

## CHAPTER THREE

### THE UNHAPPINESS OF THE GREAT KING (GORGIAS 461-481):

Amber Carpenter

Socrates, you seem to be audacious in your speech, like a real rabble-rouser. And you declaim these things now, while Polus suffers the same fate he accused you of making Gorgias suffer. For he said that when you asked Gorgias if he would teach justice... Gorgias appeared ashamed and said he would teach [it]... And on account of this admission, he was forced to say the opposite of what he'd said... and Polus mocked you, to my mind rightly so. But now the same thing has happened in turn to him. And I myself do not admire Polus in his conceding to you that to do injustice is more shameful than suffering it. For from this concession, he's become tangled up by you and muzzled, ashamed to say what he thinks. (*Grg.* 482c4-e2)

*Does Socrates shame his interlocutor into self-contradiction? Has he, in particular, put Polus in a situation where he is ashamed to say what he really thinks, so that – saying what is expected instead – he ends up contradicting himself? We need not buy Calicles' explanation of exactly how this trick was turned – by equivocation, he says, on the notion of 'just', which has two distinct and legitimate senses (just-by-nature and just-by-custom). We might all the same suppose that Polus does not in fact think that being unjust is shameful, but he was ashamed to admit it. And so, acknowledging the shamefulness of justice, he finds himself in the awkward position of claiming that it both is, and is not, worse to do than to suffer injustice.*

Since few of us would seriously 'rather suffer than do injustice' (*Grg.* 469c2) in every case;<sup>1</sup> and since we all nevertheless recognise that explicitly denying the shamefulness of injustice takes the moral hollowness and chutzpah of a Thrasymachus, this explanation of what has just gone on between Socrates and Polus seems plausible enough. In what follows, however, I will argue that this plausible explanation – handed to us so neatly by Plato via Calicles – is misplaced. Perhaps Polus does not find injustice shameful, and perhaps he is ashamed to say so. But to suppose that this captures the nature and significance of the dispute between Polus and Socrates skips lightly over just how deep their disagreement is – and it mistakenly portrays Polus as the radical, instead of Socrates.

#### 1. HAPPINESS AND GOODNESS

The correct place to locate the deep difference between Socrates and Polus, I will argue, is in their opposing positions on the relative priority of 'happiness' and 'goodness' (or 'the good') – and if this is right, then it will turn out that Socrates is *not* a *eudaimonist*.<sup>2</sup> This claim is

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· It is my great pleasure to offer this contrarian reading in tribute to M. M., from whom I had the good fortune to discover what it is (and what fun it is) to do philosophy *with* Plato. I owe her much more than this; all my work on Plato bears the mark of those PhD supervisions, where nothing mattered more than thinking carefully with (and sometimes against) the text – though she also bore with good humour my irrepressible introductions of non-Platonic interests to our discussions. Her own aliveness to philosophical puzzlement and lively articulation of it is invariably inspiring (and contagious), while also creating space for one to think for oneself. I am especially grateful for the generosity with which M.M. shared, and shares, her uncompromising love of philosophy; her refusal ever to instrumentalise philosophy kept me in the profession, and kept me sane.

<sup>1</sup> C. D. C. Reeve calls this Socrates' 'paradigm unacceptable proposition' (Reeve 1989: 9).

<sup>2</sup> Vlastos' 'Eudaimonist Axiom' is still current as a formulation of *eudaimonism*: 'happiness is desired by all human beings as the ultimate end (*telos*) of all their rational acts' (Vlastos 1999: 105-36, 108). Irwin says Socrates 'commits himself to a eudaimonist position, insofar as he claims: (1) In all our rational actions we pursue our own happiness. (2) We pursue happiness only for its own sake, never for the sake of anything else. (3) Whatever else we rationally pursue, we pursue it for the sake of happiness' (Irwin 1995: 53). This

contrary to a widely entrenched scholarly presumption that simply takes the fact of Socrates' *eudaimonism* as read,<sup>3</sup> or as the point of departure in explaining all ancient Greek moralists;<sup>4</sup> insofar as textual support is offered for Socrates' supposed *eudaimonism*, it generally requires the *presumption* that Plato uses 'good' and 'happiness' interchangeably, or at least depicts Socrates as doing so.<sup>5</sup> But 'good' and 'happy', I shall argue, are importantly *not* interchangeable for Socrates in the *Gorgias* – even if 'good' is short for 'human good'. Indeed, the dispute with Polus is precisely over which of the two has priority over the other.<sup>6</sup> Polus follows common sense in supposing that there is some agreed and recognisable content to happiness, however much people may dispute the details; and good is derivatively defined as 'whatever contributes to happiness'. Socrates takes the opposite view: in flagrant defiance of common sense, he refuses to acknowledge any agreed content to 'happiness' whatsoever, insisting that happiness be derived entirely from determinations of what is good. If this distinction can be made good, then there is good reason to reserve the title '*eudaimonist*' for some version of Polus' position and withhold it from Socrates, for it is Polus who takes happiness to be the final goal and ground of explanation.<sup>7</sup> We would need, then, some other name for Socrates' position – which, I suppose, would be '*agathist*', for he takes the good, and only the good, as the final ground of explanation.<sup>8</sup>

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ascription of *eudaimonism* to Plato's Socrates rests primarily on a literal reading of the *Euthydemus*; insofar as the *Apology* or *Crito* (45) or *Lysis* (54) are drawn in to support it, the substitutability of 'happiness' for 'good' is presumed (on which, see note 5, below). Attributions aside, *eudaimonism* as here described is at once a claim about the good which explains the goodness of everything else, whose goodness needs no explanation itself; and at the same time, therefore, a claim that we in fact aim at it in all of our rational, or well-considered actions.

<sup>3</sup> For instance, Gerasimos Santas' classic study (Santas 1979) begins his treatment of happiness in Chapter 8 by referring us to Chapter 6, 'we have seen...Socrates' view that virtue brings happiness' (218); but the discussion in Chapter 6 is in fact, aptly, conducted almost entirely in terms of benefits and harms, with appeal to the *Meno*'s more circumspect claim that 'no one wants (wishes) to be miserable and ill starved' (186). See also Brickhouse and Smith 2000, whose 'principle of *eudaimonism*' articulates the crux of the matter: 'Happiness is everyone's ultimate goal, and everything that is good is good only insofar as it contributes to this goal' (128); see also Brickhouse and Smith 1994: 103; Reeve 1989: 125–135, collects a number of the relevant passages.

