

PLATO'S LAST WORDS ON PLEASURE

In the opinion of George Grote, writing in 1875, Plato's Athenian in the *Laws* 'recedes from the lofty pretensions of Socrates in the *Republic* and the *Gorgias*'. He does this, says Grote, in proclaiming as the fundamental characteristics of human nature:

that no man will willingly do anything from which he does not anticipate more pleasure than pain: that every man desires the maximum of pleasure and the minimum of pain, and desires nothing else: that there neither is nor can be any Good apart from Pleasure or superior to Pleasure: that to insist upon a man being just, if you believe that he will obtain more pleasure or less pain from an unjust mode of life, is absurd and inconsistent: that the doctrine which declares the life of pleasure and the life of justice to lead in two distinct paths, is a heresy deserving not only censure but punishment.¹

The Athenian also recedes from the 'lofty pretensions' of the *Republic* and *Gorgias* in another point, says Grote. Socrates teaches in those dialogues that justice apart from its natural consequences will suffice *per se* to make the just man happy: '*per se*, that is, even though . . . society misconceive his character and render no justice to him, but heap upon him nothing except obloquy and persecution'.² The Athenian recedes from this teaching altogether, continues Grote, and asserts instead the Epicurean doctrine that the just man 'is one who obtains from others that just dealing and that esteem which is his due: and when so conceived, his existence is one of pleasure and happiness';³ this, he adds, is the doctrine that Glaucon and Adeimantus in the *Republic* 'deprecate as unworthy disparagement of justice'.⁴ In addition, though incidentally, Grote comments that the doctrine of the *Laws* 'about pleasure and good approximates more nearly to the *Protagoras* than to the *Gorgias* and *Philebus*', and this comment reinforces and adds interest to his other remarks, because he takes the hedonism of the *Protagoras* to be intended seriously, and he himself, a member of the circle of Bentham and James Mill, subscribes to its principal tenets.⁵

By contrast, in the opinion of Wilamowitz, writing in 1917, Plato has nothing of philosophical interest to say in the *Laws*, even Aristotle merely thumbing through it as undeserving of closer scrutiny.⁶

References (numbered in square brackets) are listed at the end of this paper.

¹ Grote [12], vol. 4, 301–2.

² Grote [12], vol. 4, 302.

³ In a footnote on 303, Grote [12] bases this claim on *Laws* 663a, a passage that will be discussed in Section IV below. Grote thoroughly approves of Plato's supposed recantation in the *Laws*, thinking the doctrine on the sufficiency of justice *per se* for happiness to be false, perverse, and contrary to every man's internal sentiment. And, to call Socrates *happy*, he declares, 'would be a misapplication of the term, which no one would agree with Plato in making—least of all the friends of Socrates in the last months of his life' (Grote [12], vol. 4, 127). Grote is fiercely critical of the *Republic*'s argument, but I think that Plato presents a better case for the worthwhileness of justice than Grote does. Grote's case, based on the 'principle of reciprocity' seems open to all of Adeimantus' objections in *Republic* 2. See Grote [12], vol. 4, esp. 99–132, and for a defence of Plato, White [30] *passim*.

⁴ Grote [12], vol. 4, 303.

⁵ Grote [12], vol. 2, 314–16.

⁶ Wilamowitz [27], 518: 'Es lohnte sich ihm nicht, mehr Aufmerksamkeit daran zu wenden, und in der Tat, wer Platons Philosophie als Philosoph sucht, kann sich die Mühe sparen, die

The majority of subsequent commentators have tended to side with Wilamowitz on this,⁷ and it must be conceded that Grote's arguments are not always convincing and his assertions not always without bias. Nonetheless, I think that Grote is more right than Wilamowitz, because the Athenian in the *Laws* proposes a doctrine of hedonism that is not only of philosophical interest in its own right, but is of peculiar interest in coming after the *Gorgias*, *Republic*, and *Philebus*. On the other hand, I think Grote wrong in suggesting that Plato wishes to replace the doctrine that justice is good in itself and sufficient *per se* to make the just man happy.

