

An abstract painting featuring geometric shapes and a muted color palette of blues, yellows, and browns. The composition suggests a cityscape with buildings and a central tree, rendered in a cubist or expressionist style. The title text is centered at the top.

STRATEGIES OF ARGUMENT

*Essays in Ancient Ethics,
Epistemology,
and Logic*

Edited by

MI-KYOUNG LEE

Strategies of Argument

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For Gisela Striker, beloved friend and teacher

CONTENTS

Preface ix

Notes on Contributors xvii

Part One: Plato

1. The life of Protarchus' choosing: Plato *Philebus* 20b–22c 3

Verity Harte

2. Fools' pleasures in Plato's *Philebus* 21

Jennifer Whiting

3. Did Plato's cosmos literally begin? 60

Sarah Broadie

Part Two: Aristotle's ethics and practical reasoning

4. A swarm of virtues: On the unity and completeness of Aristotle's scheme of character-virtues 83

Dorothea Frede

5. Justice and the laws in Aristotle's ethics 104

Mi-Kyoung Lee

6. Aristotle on how to fell a tree and other matters involving experience 124

Dana Miller

Part Three: Aristotelian logic

7. Deduction in *Sophistici Elenchi* 6 149

Marko Malink

8. Boethus and finished syllogisms 175

Jonathan Barnes

9. Alexander of Aphrodisias on Aristotle's theory of the Stoic indemonstrables 199

Susanne Bobzien

Part Four: Hellenistic ethics

10. Why there are ends of both goods and evils in ancient ethical theory 231

James Allen

11. Ancient goods: The *tria genera bonorum* in ethical theory 255

Brad Inwood

12. The philosophical ambitions of Seneca's *Letters* 281

John Schafer

Part Five: Hellenistic epistemology

13. The epistemology of Ptolemy's *On the criterion* 301

Mark J. Schiefsky

14. The compulsions of Stoic assent 332

Charles Brittain

15. Sextus Empiricus on persuasiveness and equipollence 356

Svavar Hrafn Svavarsson

Bibliography for Gisela Striker 375

Index of Names 379

Index Locorum 385

PREFACE

The original papers in this volume focus on topics in ancient Greek and Roman ethics, epistemology, and logic—and are a tribute to the influence of Gisela Striker, whose work has ranged for over forty years across these areas.

Gisela Striker's career began at the University of Göttingen, where she studied—alongside Dorothea Frede and Michael Frede—with Günther Patzig. She was also a visiting student at Oxford, where she studied with John Ackrill. Her PhD thesis, “Peras und Apeiron” (1969), was on the metaphysics of Plato's *Philebus*. She taught philosophy at Göttingen from 1971 to 1986, writing her *Habilitation*, a landmark study on the “criterion of truth” in Hellenistic epistemology (*Kritêrion tês Alêtheias*, 1978). During her years in Germany, she published many articles in the area of Hellenistic philosophy, was a member of two conferences that inaugurated a revival of interest in Hellenistic philosophy—one in Chantilly (1976) and the other in Oxford (1978)—and was one of the founders of the Symposium Hellenisticum. She is also one of the original members of the advisory board of *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy*. She spent several terms as a visiting professor in the United States: at Stanford (1974), Princeton (1979), and Harvard (1985).

In 1986, Striker accepted a position as professor of philosophy at Columbia University. In 1989, she was appointed George Martin Lane Professor of Philosophy and Classics at Harvard, thereby becoming the first tenured woman in Harvard's Department of Philosophy. Her time at Harvard was interrupted in 1997, when she accepted a position as the Laurence Professor of Ancient Philosophy at Cambridge University (becoming once again the first woman to hold this position). But Striker returned to Harvard in 2000, where she remained until her retirement as professor emerita in 2012, serving from 2002 on as the Walter C. Klein Professor of Philosophy and Classics.

Striker's seminal contributions are clustered in three main areas: Hellenistic philosophy, especially epistemology and ethics; Aristotle's logic, especially his modal logic; and Aristotle's moral and political thought. Her work in Hellenistic philosophy is collected in *Essays in Hellenistic Epistemology and Ethics* (Cambridge, 1996), which includes work in ethics deriving from her Nellie Wallace lectures (Oxford, 1984) and her Tanner Lectures (Stanford, 1987), as well as papers on a wide range of topics in epistemology: Academic and Pyrrhonist skepticism, Epicurean epistemology,

and the criterion of truth—including “Sceptical Strategies,” the paper on skeptical strategies of argument which inspired the title of this volume. Striker’s work on Aristotle’s logic recently culminated in a translation and commentary in the Clarendon Aristotle series: *Aristotle’s Prior Analytics Book I: Translated with an Introduction and Commentary* (Oxford, 2009). Her other work on Aristotle ranges widely, from his theory of emotions and the significance of his conception of ethics as “political science” to, most recently, her John Ackrill Memorial Lecture (Oxford, 2012), “Two Ways of Deliberating: Aristotle and the Stoics.”

As Striker notes in the introduction to her collected papers, *Essays on Hellenistic Epistemology and Ethics*, her essays have been, first and foremost, contributions to the history of philosophy, though she does not distinguish engaging in the history of philosophy as sharply from engaging in philosophy itself as some of her peers have been inclined to do. Many of her papers are attempts to reconstruct the doctrines of philosophers like Epicurus and Chrysippus, which, owing to the lack of evidence and original texts, involves guesswork as well as philological and historical background investigation. She has insisted, in her work and her teaching, on the importance of taking into account unique features of the social, political, and literary contexts in which the ancient philosophers were working; her work is acutely sensitive to the fact that ancient authors were often responding to questions, issues, and problems very different from those that are thought urgent and central today. Even so, her focus on philosophical arguments and theories, and her particular genius at discerning interesting, original, and deep continuities of argument running through the various authors she studies have made her a “philosopher’s historian.” Her work is thus an inspiration to those who seek to combine exegesis with philosophical thought about the problems studied in ancient as well as modern texts.

Each of the three areas in which Striker has made important contributions is represented in this volume.

The papers by Harte and Whiting focus on the refutation of the hedonist in Plato’s *Philebus*, paying special attention to the interplay between particular arguments within the dialogue and how the dialogue as a whole is supposed to work on its audience. In “The Life of Protarchus’ Choosing: Plato *Philebus* 20b–22c,” **Verity Harte** focuses on the dialogue’s treatment of the first of its two major questions: (1) which is the good, pleasure or reason? and (2) if neither is, then which (if either) of the two is responsible for the goodness of the best, that is, the mixed life? In the dialogue, an answer to the first question is given fairly quickly, whereas discussion of the second takes up most of the dialogue. In her paper, Harte addresses a puzzle about the placement and the apparent shortcomings of the argument by which the first question is settled. She argues that the argument has and is presented as having only a limited aim; and that it achieves that aim on a condition whose rejection is designed to motivate the hedonist

to think further about the hard questions about pleasure and the good. The argument also sets the agenda for the rest of the dialogue: in particular, while the characters began with three criteria, sufficiency, completeness/perfection, and choiceworthiness, only two, sufficiency and choiceworthiness, are appealed to in the argument—not perfection. Harte says that its omission is significant—and that the rest of the dialogue will take a teleological turn, by offering an argument that reason *is responsible* for the goodness of the mixed life.

Jennifer Whiting seeks, in “Fools’ Pleasures in Plato’s *Philebus*,” to give a unified account of the various forms of falsity that Socrates ascribes to pleasures. She defends Plato against the common charge of equivocation by reading him as presenting a cumulative argument involving different but related senses of “false,” one that appeals in the end to the *foolishness* of certain pleasures, which foolishness the subject cannot himself appreciate while he is in their grip. Whiting thus reads the *Philebus* as entertaining the *corrigibility* of self-ascriptions of pleasure in the present tense and as seeking thereby to improve on the anti-hedonist arguments of the *Gorgias*, where Socrates’ appeal to the shamefulness of certain pleasures begs the crucial question. Because the appeal to foolishness is content-neutral, whereas the *Gorgias*’ appeal to shamefulness was not, the *Philebus* represents an improvement: the diehard hedonist can more easily be brought to worry that he is a fool than that he is a knave. Moreover, in being content-neutral the appeal to foolishness anticipates Aristotle’s appeal to the so-called “formal criteria” for something’s counting as the good, criteria often taken to be among Aristotle’s many debts to the *Philebus*.

In “Did Plato’s Cosmos Literally Begin?” **Sarah Broadie** takes up the question of whether modern interpreters are right to read Plato’s *Timaeus*—with its thesis that the cosmos had a beginning—as “proto-historical” (i.e., as merely a *façon de parler* that presents the cosmos as though it had a beginning), and so as consistent with a semipiternalist reading of the cosmos. She argues against this, and thinks we should read Plato literally—however unfashionable that might be.

