

## **EUDAIMONIA IN PLATO'S REPUBLIC**

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### **1. The Question and its Significance**

In Plato's Republic, Glaucon and Adeimantus challenge Socrates to show that acting justly always makes one better off than acting unjustly.<sup>1</sup> They want to be shown that justice is "more profitable" (lusitelesterā) than injustice, that it brings a "better life" (ameinōn bios). They do not explicitly ask to be shown that the just person enjoys more "success" (eudaimonia)<sup>2</sup> than the unjust. In fact, in their challenge, they refer to eudaimonia only once, obliquely (364d). But Socrates interprets their challenge as a demand to show that the just person always enjoys more eudaimonia than the unjust.

Plato subtly prepares for Socrates' interpretation before Glaucon and Adeimantus issue their challenge. In Book One, Socrates treats the question whether justice is "more profitable" and makes life "better" (347e2-7) as equivalent to the question whether the just person is more

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<sup>1</sup> Unless otherwise noted, all parenthetical references to Plato's works are to the text in Slings 2003, Duke et al. **date**, Dodds **date**, or Burnet **date**, and the translations are my revisions of the renderings in Cooper 1997.

<sup>2</sup> This word is most commonly translated as 'happiness', though some have proposed 'flourishing'. 'Success' is a more natural rendering than the latter and less misleading than the former. But I will treat eudaimonia and the related adjective eudaimōn as if they were ordinary, undeclined English words.

successful (eudaimōn) (352d2-4, referring back to 347e2-7). Then, in Book Two, just before Glaucon and Adeimantus launch their challenge, Socrates seems to presuppose that questions about justice's value pertain to human beings who are pursuing success (358a1-3, taking makarios here to be a terminological variant of eudaimōn [cf. 354a1-2]).

Whether these hints reach the reader or not, Socrates' arguments defending justice in Books Eight and Nine make his attention to eudaimonia plain. Consider the way he launches his first argument in Book Eight (545a2-b2):

"Then shouldn't we next go through the worse ones [viz., constitutions of the individual soul], namely, the victory-loving and honor-loving... and the oligarchic, the democratic, and the tyrannical, so that, after we have discovered the most unjust of all, we can oppose him to the most just and our investigation will be complete, concerning how pure justice and pure injustice stand, with regard to the eudaimonia or wretchedness [athliotētos] of those who possess them, so that we may be persuaded either by Thrasymachus to practice injustice or by the argument that is now coming to light to practice justice?"<sup>3</sup>

And, again, the way he brings this argument to a conclusion in Book Nine (580b1-c5):

"Come, now," I said, "and like the judge who makes the final decision, judge who is first in eudaimonia according to your opinion, who is second, and the rest in order, since there are five—the kingly, the timocratic, the oligarchic, the democratic, and the tyrannical."

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<sup>3</sup> In his initial transition to this argument, in Book Four, before the "digression" of Books Five through Seven, Socrates says, "It remains for us to examine whether acting justly and doing honorable things and being just profit [lusitelei], whether one escapes notice as such or not, or whether acting unjustly and being unjust profit, at least if one doesn't pay the penalty and become better after being punished" (444e6-445a4). This does not signal a turn away from eudaimonia and toward profit; it confirms Socrates' willingness to use the vocabulary of profit or advantage and eudaimonia interchangeably.

"But the judgment is easy," [Glaucou] said, "since I judge them in virtue and vice and eudaimonia and its opposite in the order they entered, as choruses."

"Shall we, then, hire a herald," I said, "or shall I myself announce that the son of Ariston [viz., Glaucou] has judged that the best and most just is the most eudaimōn, that this is the kingliest who is king over himself, that the worst and most unjust is the most wretched [athliōtaton], and that this happens to be the one who is most tyrannical since he most tyrannizes both himself and his city?"

One might suppose that Socrates shifts away from talking of eudaimonia when he offers his second and third arguments for the superiority of justice, since these arguments focus on pleasure. But Socrates says otherwise when he moves from the second to the third (583b1-2):

"These, then, would be two [viz., "proofs" (apodeixeis), cf. 580c10] in a row, and in both the just person has defeated the unjust."

Socrates says, in other words, that he has three proofs of the same theorem, and the first proof's theorem is explicitly that the just is more successful (eudaimōn) than the unjust.<sup>4</sup>

None of this should be surprising. Eudaimonia is a perfectly ordinary Greek word that refers nebulously, just as our word 'success' does, to a mixture of good luck, noteworthy achievements, material comfort, and emotional well-being. So it is easily exchanged for "a good life," and what brings eudaimonia is easily called "advantageous" or "profitable."

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<sup>4</sup> One might suppose that all three proofs are of some more general theorem that the just life is better than that of the unjust, with the first proof shooting for the more specific claim that the just life is more eudaimōn and the second and third for the more specific claim that the just life is more pleasant. But this reading ignores the equivalence Socrates assumes in Book One between "more eudaimōn" and "better (as a life)." Moreover, it attributes to Socrates an infelicitous series of arguments, by leaving a gap between the specific theorems (concerning eudaimonia and pleasure) and the more general one (concerning a "better life"). If my argument in the rest of this essay is correct, there are no similar costs for the simpler interpretation of 583b, according to which the theorem of all three proofs is that the just life is more eudaimōn.