In this paper I analyse the doctrines concerning pleasure and the good that are to be found in the *Gorgias*, *Republic*, and *Philebus*, focusing on a development in the views of these dialogues that will help make sense of the *Laws*. I then go on to analyse the hedonistic passages of the *Laws* itself, arguing that there are no persuasive grounds for believing Plato to be anything but serious about these, but none either for believing that he wishes to recede from the 'lofty pretensions' of the *Republic* and the *Gorgias*. I end by arguing that, *pace* most commentators, the two positions are not incompatible.

I

What the *Gorgias* says about goodness, pleasure, justice, and happiness is so basic to the rest of this paper that it warrants detailed scrutiny.⁸

Socrates engages in a discussion with Polus (461b–481b) that he describes as an enquiry into what kind of person is happy and what kind is not (ὅστις τε εὐδαίμων ἐστὶ καὶ ὅστις μὴ, 472c). In substance Socrates' argument in the course of this discussion is that what constitutes happiness is goodness, the good man or woman being the one who is happy (470e);⁹ or, to put the point differently, the happiest man or woman is the one who is free from wickedness (478e). Further, the goodness constituting happiness is justice, so that a man is happy if and only if he is just (470d–e),¹⁰ while the evil constituting misery is injustice, licentiousness, and the rest of wickedness, the greatest of all evils (477c–d). In brief, justice or virtue is the greatest good and constitutive of happiness;¹¹ injustice or vice the greatest evil and constitutive of misery.

When Socrates argues that justice is good and constitutive of happiness, he is thinking of justice as an ultimate or *intrinsic* good (470e8–9), just as when he argues

dieses schwere Werk dem Leser bereitet.' Wilamowitz makes no mention of Grote, nor does he discuss the issue of hedonism in his chapter on the *Laws* (ch. 20, 'Resignation').

⁷ Gosling and Taylor [11] are the most striking in this respect. They have a chapter on the *Laws* but, although their book is on the Greeks on pleasure, they have nothing to say about the *Laws*' hedonistic assertions. The attitude of other scholars will be discussed later on, in Section VI.

⁸ For greater detail supporting the analyses presented in this section, see White [31], *passim*.

⁹ Compare *Symposium* 205a: κτήσει . . . ἀγαθῶν οἱ εὐδαίμονες εὐδαίμονες.

¹⁰ Throughout the dialogues Plato uses the masculine form and sometimes even the word ἀνὴρ (see e.g. *Laws* 660e, 661b). It would be misleading and unduly contrived to alter this when recording what Plato says, and for the sake of uniformity I follow his usage throughout this paper.

¹¹ The Greek words δικαιοσύνη, τὸ δίκαιον, and others from the same root, like the English word 'justice', are sometimes used in a fairly general sense to denote all-round rightness or goodness, as at *Phaedo* 118a and *Letter* 7, 324e. The main reason for this is doubtless that justice in the narrow sense of the word is the principal part of virtue, being concerned with dealings with other people (πρὸς ἕτερον), and it therefore presupposes the other parts, as does justice as a state of soul in the *Republic*. Cf. *Nicomachean Ethics* 1129b25–1130a13 where Aristotle [4] quotes the proverb: ἐν δὲ δικαιοσύνῃ συλλήβδην πᾶς ἀρετὴ ἐνι.