Are Aristotle’s virtues of character an integrated whole, as he claims, or are they, in Plato’s terms, just like a disparate swarm? The problem is due to the facts that (a) Aristotle enumerates affections without virtues and virtues without affections, and (b) his definitions narrowly confine the virtues to one type of action and affection, so that it is hard to see how they can form an integrated whole. In “A Swarm of Virtues: On the Unity and Completeness of Aristotle’s Scheme of Character-Virtues,” **Dorothea Frede** argues that certain affections cannot be made the subject of the sort of systematic training and practice that is required by the good life in a community, that there is an affection contained in every disposition even if it is not named, and that the narrowness of the definitions of the virtues is the prerequisite of the right mean between excess and defect: unless the actions and affections are of the same type this

conception would be vacuous. She concludes that there are also indications of how to supplement what seems missing so that Aristotle's confidence in the completeness of his catalog of virtues is justified—albeit not by explicit argumentation—because the character-virtues are just those virtues needed for a satisfactory life in a polis.

Mi-Kyoung Lee's paper "Justice and the Laws in Aristotle's Ethics" raises similar questions about the shape of Aristotle's argument concerning virtue by focusing on his claim that justice is identical with "*teleia arête*"—variously rendered "the whole of virtue," "complete virtue," and "perfect virtue." This claim helps us to discern a striking line of argument in Aristotle's account of virtue—namely, that justice in particular is the most important of all the virtues because it encompasses all of them. Lee argues that Aristotle's identification of general justice with virtue "as a whole" strongly implies that Aristotle's virtuous agent, both qua good citizen and qua *phronimos*, will be law-abiding, and that this implication can be defended against both ancient and modern objections by looking at Aristotle's conception of the role and purpose of laws in a well-organized polis. That is, for Aristotle, virtue has to be understood in political and not just individual terms.

What is it to be a rational agent in the sphere of productive activity? In "Aristotle on How to Fell a Tree and Other Matters Involving Experience," **Dana Miller** argues that Aristotle's discussion of practical reasoning in the realm of ethics presupposes a more general account of practical reasoning about how to accomplish ends in non-ethical action. Aristotle does not, however, set out this more general account, with the result that this aspect of Aristotle's thinking is largely ignored. In his paper, Miller seeks to remedy this by posing a practical but non-ethical problem, namely, how to fell a tree, and argues that experience, practical expertise, and deliberation combine to provide the epistemic basis required for successful rational action.

In "Deduction in *Sophistici Elenchi* 6," **Marko Malink** focuses on Aristotle's definition of refutation in the theory of argument presented in his early work, the *Sophistici Elenchi*, which is sometimes considered the ninth book of the *Topics*. This work is seldom studied on its own, because it focuses on fallacious arguments and is therefore viewed as a kind of appendix to Aristotle's general treatment of dialectic and argumentation. But Malink argues that Aristotle's treatment of sophistical and merely apparent refutations has important implications for his conception of what a valid deductive argument is. A refutation, for Aristotle, is a kind of deduction; in particular, it is a deduction whose conclusion contradicts a thesis originally endorsed by one's opponent in a debate. Malink examines in detail the way Aristotle develops this definition of refutation in chapter 6 of the *Sophistici Elenchi*, and explains how this chapter sheds new light on Aristotle's conception of deduction.

Jonathan Barnes' paper "Boethus and Finished Syllogisms" deals with a claim at the heart of Aristotle's assertoric logical theory, that some syllogisms are "perfect," that

is, obviously valid or acceptable, and that others are “imperfect” but can be perfected (i) by conversion to one of the perfect syllogisms, (ii) by *reductio ad impossibile*, or (iii) by *ekthesis*. Barnes addresses post-Aristotelian controversies about whether Aristotle was right to regard only some and not all valid arguments as “perfect.”

In “Alexander of Aphrodisias on Aristotle’s Theory of the Stoic Indemonstrables,” **Susanne Bobzien** takes as her starting point Striker’s thesis that Aristotle’s so-called “hypothetical syllogisms” were his way of expressing valid arguments that are not based on the sort of term-relations characteristic of categorical syllogisms. Bobzien explores the role Alexander played in the development and transmission of Aristotle’s and the early Peripatetic hypothetical syllogistic, and in particular in bridging the gap between Aristotelian’s term logic and Stoic propositional logic. She argues that in three areas in particular Alexander made a difference. He connected passages from Aristotle’s *Topics* and *Prior Analytics* with the Stoic indemonstrables, and consequently appropriated at least four of the five kinds of Stoic indemonstrables as Aristotelian. He developed a specifically Peripatetic terminology in which to describe those arguments—thus facilitating the integration of the indemonstrables into Peripatetic logic. And he made progress towards solving the problem of what place the Stoic third indemonstrables should be given in a Peripatetic setting. Bobzien concludes that Alexander consistently presented passages from Aristotle’s logical oeuvre in a manner that makes it appear as if Aristotle was in possession of a Peripatetic correlate to the Stoic theory of indemonstrables.

In the second half of the volume, we turn to Hellenistic ethics and epistemology.

One prominent strategy of argument found in all kinds of ancient ethical theories is the sort of classification and division of goods that is the focus of the papers by Allen and Inwood. In “Why There Are Ends of Both Goods and Evils in Ancient Ethical Theory,” **James Allen** adds a new twist to the treatment of ends: he asks why Cicero presents ancient ethical theories under the rubric of “the ends of goods *and evils*.” For if an end (*telos*) is something for the sake of which we should do things, then it would seem that bad and evil things should not properly speaking have or belong to ends at all. Allen argues however that the best way of thinking of the question “what are the ends of goods and evils?” is to recognize that “end” here has the earlier senses of (i) a result, and (ii) a standard or criterion by which something is to be assessed. The two senses of “end” are thus connected insofar as a theory of the ends of goods and evils will allow one to judge which things are ends in the sense of being good by means of a criterion, namely, by the ends in the sense of results that typically follow for things of that kind. Allen can then not only explain what “ends” means in Cicero’s *De finibus*, but can also make connections with the earlier traditions in thinking about “ends” in the Academy, ones that may go back as far as Plato’s *Protagoras* and *Gorgias*.

In “Ancient Goods: The *tria genera bonorum* in Ethical Theory,” **Brad Inwood** focuses on the familiar ancient classification of goods into three kinds: goods of the body, goods of the mind, and “external” goods, that is, goods located outside the person. He asks what the argumentative point of this division of goods was, and how this division contributed to ancient ethical theories—and concludes that, in some cases, the pursuit of ever-more-refined classifications became an end in itself. The division can be found early on in accounts of Platonic ethics, in Aristotle and in later Peripatetic ethics, and had an indirect impact on Stoicism. There are indeed texts in Plato and Aristotle that are almost certainly the sources for those attributions. However, whereas in the earlier texts, the division between goods is treated as a matter of common belief, by the later period, the distinction had hardened into doctrine. That is, in the Hellenistic period, the classification of goods came to take too central a place in ethical debates, with the consequence that—in the view of at least some later ancient philosophers—excessive concern with the neat categorizations of the three-way division of goods tended to obscure the discussion of the good. Seneca, for one, reacts strongly and understandably against the Stoic obsession with categories of goods.

Despite the fact that Striker’s publications have mostly focused on Greek authors, she has always defended the value and importance of the Roman philosophers of the Hellenistic and post-Hellenistic era, and frequently taught Cicero and Seneca in her seminars. Many of her classics students went on to work on these authors. A particularly successful example of the kind of work this attention inspired is **John Schafer’s** “The Philosophical Ambitions of Seneca’s *Letters*,” which argues that Seneca’s distinction between *decreta* (the doctrinal apparatus of Stoicism with its supporting arguments) and *praecepta* (particular ethical prescriptions, exhortations, and advice) is highly relevant both to his project in the *Letters* and to his self-appraisal as a philosopher. Schafer presents a Seneca who frankly acknowledges, indeed insists upon, the limitations of his own, largely “perceptive” work, while at the same time skillfully manipulating literary form both to argue for and to instantiate in his audience the moral and intellectual efficacy of his chosen mode of instruction.

Ancient theories of knowledge tend to present themselves as theories about the nature and existence of a “criterion of truth”—that is, something which could serve as a standard or criterion for deciding which impressions (and by extension which beliefs, and theories) are true and which ones are false. In “The Epistemology of Ptolemy’s *On the Criterion*,” **Mark J. Schiefsky** examines the use that the second century AD ancient Greek mathematician and astronomer Ptolemy makes of the concept of a “criterion” in his *On the Criterion*, a seldom-studied work in epistemology that was evidently intended to be a prolegomena to his scientific works. As Schiefsky argues, Ptolemy’s use of the term “criterion” bypasses the Hellenistic uses of the term in the Stoics and Epicureans, and he seems largely unconcerned with skepticism; instead, he returns

the term “criterion” to its original meaning as found in Plato and Aristotle, according to which a “criterion” is a means or instrument of judgment. Ptolemy’s most original contribution to the history of this concept is his extended development of an analogy between the *kritêrion* and the *dikastêrion* or “lawcourt.” He goes on to describe the relative contributions of intellect (*nous*), sense perception (*aisthêsis*), and rational discourse (*logos*) to scientific knowledge. Each has its proper use, and when used properly, they are reliable means for arriving at true judgment and, ultimately, knowledge. On Schiefsky’s interpretation, Ptolemy’s theory of knowledge fits comfortably with works in epistemology in the Platonic/Aristotelian tradition, such as the *Didaskalikos* of Alcinous and Peripatetic epistemology as described by Sextus Empiricus.