<sup>4</sup> Julia Annas takes as her point of departure that 'ancient writers belong to the same ethical tradition as Plato. They are *eudaimonists*' (Annas 1999: 2); and claims that 'Ancient theories unanimously locate virtue within our overall aim of happiness' (Annas 2003: 3), focusing her discussion on 'the ethical theory of Socrates in Plato's "Socratic dialogues"' (2003: 4).

<sup>5</sup> Vlastos 1999 is most explicit about this, 109n20, as we will see below. In addition to Irwin 1995, Irwin 1977 (esp. 51–4) also identifies 'happiness' (and 'doing well') as the 'final good' on the basis of the *Euthydemus* (15, 52); indeed, the index entry for 'happiness' in Irwin 1977 simply directs the reader to 'Good, final' (360). Of course no one supposes happiness is *The Good*, described at *Republic* 505d–509c; rather an Aristotelianism ('the human good') is imported and then abbreviated ('the good') to justify the equation. Doing so however assumes a distinction, and a way of thinking about goodness, that does not in fact find a natural home in Plato's ethics, or that of his Socrates. If Plato could be made to talk about 'the human good', it would likely look rather more like the supremacy of virtue, as Vasiliou 2008 develops the notion: virtue is how goodness is manifested in things of this kind. But to gloss this as 'the human good', would presume the *irrelevance* of physical qualities to a human being and human life.

<sup>6</sup> Reeve 1989: 126, offers a gloss to accompany his claim that 'Socrates embraces *eudaimonism*' which captures just the asymmetry characteristic of the position which I wish to highlight: 'he [Socrates] holds that we all aim at the good *because* (in some way or another) it guarantees us *eudaimonia* or happiness' (emphasis mine).

<sup>7</sup> In arguing against this widespread approach to Plato's ethics, I am not completely alone: Devereux 2004 argues against attributing strong *eudaimonism* to Plato in the *Republic*; virtue there is a good in its own right, and he ascribes a Kantian ethic to Socrates in Devereux 1995. Vasiliou 2008 is an extended exposition of an approach to Plato's ethics as good- and virtue-centred; 'the focus of this study is virtue, not *eudaimonia*', and without arguing against attributing *eudaimonism* to Plato, Vasiliou '*begins* from the idea that virtue is supreme (as...Socrates himself does)' (6).

<sup>8</sup> Morrison 2003 uses the term '*agathism*', defining '*rational agathism*' as the view that 'the good is desired by all human beings as the ultimate end of all their rational acts' (20). Although there are points of convergence, our respective views – and our uses of the term *agathism* – are not the same. The crux of our difference seems

One might wonder, however, whether there is a substantial distinction to be made here. Both ‘happiness’ and ‘the good’ are contested; they are unclear, and used (perhaps differently) across a wide range of contexts; and in many respects they seem to obey the same logic. For example, about happiness and about the good it seems equally correct to say that ‘whatever recognises (*gignōskon*) it hunts for it and pursues it wishing to seize and possess it’ (*Phlb.* 20d8-9). And both seem perfectly able to function as the end-point of explanation. Thus Socrates in the *Symposium* famously agrees to the claim that ‘There is no need to ask further on account of what one wishes to be happy; rather, the answer seems to be complete (*telos*)’ (*Symp.* 205a2-3).<sup>9</sup> And yet, less than two pages later, he has his lovers cutting off ‘even a foot or a hand’ if it is not good (205e3-4), in defence of his claim that people only want what they think is *good*. ‘A lover does not seek the half or the whole, my friend, unless it chances to be good as well...for what people love is nothing other than the good’ (*Symp.* 205e3-206a1). That is, the passage with the definitive statement of *eudaimonism* concludes with the explanatory finality of the good. For this reason, we may be inclined to agree with Vlastos’ view that ‘neither Socrates nor Plato feels called upon to *argue* that happiness is man’s good: they use the terms interchangeably’.<sup>10</sup>

Now this is clearly not the usage of the *Republic*, which not only puts unqualified goodness alone at the centre of thought and action, but even specifies that *happiness* is some distinct thing, and something which we are better off *not* aiming at.<sup>11</sup> So the extended likening of the good to the sun, in Book VI, may be underdetermined and open to multiple interpretations in many respects; but it is at least indisputable that Socrates there claims that neither knowledge nor pleasure *is* the good (*Rep.* VI.505b-d). And he adds here to the claim of the *Meno* 77d-78a, that people want only what they take to be good, the additional qualification that their *thinking* it good does not satisfy the person herself who is desiring – it must actually *be* good. ‘Concerning just and fine things don’t many seize upon things thought to be so, even if they are not really so?...while no one puts up with acquiring things merely believed to be good – rather everyone seeks what really is so, and despises mere belief here’ (*Rep.* 505d5-9). Unlike every other desired quality or thing, when it comes to judging of goodness, we cannot escape caring whether it *really is* as we judge it to be – not merely thought good, whether by myself or others, but *actually* good. No one wants for themselves what merely appears, but is not, good. And this is at once a psychological and a normative fact true *only* of the good,<sup>12</sup> explicitly contrasted with judgements about virtue or beauty, where the fact that ‘everyone deems this a fine sentiment’ might be ‘good enough for me’.

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to stem from Morrison’s use of ‘happiness’ to mean ‘a particular human being’s good’; since his interest is in egoism, this definition allows him to peg ‘happiness’ to egoism, and results in *eudaimonism* being a species of *agathism*, namely the egoistic sort, grounding value and principles of choice in one’s own good (2003, 18-20). Morrison offers no textual evidence that this is how Plato – his Socrates or the other interlocutors – are in fact using the Greek words *eudaimonia* and *eudaimōn*; and interest in this is another difference between us. In spite of this and other disagreements along the way, Morrison’s conclusion that the Platonic Socrates is nowhere an egoist (2003, 32) ultimately coincides with a larger claim of which this paper is a partial defence – viz., that Plato’s ethics consistently takes only the good (and *not* happiness) to be an ultimate ground of value and principle of action; that this cannot operate egoistically, however, would require considerably more discussion.

<sup>9</sup> Compare Aristotle: ‘Now happiness seems, above all else, to be such a thing; for this we choose it always on account of itself and never on account of something else’ (*Eth. Nic.* 1.7, 1097a34-b1).

<sup>10</sup> Vlastos 1999: 109n20. For ‘Socrates’ usage’, we should ‘see e.g. how freely he interchanges the terms in his statement of the Calliclean thesis at *Grg.* 494e-495b: “those who have pleasure, pleasure of whatever sort, are *happy*”, or again, without any intervening explanation, “this is the *good* – to have pleasure of whatever sort”; we will return to this at the end of the paper.

<sup>11</sup> See discussion of *Republic* 421, below.