But of course people can and do disagree about what exactly makes a life successful or eudaimōn. This prompts an obvious question for Socrates' central arguments in Plato's Republic, and here something is surprising. The voluminous scholarship on the Republic says almost nothing to identify Socrates' conception of eudaimonia.<sup>5</sup> In this essay, I redress this neglect. I argue that there are three distinct conceptions of eudaimonia in the Republic and that Socrates rejects two of them. My principal goals are to examine why he rejects them, and to explain how all three conceptions relate to the Republic's central arguments in favor of being just.

The payoff is not merely a surer grasp of the Republic's central task. The way Plato grapples with various conceptions of eudaimonia in the Republic set the parameters for subsequent Greek ethics and repays attention for those currently interested in eudaimonist ethics or theories of well-being.

## 2. The Socratic Conception

One conception of eudaimonia emerges at the end of Book One, when Socrates argues that injustice is never more profitable than justice (352d-354d).<sup>6</sup> As noted above, he initiates his argument by sliding from the question of profitability to the question of eudaimonia (352d2-4, referring back to 347e2-7). Then the argument unfolds like this:

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<sup>5</sup> Annas' Introduction, still the best such available, has no place in its index for eudaimonia, happiness, or anything similar. The Blackwell Guide to Plato's Republic offers only one direct paragraph (Keyt 2006, 206). Etc.

<sup>6</sup> Another conception enters earlier, when Thrasymachus assumes it at 344b-c, but I postpone discussion of this conception until section three.

- (1) The function of an X is what X alone or best does.<sup>7</sup>
- (2) The virtue/excellence of an X is what makes an X perform its function well (and be a good X), and the vice of an X is what makes an X perform its function badly (and be a bad X).
- (3) Living is the function of a (human) soul.
- (4) Justice is the virtue/excellence of a human soul, and injustice its vice.
- (5) So: A just soul lives well, and an unjust soul badly.
- (6) Anyone who lives well is eudaimōn, and anyone who lives badly is wretched (athlios).
- (7) So: A just soul is eudaimōn, and an unjust one wretched.
- (8) It profits one not to be unhappy but to be happy.
- (9) So: Injustice is never more profitable than justice.

For my purposes, the crucial premise in this "function argument"—more famous from Aristotle's version (in Nicomachean Ethics I 7)—is (6). Socrates introduces it thus: "And surely anyone who lives well is blessed [makarios] and eudaimōn, and anyone who doesn't is the opposite" (354a1-2). Why is Socrates so confident that anyone who lives well is eudaimōn whereas anyone who doesn't is wretched?

One might try to brush this question aside. Perhaps premise (6) is an empty platitude:

'living well' is just as open-ended as 'being eudaimōn', another indeterminate way of saying the

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<sup>7</sup> When Socrates first specifies what a function is (352e3-353a8), he actually limits his attention to things that one uses (tools, horses), and he says that the function of a thing is whatever one does best or only with that thing (cf. **Book X**). But he generalizes to the premise that I report at 353a9-11, which is fortunate, since it would be infelicitous to consider the soul as something one uses to live, as if one were something over and above a soul. Still, it is worth noting that Aristotle's function argument, which might seem to sprout from natural teleology, is rooted for Plato in more mundane thoughts about tools. So where Aristotle imagines the eye as an independent organism to identify its function (De an. **citation**), Plato considers it a tool (**citation**).

same thing. In fact, there is no doubt that "living well" can be used in this broad way, and no doubt that Socrates' unwary interlocutors might hear it this way. But if premise (6) is read this way, then Socrates' argument is invalid, because 'living well' is not open-ended in premise (5). In premise (5), justice produces living well, and Socrates needs this living well, produced by justice, to entail being eudaimōn in premise (6). The question for (6), then, is, Why would he think that any person who is just and lives well is eudaimōn?

The simplest answer would be that Socrates identifies eudaimonia with justly living well. In Plato's Socratic dialogues, Socrates frequently insists that being virtuous entails acting well which in turn entails being eudaimōn. In Charmides 171e5-172a3, Socrates says,

And in this way, governed by moderation, a household would be managed nobly [kalōs], and so would a city be governed, and so would everything else over which moderation rules. For with error removed and rightness in control, those disposed in this way necessarily act nobly and well [kalōs kai eu] in every action, and those who act well are necessarily eudaimōn. [emphasis added]

In Gorgias 507b8-c5, Socrates sums up his case against Callicles thus:

So, Callicles, it is very much necessary that, as we have discussed, the moderate man [sic],<sup>8</sup> since he is just and brave and pious, is completely good, that the good man does well and nobly [eu kai kalōs] whatever he does, and that the one who does well is blessed

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<sup>8</sup> Socrates' accounts of virtue and its value usually apply generally to any human being (anthrōpos) and not specifically to men (see esp. Meno 73b-c). The specific attention to men here is probably due to the gendered terms of Callicles' challenge. Callicles accepts that success requires the "manly" virtues of wisdom and bravery (andreia, "manliness"), but he denies that it requires the more cooperative, more "feminine" virtues of moderation (or self-control) and justice. Socrates wants to emphasize that moderation does not undermine manliness but actually is required for the "manly" virtues.