The final pair of papers in this volume has to do with belief, appearances, and assent in Hellenistic epistemology. For philosophers who are optimistic about the possibility of getting at truth, it is important to distinguish carefully between how things appear to one (i.e., mere impressions and non-epistemic appearances) and one’s all-things-considered reason-based judgments about how things really are; the key, of course, is to figure out a good and reliable basis for arriving at the latter. **Charles Brittain’s** paper “The Compulsions of Stoic Assent” is on the notion of assent in the Stoic theory of reason, according to which all our judgments are the result of a conceptually distinct act of assent to our impressions, that is, to the perceptual and non-perceptual contents (of varying quality and reliability) we entertain. Brittain argues that even though it is tempting to think that rational creatures are virtually compelled to assent to so-called “kataleptic” (“clear and distinct”) impressions and to find such impressions forceful and irresistible, the Stoics did not hold this position; they thought that, while it is natural to assent to kataleptic impressions, there are cases in which we don’t assent to them, and indeed some in which it is right not to.

In “Sextus Empiricus on Persuasiveness and Equipollence,” **Svavar Hrafn Svavarsson** considers Sextus’ suggestion that the skeptic suspends belief because he experiences contrary *logoi* or accounts for appearances (i.e., accounts that purport to establish the truth or falsity of particular appearances) as being equipollent, or equally persuasive or unpersuasive. Svavarsson argues that the immediate effect of equipollence on the skeptic does not consist in his finding contrary accounts equally persuasive in the sense that he is equally persuaded by both accounts. Although this can happen, the effect of equipollence consists in the skeptic’s being unable to determine by which account he ought to be persuaded, irrespective of which account *in fact* persuades him. For Sextus suggests—as Svavarsson argues—that what appears to the skeptic to be the case may appear so to him precisely because he is persuaded at some point by one account of its being the case rather than by another account for its contrary. Such accounts include philosophical arguments. Any account could

persuade the skeptic and thus affect his way of life without forestalling his suspension of belief.

The range and richness of the papers offered here is a small testament to that of Gisela Striker's work. It is a great pleasure to present this collection of papers to Gisela Striker—teacher, mentor, colleague, and friend to the contributors of this volume.

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PART ONE

Plato

1

THE LIFE OF PROTARCHUS' CHOOSING

PLATO *PHILEBUS* 20B–22C

Verity Harte

The *Philebus* is something of a rarity among Platonic dialogues. First, it is a dialogue about which there is a rare, near universal consensus as to its dating—it is late (a thought supported by its unusually extensive allusions to a very great number of other Platonic works). Second, for a late Platonic dialogue, it is unusual in having Socrates as principal speaker, and in what we might think of as typical “Socratic” form; the *Philebus* contrasts in this respect with, for example, the *Sophist*, *Statesman*, or *Laws*, although it is like the *Theaetetus*. Last and most important for my purposes, then, the *Philebus* is a dialogue that, unlike the *Theaetetus*, and despite its “Socratic” renaissance, not only poses a question, but also gives it an answer. In fact, it does this not just once, but twice.

Its questions are highly specific: of two rival candidates—pleasure, championed by Protarchus, taking over from Philebus, and reason, championed by Socrates himself—the question is first, which (if either) is the good or, more specifically, which (if either) is that “state or disposition of soul capable of providing the *eudaimōn* human life” (*Philebus* 11d4–6)? Having arrived at a verdict on this question—that it is neither pleasure, nor reason, but some combination of both—the dialogue goes on to formulate a second, related question, namely, which (if either) of our rivals is responsible for the goodness of this victorious mixed life? The verdict on this second question is given at the end of the dialogue, in an elaborate prize-giving. On a previous occasion I have examined the details of this second verdict within the context of the dialogue as a whole.¹ My focus here is the dialogue’s early, and curiously abrupt, arrival at the first verdict.²

¹ Harte (1999).

² In both cases, I use the term “verdict” advisedly. The dialogue’s questions and answers are frequently posed in explicitly legal terms and with considerable interest in the parallel between legal judgments, cognitive judgments, and the judgment we are invited to decide upon here regarding our two contenders.

In outline, my aim is, first, to identify, and then, hopefully, to resolve various problems regarding the timing and means by which Socrates and Protarchus arrive at this first verdict. In doing so, I hope to provide evidence for the view that the *Philebus* is not, as it might appear, a poorly structured ragbag,³ but a dialogue as carefully written as any.

INTRODUCING THE FIRST VERDICT AND ITS CONTEXT

I begin by introducing the argument by which the first verdict is arrived at, and setting it in context.

The *Philebus* begins in the middle of things. It is clear that a conversation of some kind has already taken place, in which Philebus and Socrates have disputed the rival claims of pleasure and reason. The title for which pleasure and reason have been disputing is less clear. Philebus is reported as holding that enjoyment, pleasure, and the like are “good for all creatures” (11b4–5), but this is neutral between the claim that pleasure is *a* good and the claim that pleasure is *the* good, into which it is subsequently resolved.⁴ Socrates’ counterclaim is carefully nuanced: first a comparative claim—that for those capable of it, reason and its kin are “at least better and more to be valued than pleasure”; then a superlative, but restricted in scope—they are “the most beneficial of all things,” for all things capable of them (11b7–c2).

This conversation, whatever its object, has clearly run aground—at least, Philebus has baled out. Hence the dialogue begins with an elaborate handover, in which Protarchus agrees to accept custody of Philebus’ thesis, and in which the rules of engagement are set. Significantly, these rules include formal provision for what should happen in the event that some third candidate should emerge victorious over both pleasure and reason—the very result that the argument on which I will focus produces. Indeed, the anticipation of this argument is more than merely formal. Socrates’ phrasing is, in retrospect, pretty informative. He asks:

SO. What if some other [state or disposition⁵], better than these, should emerge?

If it turns out to be more akin to pleasure, then, while both [lives,⁶ viz. that of pleasure and that of reason] are defeated by the life securely having these

³ See, for example, the memorably scathing words of no less august a figure than Jowett (Introduction and Analysis to *Philebus*, in his [1871]): “diminution of artistic skill....want of character....a laboured march....a degree of confusion and incompleteness in the general design.”

⁴ First implicitly at 13b7, explicitly at, e.g., 60a7–b1.

⁵ Supplying *ἐξίς καὶ διάθεσις* as per 11d4, tracked through feminine articles of d8.

⁶ Supplying *βίοι* for masculine plural *ἀμφοτέροι* 11e2, by comparison with *βίου*, e2.

[sc. (the states or dispositions of) pleasure and reason⁷], won't the [life⁸] of pleasure surpass the [life] of reason?

PRO. Yes.

SO. But [if it turns out to be more akin to] reason, won't reason conquer pleasure and [pleasure] be defeated? (11d11–12a4)

Two features of the language are especially worthy of note. First, this is the first time in which the candidates—pleasure and reason—have been presented as competing in the form of representative *lives*. Prior to this, the talk has been of pleasure and reason as such, or, in the immediately preceding passage, of states or conditions of the same. Second, the hypothetical claimant on first prize is envisaged as having a rather specific character. It is not just any old life, but a life secure in its possession of our two rival candidates—pleasure and reason. On both points, we have here a rather careful anticipation of the argument to come, in which Protarchus will be invited to consider three lives—the life of pleasure, the life of reason, and a life in which both are together—and in which the life that has both will emerge victorious over the others.

There is a way to go, however, before we get to this argument. Notice that the tone of Socrates' descriptions of the contest is rather martial in character. This combative spirit threatens to undo progress right from the start. For no sooner has their conversation begun in earnest than Socrates and Protarchus get into a fight. Protarchus initially disputes Socrates' claim that pleasure is something complex, that one pleasure may differ from or even be opposed to another in the same way as one shape may be opposed to another. And he downright objects to the provocative way in which Socrates frames the question that such complexity gives rise to. And he does so with reason, since Socrates asks what he takes to be the common characteristic among the good *and bad* sorts of pleasures, in light of which he calls all of them "good" (13b3–5). As Protarchus points out, no self-respecting defender of hedonism will allow his opponent to *start* from the contention that some pleasures are bad (13b6–c2).