<sup>12</sup> Imagine a Moorean sort of exercise, asking whether there could be circumstances under which it would be good to *appear* X, without actually being X; and for every X, including happiness, except goodness itself, the answer is ‘yes’.

Happiness is nowhere in sight – unless we take it to be tacit within ‘virtuous and fine’, and thereby likewise banished from any role in determining what is truly good, or functioning as the ultimate end of action. In fact, Socrates has already said that we *ought not* to aim at happiness; and if happiness, in any recognisable sense, is a good thing to have and comes along with being good, this will be due to the providential ordering of nature. In response to Adeimantus’ complaint that ‘you are not making your guardians very happy’ (*Rep.* IV.419a2-3), Socrates insists that within the well-governed city *none* of the citizens will be focused on attaining happiness – their goal instead will be to do their own jobs as well as possible:

we must compel and persuade the auxiliaries and the guardians to do what makes them the best craftsmen in their respective tasks, and likewise with all the others. And with the whole city growing and managed well, we must suffer nature to yield to each group its share of happiness. (*Rep.* IV.421b7-c6)

Happiness as distinguishable from goodness is granted as a coherent *desideratum*; but *that* should not be the focus of our endeavours. Such happiness is neither up to us nor guaranteed by logical necessity to attend the attainment of what we *should* focus on. We must leave it to nature.<sup>13</sup> If we do attain it, this does not explain the goodness of what we *do* aim at. And if it is entirely likely to come along with goodness (and we might take it as the larger burden of the *Republic* to show this, while at the same time revising our initial conception of happiness so that it is more plausible), this will be due to the good overall order of the natural world.<sup>14</sup> Socrates’ advice to the guardian class is that everyone pursue and secure the good, and hope that nature is not step-motherly.

The importance of this passage is not just that it undercuts the *Symposium*’s claim that we all do in fact aim ultimately at happiness – after all, we might think that claim was already undercut in the *Symposium* itself, with its insistence that it is *only goodness* that really moves us. The real significance of this remark from the *Republic* is that, even at this stage in the dialogue, Socrates allows there to be a perfectly intelligible notion of happiness that has specifiable content.<sup>15</sup> There *is* something that we mean by ‘happiness’, independently of our conception of ‘the good’; and although that is not detailed here, we can readily suppose what that might be, by the fact that *nature* should be responsible for supplying it. Happiness consists presumably in the evident and agreed goods that so many of Socrates’ interlocutors instantly recognise as desirable: Health, beauty, pleasures, good birth, social standing, wealth and presumably the power to satisfy desires that comes with that.

Consider, for instance, Socrates asking Meno whether ‘to be able to obtain good things is virtue,’ where ‘by good things you mean, for example, health and wealth’ (*Meno* 78c4-6). Meno’s immediate rejoinder is to add to the list, ‘gold and silver, also honours and offices in the city’ (*Meno* 78c6-7). Or when Cleinias agrees in the *Euthydemus* that happiness is having good things, those goods (as ‘everyone would tell us’) are money, ‘being healthy, and handsome, and having ready enough of the other things the body needs...noble birth, and power, and honour in one’s country’ (*Euthyd.* 279a8-b3), while virtue comes as a doubtful afterthought. And the *Apology*’s grand call to moral sobriety reveals Athenians who are not ‘ashamed to take such care for wealth, reputation and honours, while not caring for nor giving thought to wisdom or truth, or to the soul being in its best state’ (*Ap.* 29d9-e3).

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<sup>13</sup> as Grube translates it

<sup>14</sup> That happiness cannot be had without goodness is a corollary to the discussion at *Republic* 505d; for any happiness attained apart from goodness could not be what we were seeking when we thought we wanted happiness, because it is not *good*. This does not, of course, prevent people being mistaken about whether happiness as ordinarily conceived is itself a good thing, worthy of pursuit. On the two-step structure here, revising our initial conception of happiness but then showing that happiness on any description is not the ultimate aim, see Carpenter 2015: 22-3.

<sup>15</sup> This is much in contrast to his obdurate stance in the *Gorgias*, for reasons that will become clear below.

What this shows, in turn, is that for ordinary thought and discourse, for all that ‘happiness’ may be contested, there are certain fairly stable and agreed features it has, and certain things that are incompatible with it.<sup>16</sup> Aristotle speaks with the voice of common sense when he says that ‘those who say that the man on the rack, or fallen into great misfortunes, is happy if he is good, are talking nonsense, whether intentionally or not’ (*Eth. Nic.* VII.13, 1153b19-21); and ‘no one calls happy a man who has been subject to such chances [as Priam], and comes to a miserable end’ (*Eth. Nic.* I.9, 1100a8-9). It just does not matter what the state of your soul is – if you are suffering tremendous material loss or physical pain or social denigration, we cannot call you ‘happy’. That is simply not what the word means. ‘Happiness’ may be elastic, but it cannot stretch *that far*.<sup>17</sup> How much can the term ‘happiness’ stretch before it snaps, loses all meaning and becomes unintelligible gibbering? One important limit – a limit that will be crucial for our discussion of the *Gorgias* – is that the state called ‘happy’ has to be recognisable to others as such, and so be a condition which others might envy.

This basic ‘axiom of happiness’ – that it is evidently desirable – is the one that Socrates scandalously flouts in the *Gorgias*. It is closely related to another axiom of happiness: happiness *feels good* or is *enjoyed* by the person who has it. This may not be its essence, or even what we aim at when we aim at happiness; but it is a limiting condition on what can be considered ‘happy’. Deny this – defend, say, the happiness of the man on the rack, or of Priam – and you are simply no longer talking about the same thing. Perhaps the virtuous Priam *is* ‘happy’ – but of the happiness referred to there, none of the truisms of happiness would hold, including that it is universally desired and explanatorily final.

Both the positive feel and the social recognition proper to happiness are related in turn to a deep conviction that happiness involves being able to do what you like – or as the *Republic* has it at 520a2, to ‘turn in whatever direction one wants’.<sup>18</sup> Happiness thus invites consideration of power, success, and pleasure – so that it is natural to exalt those ‘who have wealth and other types of power, and to declare them happy’ (*Rep.* 364a6-7). The hyperbolic version of this is vehemently endorsed by Callicles, ‘How should a man be happy while enslaved to anyone at all?’ (*Grg.* 491e5-6) – and it is worth noting that at this point in his encounter with Socrates, although there has been much talk of the ‘superior’, the ‘better’, the ‘worthier’ and the ‘stronger’, it is only here, at the rejection of self-control as a kind of constraint, that *happiness* comes back into the picture. Its fundamental and self-evident incompatibility with constraint is the touchstone by which to measure other claims about what is desirable and good.