[makarion] and eudaimōn while the wicked, the one who does badly, is wretched  
[athlion]. [emphasis added]

One might wonder what is supposed to explain the necessity of these entailments. In Crito 48b4-9, Socrates proposes identities:

SOC. Examine this, also, whether it abides or not, that the most important thing is not living, but living well... And that living well, living nobly [kalōs] and living justly are the same thing, does this abide or not?

CRI. It abides.

In other words, acting virtuously = acting well = living well. And if we take the identities of the Crito to explain the necessities of the Charmides and Gorgias, Socrates must be using 'living well' (in the Crito) interchangeably with 'being eudaimōn' (in the Charmides and Gorgias). So, for Socrates, acting virtuously = acting well = living well = being eudaimōn. My proposal, then, is that the Socrates of Republic I—so similar to the Socrates of the Crito, Charmides, and Gorgias—asserts that acting virtuously entails living well which in turn entails being eudaimōn because he assumes that acting virtuously simply is living well and simply is being eudaimōn. On this reading, Republic I invokes what I call the Socratic conception of eudaimonia: eudaimonia is virtuous activity.<sup>9</sup>

One might, however, reject this simple explanation of Socrates' commitments in the function argument, and offer a more complicated tale about why Socrates assumes that anyone

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<sup>9</sup> It is beyond the scope of this essay to argue that Socrates stands by this identity in all of Plato's Socratic dialogues. Readers might accordingly want to read my label 'Socratic conception' warily. But note especially Euthydemus 278e-282d, where Socrates uses eudaimonia, being eudaimōn [eudaimonein], good action [eupragia], and acting/faring well [eu prattein] interchangeably. (For discussion, see my "Socrates the Stoic?") It is also perhaps worth noting that followers of Socrates as diverse as Aristotle and the Stoics insist that eudaimonia is simply virtuous activity (though in the case of Aristotle many scholars have tried to deny this).

who lives justly and well is eudaimōn while anyone who does not is wretched. Perhaps Socrates assumes only that virtuous activity is necessary and sufficient for eudaimonia without thinking that it exhausts the contents of eudaimonia. If virtuous activity necessarily entailed the possession of health and friends, say, one might say that it is necessary and sufficient for eudaimonia while thinking that eudaimonia is not virtuous activity alone but virtuous activity plus health and friends.<sup>10</sup>

But what is the warrant for introducing this more complicated tale? As my simpler explanation does, the complicated account might link the Socrates of Republic I to the Socrates of Plato's Socratic dialogues. But the complicated account requires two further assumptions. It must assume that according to Socrates in all these dialogues, certain things other than virtue and virtuous activity (e.g., health and friendship) are good and that Socratic eudaimonia is defined by the possession of all the goods.

Both of these assumptions are dubious. While there is evidence in Socratic dialogues that Socrates takes health to be a good (Cri. 47d-48a, Grg. 511e-512b), there is also evidence that he denies health to be a good (Euthd.). Whether health is a good or not depends upon what goodness is. If nothing is a good without being unconditionally beneficial (that is, beneficial in every circumstance), then, plausibly, health is not a good. Socrates seems to lack a single, well-developed understanding of goodness, and this explains his divergent views about whether health is a good. One might think that his practical commitments take health to be a good, but this is not so. Those commitments are well explained if Socrates takes health to be generally worth valuing positively and worth pursuing without being unconditionally beneficial (and thus without being

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<sup>10</sup> (Note here about Vlastosian attempts to say what Socrates' conception of eudaimonia is. The standard picture winds up being close to what Keyt 2006, 206 attributes to the Republic. Note also the parallel about Aristotle.)

good). In fact, a Socrates who denies that health is good and insists that eudaimonia is merely virtuous activity could give two reasons why one should generally value and pursue health. First, if eudaimonia is virtuous activity, then since virtuous activity requires at least some measure of health, one has good reason to value and pursue health just because one has good reason to value and pursue eudaimonia. Also, if eudaimonia is virtuous activity, it requires virtue, and if virtue requires evaluating positively things that have positive value, then eudaimonia can require positively evaluating health even if health is not to be seen as unconditionally beneficial and thereby good.<sup>11</sup>

The complicated account's second assumption is even more dubious. To say what eudaimonia is, one should not list all the necessary conditions for being eudaimōn. Such a list would include food, drink, and air, and a whole host of bacteria and enzymes. Instead, one should say what makes a eudaimōn life eudaimōn and what serves as the practical goal for the sake of which a eudaimōn person should do everything he or she does. In the Euthydemus, Socrates quickly rejects the ordinary presupposition that eudaimonia is the possession of goods, by pointing out that nothing is good unless it benefits and nothing benefits unless it is used in a certain way. What makes a person eudaimōn, on this view, is activity of a certain sort and not the assets that the activity engages. It might be said that the Euthydemus is an outlier,<sup>12</sup> but we

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<sup>11</sup> A proponent of the more complicated tale might reject my reading of the Euthydemus (cf. note 00 above) by pressing what I call the Vlastosian expectation, namely, the thought that anything Socrates sincerely says in one of Plato's Socratic dialogues must agree with everything he says in all of them. This expectation does not tolerate Socrates offering different accounts of health's value in different Socratic dialogues. But there is no independent reason to accept the Vlastosian expectation, and those who insist on it do not offer the most natural readings of the individual dialogues, as I argue in the case of the Euthydemus in "Socrates the Stoic?" It is better, then, to see the Socratic dialogues as diverse explorations of a small number of central Socratic commitments.