A truce is called by their agreement that both pleasure and reason are on a par as regards possible complexity and that they themselves are contending, not for the love of victory, but as allies in search of truth (14b5–7). This truce is followed by the first of the *Philebus*'s apparent digressions from the seemingly user-friendly topics of the good, pleasure, and reason to the seeming obscurities of Platonic metaphysics. We are led from a general discussion of problems of simplicity and complexity—or one and many—through a focus on the way in which these problems arise, in particular, for

⁷ Supplying these, in one formulation or another, as natural referents of ταῦτα, 11e2, picking up on τοῦτων, 11d11.

⁸ Supplied for masculine articles of 11e2 and 12a1, as per n6 above.

certain imperishable *henads* (or “units”), to the outline and illustration of a method of investigation which is supposed to resolve them.

It is from this labyrinth that the argument to the first verdict promises rescue, not to mention a breath of fresh air. Not without justification, Protarchus and Philebus have had difficulty seeing the relevance of much of the abstruse talk of method to the matter under dispute. But Protarchus does get the point at last and he does not like what he sees. The question before them, he says, is whether or not there are kinds of pleasure and of reason, and, if so, how many and what they are like (19b2–4). Protarchus balks at the question and insists that Socrates must decide whether or not such a division of the competitors is in fact necessary (20a5–8).

Cue sudden Socratic inspiration. And in less than two Stephanus pages their question is answered. The argument goes like this.

Socrates begins by gaining agreement on what, with characteristic understatement, he terms “minor matters” (20c8). Three features are agreed to be characteristic features of the good: the good is complete or perfect (τέλειον); it is sufficient (ικανόν); and it is such that “everything that recognizes it pursues it, having no interest in anything else save what is accomplished together with goods” (20d8–10), a formula later captured by the notion of being choiceworthy (αἰρετός, e.g. 22b1). These characteristics subsequently function as necessary conditions to test candidates for the good. It is not clear whether they are also taken to be jointly sufficient to identify the good.

Having identified these characteristics of the good, Socrates next proposes a method of proceeding. Two lives are distinguished: a life in which there is pleasure, but no reason; and a life in which there is reason, but no pleasure. These two lives are to be put to the test on Protarchus (21a4).

The life of pleasure gets the most extensive discussion. Protarchus is first asked whether he would agree to live his whole life through enjoying the greatest pleasures, and he says that he would and that he would have no need of anything further; and, a fortiori, no need of any of the family of reason. Socrates then highlights three consequences of the absence of reason, memory, and so on, consequences concerning the present, past, and future respectively. Without reason, Protarchus would not recognize whether or not he is enjoying himself (21b6–9). Nor, without memory, would he remember that he once did enjoy himself (21c1–4). Finally, being deprived of reckoning (λογισμός), he would be unable to reckon that he will enjoy himself at some future time (21c5–6). Such a life, Socrates proposes, is not a human life, but the life of a mollusk or sea-lung. Asked now whether such a life is choiceworthy, Protarchus declares himself speechless (21d4–5).

The discussion of the life of reason is much swifter. Protarchus is invited to consider whether anyone would accept a life consisting of the various faculties of reason, but

without any pleasure or pain. Protarchus immediately answers that neither this nor the life of pleasure seems to him choiceworthy.

Protarchus is then asked to consider one final life—discussion of which is the least elaborate of all. He is simply asked what he makes of a life in which pleasure and reason are both mixed together and declares that everyone would choose this life over either of the others.

Socrates proceeds to draw conclusions. Of the three lives considered, he says, two—the life of pleasure and the life of reason—have been shown not to be the good. He thus declares it sufficiently shown that Philebus' goddess, pleasure, is not the same as the good. And nor is Socrates' reason, Philebus adds, in one of his rare contributions to the discussion.

This is the end of the argument by which their first verdict is agreed. The dialogue does not end here, of course. A new contest is forged, whose discussion prompts a second, lengthy digression into general metaphysics, with the production of a fourfold division of beings, followed by a lengthy examination of different sorts of pleasure, and a shorter examination of different sorts of reason or knowledge, as a backdrop to a dramatic enactment of the mixing of the victorious, mixed life and the giving of prizes. Nor is this the last we hear of the argument to the first verdict. For it is explicitly reprised at the end of the examination of pleasure and reason and before the mixing of the victorious life (59e7–61a3), and an opportunity to correct it is offered and declined (60d3–e7).

In all, then, the argument by which the first verdict is arrived at seems of central importance to the dialogue as a whole. And this impression is reinforced by the weight it is given in the dialogue's own signposting as to its structure. Not only does the argument answer the central question from which the dialogue begins, but, as we have seen, the way in which it does so is anticipated at the beginning of the dialogue and reprised en route to its end.

PROBLEMS OF THE FIRST VERDICT

For all its apparent importance, however, there are several puzzling aspects of the argument to the first verdict, regarding both its position in the dialogue and the argument itself.

First, the argument is oddly placed. The argument comes after the dialogue's first lengthy discussion of method. But there is not obviously anything in the argument itself that could not have been stated beforehand, right from the start. So, why put it here? This oddity of the argument's placement is certainly not hidden. In fact, it is positively flaunted by the use of a favorite Socratic device: the argument is portrayed as one of

Socrates' arguments '*ex machina*'; a fortuitous, sudden, divinely inspired gift of memory of arguments heard long ago, perhaps in a dream (20b).

The explicit reason for the argument's intrusion is to relieve us of the task that the discussion of method has threatened. Socrates proposes that this argument will allow us to avoid the need for a division of pleasure into kinds (20c4–6). But if this helps with the first puzzle, it raises a second. For, despite the divine inspiration of Socrates' sudden memory, the argument turns out oddly redundant. It achieves its apparent goal of settling the dialogue's question, and yet the dialogue does not finish. Worse still—from the point of view of the argument's explicit intended achievement—the dialogue will go on to draw distinctions between kinds of pleasure the need for which this argument was meant to forestall.⁹

Of course, the dialogue goes on to do this in answering a *second* question, and one might think that this fact is enough to defuse the puzzle here. But the second question is not just another question; it arises out of and depends upon the answer to the first question. So it is at least ironic that an answer to the second question should involve (among other things) the very task from which the answer to the first was meant to relieve us.

Last and by no means least of the puzzles: the argument of the passage seems pretty poor. It is, in the first place, very uneven. The life of pleasure gets fairly detailed treatment. The treatments of the life of reason and of the mixed life, by contrast, are cursory at best: in each case, a simple question and answer. There is no reason given, save Protarchus' fiat, to explain why it might be that the life of reason without pleasure and pain is not to be chosen. And the mixed life is scarcely described: it is a life in which there is both pleasure and reason, and that is all we are told. And yet this is enough for Protarchus to decide that everyone will choose this life over either of the others and, more worryingly, for it to be treated as though it has won outright in the discussion that follows.

This brings us to a second troubling feature of the argument: its unusual form with its total reliance on Protarchus' choices. The passage is methodologically unusual and in a way that is not really captured by those who see it as a resurrection of Socratic method. Frede describes the argument as the dialogue's only elenchus.¹⁰ But this is not a typical elenchus, if by that we mean a procedure that exposes inconsistencies in an interlocutor's beliefs.¹¹ At best, the examination of the life of pleasure could be read this way, but even here, only if we supply the relevant beliefs. Our best clue as to the form of the passage lies in Socrates' invitation at 21a4: "Then shall we put these to the test on

⁹ This drawing of distinctions is hardly a thorough division, it is true. But it was not from *thoroughness* of division that Socrates promised to rescue us, but from the need for division at all.

¹⁰ Frede (1997) 176.

¹¹ Here I agree with Delcomminette (2006) 171.

you?" Two rather different images are implied by the verb (βασανίζω): the torture of the lives before Protarchus to provide him evidence from them or the use of Protarchus as a touchstone with which to test their metal. The touchstone motif goes along with the thought that the good is the sort of thing that, once recognized, would be chosen by everyone. But it does not follow from this that all choices are equal, and the trouble about Protarchus is that he has a stake in the outcome.

In places, then, the argument is excessively thin and it is oddly reliant on Protarchus' partisan opinion. And finally, even where there is at least some measure of argument, and which Protarchus might justly be expected to answer, in the examination of the life of pleasure, the argument looks vulnerable to (and has been subject to) serious objection.

In sum, the interpretation of the passage faces the following dilemma: if the argument is good, it is hard to explain its apparent sidelining within the dialogue overall (despite the noise that is made about its importance); and if the argument is bad, it is hard to explain its appearance at all (especially with fanfare).

In the remainder of the paper, I will take up these problems and puzzles and attempt to steer my way through the dilemma.

THE EXAMINATION OF THE LIFE OF PLEASURE

I begin with the examination of the life of pleasure, where there is at least some argument to go on. The argument has been subject to two rather different sorts of objection, each directed at the legitimacy and strength of its claim to be a strike against hedonism.