In short, it is axiomatic that happiness is something evident to others, desired and envied. Someone in pain or hindered in the fulfilment of their purposes is not enviable. Everything we need to know about goodness or goods simply follows from this. If health and wealth and good birth are self-evident goods, it is because it is these that enable one to enjoy unhindered fulfilment of his purposes. This is why we see so many Socratic interlocutors, with

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<sup>16</sup> Thus Annas acknowledges, ‘We intuitively think that happiness must be intimately linked to health, money, success and achievement, so it is a strain to find that someone can be happy who has none of these things...’ (2003: 11); and these are not, she grants, just the intuitions of ‘we moderns’ – they are shared by Plato’s contemporaries.

<sup>17</sup> Contra Annas, who claims in a single paragraph that ‘Plato’s theory was not seen as absurd as an account of happiness’ and yet ‘Aristotle reacts with outraged common sense’ (2003, 11). The tension could be avoided by not forcing Plato into the *eudaimonist* mould. We can then grant that Plato’s theory of *goodness and the good human life* was not seen as absurd, while observing that his Socrates is indeed found absurd when he tries to make happiness wholly determined by and subservient to virtue and goodness – found absurd not just by the excitable Polus, but by sober Aristotle as well.

<sup>18</sup> ‘license (*exousia*) to do as they wish (*bouletai*)’ in *Republic* VIII means ‘each will arrange his private (*idian*) life in a way that would be ingratiating (*apeskoi*) to him’ (557b5-6). Such a life is called pleasant, and free and blessed (*all’hedun te dē kai eleutherion kai makarion kalōn ton bion*) at 561d6-7, and doing whatever one feels like is ‘a divine and pleasant life’ at 558a1-2, a ‘pleasant constitution’, at 558c4. Compare *Gorgias* 469c5-6: The enviable tyrant is the one ‘with license (*exeinai*) in the city to do whatever he takes a notion to (*ho an dokēi autōi, poiein touto*)’ – cf. *doxēi beltiston*, 466e2, 10.

views conspicuously at odds with Socrates', cheerfully willing to endorse the Socratic dictum that 'happiness is having good things' (e.g. *Symp.* 202c9-10, *Euthyd.* 279a1-2). Socrates for his part is so keen to elicit their agreement to this point because its unobtrusive ambiguity provides cover for his favourite trick: appealing to axioms of goodness – such as 'what is good, is beneficial'<sup>19</sup> – in order to reverse the order of explanation between the two key terms, so that the unastute interlocutor finds himself unexpectedly committed to the priority of goodness over happiness, making happiness the possession of whatever things turn out to be independently good. For an instance of this, let us consider more closely the context of the *Symposium*'s declaration of about the explanatory finality of happiness. After introducing the principle that, 'you call someone "happy" because they possess good and beautiful things' (*Symp.* 202c10-11), Diotima goes on (*Symp.* 204e5-205a7):

What is his when the good things have become his?

This is easier to come up with the answer, I [Socrates] said, he is happy.

For it is by possessing goods that the happy are happy, she said; and there is no further need to ask why (the one so wishing) wishes to be happy; rather that answer seems to be complete.<sup>20</sup>

This is true, I said.

Now do you suppose this wish, this kind of love, is common to all human beings, and does everyone wish that goods should be his always – or what do you say?

Staking out the ambiguous territory of 'happiness is having goods', Diotima from the first insinuates an order of priority (the goodness explains the happiness). Focusing on the desire to *have good things* creates the impression that there are things that just are good – and they are not made so by serving to provide some independently specified notion of happiness. It is not elision but transition that leads then to the conclusion that 'what people love is nothing other than the good' (*Symp.* 205e7-206a1).

With the young Socrates, there is not much work to be done here, for he readily accepts that explanatory priority flows from goodness to happiness, and not the other way round. It is only a nod to common usage that brings happiness into the conversation at all. But the same move is made in the *Euthydemus* with Cleinias, who requires a bit more persuading. After securing the easy agreement that we fare well (*eu prattein*) 'by having many good things' (*Euthyd.* 279a1-2)<sup>21</sup>, it becomes apparent that Cleinias thinks this means happiness is being healthy and handsome, wealthy, well-born and powerful (*Euthyd.* 279a-b). Only after dropping happiness and pinning the discussion to good and benefit can Socrates persuade Cleinias that the initially doubted goods of virtue and wisdom (279b5-8) are in fact the only independent

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<sup>19</sup> Socrates appeals to this throughout his manoeuvrings with Polus in the *Gorgias*, from his claim that power is either not good, or else orators have no power (466b), to the proof that the punished villain is happier than the unpunished one (esp. 477a); he later appeals to the same principle in his attempt to relieve Callicles of his hedonism: 'Some pleasures are good while others are bad... And the good ones are the beneficial ones, and the bad ones are harmful ones?' (*Grg.* 499c7-d2). Other instances, many of which adopt the negative form (good does not harm), include *Meno* 87e1-2; *Protagoras* 333d8-e2; *Republic* I.335d; *Republic* II.379b (which calls good 'the cause of doing well (*aition ara eupragias*)'). Further axioms of goodness which are not likewise axioms of happiness include 'what is good is appropriate' (*prosēkon*, proper to, befitting), used at *Gorgias* 507a-8a, and connected with its near conceptual kin, adequacy, completeness, order and due measure (see also *Phlb.* 22d, 64d-65a); 'what is good is true and non-deceptive' at *Republic* 379c and 382a, and *Philebus* 64b, 65a.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. *Symposium* 205a2-3, which Vlastos cites as *eudaimonist* (1999: 108) glossing it as claiming that we do everything for happiness – his 'Eudaimonist Axiom' from note 2, above.

<sup>21</sup> The *eu prattein* of 279a2 is picked up and glossed as 'happiness' at 280b4-5 'We agreed that if we had many good things, we would be happy and do well (*eudaimonein an kai eu prattein*)' (*Euthyd.* 280b4-5). McCabe 2005: 195 ff. notes the ambiguity, highlighting Socrates' concern with 'the direction in which value flows'.

goods, with the once obvious happiness-making goods being relegated to the inferior status of dependently good (*Euthyd.* 281d2-e1).<sup>22</sup>

What we see in these discussions are two incompatible ways of understanding the 'happiness is having goods' principle, the one properly *eudaimonist*, the other Socratic and *agathist*. They differ according to the direction of explanation. According to the common sense picture, happiness is a relatively stable, relatively contentful notion, and it acts as the final good explaining the goodness of anything else. So the goods that one has, having which make one happy, are *whatever* things bring the happiness defined already independently of considerations of any other sort of goodness (there is no other sort of goodness). For Socrates, however, the explanation of normativity flows in the opposite direction – as the *Republic* puts it, the good 'is the cause of doing well' (*Rep.* II.379b13)<sup>23</sup>; happiness does not *make* things good. In his ethical inquiries, Socrates introduces the 'happiness is possessing goods' principle in order to reverse the common-sense direction of explanation: in the *Gorgias*, he will only call 'happy' that state (whatever it is) which involves having goods whose goodness is determined independently of any considerations of happiness. For the common sense *eudaimonist*, Polus among them, things are good because they make you happy; for Socrates in the *Gorgias*, things make you happy because they are good.