<sup>12</sup> The proponent of the more complicated tale, moved by the Vlastosian expectation (see the preceding note), will not easily explain away Socrates' commitment to activity, but he or she might well decide that the Euthydemus does not count as a Socratic dialogue but only as a "transitional dialogue." Such are the machinations of those who want to save the Vlastosian expectation.

should recall the repeated identification of living well or being eudaimōn with virtuous activity. Why should we not take this identification at face value? We need some special reason to deny that Socrates means what he says when he identifies success with activity of a certain kind, some special reason to insist that he must really mean to include some separate goods in eudaimonia. Without such a reason, I cling to my simple explanation of why Socrates insists in the function argument that anyone who lives well is eudaimōn.<sup>13</sup>

With the Socratic conception of eudaimonia, Socrates is well positioned to answer Glaucon's and Adeimantus' challenge. He could argue directly:

- (1) Justice is a virtue.
- (2) So: virtuous activity requires acting justly.
- (3) Eudaimonia is virtuous activity.
- (4) So: eudaimonia requires acting justly.

At the end of Book One, he reflects on the conversation thus far and announces that he has work to do to secure the first premise of this argument (354b9-c3):

"The result that has just now come about from this discussion, as far as I'm concerned, is that I know nothing, for when I don't know what justice is, I'll hardly know whether it happens to be a virtue or not, or [kai] whether a person who has it is eudaimōn or not eudaimōn."

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<sup>13</sup> Note that the Socratic conception of eudaimonia is consistent with insisting that health and friendship are goods and are necessary for eudaimonia. For one might maintain that minimally virtuous activity is impossible without health and friendship, and one might think that possessing virtue requires evaluating health and friendship as goods (=causal contributors to eudaimonia). Cf. my "Wishing for Fortune, Choosing Activity."

Notice that Socrates does not call into question his conception of eudaimonia but only his conception of justice.<sup>14</sup> This might suggest that he will proceed by continuing to assume that eudaimonia is virtuous activity and by arguing that justice is a virtue, perhaps by showing that justice makes a person good, since a virtue is whatever makes its possessor perform its function well and be good.

But in fact, Socrates does not proceed in this way. Instead, in Book Four he takes for granted that justice is a virtue. Having imagined an ideally good city with the conviction that any good city must be just (427e, 434d-e), he analyzes the virtues of that city and applies the analysis to the case of an individual human being (434d-435b, 441c-442d).<sup>15</sup> That is, he adopts the working assumption that a good person is just. So he cannot also assume that eudaimonia is virtuous activity without begging the question that Glaucon and Adeimantus put to him.

In other words, Socrates' strategy in the Republic is not to show that justice is a virtue on the assumption that eudaimonia is virtuous activity. It is to show that acting justly is or brings about more eudaimonia than acting otherwise, on the assumption that justice is a virtue that makes one good. As a result, Socrates has to set aside the Socratic conception of eudaimonia as

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<sup>14</sup> Casey Perin has suggested to me that he does, since he ends with two questions, one whether justice is a virtue and the other whether the just person is eudaimōn, though the second question would be equivalent to the first if he were continuing to assume that eudaimonia is virtuous activity. Both these questions, however, are subordinate to the question of what justice is (and not to the question of what eudaimonia is). Socrates is insisting (cf. Meno) that so long as he does not know what justice is, he will not know any features of justice, including whether it is a virtue and whether it makes a person eudaimōn. It is true that these two features are inseparable if eudaimonia is virtuous activity, but Socrates does not rigorously avoid redundancy and we can construe the kai epexegetically to capture the redundancy.

<sup>15</sup> My reading might seem unfair to Socrates, since he has insisted that he will not know whether justice is a virtue until he knows what justice is (354b-c). But I am not imputing any inconsistency to him. Without knowing what justice is, he can hypothesize that justice is a virtue to devise a certain picture of what justice is, and he can develop and test his elaborated hypotheses on the way to knowing what justice and its features are. That is, although he will not know anything about justice until he knows what justice is, his procedure for discovering what justice is can use hypotheses about it. Cf. the Meno.

virtuous activity. He has offered no reason to doubt this conception. But he has good reasons not to assume it.

### 3. The Adolescent Conception

As I noted above, Glaucon and Adeimantus do not pay much explicit attention to eudaimonia in stating their challenge in Book Two. But Adeimantus does appeal explicitly to eudaimonia in Book Four. Socrates has just finished explaining how the guardians will be situated in an ideal city. He says that they will live without private property—not even touching gold or silver—and with minimal sustenance, as soldiers in a camp with a common mess hall (416d-417b). Adeimantus worries about this (419a1-420a2):

"What defense will you offer, Socrates, if someone were to say that you don't make these men [sic] eudaimōn at all and that it's their own fault, since the city in truth belongs to them, yet they derive no good from it. Others own land, build fine big houses, acquire furnishing fitting for them, make their own private sacrifices to the gods, entertain guests, and also, of course, possess what you were talking about just now, gold and silver and all the things that are thought to belong to people who are blessed [makariois]. But one might well say that they are settled in the city like hired guards, doing nothing but watching over it."