First is what I shall call the *Instrumentalist Objection*.¹² This is the charge that Socrates' putative victory over the hedonist is hollow, since the hedonist need concede no more than that the inclusion of reason is of instrumental value in the service of pleasure. Sure, Protarchus would like to have the faculties of reason in the life of his choosing—so as to maximize his pleasures. Such value as reason has is derivative of the value of pleasure.

The second objection is what I shall call the *Recalcitrant Objection*.¹³ The objection turns on the unusual form of the argument—it depends on the choice of Protarchus. And its success might seem correspondingly fragile. If Protarchus cannot bring himself to choose the life of a mollusk or sea-lung, another, more robust hedonist might say that names can never hurt him.

¹² The charge is levelled by both Gosling (1975) 183–4 and Frede (1997) 180–1.

¹³ The objection is raised and addressed by McCabe (2000) 128–34.

These objections are serious, because each has the consequence that the hedonist's central thesis—that pleasure is the good—is left entirely untouched. But it is just this claim that the argument targets. Fortunately, the argument can, I think, be defended, more or less directly, against each of these objections.

Consider, first, the *Instrumentalist Objection*. In places, Socrates' choice of language certainly invites and might be taken to support such an objection.

Having been asked whether he would agree to live his whole life through enjoying the greatest pleasures, and whether he would think himself in need of anything further (21a8–12), Protarchus is asked to consider whether he would need any aspect of thinking, understanding, or “reckoning” or “calculating what's needed” (λογίζεσθαι τὰ δέοντα, 21a14–b1). At least he is asked it this way in Burnet's edition (1901); but the text is disputed. Frede excises “τὰ δέοντα” as a corruption with Badham (1878) and Diès (1941), and one that gives away what she takes to be the punch line of the argument rather too soon.¹⁴ Whatever exactly he is asked, Protarchus is in any case confident that, with enjoyment, he would have everything.

Socrates next draws his attention to three consequences of the absence of reason: concerning the present, that he would be ignorant of whether or not he is enjoying himself (21b6–9); concerning the past, that he would not remember that he once did enjoy himself (21c1–4); and concerning the future, that “being deprived of calculation (or: reckoning, λογισμός), [he]¹⁵ would be unable to calculate that [he] will enjoy [himself] in the future” (21c5–6). Use of the term λογισμός, a term associated with arithmetical calculation, invites the thought that the use of reason in this case at least is for the calculation of how to acquire the maximum future pleasures. And this thought is encouraged by a translation like Frede's: “being unable to calculate, you could not figure out any future pleasures for yourself.”¹⁶ But we are not forced to adopt such a construal. Socrates may simply point to the lack of ability to *predict* future occasions of pleasure.¹⁷

Whatever Socrates' choice of language may suggest, there is one rather simple reason why the argument may be saved from the *Instrumentalist Objection*. It is preempted by the way in which the argument is set up. The objection holds that the hedonist will agree to incorporate reason, but only for instrumental reasons—to maximize pleasure. But, in the context of this argument, this rationale for the inclusion of pleasure is

¹⁴ Frede (1997) 25, note *ad loc.*

¹⁵ Socrates puts his question directly in the second person, of course.

¹⁶ Frede (1993) tr. *ad loc.* ὥς χαίρῃς, 21c6, might be translated as purposive (in particular as regards the manner of the future enjoyment), but such a translation is by no means obvious or required.

¹⁷ See, e.g., the translation *ad loc* in Gosling (1975).

directly ruled out. For this argument supposes, *ex hypothesi*, that the life of pleasure under consideration is one in which Protarchus has the *greatest* pleasures (see 21a9, b3–4) and has them *throughout* the life (see 21a8, b3). The life under consideration is thus already maximal in terms of pleasure. A fortiori, the inclusion of reason cannot be intended to maximize pleasures.¹⁸

The point may be spelled out. It is possible to think of reason as being itself a source of pleasure and as a means to secure or increase other pleasures. But for the argument at hand, these ways of thinking of reason are irrelevant. Take, for example, the case of reasoning about the future. It is, of course, true that in the life envisaged we would not be able to reason out ways to ensure we get the maximal possible future pleasures. But, given the argument's hypothesis, this does not mean that we will be deprived of the maximal possible future pleasures. We will get them in any case, without the labor of reasoning for them. Hence, the inclusion of reason is not required for the maximization of pleasures.¹⁹

Of course, this raises the question of why Protarchus *does* agree to the inclusion of reason,²⁰ and, in particular, why he does not simply refuse the hypothesis, and simply deny that a life without reason could be maximal in terms of pleasure.²¹ I shall say more about this question later, in considering the argument's scope and context. For now, it brings us neatly on to the second *Recalcitrant Objection*. Protarchus' sudden

¹⁸ The point is made by Irwin (1995) 334 and Cooper (2003) 121.

¹⁹ A variant of the *Instrumentalist Objection* is made the basis of an alternative reading of the argument by Evans (2007), who takes Protarchus' rejection of the life of pleasure without reason to be based on his recognition of a human limitation requiring the involvement of reason in a human life, and not on the value of reason as such (350–1). However, as Evans notes (351–2), on this reading, the argument does not secure the conclusion that Socrates explicitly gives it, not only at 22b3–4, which Evans discusses (359), but also, in anticipation of the argument, at 20b8 and c2.

²⁰ Protarchus could simply miss the point, but this seems a counsel of despair.

²¹ I assume that he does not in fact refuse the hypothesis, nor is he *directly* invited to do so. Contrast here Lear (2004) 54–7. Where she takes Socrates' question, at 21b3–4, directly to invite Protarchus to reject the supposition that the life illustrated would involve the greatest pleasures, and to do so for reasons consistent with his hedonism, I take Protarchus' assent to the question to underline the argument's hypothesis and, in so doing, to flush out the hedonist's present reliance on purely quantitative variations among pleasures and give him reason to think more seriously about kinds of pleasure and about the relation between reason and pleasure. Delcomminette (2006) 172–82 also appears to adopt a reading according to which the hypothesis is rejected or at least undermined by the life's absence of reason. However, all such readings—according to which the life of pleasure without reason turns out not to contain pleasure or not the very greatest pleasures—face the difficulty that such an interpretation will not generate Socrates' conclusion for the hedonist: that pleasure is not the good.

capitulation prompts the worry that there might be another more stubborn hedonist waiting in the wings.

The objection is one that is raised and, to a large extent, answered by M.M. McCabe.²² As she points out, Socrates' points about present, past, and future implicitly highlight the sort of psychological continuity we expect of human *lives*. Socrates concludes the examination of the life of pleasure with the claim that it is not a human life at all, but the life of a sea-lung or mollusk. He then asks Protarchus whether he thinks that a life of this sort is choiceworthy—not for sea-lungs or mollusks, but for us humans. Protarchus' answer is striking: the argument has rendered him speechless (21d4–5). This is not just the embarrassment of one beaten in argument by Socrates. If, on pain of absurdity, Protarchus were to choose such a life, then speechless is just what his choice would make him;²³ a fact of which the conspicuous silence of the recalcitrant Philebus is a vivid reminder.

Notice that on this (which I take to be broadly McCabe's) view, the unusual form of the argument is its strength, not its weakness.²⁴ For the fact that a stubborn hedonist might simply make this choice and opt to be like a mollusk shows the choice to be evidently absurd. And it is an absurdity that arises directly from the position and not from any fancy argumentative footwork against it.²⁵

We are, however, once again forced to confront the hypothesis: that the life under consideration is maximal in terms of pleasure. We are forced to do so, because the success of this answer to the *Recalcitrant Objection* depends, first, on the assumption that Philebus espouses a particularly extreme sort of hedonism. Second, and more importantly, it depends on the assumption that Protarchus must agree that hedonism of this extreme sort can give us a life with the greatest of pleasures.

Let us take stock. We have candidate answers to each of the two objections to the treatment of the life of pleasure, *granted its hypothesis*. But we have yet to see why Protarchus should grant the hypothesis. And we have not yet considered the more

²² McCabe (2000) 128–34. In what follows, I am heavily indebted to her discussion.

²³ This is not at all to deny that Protarchus is invited to *make* the choice from *outside* the perspective of such a life and not from the perspective of an occupant (as rightly emphasized by Irwin (1995) 333 and Lear (2004) 54–5). Indeed, in this case, choice is only possible from such a perspective.

²⁴ For interesting reflection on the force of appeals to human nature in this and other Greek philosophical arguments, see Nussbaum (1995), though I am not persuaded by her proposal that the argument turns in part on Protarchus' perceived lack of continued personal identity if transformed into the subject of such a life.

²⁵ This is not to say that we have yet been given an *explanation* of the evident absurdity. For some suggestive discussion, see Bobonich (2002) 153–79, with whom I agree that the move made here “is only a starting point for the hard philosophical work done in the rest of the dialogue,” a provisionality which, I argue, is clearly marked in the frame of this argument.

general objections as to the shape and form of the passage as a whole. For answers to these questions, I turn to the passage's aims and context.