This deep division on the matter of the explanatory priority of goodness and happiness drives the unresolved dispute between Polus and Socrates in the *Gorgias*, to which we now turn.

## 2. SPOILING FOR A FIGHT

It is the question of the unjust use of oratory that prompts Polus to enter the fray. Oratory is marvellous, in his view; but it need not lay claim to virtue in order to be so. This, and not sheer brazenness, is why Polus does not share Gorgias' shame in acknowledging that the orator does not teach virtue (*Grg.* 461b). Being gratified – obtaining what one wishes and the associated positive affect – is good, and so oratory would be 'an admirable thing' simply for being able to give gratification. Picking up Socrates' description of oratory as knack for giving gratification and pleasure (*Grg.* 462c6-7), Polus concludes, 'Well then, doesn't rhetoric seem to you to be a fine thing, since it is able to gratify (*charizesthai*) people?' (*Grg.* 462c8-9).

Socrates insists with disdain, as if it were obvious, that he cannot know whether oratory is admirable until he knows what it is. And he goes on to chastise Polus for his undue haste, charging on in the discussion as if he had understood what had already been said. It is a memorable and rhetorically effective characterisation, but one which we should be cautious about swallowing whole, pleased to be on the right side laughing at Polus before we have properly understood what is going on.<sup>24</sup> It is, after all, not at all obvious that one must know fully what something is before one can make a good judgement about its qualities; nor is it obvious that Polus is hasty to confirm oratory's admirableness based on its agreed power to gratify.

This is not just because we may have legitimate doubts about Socrates' infamous

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<sup>22</sup> 'with respect to all the things we called good in the beginning, the correct account is not that in themselves they are good by nature, but rather... if reason and wisdom (*phronēsis te kai sophia*) are in control, they are greater goods. In themselves, however, neither sort is of any value.' McCabe 2001 takes this conclusion to highlight the non-derivative value of the person's own state.

<sup>23</sup> Compare *Gorgias* 508b1-3, discussed in section 3.

<sup>24</sup> We must, that is, avoid falling into the trap set by what Alexander Nehamas calls 'Platonic irony'. 'Plato's irony,' he observes, 'is more disturbing than Socrates'. It uses Socratic irony as a means for lulling the dialogues' readers into the very self-complacency it makes them denounce...in the process of producing in us a disdain for Socrates' interlocutors, the dialogues turn us into characters just like them' (Nehamas 1998, 44).

epistemological principle of the ‘Priority of Knowledge What’.<sup>25</sup> Much worse, under the cover of this epistemological squeamishness, Socrates is upending the dialectical playing field. His insistence that he cannot determine rhetoric’s goodness on the basis of its quality as gratifying actively precludes consideration of the very position Polus endeavours to represent. For suppose Polus actually has a view, and indeed the not uncommon view that being gratifying *is* being good. In that case, Polus does *not*, in fact, need to know anything more about oratory in order to know that it is good. It is indeed a two-fold good, both based on the goodness of gratification: first, oratory is good simply because it gives gratification to others (it does them a good turn); second, because people respond favourably to being indulged, oratory as a tool for producing gratification gives power to the orator (466b4-5), which power in turn is simply the power to obtain gratification himself, or indulge his desires to do whatever he sees fit (466b11-c2). It may be agreed that happiness is ‘possessing goods’; but as far as Polus is concerned, what counts as ‘goods’ is determined by the fact that happiness involves the conspicuous and enviable (468e8, 469a1; 473a7) power to do as one likes. Things are not good prior to and independently of that fact about happiness. The fractious conversation which ensues arises from Polus’ stubborn, and legitimate, resistance to accepting Socrates’ version of the ‘happiness is having goods’ claim, and so of its implications.

Socrates’ initial characterisation of oratory, as a knack for producing gratification and pleasure, indicates the close connection between gratification and positive affect. It is a connection which is not disentangled in this passage. We see in Polus’ response to Socrates’ outrageous claim not to know whether the Great King is happy that Polus takes the goodness of positive affect as self-evident, and an unquestionable aspect of happiness. But the hedonist interpretation of this connection – where pleasure is taken to be the desired thing, quite universally, and power is relevant only as an adjunct to this – will be pursued in the conversation with Callicles. With Polus, attention is focused on the positive affect of desire-satisfaction (gratification), and so on power. Pleasure is relevant here as the positive feeling associated with successfully exercising your power to accomplish what you set out to do. While Aristotle takes up a sanitised version of pleasure as the natural concomitant to unimpeded, purposive activity (*Eth. Nic. X.4 1174b-75a*), its popular version is represented by Polus, who therefore rightly attempts to resist the distinction between ‘aiming at pleasure’ and ‘aiming at what is best’ (464b-465a), which underwrites Socrates’ denigration of oratory as a knack for flattery.<sup>26</sup> Such a distinction forecloses the possibility that a pleasure could be good simply as such, or that something’s being pleasant could be the very thing that is good about it. The denigration only gets off the ground if the pleasant/good distinction is correlated, as Socrates claims, to the distinction between *mere* appearance and reality (464a). But the reality of affect *just is* its appearance to the person affected, so that in this respect happiness admits of no appearance/reality distinction. Socrates may call oratory ‘a shameful sort of thing, ... because it aims at the pleasant without [aiming at] the best’ (464e3-65a2), but if Polus thinks that getting what you want, or what it pleases you to have, *is* what is good, then aiming at gratifying desires already includes ‘the best’. Polus is not, as accused, ‘asking two things at once’ (466c8), when he asks whether oratory is not good and powerful, giving people the power to do whatever they

<sup>25</sup> *Meno* 80d-e is a *locus classicus* for Socratic insistence that we cannot say *anything at all* about what something is like until we know what it is. Fine 1992 is responsible for baptising the principle PKW.