that physical health, or not being ill, is good and constitutive of the 'happiness' of the body (478c),¹² he is thinking of health as an intrinsic good. (In fact he considers justice to be a form of health, the health of the soul [480c]). This is clear from the fact that his talk of justice as the greatest good occurs in a context where he distinguishes between intrinsic goods and instrumental goods, albeit not in those terms. He argues that when we perform an action it is not the action itself that we wish to secure, but its object, and that we wish to secure only what is good, never what is neutral or bad; moreover, everything done, he says, is to be done (*πρακτέον*) for the sake of what is good, the good (*τὸ ἀγαθόν*) being the proper end (*τέλος*) of all our actions (467c–468b; cf. 499e–500a). To illustrate his point, he says that we do not take medicine for its own sake, but for the sake of health (478b–c), and that even good pleasures are to be sought only because they produce some good beyond them. It follows that he is distinguishing between what we term instrumental goods and intrinsic goods: medical treatment is instrumentally good, he thinks, by virtue of the intrinsic goodness of the health that it brings, and good bodily pleasures are instrumentally good by virtue of the intrinsic goodness of the health, strength, and other forms of bodily excellence that they bring (cf. 499d). Given, then, that justice is the essential and in extreme circumstances the sole constituent of happiness, and is therefore the greatest or 'sovereign' good,¹³ it is an intrinsic good, and a good to which most of our actions as instrumental goods should be directed.

These conclusions from the discussion between Socrates and Polus are reinforced in the discussion that ensues between Socrates and Callicles (481b ff.). Callicles asserts that happiness and goodness consist in unrestrained pleasure: the life of pleasure, he says, is goodness and happiness (*ἀρετή τε καὶ εὐδαιμονία*, 492c–d, 495a); pleasure and the good are identical (*τὸ αὐτὸ τὸ ἡδὺ καὶ ἀγαθόν*, 495a); pleasure is the good (*τὸ ἀγαθόν*, 495b). Socrates in reply argues that pleasure is not the good; indeed some pleasures are bad (499c), and even those that are good are only instrumentally so (500a). Rather, it is justice, temperance, and the other parts of virtue—order and harmony in the soul—that are good (503d–504e), and it is the man who possesses these that is happy. What Socrates does here, then, is continue the enquiry begun with Polus into what kind of person is happy, and he concludes by asserting that it is the good man, the temperate, just, courageous, and pious man, who is happy (507c). Anyone who wishes to be happy, he affirms, must practise temperance and flee from licentiousness (507d), while a person who is unjust needs to be corrected if he is to be happy (507d): it is by the possession of justice and temperance that the happy are happy, and by the possession of vice that the miserable are miserable (508b). Grote is right, then, in believing that according to the *Gorgias* justice suffices *per se* to make the just man happy;¹⁴ in fact the *Gorgias* considers justice to be necessary as well as sufficient for happiness. It should be noted, however, that while it does indeed speak in this way of justice or virtue as sufficing for happiness, the *Gorgias* also allows that there are other intrinsic goods. This is clear from the great importance that Socrates attaches to health in his discussion with Callicles, effectively treating it as a paradigm of what is

¹² The use of the word 'happiest' in referring to the body gives some indication of what Plato means by happiness. Happiness of the body is a good state of the body, and analogously happiness of the soul is a good state of the soul.

¹³ For the notion of justice as the sovereign good, see Vlastos [25], esp. 196–201.

¹⁴ I make the assumption here that in lumping the *Gorgias* and *Republic* together Grote means to assert that the *Gorgias* shares the teaching of the *Republic* on the sufficiency of justice *per se* for happiness. It does.

intrinsically good (499d–500a), and in his discussion with Polus he not only speaks of health as good but even classes it with wisdom (467e); in fact he mentions wealth too as being good, like wisdom and health (467e). (Cf. *Lysis* 218e; *Euthydemus* 279a–b; *Meno* 78c, 87e.) What Socrates believes, then, and will make more explicit in the *Republic*, is that justice suffices *per se* in extreme circumstances, an assertion that does not exclude there being other intrinsic goods.