THE FIRST VERDICT AS A WHOLE AND IN CONTEXT

Return to Socrates' sudden inspiration. What he remembers is arguments to the effect that neither pleasure nor reason is the good, but some third thing (20b7–9). And he takes the promise of such arguments to be this:

- SO. And yet, if this were to become clearly apparent to us now, then pleasure would be displaced from victory—for the good would no longer turn out to be the same as it, isn't that so?
- PRO. Yes.
- SO. And, in my judgment, we will no longer need in addition a division of kinds of pleasure. (20b9–c5)

This characterization of what the arguments would show—that the good is not the same as pleasure—is exactly what Socrates takes the subsequent examination of lives to have shown, in conclusion. He says:

It seems to me to have been sufficiently stated that we do not need suppose that *Philebus' goddess* and the good are the same. (22c1–2)²⁶

The argument's object is thus presented as the limited, negative object of establishing that pleasure and good are not the same, where this thesis is understood as having a particular association with *Philebus'* understanding of pleasure. This limited object immediately helps with the question of why the treatments of the life of reason and of the mixed life are comparatively uneven. We do not need to suppose that this is to give Socrates' candidate an unreasonably easy ride; nor to suppose that Protarchus' choosing too quickly does him in. Instead we may recall the nuance with which Socrates' claim was recorded right at the beginning. We do not need to spend a great deal of time showing (or, for that matter, denying) that Socrates' candidate is not identical with the good. Socrates never claimed that it was, but only that it was a better good than pleasure for those capable of it.

The limited object can help us further. Return to the unquestioned hypothesis—that the life of pleasure without reason that is described to Protarchus is a life consisting of

²⁶ Emphasis to reflect the effect of γε, c1.

the greatest pleasures throughout. It is a moot question, at this point in the dialogue, whether Protarchus has the resources to question such a hypothesis and deny that a life deprived of reason could be maximal in terms of pleasure. Is Protarchus in a position to claim that there are certain sorts of pleasures—those of reason, for example—that are simply *better* than others? What would this mean? Well, if the good is pleasure, then something is *better* if and only if it is *more pleasant*. But what does it mean to be *more pleasant*? Protarchus is clearly happy with the idea that pleasure is something that can be *maximized*—and thus that some pleasures are quantitatively greater than others. But it would be simply question-begging for him to claim that, as it happens, it is the pleasures involving reason that are quantitatively greater than the rest. And it is unclear that he can lay claim to any other sort of salient variation among pleasures. Protarchus, after all, has resisted the idea that there are different kinds of pleasure, and, even more strongly, that any kinds there might be could make a difference as regards value.²⁷

He has done so, we may note, in the terms of the Phileban identity the first verdict will challenge. What he said was this:

Do you think that anyone who supposes that pleasure is the good will agree to allow you to say that some sorts of pleasures are good, and certain other sorts are bad? (13b6–c2)

Thus the defense of the Phileban identity has left Protarchus in a bind. The examination of the life of pleasure succeeds in its limited object, given its hypothesis. And Protarchus is not in a position to question its hypothesis if he sticks to his guns about pleasure and kinds.

Is the passage disappointing if it has only a limited object? Well, it would be if the dialogue finished here. But the dialogue does not. And it would be if that were all that the passage accomplished. But it is not. For, just as the dialogue does not end here, so its limited argumentative object is not the only thing the passage achieves.

First, the argument's success against its limited object precisely serves to motivate Protarchus in the direction of an examination of pleasure and its kinds of the sort the dialogue will turn to later. This motivational role of the argument helps with the passage's puzzling placement. And it is underscored by a striking feature of the way the passage is written. This is its use of marked parallels between the terms of the discussion and the terms in which the discussion itself takes place.

²⁷ This is a little complicated. He is committed to all kinds of pleasure that there might be being good. It would be open to him to think them good to differing extents. But the question is whether he has to date the resources to support anything beyond mere quantitative variation.

Return to the way in which Socrates frames the argument. If the argument succeeds in displacing pleasure from victory, he says, “we will no longer need in addition a division of kinds of pleasure” (20c4–5). And he concludes that the rejection of Philebus’ identity has been “sufficiently stated” (22c2).

Sufficiency, we may recall, is one of the three criteria agreed as marks of the good, and it is the main one tested in the examination of the life of pleasure. The test for sufficiency is captured by the idea that if a life has the good in it—the life of pleasure or reason—then we will not need anything in addition. This verb (προσδεόμαι) is used to introduce the examination of lives (20e6) and forms the question that drives the examination of the life of pleasure (21a11). And it is the very same verb with which Socrates makes his claim that, given this argument, there will not be any additional need of a division of kinds of pleasure.

There are, then, two parallel questions about sufficiency, about whether there is need for anything more. As far as the dialogue’s overall discussion goes, the question is whether the argument we have been given is sufficient to defeat the view that pleasure is the good or whether we need in addition to embark on a division of pleasure. Within the argument, the question for Protarchus is whether, if he has the maximal possible pleasure, where pleasure is considered invariant with respect to value save quantitatively, this would suffice to make this life the good life, or does he need reason in addition? And the answers to these questions are designed to stand or fall together. If Protarchus takes the life of pleasure to suffice (to be the good life), then the argument suffices to defeat him (to defeat the view that pleasure is the good) without the need for, and because he has no room for, the sort of view of pleasure that would motivate a division of pleasure. But if Protarchus accepts that maximal pleasure, considered as invariant with respect to value save quantitatively, does not suffice to make the life of pleasure the good life, then this argument too does not suffice to address the various new questions now provoked, nor to defeat the view that pleasure is the good and give a positive answer to the dialogue’s original question. For it is now open to Protarchus to reconsider the question of the greatest pleasures. In this way, the limited object of the argument acts as a control on the question of whether we will need in addition a division of pleasure. And it provides the reluctant hedonist with a motive for thinking we do.

Motivating Protarchus is not, however, the only thing the passage can be seen to achieve over and above its limited argumentative object. It also sets the agenda for the inquiry it motivates him to follow. One rather obvious way in which it does so is in the questions that are raised by the examination of the life of pleasure. These include the question of what should count as the greatest of pleasures (and what greatness amounts to)—a question the dialogue will later explore in contrasting intense pleasures, inevitably mixed up with pain, with true, pure pleasures; and the question of

the relation between reason, memory, and expectation as to the future and the experience of pleasure—a question explored, above all, in the dialogue's discussion of false pleasure.

Examination of these questions would require us to look at pretty much the whole of the rest of the dialogue. I do not propose to attempt this here. Instead, I want to concentrate on a less obvious way in which our passage sets the agenda for the inquiry to follow, and one which relies once again upon its context and framing.

Recall that Socrates began the argument of the passage by proposing for agreement three criteria of the good: it is complete or perfect (τέλειον), sufficient (ικανόν), and choiceworthy (αἰρετός). I have already drawn attention to the way in which the sufficiency criterion is applied both within the discussion and to the terms of the discussion itself. There is another example of this sort of parallel, this time one of omission.

When we examine the details of the examination of the lives of pleasure, of reason and of them both together, we find that only two of the criteria are directly appealed to: sufficiency—as we have seen; and choiceworthiness, mentioned directly at 21d3, e4, and 22a5. The criterion of completeness or perfection, however, is not mentioned during the course of the examination. Further, its absence is made pointed by the way in which the passage concludes. At the end of the examination of all three lives, Socrates invites Protarchus to state the outcome, which he does, like this:

Three lives having been put forward, [it follows] for two of them that they are neither sufficient nor choiceworthy for any person or animal. (22a9–b2)

This summary confirms that only two of the criteria have been appealed to in the course of the argument. Socrates then continues:

Isn't it then already clear, regarding these [two lives] at least, that neither of them has the good? For it was to be sufficient and complete and choiceworthy for every plant and animal capable of living in this fashion throughout its life. (22b3–6)

Socrates mentions all three criteria. But this does not mean we were wrong to suppose that the argument has used only two of them.²⁸ Socrates' remark is an accurate reflection of what they required of the good. And we do not need to have gone through all three of the criteria for it to be true that the lives of pleasure and of reason have failed this test. (If we know that something is not sufficient and is not choiceworthy,

²⁸ Contrast Cooper (2003) 119–20. Contrast also Delcomminette (2006) 167, who has a different view both of which criteria are explicitly used and of the implications of their not all being so.

then we also know that it is not sufficient, choiceworthy, and perfect.) What Socrates' remark does do—especially following Protarchus' accurate summary—is draw our attention to the fact that the completeness criterion has not been considered.

There is a rather pleasing irony to the parallel suggested by this failure to consider the completeness criterion: the examination of the lives—of the surviving mixed life, in particular—is as incomplete as their discussion turns out to be. But I think there is also more to be said about the significance of the omission of the completeness criterion, although it will be brief and at this stage somewhat speculative.