<sup>26</sup> Vasiliou’s thought-provoking discussion of this passage notes that Socrates’ crucial constructive contribution (the anatomy of flattery, 464b-66a) is directed to Gorgias, not Polus. This, he suggests, is because Polus cannot conceive of a good *for* the soul, independent of ‘good for Polus’ (2008, 109) or good for the body (2008, 113); but such a notion is necessary in order to make sense of Socrates’ position. Closer to the surface, however – and nearer to our purposes here – Socrates’ anatomy of flattery hangs on the priority of goodness: The difference between real craft and imitation is that the former, in all four domains outlined, aims at the best; the latter, by contrast, aims at pleasure (464c-d). This priority of goodness is the crucial point Polus cannot admit – and why the speech here is directed to Gorgias. Note that both of these failures might be considered ‘common sense’ failures – the poor man’s version of *Nicomachean Ethics* I.6 is bafflement at what ‘for the best’ could mean, distinct from the health, wealth and gratification of desires constitutive of human happiness; and it is Aristotle who insists that it is *the man* who gets angry (with his soul), *De an.* I.4.

see fit. 'Good' does not have some independent meaning apart from being or serving the unhindered exercise of one's ability to do as one likes.

This is why Polus unhesitatingly holds power to be obviously good for its possessor (466b5) – since power is the ability to get what you want, or gratify your desires, or simply 'to be gratified', it is virtually analytic that power is good, no matter what you do with it. It may seem that his fatal error in his dispute with Socrates comes in his unwillingness to concede that even foolish desires are well-gratified (466e). But it is not so simple as that. For, unable though he may be to spell it out precisely, Polus is entitled to his own definition of what makes a desire foolish – it will be a desire the gratification of which brings about the thwarting of other, greater desires or of future unhindered exercises of power to execute one's projects. What makes someone foolish is that they do not know how to manage their desire-gratification so as to maximise it: the fool is the one who gets caught, not the one who commits the crime. Thus Polus explains that his objection to 'that sort of power' – wielding a knife in a crowded marketplace – is that 'the person acting in this way is necessarily punished' (470a5-6), and this is presumably just what that same man did not want. Polus can admit that some desires are foolish, and yet maintain his position that good and bad are defined by reference to desire-satisfaction. Presuming the murderer in the marketplace did not want to be punished for his crime,<sup>27</sup> then being punished is bad because it is not getting what he wants (escape from punishment) and in the usual course of things involves him in future not being able to exercise his powers to attain his goals.

In the agreement that happiness is having good things, Polus maintains the line of someone who subordinates good to happiness – with its emphasis on feeling and appearing, pleasure and gratification, getting what you want – in the face of Socrates' equal insistence on the priority of the good (its consideration of the fine, the true, the beneficial-in-some-other-sense) in determining what counts as happy. And this, I suggest, informs his infamous inability to recognise any distinction between what one wants, and what one thinks best.

### 3. TURNING THE SOCRATIC TRICK

If it is not Polus' admission that desires can be foolish that leads him into the morass from which Callicles attempts to rescue him, then how is it that Socrates turns the Socratic trick of getting Polus to agree, without agreeing, to the Socratic position that good is prior to happiness, and indeed the only consideration by which to determine desirability?

The answer in short is: by refusing to conduct the conversation in terms of happiness at all, and insisting on appealing instead only to goodness. Polus may have a position which he consistently represents; but he is not articulate and explicit about what the fundamental and non-negotiable principles of it are, and so he will not immediately see what it is about Socrates' questions that begs the question in Socrates' favour.

In particular, the discussion has not made explicit that there are two senses in which it can be true that 'happiness is having goods', and that these two senses are fundamentally opposed. Socrates insists on conducting the conversation in terms of 'goodness', beginning with the 'aiming at pleasure/aiming at the best' distinction. This persists when he begins the examination of 'power' by asking whether 'by "having power" you mean something that is good for the one who has power' (466b7-8; reiterated at 466e7-8, 467a3), and then is exploited at

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<sup>27</sup> The assumption is safe, for if he did want it, it would be no punishment. Polus would reject any fanciful example of a wrong-doer taking gratification from his punishment; if happiness is conspicuously desirable and enviable, and if (as he supposes) we all fundamentally want to exercise our powers to obtain our objectives, then punishment – the hindering of one's free exercise of one's powers to obtain one's objectives – will never be desired.

468c6, when Socrates tacitly invokes the axiomatic connection between goodness and benefit to claim that Polus has conceded the vital point: that 'so long as doing as one sees fit accords with acting beneficially, it is good and this, so it seems, is having great power' (470a10-12). This gloating obscures the fact that 'harm' is still unspecified; Polus' 'concession' takes harm to be damage to one's well-being (in the ordinary sense), and Socrates has still given him no reason to acknowledge any other kind of harm. But since the core values of happiness have by now fallen from view, Polus is in no position to observe that the knife-wielder is harmed only *by virtue of* the loss of liberty and reputation that punishment comprises. He invites Socrates to say how *he* distinguishes between good/beneficial and bad/harmful cases of 'doing as one pleases' (justice, of course, 470c1-3), never attempting his own distinction.

This is not the first time Polus is tongue-tied by this manoeuvre. Socrates' almost mind-numbingly laborious (and still unsatisfactory) spelling out of the difference between merely instrumental goodness and the final goods which ground them (467c-468c), supposedly won him the concession that

we do not want simply to slaughter or to exile from the cities or to expropriate property as such; but if these things are beneficial, then we want to do them, and if they are harmful, we do not want to do them. For we want good things, as you say; we do not want things that are neither good nor bad – nor do we want bad things. Or? Do I seem to you to speak truly, Polus, or not? Why don't you answer? (Grg. 468c2-8)

Now Polus has particularly good reason to fall silent here – but it is not so much the embarrassment of self-refutation as it is the frustration of one's position being precluded by definition. Polus has just acknowledged things are 'neutral' when they are sometimes good and sometimes bad; and exiling someone is one such 'neutral' thing (this returns explicitly at 470b-c). So there must be some good or benefit arising from exiling someone, in order for that to be good in any particular case. Of course, there are plenty of cases where one might point out the practical benefit to a tyrant of banishing a particular person – a rival who is not yet very powerful. But Polus has claimed that the power to banish *whomever one likes, whenever one likes* is good, regardless of considerations of some *further* benefit from the banishment. With a view to happiness, this makes perfect sense: if happiness involves the conspicuous enjoyment of the free exercise of one's capacities, then that 'for the sake of which' exiling might be done may simply be 'because it pleases me', or 'because I feel like it', 'it gratifies me to do so' – that *just is* the benefit it brings, and that suffices to make it good. But this option is forced out of the picture by Socrates' insistence on the priority of the good, and the resulting insinuation that there must be some *further* good that the exiling brings about – as if 'it gratifies me' did not suffice. Appeal to goodness *already conceived of as determined independently of desires* leads to a notion of 'benefit' which should likewise be specifiable without reference to gratification. And this is what leaves Polus tongue-tied, in danger of losing his grip on the notion that something neutral becomes good *simply because that is what I choose*.

