throughout all the Platonic compositions, there is nowhere to be found any train of argument more direct, more serious, and more elaborate, than that by which Sokrates here proves the identity of the good with pleasure, or pain with evil (p. 351 to end)."
35. Hackforth, p. 41: "Socrates originally propounds the doctrine and propounds it seriously..."; Dodds, p. 21; n. 3: "The dialogue contains no hint that the assumption is made merely for the sake of argument..."
36. This argument has been widely used by prohedonists: see Grote, pp. 314-5; Hackforth, p. 41; Dodds, p. 21, n. 3; Irwin, p. 309, n. 13.
37. Prohedonists regularly underrate the irony of the passage; cf. nn. 34 and 35 above. Although I do not accept the view that Socrates is explicitly representing himself as a hedonist, but only ironically (Sullivan's view), the irony of the passage is inescapable to one not already partial to a prohedonist view. Socratic irony (if not sarcasm) is seldom so blunt as it is at 357e, where Socrates chides the many for failing to purchase (!) a sophistic (!) education. "This is more than an ironical aside in an otherwise straightforward exposition: it is rather a clue that Socrates is not being straightforward at all." (O'Brien, p. 138).
38. So Taylor, p. 170, argues for distinguishing the thesis he takes Socrates to be endorsing in the Protagoras from that which he attacks in the Gorgias. And Crombie writes, p. 248, "... Even if at the (probably early) date at which he wrote the Gorgias Plato had thought that it was in one sense true to say that all pleasant things are good, it would have suited his purpose better to stress the sense in which this was false."
39. The similarities are noted by Adam and Adam, p. xxx.
40. Irwin, p. 93. Irwin's position has been criticized by Vlastos in the Times Literary Supplement, Feb. 22, 1978, and in subsequent correspondence, as well as by other reviewers.
41. The temptation to credit Socrates with a rarified hedonism, such that only the pleasure experienced in virtuous action, etc. deserves to be called pleasure must be resisted, since it finds no support in the Protagoras and seems to be rejected by Socrates' objection to Protagoras' qualification that only pleasure at praiseworthy things counts in the determination of the goodness of a life (351c1,2; cf. I (a) above). Nor will the Protagoras allow a plurality of

ultimate goods (pleasure and virtue) if Socrates believes with the many that there is no other standard of goodness than pleasure (353c9-354e2).

42. Adam and Adam, p. xxxii; Taylor, p. 210.

43. Gulley, p. 113f.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

1. Adam, J. and A.M. Adam, Platonis Protagoras, Cambridge, 1893.
2. Crombie, I.M., An Examination of Plato's Doctrines, Vol. I, Plato on Man and Society, London and New York, 1962.
3. Dodds, E.R., Plato, Gorgias, Oxford, 1959.
4. Dyson, M., "Knowledge and Hedonism in Plato's Protagoras", Journal of Hellenic Studies, vol. 96, 1976, pp. 32-45.
5. Grote, G., Plato and the Other Companions of Socrates, new edition vol. II, London, 1888.
6. Grube, G.M.A., "The Structural Unity of the Protagoras", Classical Quarterly, vol. 27, 1933, pp. 203-207.
7. Gulley, N., The Philosophy of Socrates, London, 1968.
8. Hackforth, R., "Hedonism in Plato's Protagoras", Classical Quarterly, vol. 22, 1928, pp. 39-42.
9. Irwin, T.H., Plato's Moral Theory: The Early and Middle Dialogues, Oxford, 1977.
10. Klosko, G., "Toward a Consistent Interpretation of the Protagoras", Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie, vol. 61, 1979, pp. 125-142.
11. O' Brien, M.J., The Socratic Paradoxes and the Greek Mind, Chapel Hill, 1967.
12. Sullivan, J.P., "The Hedonism in Plato's Protagoras", Phronesis, vol.6, 1961, pp. 10-28.
13. Taylor, C.C.W., Plato: Protagoras, Oxford, 1976.
14. Vlastos, G., ed., Plato, Protagoras, Indianapolis, 1956.
15. Vlastos, G., "Socrates on Acrasia", Phoenix, vol. 23, 1969, pp. 71-88.