Socrates catches the drift of Adeimantus' objection and expands the brief (420a3-9):

"Yes," I said, "and they do these things for room and board and do not take a wage in addition to board as others do, so that if they should want to take a private trip away from

the city, they won't be able to, and they won't be able to give to their mistresses [sic] or to spend in whatever other ways they would wish, as those who are thought eudaimōn do.

You've left these and countless other, similar facts out of your charge."

"But let them be added to the charge, too," he said.

Adeimantus worries that the guardians of Socrates' ideal city fail to be eudaimōn. But the charge is not that the guardians fail to act virtuously. Some other conception of eudaimonia is assumed.

Whoever would bring this charge—Adeimantus distances himself from it, at least rhetorically—must think that private possessions are fundamentally important to eudaimonia. She need not think that eudaimonia simply is wealth or the like. She might think, after the popular fashion (note Socrates' phrase 'as those who are thought eudaimōn'), that eudaimonia consists in having many good things, where the good things include wealth (cf. Euthd. 278e-279c). This "objective list" conception of eudaimonia is really a family of views, since individuals can disagree about which goods to include on the list, how to rank the listed goods, and whether some of them might contribute to eudaimonia without being required for it.<sup>16</sup> But anyone charging that the guardians lack eudaimonia presumably holds that wealth, at least, is so important that it is necessary for eudaimonia.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Keyt (2006, 206) attributes to the Republic a refined version of this conception; his Plato believes that "reason" is first on the list of goods that constitute eudaimonia.

<sup>17</sup> In the previous section, I noted that one might hold that eudaimonia is simply virtuous activity and still think that it requires other goods besides virtue (n. 00). Indeed, I have asserted that Aristotle holds a view like this and I have allowed that Plato's Socrates might hold it in this or that Socratic dialogue. So why not think that Adeimantus is conceiving of eudaimonia in such a way? Two reasons. First, Plato plainly aligns Adeimantus' objection with a popular conception of eudaimonia, and he elsewhere (Euthd. 278e-279c) identifies the popular conception of eudaimonia as an "objective list" theory. Second, as I go on to show, Socrates very sharply rebukes the conception of eudaimonia underlying Adeimantus' objection, and his reasoning makes optimal sense if he is targeting an "objective list" theory.

Socrates does not call this conception of eudaimonia into question in Book Four. Instead, he politely and elaborately insists that his task is to design a city that is eudaimōn as a whole and not to design a city so that one or two particular classes in it are eudaimōn (420b-421c). But in Book Five, he refers back to the charge Adeimantus introduced, and he dismisses the conception of eudaimonia on which it rests (465e5-466a6 and 466b5-c2):

"Do you remember," I said, "that, earlier in our discussion, someone—I forget who—shocked us by saying that we do not make the guardians eudaimōn, since they would have nothing though it was possible for them to have everything that belongs to the citizens? We said, I think, that we will look into this again if it should come up but that for now we make our guardians guardians and the city as eudaimōn as we can, but that we do not look to any one class within it and shape it as eudaimōn...

"If a guardian tries to become eudaimōn in such a way that he's no longer a guardian and isn't satisfied by a life that's measured, stable, and—as we say—best, but a foolish and adolescent view [anoētos te kai meirakiōdēs doxa] of eudaimonia seizes him and incites him to use his power to appropriate everything in the city for himself, he'll come to know that Hesiod was really wise when he said that 'the half is somehow more than the whole.'"

Perhaps Socrates has his sights on the entire family of "objective list" views of eudaimonia, but he does not explicitly commit himself to such a broad target. Socrates focuses more directly on a conception of eudaimonia that makes its pursuers unsatisfied with measure and desirous of getting more for themselves than the common good tolerates. So it is especially an "objective list" conception of eudaimonia that requires wealth that Socrates calls "foolish and adolescent."

This adolescent conception is not limited to the charge Adeimantus introduces. It also motivates the entire objection to justice developed by Thrasymachus in Book One and Glaucon and Adeimantus in Book Two. Thrasymachus sums this up when he contrasts ineffectual, limited injustice and total injustice (344b1-c2):

"If someone commits only one part of injustice and is caught, he's punished and greatly reproached, for such partly unjust people are called temple-robbers, kidnappers, housebreakers, robbers, and thieves, when they commit these crimes. But when someone in addition to appropriating the citizens' possessions, kidnaps and enslaves them as well, then instead of these shameful names he is called eudaimōn and blessed [makarios], not only by the citizens themselves, but by all who learn that he has achieved total injustice."

Thrasymachus emphasizes the possessions and power that complete injustice brings, and he locates eudaimonia there. By doing so, he assumes an adolescent conception of eudaimonia.

Thrasymachus also asserts that most people agree with him, and Glaucon and Adeimantus echo this assertion. For when they develop their challenge to Socrates, they insist that most people do not want to be just but only to seem just, precisely because they can enjoy more material goods by getting away with injustice. **add quote or two here** Plato is quite clear, then, that the adolescent conception of eudaimonia is at odds with justice.