This detailed analysis serves to bring out that the teaching of the *Gorgias* is in every point the opposite of what Grote claims to find in the *Laws*. For, in addition to teaching that justice will suffice *per se* for happiness, the *Gorgias* affirms in substance that no one will willingly do anything from which he does not anticipate more intrinsic good than harm; that every man desires what is intrinsically good and desires nothing else; that pleasure is not an intrinsic good, and that accordingly every good is superior to pleasure; that to insist upon a man being just, if you believe that he will obtain more pleasure or less pain from an unjust mode of life, is what in all circumstances you should do, and it is consistent with the nature of what is good; that the doctrine which declares the life of pleasure and the life of justice to lead in two distinct paths is both true and deserving of the highest praise.

From the *Gorgias* onwards Plato is to make some surprising changes to these affirmations.

II

In the second book of the *Republic*, at 357b–d, Glaucon classifies good things into three kinds, the first being the kind ‘that we would choose to possess, not from desire for its effects (οὐ τῶν ἀποβαινόντων ἐφιέμενοι), but welcoming it for its own sake (ἀλλ’ αὐτὸ αὐτοῦ ἐνεκα ἀσπαζόμενοι)’. Glaucon gives as examples of this kind: ‘joy (τὸ χαίρειν)’ and those pleasures that are harmless and from which nothing results later on other than possession of enjoyment (χαίρειν ἔχοντα).¹⁵ The insertion of the phrase ‘later on (εἰς τὸν ἔπειτα χρόνον)’ is important because it makes plain that Glaucon is talking about consequences that are not internal to the good in question. The second kind is the kind that ‘we love both for its own sake (αὐτοῦ χάριν) and for its consequences’, paradigm instances being knowledge or understanding (τὸ φρονεῖν), sight, and health. Health is cited as an example of this kind because Socrates’ principal demonstration of the goodness of justice is going to be that it is a form of health, as was already said in the *Gorgias*, a state of the soul in which reason (τὸ λογιστικόν)¹⁶ is in command. Good things of the third kind are those that we would not accept for their own sake but only for the sake of the rewards (μισθῶν τε χάριν) and other things that result from them; for example, taking painful exercise or undergoing painful medical treatment (ἰατρεύεσθαι; cf. *Gorgias* 478b7–8). The usefulness of introducing this third kind, of things that are painful (ἐπίπονα) but beneficial in respect of their consequences, is that it serves to bring out yet further

¹⁵ The point about nothing else resulting later on applies to all goods of the first kind, not just to harmless pleasures.

¹⁶ Reason is referred to as: τὸ λογιστικόν (e.g. 439d, 440e); ὁ λογισμός (e.g. 440a); ὁ λόγος (440b); τὸ φιλομαθές; and τὸ φιλομαθές καὶ φιλόσοφον (435e, 581b; cf. 376b8). It is also referred to as the seat of φρόνησις and σοφία (e.g. 433d, 441e, 443e). This is important because in *Republic* 9, 580c–583a, Socrates speaks as if justice and knowledge are the same thing: he argues that the most just man is the happiest by endeavouring to show that the φιλόσοφος, the φιλομαθής, the possessor of φρόνησις, and so on, has the greatest pleasure.

that the consequences under discussion throughout the passage from 357a to 367e are external, not immanent.

Socrates affirms that justice belongs to the best of the three kinds: it belongs to things of the kind that the man who 'is to be happy (*μακαρίῳ*)'¹⁷ must love for their own sake as well as for their consequences. He holds, then, that it is the possession of what is good, and ultimately of what is intrinsically good,¹⁸ that constitutes *happiness*—the doctrine of the *Gorgias*. It follows from this, a point whose importance will emerge later on, that according to Socrates the man who is the happiest is the man who possesses the greatest intrinsic good or goods.

Glaucon and Adeimantus want Socrates to demonstrate, not that justice is desirable for its consequences, since everyone else does that effectively enough (parents, teachers, priests, and the like), but that it is desirable for its own sake. The majority of people (*οἱ πολλοί*), asserts Glaucon (358a), do not believe that it is anything of the sort: what they believe is that it belongs to the class of things that are painful (*τοῦ ἐπιπόνου εἶδους*), things to be avoided as ends in themselves and practised solely for the rewards and reputation that they give rise to.