If we were reading Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*—which borrows heavily from this passage of the *Philebus*²⁹—it would be tempting to translate the omitted criterion, not as “complete” or “perfect,” but as “final,”³⁰ a translation that immediately brings to the fore a teleological framework. Even if it lacks the technical sense the term may come to have in Aristotle, it is not without teleological connotations in the *Philebus* at least. At the time that the first verdict is drawn, no teleological framework has yet been established within the dialogue. But its establishment is among the first jobs of the newly formulated contest to which the first verdict gives rise.

This newly formulated contest asks which of our two candidates—pleasure or reason—should be declared responsible for the goodness of the victorious, mixed life. Socrates immediately embarks on the second of the dialogue's adventures into general Platonic metaphysics, in which he divides everything there is into four kinds: unlimited, limit, mixed, and cause. Our missing criterion—being complete, perfect, or final—is one of the hallmarks of the successful complex items that are found in the mixed kind³¹ and of which the mixed life is taken to be an example. The existence of such good, successful mixtures is credited to the teleological operation of reason, to which responsibility is given for the way in which these things are ordered for the best.

Now, it is not my intention to explore these matters here.³² But two points may be noted. First, we ought to be somewhat surprised at the second contest's implicit assumption that a life mixed of pleasure and reason has not only beaten the alternatives—the life of pleasure and the life of reason—but won outright. Given the brevity of its treatment, and its lack of completion, this is hardly something the interlocutors

²⁹ The relation between Aristotle's *NE* and this passage of the *Philebus* is the subject of two excellent recent discussions in Cooper (2003) and Lear (2004).

³⁰ Cf. Lear (2004) 53, who explicitly rejects this translation for the *Philebus* passage in contrast to its meaning in Aristotle. Of course, the translation of the term in the context of Aristotle's *NE* is itself a controversial matter, but for reasons that need not concern us here.

³¹ See, e.g., 26a4. And notice 31a8–10, where τέλος is among the ordered features denied to pleasure, as a generic unlimited, and 66b2 where τὸ τέλειον is among the identifying marks of the second prizewinners.

³² There are related discussions in Harte (1999) and Harte (2002) §4.3.

could claim to have shown. Second, once the mixed life is identified as a mixture—in the terms of the fourfold division—and hence as something whose value is the responsibility of reason, why is the second contest not already over? After all, this second contest concerned precisely the identification of what is responsible for the goodness of the victorious, mixed life.

The answer, I suggest, is the dialogue's implicit acknowledgment that it has not even completed its first contest as yet. The progress towards the dialogue's second verdict is as much a continuation and expansion of the inquiry into what gets first prize as an inquiry into which of pleasure and reason comes second. And it is, I would argue, a progress that is organized around the omitted teleological criterion—aimed at revealing pleasure's status as a teleologically dependent item, the mixed life's nature and constitution if it is to be good, and the organization by reason that makes it so.

I want to close by linking this teleological turn of the dialogue with an example of an aspect of the *Philebus*'s character that I have mentioned, but not thus far explored: its habit of alluding, more or less directly, to other Platonic works.³³ The dialogue's teleological turn is anticipated and, it is tempting to suggest, highlighted by a rather striking cluster of reminiscences of a foundational passage in Platonic teleology: the fictional autobiography of Socrates which he provides in Plato's *Phaedo*. The first such reminiscence comes when prior to Socrates' sudden inspiration and faced with the implication drawn from their discussion of method, Protarchus suddenly "comes over all Socrates," for a moment. Faced with Socrates' claim that, not only must he consider whether, how many, and of what sort are the kinds of pleasure and reason, but we will not be worth anything until we have answered this question about *everything*, Protarchus' reply is both worthy of and reminiscent of Socrates:

While it's a fine thing for a prudent man to know everything, a second sailing,
I think, is not to be mistaken about oneself. (19c2–3)

The phrase "second sailing" has a history in Plato and one pertinent to our theme. In the *Phaedo*, Socrates describes a *second sailing* in his account of the history of his investigations into the nature of causal responsibility (τὸ αἴτιον, αἴτια) (*Phaedo* 99c9–d1). It is an investigation of this sort that is launched in the *Philebus* following the drawing of their first verdict (and the arguments prompted by the exchange following Protarchus' modest refusal). In this second contest, Socrates goes on to provide a teleological account of causal responsibility in which the goodness of mixtures is

³³ This is a feature of the dialogue, the extent of which was first drawn to my attention by Myles Burnyeat (pers. comm.); aspects of it are now explored in Burnyeat (2004).

the responsibility of reason (νοῦς). Just this model of causal responsibility—that reason (νοῦς) arranges things for the best—was the Anaxagorean model of Socrates' *first Phaedo* sailing, for which he held out great hope.

What should we make of this complex allusion, if that is what it is? I suggest that it draws attention once again to an elaborate parallel at work in the *Philebus* between the terms of the discussion and the discussion itself. The striking omission from consideration of the teleological criterion from the *Philebus*'s first verdict has a methodological payoff for the dialogue's discussion: it indicates the (teleological) direction the inquiry must take. According to the *Phaedo*, this is exactly what we should expect to be the payoff of getting a theory of causal responsibility (αἴτια), especially a teleological one: it directs our inquiry (cf. *Phaedo* 97c6–d4).

Not only that: this structure, an orientation for the purposes of good organization has the sort of structure for which we may very well be looking not only for the inquiry to come, but also for the answer to its question: what state or disposition of soul is capable of providing the *eudaimōn* human life? Certainly, this seems to be part and parcel of what is involved in the good turning out to be something τέλειον, and it goes along with the dialogue's gloss on its being choiceworthy. To be choiceworthy, we may recall, is to be such that "everything that recognizes it pursues it, having no interest in anything else save what is accomplished together with goods" (20d8–10). Once recognized, that is, the good acts in such a way as to provide an orientation and structure for all one's desires. Finally, as his use of a cognitive word here might suggest, and as the *Philebus* likes frequently to remind us,³⁴ the nature of this good organization is something that it will be the responsibility of our own reason to investigate and discover both in the remainder of the dialogue and in life.

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³⁴ In the vicinity, see, e.g. the play on Socrates' νοῦς, at 22c3, c5, e3, in setting the terms of the second contest.

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2

FOOLS' PLEASURES IN PLATO'S *PHILEBUS*

Jennifer Whiting

It seems to me that as far as thinking about philosophical problems is concerned, historians of philosophy are doing much the same as specialists in systematic fields. In trying to make sense of the arguments and theories of older philosophers, we cannot help but think about the problems they were thinking about—problems which are often versions or interesting variants of questions that are discussed in contemporary systematic debates. One polemical way of describing the difference... would be to say that it's a matter of taste: historians tend to be those who prefer to read, say, Hume rather than the latest issue of a philosophical journal, or who prefer to do ethics with Aristotle (to borrow a phrase from Sarah Broadie) to doing it with the latest school of consequentialists or deontologists. Their prejudice is that there may often be more to be learned from these authors than from our technically more sophisticated contemporaries. It seems highly implausible to suggest that the historian is thinking about Hume or Aristotle *rather than* ethics or epistemology, and if she does she will not get very far.

One might object that this will not eliminate the difference between the exegetical exercise of figuring out what Aristotle was saying about virtue, for example, and a straightforward discussion of questions of desert or moral responsibility. But the line between exegesis and argument is less clear than these labels suggest. The historian who wants to understand a classical author will have to rely on her own sense of what is philosophically plausible, what counts as a strong or a weak argument, and in this respect she will of course be guided by her training as a philosopher, which can only be that of a contemporary philosopher...

But what can historical exegesis contribute to present-day philosophical debate? I would like to argue that the historian's contribution consists in keeping available the thought of past philosophers as a resource that would otherwise be lost or inaccessible.

—Gisela Striker, Preface to *Essays on Hellenistic Epistemology and Ethics* (1996)

Rarely has the line between exegesis and "systematic" argument been less distinct than in debates about the conception of false pleasure in Plato's *Philebus*. Philosophers seeking to make "systematic" sense of the very idea make liberal use of the *Philebus*,

especially its infamous reference to the allegedly false pleasure experienced by someone who pictures himself in the future, getting lots of gold and many consequent pleasures, and also (presumably as a result) “beside himself with delight.”¹ But different philosophers read this example in different ways. And recent exegetes have (as we shall see in §4) followed their different leads. Matthew Evans (2008) follows what he calls the “Old School” lead of Bernard Williams (1959), while Verity Harte (2004) claims to follow what Evans calls the “New School” lead of Sabina Lovibond (1989–90). But Williams and Lovibond make only passing reference to the *Philebus*; neither pretends to serious exegesis or attempts to read this example as part of the sequence in which it is merely the first step. It is thus no surprise that exegetes following these leads have lost sight of important aspects of Plato’s thought, aspects best recovered through the sort of historical and philosophically astute exegesis so wonderfully displayed in Striker’s own work. We do better to read the *Philebus* in the light of Plato’s *Gorgias* (which is generally agreed to be earlier) and some passages from Aristotle’s account of *phantasia* that are close in spirit (and sometimes even in letter) to the *Philebus* itself. For this context reveals both the flawed argument on which the *Philebus* aims to improve and the means by which it seeks to do. Or so I argue.