Given the importance of the adolescent conception, it is perhaps surprising that Socrates does not do much more than signal his opposition in Book Five. He elaborates no reasons for rejecting it. He hints that the pursuer of adolescent eudaimonia undermines his own pursuits—he suggests that the pursuer would have somehow achieved more had he gone for half as much—

but he does not develop this thought until he completes his defense of justice, in Books Eight and Nine.

#### 4. The Democritean Conception

Curiously, though, Socrates' arguments in Books Eight and Nine suggest yet another conception of eudaimonia. The first argument leads to its conclusion like this (577c-578b):

- (1) The tyrannical city is enslaved.
- (2) So: The tyrannical soul is full of slavery.
- (3) The tyrannical city is least likely to do what it wants.
- (4) So: The tyrannical soul is least likely to do what it wants.
- (5) So: The tyrannical soul is full of disorder and regret.
- (6) The tyrannical city is poor.
- (7) So: The tyrannical soul is poor and unsatisfiable.
- (8) The tyrannical city is full of fear.
- (9) So: The tyrannical soul is full of fear.
- (10) The tyrannical city has the most wailing, groaning, lamenting, and grieving.
- (11) So: The tyrannical soul has the most wailing, groaning, etc.
- (12) So: The tyrannical city is most wretched.
- (13) So: The tyrannical soul is most wretched.

Socrates appears to be running the analogy of city and soul too hard, but he might intend the analogy only to introduce psychological hypotheses that need to be assessed on their own merits.

Taken this way, Socrates' crucial observation is that a soul, to the extent that it is filled with ever-growing appetitive desires, is more likely to experience conflicting and unsatisfiable desires and so less likely to do what it wants. That is why the most disordered soul filled with limitless appetites—the tyrannical soul—is least likely to do what it wants. He then assumes that past manifestations of this inability occasion regret; present manifestations occasion feelings of poverty and frustration; and future manifestations occasion fear. These negative feelings then are summed up as wretchedness. To extend this reasoning to other psychological constitutions, Socrates could generalize and conclude that vice correlates with psychological disorder which correlates with negative feelings, whereas virtue correlates with psychological order and the absence of negative feelings. After this argument, Socrates offers two more, and both seek to show that the just person experiences more pleasure than the unjust. If all three arguments purport to show that the just are more eudaimōn than the unjust—as the transition to the third argument indicates (583b1-2, quoted above)—all three must presuppose some conception(s) of eudaimonia. But it seems plain that they do not presuppose the Socratic or adolescent conception.

There is a natural conception of eudaimonia that makes sense of all three of Socrates' arguments.<sup>18</sup> Eudaimonia might just be the presence of good feelings (such as pleasure) and the absence of bad feelings (such as pain). This subjectivist account might seem anachronistic, but it

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<sup>18</sup> One might resist my assumption that just one conception of eudaimonia explains all three arguments. One might suppose that the second and third arguments presuppose a hedonistic conception whereas the first presupposes something different. On this view, there could be four conceptions of eudaimonia in the Republic. But this seems to me untidy and potentially problematic. Why should Socrates assume two distinct conceptions of eudaimonia in his arguments? If he is endorsing more than one conception of eudaimonia, he would seem to be confused, and if one or both of were introduced ad hominem, we should expect to see clear indication of where the shift to the ad hominem mode enters or where the disjunctive nature of his overall set of three arguments emerges. I see no such shifts and I prefer to be charitable toward Socrates, and so I favor the simpler assumption. Nevertheless, everything I say in what follows could easily accommodate the distinction between two conceptions of eudaimonia in Books Eight and Nine. See note 00 below.

closely resembles the view that late antiquity attributes to Democritus, the atomist who was born some thirty years before Plato. According to Diogenes Laertius, for example, Democritus says that "the goal [telos, i.e., that for the sake of which one should do everything one does, i.e., eudaimonia] is good-spiritedness [euthumia], which is not the same pleasure, as some have misunderstood it to be, but that in which the soul continues in peace and in good balance, disturbed by no fear or superstition or any other passion. He also calls this well-being [euestō] and many other things" (VII 45). For this reason, I will say that the arguments in Republic VIII-IX suggest a Democritean conception of eudaimonia. I do not mean to suggest that the conception of eudaimonia at work in Republic VIII-IX is exactly what Democritus meant by euthumia, or even that Plato was influenced by Democritus. (Indeed, my understanding of the Democritean conception of eudaimonia is not as hostile to hedonism as Diogenes Laertius would have us think Democritus himself was.) The label is for convenience and to remind us that it should not be too strange to find in the Republic a view that locates eudaimonia in good feelings and the absence of bad feelings.<sup>19</sup>

Since Socrates' arguments for the superiority of justice appeal to the Democritean conception of eudaimonia, the most natural supposition would be that Socrates accepts it.<sup>20</sup> But this cannot be right. Socrates explicitly rejects pleasure and good feelings as a guide to life and

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<sup>19</sup> One might think that if we were to identify the "Democritean" conception of eudaimonia with greatly fealty to Democritus, we would distinguish between the Democritean conception assumed by Socrates' first argument and the hedonist conception assumed by his second and third. Again (see n. 00), I think that this needlessly complicates Socrates' case, without sufficient textual grounds, but my account of how Socrates uses the (broader) Democritean conception and why he rejects it could easily explain how he uses both a narrower Democritean conception and a hedonist conception and why he rejects both (see n. 00 below).