Glaucon and Adeimantus also want Socrates, in addition to demonstrating that justice is good in itself and injustice bad, to spell out what each of these two is, and to say what effect each has in and of itself on the soul that possesses it (e.g. 358b). Socrates, then, is challenged to show that justice is superior to injustice, but also to show what it is that justice in itself (*αὐτῇ δι' αὐτήν*) does to the soul by virtue of which it is good, and what injustice in itself does to the soul by virtue of which it is bad (367e).

The importance of the request for an account of what justice and injustice are, and by virtue of which the one is good and the other bad, can hardly be overemphasized, since it explains why so much of the *Republic* (Books 2–4)¹⁹ is devoted to articulating what justice is, and so much of it to articulating what injustice is (Books 8 and 9).

Socrates' account of justice is that it is a form of harmony in the soul resulting principally from reason's being in command (444d), and that, being harmony, it is analogous to health in the body; by contrast, injustice is a form of disharmony in the soul, indeed a form of civil war there (*στάσιν τινά*), and therefore analogous to disease (444b–c); more generally, the whole of virtue, not only justice, is a form of health in the soul (444d–e). When we recall that Glaucon cited health as a typical intrinsic good (with good consequences), we should not be surprised at what he exclaims when Socrates, having completed his account of justice, goes on to say that it remains to enquire whether it is profitable (*λυσίτελει*)²⁰ or not. Glaucon exclaims that, given the nature of justice and injustice as now articulated—justice being a state of health in the soul in which reason is in command—it would be absurd (*γελοῖον*) to ask if, while life is not worth living after the destruction of the body's constitution, it is nonetheless worth living after the destruction of the soul's constitution (445a–b), the implication being that justice has been shown like health to be intrinsically good, and intrinsically

¹⁷ The word *μακάριος* is used in this context and elsewhere in the *Republic* as interchangeable with *εὐδαίμων*: see e.g. 361d 3, 365d1–2.

¹⁸ This for the obvious reason that instrumental goods are sought in the end for the sake of intrinsic goods. An infinite regress or progress of instrumental goods makes little if any sense.

¹⁹ Books 5–7 would be included but for the fact that Socrates refers to them as a digression from the main task of showing that justice is intrinsically good and injustice correspondingly bad (543c).

²⁰ Given the context, this means, not whether it is profitable in its consequences, but whether it is profitable *in itself* (cf. *αὐτῇ δι' αὐτήν* at 367e).

good to such a degree that life without it is worthless. Socrates agrees that it would be absurd, but asserts that they should continue to strive after making the truth of their conclusions as evident as possible.

This striving after making the truth of their conclusions as evident as possible is interrupted at the end of the fourth book of the *Republic* (445b–c), and resumed only in the eighth and ninth books (see 543c–d). In these, after Socrates has described the various manifestations of injustice, ending up with that extreme manifestation characterizable as tyranny in the soul, he recurs to the issue of the worthwhileness of justice, presenting three arguments for saying that the most just person is the happiest (εὐδαιμονέστατον).²¹ The first argument is that the just man is in proper control of himself—he is king over himself (βασιλεύοντα αὐτοῦ, 580c)—while the most unjust man is in a state of inner slavery, ‘teeming with terrors and full of convulsions and pains’²² (579e). The second argument is that the life of justice is more pleasurable than other lives (580c–583b),²³ and the third is that the pleasure of justice is more real than other pleasures (583b–588b).²⁴