Socrates exploits the mere appearance of common ground to wrest from Polus the mere appearance of agreement. Cue Polus' exasperation:

As if *you*, Socrates, would not welcome being able to do what you see fit in the city, rather than not; or would not be envious whenever you saw someone putting to death some person he saw fit, or confiscating his property or tying him up! (Grg. 468e6-9)

Notice that Polus' reaction is an appeal to what *everyone recognises* as desirable, and so to what is acknowledged to be enviable. He returns to his touchstone: happiness – the happiness which serves as the final endpoint in the explanation of human action – is, if nothing else, an enviable state, one that we all collectively can recognise in others and want for ourselves. Happiness cannot be something unrecognisable to others as something desirable for themselves. And enjoying unhindered achievement of one's aims (whatever they are) is 'to be envied either way' (469a1), however one manages it. Once Socrates explicitly makes justice the criterion of benefit

and goodness (470c1-3), Polus is able to find his voice again, rejecting Socrates' appeal to justice by explicitly reintroducing happiness into the discussion: 'But Socrates, we do not even need ancient cases to refute you - current events would quite suffice to refute you, and to demonstrate that many who behave unjustly are happy' (470c9-d3).

When Socrates insists that he would 'not even know whether the Great King is happy', for 'I do not know how he stands in regard to education and justice' (470e4-7), he is insouciantly – even perversely – dissociating happiness from its natural home among satisfaction, pleasure, and being recognisably well-off, and associating it instead (much to the consternation of Polus) with education (*paideias*) and justice (*dikaiosunēs*), with truth and virtue – conditions (to his mind) *worthy* of admiration regardless of how they make one feel or whether they allow one unimpeded gratification. He then baldly asserts the priority of the good over happiness, 'I say that the fine and good man or woman is happy, but that the unjust and base person is miserable' (470e9-11). That is to say, however the Great King *feels*, and whatever anyone else might think of him, education and justice are good. But this flies in the face of the best-recognised facts about happiness: that it *feels good*, is *enjoyed* – closely related to it involving the successful satisfaction of one's desires or aims (the notion of 'gratification' neatly joins the two); and that others recognise and envy the happy man as such. Polus takes Socrates up on both of these points.

First, in his sarcastic rejoinder to Socrates' claim that the unjust tyrant is miserable, it is clearly important to Polus that the tyrant himself does not *feel* miserable. 'And after all these iniquities, it has escaped his notice that he had become most miserable, nor does he have any remorse' (471b6-7). With happiness as the anchor by which we fix the content of good and benefit, Polus allows no gap between how the tyrant *feels* the world is going for him, and how it in fact is with him. Unfelt misery is no misery at all; conversely, feeling satisfied (and being satisfied with one's state) is inseparable from being happy. From the first-person perspective, there is no distinction between the appearance of happiness and its reality. Since it is just plain obvious that happiness is that which everyone desires and that at which our actions aim, Polus ends up repeating his disbelief in Socrates' sincerity, without the indignation: 'You're just unwilling to admit it; you do actually think it is as I say' (471e1).

Second, in his appeal to what 'everyone agrees', Polus is not – as Socrates sanctimoniously claims – appealing to the false witnesses, powerful only because they are many. He is, rather, insisting, as Aristotle will do a generation later, that nothing can be called happiness which is universally reviled or rejected. On the contrary, while appeal to a majority of witnesses has no place if one is considering the truth about goodness, it is perfectly legitimate if one is considering happiness – precisely because it is axiomatic that happiness is something enviable, something recognised and recognisable as what one wants. It is with a view to happiness, and the considerations compelling and relevant to happiness, that Polus asks, 'do you not think, Socrates, that you have been sufficiently refuted, when you say that which no human being will allow?' (473e4-5). If the good has definite content and reality independently of, and prior to, any considerations of happiness, then Socrates is right to dismiss Polus' witnesses. But that begs the question at issue. For the dispute between Polus and Socrates is precisely over which of happiness and goodness has priority in determining the content of the other. If, as Polus supposes, happiness is prior to the good – and what counts as good is simply *whatever* brings happiness – then these witnesses are most relevant indeed; for whatever its disputed content, happiness is something we can all recognise as such. If no one recognises the candidate Socrates puts forward, defined wholly derivatively from goodness, then Socrates has simply changed the subject.

This question of explanatory and normative priority is not obscure or surprising. Indeed, it is a *leitmotif* in Socratic questioning. Euthyphro is enjoined to say what is 'that form itself that makes all pious actions pious' (*Euthphr.* 6d10-11), and later 'the god-loved is not the pious, nor the pious the god-loved...because the pious is loved on account of its being pious; but it is not because it is loved that it is pious... [while] the god-loved, on the other hand, is so because it is

being loved by the gods' (*Euthphr.* 10d12-e8). Or in the *Meno*, 'even if [the virtues] are many and various, all of them have one and the same form on account of which they are virtues' (72c6-8). In the *Gorgias*, Socrates later acknowledges explicitly that the crux of the matter is precisely this question of priority, challenging Callicles to 'Either refute this account of ours, [and show] that it is not by the possession of justice and temperance that the happy are happy, and by [possession of] badness that the miserable [are miserable], or else if it is true, examine what follows' (*Grg.* 508a7-b3). Throughout his discussion with Socrates, Polus attempts to insist on the priority of happiness over goodness, invoking three acknowledged facts about happiness: it *feels good*; it involves *getting what you set your mind on*, (interpreted as 'and the more, the better', so unconstrained desire-gratification); and it is recognisable and envied as such by others. The conception of happiness thus defended is the orientation towards power, honour, and wealth criticised in the *Apology*, rejected in the *Republic*, and articulated as the obvious goods by Meno and in the *Euthydemus*' conversation with Cleinias. As long as Polus holds to this, Socrates' attempts at reorientation – via a Socratic version of 'happiness is having goods' – must fail.