<sup>20</sup> Butler, Mouracade. Reeve (1988, 153-159) explicitly rejects the thought that Plato is a hedonist but fails to identify a substantive conception of eudaimonia in the Republic apart from certain pleasures.

thereby rejects the view that eudaimonia is the presence of good feelings and absence of bad feelings.

Consider first Socrates' discussion of the human good in Book Six.<sup>21</sup> The human good is the goal of all action, "that which every soul pursues and for the sake of which every soul does everything it does" (505e1-2). This goal is eudaimonia, since everyone wants to be eudaimōn and no one seeks anything beyond that (cf. Euthyd. 278e and Symp. 205a). This is why Socrates defends justice by reference to eudaimonia: if the just are more eudaimōn, then because eudaimonia is the final and universal goal for an individual's actions, there are no further grounds for recommending injustice.

When Socrates discusses the good for a human being, he explicitly rejects pleasure as a candidate, saying, "What about those who define the good as pleasure [cf. 505b5-6]? Does confusion fill them any less than it does the others [who define the good as knowledge, cf. 505b6-c5]? Or aren't they also forced to agree that there are bad pleasures?" (505c6-8; cf. 509a6-10) The hedonist should of course agree that there are bad pleasures by insisting that pleasures are bad by virtue of giving rise to more pain than pleasure in the long run. But Socrates suggests, I take it, that there is a deeper problem for pleasure, that some pleasures are intrinsically bad. Compare, for instance, how he prosecutes Callicles for his hedonism in the Gorgias. Socrates tries, among other things, to get Callicles to see that some pleasures are

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<sup>21</sup> The human good (the good for a human being) is a qualified goodness, as opposed to the Form of the Good (unqualified goodness). There are other qualified kinds of goodness, such as the good for a city (the civic good). But Plato being Plato, Socrates in the Republic insists that understanding qualified goodness requires understanding unqualified goodness, which is why the discussion of what is good for a human being gives way quickly to a discussion of the Form of the Good. Socrates is coy about what unqualified goodness is, but it is tolerably clear that he takes it to be unity (cf. 462a-b, 443e). So x is a good K to the extent that (and in the way that) it is a unified K. And something is good for x to the extent that (and in the way that) it causally contributes to the unity of x. And the good for a human being is a good for a human being that unifies one by serving as the goal of all one's actions.

intrinsically shameful. More generally, on Socrates' view, that something feels good for one does not mean that something is good for one. And when we pursue the human good (eudaimonia), we pursue what is good for us and not merely what seems to be good for us (505d). So good feeling by itself is not enough. A good feeling must at least survive reflection as something good for us, and that requires some awareness of some good for us independent of good feelings.

Socrates offers a second consideration against the Democritean conception of eudaimonia by arguing that the pursuit of subjective satisfaction undermines itself. This emerges as a corollary to his critique of spirited and especially appetitive desire. The critique rests on three main points. First, subjective satisfaction—good feelings—come cheaply. Many different kinds of agents can get them, and all three parts of the human soul have their own pleasures (581c). Some of our good feelings, then, are entirely independent of our calculating judgments of what is good: satisfactions of spirited desire and bodily appetite feel good whether we reason them out to be good for us or not (and certainly whether they are good for us or not).

Next, Socrates maintains that if spirited and appetitive desires are indulged and are not held in check by countervailing commitments to what is genuinely good, they will grow stronger and more numerous. Socrates paints this conviction into his imaginative portrait of the soul at the end of Book Nine, when he says that even the just person must continually prevent the many-headed beast of appetite from sprouting savage heads (589a-b; cf. 571b-572b). He also assumes it when he asserts that gold and silver need to be kept away from guardians (416e-417a) and when he predicts that a person with a timocratic soul will become progressively more money-loving over the course of his lifetime (549a-b). Moreover, these worries about spirited and appetitive desire underwrite Socrates' ban on mimetic poetry in Book Ten (602c-606d).

Finally, Socrates maintains that as spirited and appetitive desires grow, they conflict with each other and in other ways outstrip our ability to satisfy them. We have already seen this last point, as it is the key to the first "proof" of justice's superiority.

But if indulging spirited and appetitive desires outside of any control by a reasoned grasp of what is good undermines one's ability to satisfy them, then it is not a good idea to pursue good feelings. For good feelings can be achieved independent of a reasoned grasp of what is good, and when they are, they tend to make it more difficult, not easier, to achieve good feelings. (To achieve good feelings within a reasoned grasp of what is good, one needs either to pursue something other than good feelings, namely wisdom, or one needs to be under the control of someone else's reasoned grasp of what is good (590d).)

This indictment of the Democritean conception of eudaimonia is easily extended to explain why Socrates rejects the adolescent conception, as well.<sup>22</sup> Wealth and political power and the related goods so important to the adolescent conception are characteristic ends of the spirited and appetitive parts of the soul; they can exert attractions and prompt satisfactions independent of our calculations about what is good for us. To pursue such goods is to stray from what really is good and to run the risk of undermining one's own pursuits. Indeed, the reasoning can be extended to cast doubt on all the "objective list" conceptions of eudaimonia, except those that pare the list down to virtue and virtuous activity, which alone are guaranteed to agree with the reasoned grasp of the good that makes anything that is good for a human being good for a human being.<sup>23</sup> So Socrates' moral psychology targets not only subjective satisfaction but also objective

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<sup>22</sup> And if one thinks that Socrates' three arguments in Books Eight and Nine appeal implicitly to more than one conception of eudaimonia (see note 00 above), these considerations should tell against all of them.