The flawed argument is the one Socrates ran in the *Gorgias* against the professed hedonism of Callicles. The *Philebus*’s means for improving on it are two. One is an appeal to the *foolishness*—as distinct from the *shamefulness*—of certain pleasures, an appeal designed to avoid the sort of reliance on contested values that taints the *Gorgias* argument. The other is a proto-Aristotelian understanding of Socrates’ talk of false pleasures as “ridiculous imitations of true ones” (40c4–6).

One natural way to take this talk is to take “false” (*pseudês*) to function here in its alienans capacity, as in talk of a “false friend.” But there are reasons to resist doing so. For one, doing so is in tension with a highly plausible reading according to which the *Philebus* seeks (in ways explained below) to improve on the *Gorgias* by producing a *genuine* pleasure that a hedonist subject might himself take to detract, even *ceteris paribus*, from the goodness of his life. More importantly—and less controversially—seeing the alienans use here would undermine the analogy between false pleasure and false belief on which the immediate argument turns. For Socrates—who seeks here to persuade his hedonist interlocutor Protarchus that some pleasures are false and hence bad—responds to Protarchus’ skepticism about the possibility of false pleasure by appealing to what Dorothea Frede calls “the facticity claim” and its parallel applicability to pleasure and belief: just as “whoever judges anything at all (even if it is not about anything existing in the present, past or future) *is always really judging*,” so too

¹ *Philebus* 40a9–12. Translation from Frede (1993). Others (except where indicated) are my own.

“someone who has any pleasure at all, however ill-founded it may be, *really does have pleasure*” [40c8–d10]).² So here at least the pleasures that are supposed to be false are meant to be *genuine* pleasures and their falsity seems to lie in the falsity of their *propositional content*.

I say “here at least” because the *Philebus* argument proceeds in four stages and Socrates does seem in the third to use “false” in its alienans capacity. Many commentators are troubled by the apparent equivocation. Most seem to assume that Socrates *should* use “*pseudês*” in the same sense throughout. And most focus primarily on the first stage, taking the sense there to indicate the sense that must—on pain of equivocation—be present in what follows. The charge of equivocation is common: Gosling accuses Plato of “rank equivocation.”³

Dorothea Frede is a notable exception in suggesting that Socrates may *legitimately* use “false” in different senses. She characterizes the various senses as follows (with my italics):

1. Pleasures are false because *the state of affairs which is enjoyed is not real*. Such falsity presupposes that certain pleasures... have propositional form and content...
2. Pleasures are called false, when they are *inflated in size*.... What is false here is not the pleasure itself, that is, *what* it was taken to be, but rather the *size or worth attributed to it*.
3. Freedom from pain is sometimes *falsely called pleasure*, although it is not a pleasure at all. In this case, there is no false pleasure but a confusion about what pleasure *is*.
4. Pleasures are called false because they contain an admixture of pain. In this case, *falsity consists in impurity*.⁴

These characterizations are controversial. There is even a question about whether “mixed” pleasures are supposed to be false. For although Socrates does not call them “false,” he does call “true” the pure pleasures to which they are opposed. But the point here is that, however many senses there are, Frede sees no problem of equivocation: she reads Socrates as giving a generic account of pleasure as a kind of process of restoration and then simply describing *various* “ways in which something can go wrong with processes of restoration.”⁵

² Frede (1993) 39, n. 2. Because so much of the secondary literature uses “belief” for what Plato calls “*doxa*,” I use “belief” where Frede uses “judgment.”

³ Gosling (1975) 212, who takes Socrates to move from speaking of pleasures as false in the sense that their propositional content is false to speaking of pleasures in the alienans sense.

⁴ Frede (2000) 234–5 (cf. Frede [1997] 242).

⁵ I explain the restorative account in §1. Note that it is *not obvious* that Socrates treats *all* pleasures as involving a process of restoration: this may apply only to body-involving pleasures. For

Frede's suggestion is salutary. But I think she goes too far in taking Socrates to present what is effectively a *list*. What matters here is not that Socrates' use of "*pseudês*" be absolutely univocal, but rather the coherence of his overall argument. And for that it may suffice if he employs a core notion of falsity departures from which are justified in their respective contexts and contribute to the argument *as a whole*.⁶ So, for example, it is not necessarily a problem if, in moving from the first to the second stage, Socrates moves from speaking of pleasures as false in the sense that they have false propositional content to speaking of pleasures as false in the sense that they appear to be larger or smaller than they really are. For there is an intuitive sort of unity provided by the common use of "*pseudês*" to characterize things as *lying* or *deceitful*. Pleasures that seem larger or more significant than they really are can be said to resemble false propositions insofar as they threaten to deceive us about some way the world really is: a pleasure that appears larger or more significant than it really is threatens to deceive us about *itself*.⁷ And it need not be a problem if Socrates then in the third stage speaks of pleasures as false in the sense that they are merely apparent pleasures mistaken by their subject for genuine ones. For as long as the non-alienans use is *also* in play—especially where the falsity of pleasure is assimilated to the falsity of belief—Socrates can perhaps allow that *some* self-ascriptions of pleasure in the present tense are mistaken and still come up with an example of a genuine pleasure his hedonist interlocutor will think he is (even *ceteris paribus*) better off without.

In sum, we need not choose between absolute univocity and a mere list: Plato may aim to provide Socrates with a coherent story involving different *but related* senses of "false." So I propose to examine Socrates' various "models" of false pleasure by attending to the role each plays in the overall sequence. Note that I speak of "models" here so as to avoid begging questions about whether what we find here are different examples of the same kind, different kinds of false pleasure, or something else instead. And I shall pay special attention (as Galen apparently did) to what Socrates says as he transitions from one model to another.⁸

further discussion of this, and powerful argument that it is part of the *point* of the *Philebus* that no *generic* account of pleasure *can* be given, see Fletcher (2012) (from whose author I have learned much).

⁶ I see here misguided assumptions about what is required for the consistency of Plato's argument similar to those I see in readings of Plato's *Republic* and diagnose in Whiting (2012).

⁷ The second stage is in fact best read this way, since there is otherwise a puzzle, clear from Frede's characterization, about why it is the *pleasures themselves* (and not the subjects' estimates of their sizes) that are called "false."

⁸ Galen, in *De libris propriis* 13, lists among his works on Plato one (now lost) on the transitions in the *Philebus*: *Peri tón en Philêbô(i) metabasêôn*.

But first let me explain the dialectical situation and the distinction between forms of pleasure on which Socrates' arguments turn (§1). I shall then—after a brief digression that prepares the way for my reading of the third model (§2)—say a bit about the *Gorgias* background (§3), turning finally to the sequence as such (§§4–8) and the light it might shed (§§9–10) on the interpretive controversies surrounding the infamous example at the heart of Socrates' first model.

1. THE *PHILEBUS*: A BRIEF INTRODUCTION

The *Philebus*, whose official topic is the human good, begins in medias res. Protarchus has just taken over from Philebus, who has apparently been defending the life of pleasure, though there is little sign from here on that he has any interest in doing so. This may be significant. For the dialogue seems focused more on the difficulties involved in *defending* the life of pleasure than any difficulty involved in *living* it. Someone who simply loses himself in first-order pleasures—without stepping back and taking a kind of second-order satisfaction in what a great thing it is, perhaps even the essence of *eudaimonia*, to be enjoying such pleasures—may escape Socratic refutation. But that is no guarantee against serving as an object lesson for would-be hedonists who are sufficiently reflective to ask themselves whether pleasure *really is* the human good.

Socrates is defending the life of intelligent activity, including not only knowledge and true belief but also memory. When Protarchus says that he would gladly live his whole life enjoying the greatest pleasures and would need nothing further in addition, Socrates asks whether Protarchus would *really* be content with such a life, since, lacking intelligence, he would not even realize that he was enjoying himself when he was in fact doing so.⁹ Nor, lacking memory and the power of reasoning, would he be able to remember that he had previously enjoyed himself or calculate how to do so in the future. He would be living the life not of a human being but of a jellyfish or some testacean (21c–d). Protarchus quickly concedes that a life of pleasure involving these forms of intelligence is more choiceworthy than a life of pleasure that lacks them. It is not entirely clear how to interpret Protarchus' concession, but he may be supposing (contrary to their explicit hypothesis) that adding memory of past pleasures, awareness of present ones, and planning for future ones would yield new forms of pleasure such that any life to which they were added would be *more pleasant* with than without them. So it is tempting to see second-order pleasures lurking here, setting us up for the arguments that follow.

⁹ Cf. *Gorgias* 474b, where Socrates suggests that Polus, too, fails to know his own mind.