Polus eventually loses his grip on this when it comes to 'disgraceful'. In this, Callicles does not mislocate the crux of the argument when he picks up the point at 482d. Polus needs some better account of the disgracefulness of doing injustice, or else to deny that it is disgraceful. This would not be impossible. For instance, Polus might maintain that those – including Archelaus himself – who admit Archelaus behaved disgracefully do not mean he caused pain or harm to himself or to the third parties making the judgement; rather, they (and Archelaus himself, if he concedes his behaviour is disgraceful) mean he behaved in a way we all agree to censure lest anyone should try to behave that way against us, because it is painful and unbeneficial to anyone so treated, leading to their unhappiness.<sup>28</sup> Or Polus might simply say that disgraceful means bad-for-recipients, not bad for agent – that is, that action is disgraceful which leads to others' unhappiness, but it is not particularly relevant to one's own happiness at all.<sup>29</sup> Either way, Polus must return to and insist on the fundamental role of 'happiness' in the explanation of goodness and badness, prior to any independent notion of goodness (which he must refuse to accept exists), if he is to maintain his position. This is what a consistent *eudaimonism* would look like. After missing the disgrace point, Polus rolls over, no longer trying to seriously participate in the conversation. By 478d, it is safe for Socrates to re-introduce happiness to the discussion on his own terms; after an argument based on the beneficial, any happiness appealed to rests firmly on a foundational notion of goodness.

#### 4. CALLICLES AND CONCLUSION

While Callicles accuses Polus of allowing to happen to him precisely what Polus claims Gorgias wrongly allowed to happen to him, in fact we find that Socrates does to Callicles just what he did to Polus: he introduces goodness where it can be equivocally accepted by both parties, and makes his case by drawing on a notion of goodness that presumes its priority to happiness.

Socrates does not, as Vlastos says, use the terms 'good' and 'happy' interchangeably.<sup>30</sup> Rather, it is Callicles' view that is unstable, precisely because (as Plato depicts him) he is torn between happiness as informed by the good (*agathist*) and good as informed by happiness (*eudaimonist*). So, for example, in his long opening speech, 'happiness' is strikingly absent – it is

<sup>28</sup> This is more or less the line Callicles takes; as this option remains open, I disagree with Mackenzie 1982 that 'Polus does indeed stand refuted' (87) on this score – though not, it should be clear, because I endorse the Vlastos (1991: 139-48) alternative, that Plato has (or inadvertently depicts Socrates as having) got confused. The confusion is Polus'.

<sup>29</sup> Or if disgraceful happiness is no longer recognisably enviable, then he might have reconsidered (as Stauffer 2006: 73, points out) whether doing injustice is disgraceful, after all.

<sup>30</sup> Nor is 'good' in this context (which supposedly warrants taking 'good' as short for 'the human good') simply used interchangeably with 'happy'.

all about what is just and unjust, about superiority and strength. But once he specifies superiority and strength as ‘competent to accomplish whatever they have in mind’ (491b2) – a classic non-negotiable feature of happiness – then concern for happiness soon follows. Socrates’ proposal that the best men rule themselves and their own desires is firmly rejected, by reference to happiness (491e7-8).<sup>31</sup> And Calliclean hedonism immediately follows: ‘the man who’ll live correctly ought to allow his own appetites to get as large as possible and not restrain them’ (491e10-492a1).

The discussion which follows takes place largely in terms of pleasure – and Callicles is utterly unpersuaded. Rather than using ‘happy’ and ‘good’ interchangeably here, Socrates uses their different connotations as part of an argument: Callicles insists that ‘those who enjoy themselves, however they may be doing it, are happy’; Socrates tries to challenge this view by asking whether he thinks that pleasure is the good (‘But say now whether you claim the pleasant and the good are the same’, 495a2-3). This is intended to be a new move, a way of getting at Callicles from a different direction, to make him give up his view. It is successful because it exploits the natural relationship between happiness and pleasure (when we suppose happiness to be something determinable independently of a separate conception of goodness) in contrast to conspicuous absence of any such relation between pleasure and goodness (taken as something determinable separately from considerations of happiness). Socrates rightly thinks it is easier to show that (unrestricted) pleasure is not *the good* than to show that (unrestricted) pleasure is not *happiness* (495b3) – and that is what he sets out to do. It is by appeals to ‘the good’ that pleasure is seen to be inadequate, and Callicles’ hedonism crumbles.

But this only works if Socrates precisely *does not* use happiness and the good interchangeably, but rather recognises their distinct connotations. And the dispute, both here and with Polus, only makes sense if Socrates (and indeed Plato) recognises too that one must choose which of happiness and the good is prior to the other.<sup>32</sup> Either goodness is definable independently of happiness, and we allow our conception of happiness to be constrained by what is – independently – determined to be good; or else happiness is defined independently of goodness, and, if happiness is our only ultimate aim, we allow the goodness of only that which contributes to happiness. Such a view may have to have a non-standard explanation of the disgraceful, and any vices that do not entail painful constraint of one’s ability to satisfy one’s aims; but only such a view can coherently oppose Socrates’ outrageous claim that it is worse to do than to suffer injustice.

One might think that Socrates has sufficiently proved his point when the alternative position is driven to such extremity as to be radically revisionist about shame – has the view not been sufficiently refuted when it attracts such counterintuitive and unseemly commitments? But who has won is not the point; the point is rather that we cannot see what is at stake, if we do not even appreciate the difference between the two sides – and we cannot do that if we insist on forcing Socrates into the *eudaimonist* mould. Socrates and Polus are not having a dispute over what happiness is; they are having a dispute over what is good: Polus holds that what is good is what makes you happy, and is good *because* it makes you happy; Socrates holds that the good is beneficial, appropriate, fitting and fine, and because of this having such things makes you do well (and only such doing well should be called ‘happy’). Polus has not lost (if he has lost) because he is stupid, but because he defends *eudaimonism*: he takes the limiting conditions on any intelligible notion of happiness (envious, successful, free, incompatible with constraint and pain) to be the limit of what can be considered ‘goods’. For Socrates, the possible goods – having which explains the goodness of a human life – are constrained only by principles of goodness (it is beneficial, does no harm, is proportionate and sufficient, appropriate and fine).

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<sup>31</sup> ‘How could a man prove to be happy if he’s enslaved to anyone at all?’, cited in section 1.

<sup>32</sup> Or else be a Kantian-style dualist about value – which is a view attributed to Socrates by Devereux 1995, and could perhaps be drawn out of the *Republic* based on the passage at 421b-c, quoted in section 1.

There is not just a difference between the *agathist* and the *eudaimonist*; there is, as Socrates says in the *Crito* (49d3), ‘no common ground between’ the two.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> ‘No common ground’, that is, between those who think harming or doing others injustice is always wrong, and those who think it might be justified. If it might be justified, this can only be by appeal to considerations of happiness determined independently of a prior conception of goodness. And so it is no accident that the very same point – that it is always worse to do than to suffer injustice – arises in the discussion with Polus in precisely this context.