<sup>23</sup> (Something here about Bobonich's denial that the Republic assumes the conditionality of goods thesis?)

accounts of eudaimonia broader than the Socratic account, according to which eudaimonia is virtuous activity.

### 5. The Answer and its Significance

In sum, the Republic implicates three conceptions of eudaimonia and rejects two of them. The rejections rest, or so I have argued, on some sweeping empirical claims about psychology. I leave it to others to assess these claims' plausibility. Instead, I want to press here some implications of Socrates' having considered three conceptions and having endorsed only one.

First, this matters to our reading of the Republic. Socrates' arguments for the primary thesis that the just is always more eudaimōn than the unjust rest on a Democritean conception of eudaimonia that he rejects. So he must be appealing to this conception ad hominem, to persuade Glaucon and Adeimantus of justice's value. His own reason for his thesis presumably rests on a conception of eudaimonia that he accepts. So he must believe that the just is always more eudaimōn because justice is a virtue and eudaimonia is virtuous activity. He does not appeal to this argument only because it would beg the question against Glaucon and Adeimantus to use it.

So understood, the Republic displays a protreptic conversation. Any hortatory speech may be called "protreptic," but the label came to be associated especially with exhortations to the philosophical life.<sup>24</sup> In the Euthydemus, Socrates very self-consciously requests a demonstration of a protreptic to philosophy. To show what sort of thing he wants, he offers a short example by arguing Cleinias from ordinary beliefs about eudaimonia to the extraordinary, wisdom-loving

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<sup>24</sup> Slings, intro to edition of Clitophon. Gallagher.

conclusion that only wisdom is good for a human being. What is striking about this argument is that the initial, "commonsense" premises are false by the lights of one who has accepted the conclusion. The argument proceeds by stripping false beliefs away from the ordinary view of eudaimonia until only one core thought remains, namely, that wisdom is good for a human being. This sort of protreptic should put us on guard for other arguments in which Socrates uses premises he rejects only because they are the premises that his interlocutors accept and that can lead his interlocutors to the right conclusion.

This is not to say that Socrates must wholly reject the claims he makes in Books Eight and Nine as he argues Glaucon and Adeimantus over to the side of justice. He might even agree that good feelings and the absence of bad feelings correlate with eudaimonia and disagree only with the Democritean suggestion that these are eudaimonia. So understood, the Democritean conception of eudaimonia would be like Euthyphro's account of piety in terms of what all the gods love. On Socrates' view, Euthyphro's account is extensionally adequate—x is in fact pious if and only if x is loved by all the gods—but intensionally inadequate—it captures an inessential feature of piety instead of what makes pious things pious (Eu. 11a-b).<sup>25</sup> In roughly this way, good feelings might correlate with eudaimonia though they do not make one eudaimōn and do not constitute the appropriate goal for action.

So Socrates might thoroughly reject the Democritean conception of eudaimonia or he might concede that it is extensionally adequate. But either way, he insists that the Democritean conception does not capture what eudaimonia is and what the goal of human activity should be.

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<sup>25</sup> See esp. Evans.

When he appeals to the Democritean conception of eudaimonia in the Republic, he does so for protreptic reasons.

Socrates' acceptance of the Socratic conception of eudaimonia and his rejection of "objective list" and subjectivist conceptions also matters to the structure of Plato's ethical theory. If we think that Plato embraces eudaimonism—the dictum that one should act for the sake of one's own eudaimonia (**citations?**)—and that he accepts some version of the objective list or subjectivist view of eudaimonia, we will think of him as an egoistic sort of consequentialist: actions are right insofar as they bring about a state of affairs in which the agent feels satisfaction or enjoys the listed goods that constitute eudaimonia. But if the Republic stands by the Socratic conception of eudaimonia as virtuous activity then its eudaimonism can recommend acting virtuously not so as to bring about eudaimonia but so as to instantiate it. This Socratic eudaimonism is substantially different from the consequentialist variant. (**note with some of the most important differences: cf. "Advising Fools."**) And in fact, the difference gains importance in the years after Plato's death. The heirs of Democritus, including especially Epicurus, develop the consequentialist version of eudaimonism, and the heirs of Socrates, including especially Aristotle and the Stoics, insist that because eudaimonia simply is virtuous activity, one should act for the sake of eudaimonia simply by acting virtuously.<sup>26</sup> According to my argument here, Plato stands with the heirs of Socrates against the heirs of Democritus.

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<sup>26</sup> This characterization of Stoic ethics is uncontroversial, though the Stoics distinguish between eudaimonia and eudaimonein and assert that the latter is the telos, strictly speaking. My characterization of Aristotle's view is not uncontroversial. Many readers of Aristotle, from antiquity to the present day, unfortunately fail to take him at his word when he says (over and over again) that eudaimonia is simply virtuous activity, temporally extended over a "complete life." See Brown 2006.

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