It should be clear from what has already been said that all three of these ‘proofs’ are designed to show that justice is worth while *in itself*.²⁵ For they constitute a continuation of the argument of Books 2–4, forming part of the striving after making as evident as possible the conclusion that was reached in those books, namely that justice is good or profitable in itself, injustice bad and unprofitable. More generally, the proofs are designed to show what Socrates was asked to show: Adeimantus explicitly requested him not to talk about the rewards and good reputation consequent upon justice, and declared that he would not tolerate hearing talk about these from Socrates unless he were positively ordered to do so (367d–e). In fact Socrates does talk, and indeed at some length, about those rewards, but only towards the end of the dialogue (612b ff.); what is more, he asserts there explicitly that everything said previously had been concerned with justice taken by itself (612a8–b5). It follows that the pleurability of justice (τὴν ἡδονὴν ἀπὸ τοῦ μανθάνειν, ἀπὸ τοῦ εἰδέναι, 582b)²⁶ is not intended to be thought of as extrinsic to justice, as something resulting from it ‘later on’, but as arising from it immediately. Nor indeed could it plausibly be thought of as an extrinsic consequence, since the taking of pleasure in being just, in being rational,

²¹ To renew a point made earlier, to argue that the most just man is the happiest is *eo ipso* to argue that he is in possession of the greatest intrinsic good or goods. Strictly speaking, the task of Books 2–4 is to argue that justice is good in itself, while the task of Books 8 and 9 is to argue that the just man is the happiest; but, for the reason just given, the tasks amount to the same.

²² This is an extension or reformulation of the argument of *Republic* 4.

²³ That this is the intention of the argument is clear from what is said at 580b8–d1. The argument is rather indirect, but nonetheless ends up with the assertion that the life of that man is the happiest in whom the knowing part of the soul dominates (583a), which life, of course, is the life of the just man.

²⁴ Again much of the argument is indirect, but its intention is to proclaim the victory of justice over injustice in respect of pleasure and happiness (see 588a–b).

²⁵ On the aim of Books 8 and 9 I disagree with Annas [1], 294ff. Annas believes that their aim is to show that justice has good consequences, while the aim of Book 4 is to show that justice is worth having for itself. The reasons for my disagreement will become clearer later in this section. I also disagree, for different reasons, with Waterfield [28], 298, who asserts that ‘*Republic* 583b ff. stands on its own as a hedonistic justification of the philosopher’s life: it is as if even while repudiating hedonism, Plato felt compelled to include such an argument.’ By the end of this paper it will be clear how deeply I disagree with these scholars.

²⁶ To repeat a point made in a different form earlier, Plato considers τὸ μανθάνειν or τὸ εἰδέναι to be the essence of justice.

and so on is not an experience separate or separable from those states: it is part and parcel of them.

It has now emerged that, while the *Republic* continues with and reinforces the doctrine that justice will suffice *per se* to make the just man happy, it makes two changes to the teaching of the *Gorgias*: it considers some pleasures to be intrinsically good, and it attempts to account for the intrinsic goodness of justice by appealing to its pleurability. At first blush, this second change is puzzling.

III

Like the *Gorgias* and the *Republic*, though more directly and more single-mindedly, the *Philebus* sets out to answer the question 'What things are good?', and its answer has surprising economy: there is knowledge of various kinds and there is pleasure of various kinds.²⁷ The dialogue makes tacit use of the distinction between intrinsic and instrumental goods,²⁸ and like the *Gorgias* and *Republic* concludes that there is more than one intrinsic good. However, it also contains important developments of points made in the two earlier dialogues.²⁹ It not only acknowledges but brings to the fore the importance of pleasure of certain kinds as an intrinsic good and component of happiness,³⁰ even though it ranks it much lower than knowledge. Then it greatly extends the idea, first given currency in the ninth book of the *Republic*, that goods form a hierarchy.³¹ Thus it ranks kinds of knowledge in the following order of descent: dialectic; philosophical mathematics; practical knowledge of the sort that is precise in its employment of measurement, such as ship-building and house-building; and practical knowledge of the sort that is imprecise, such as music and medicine (55c–59c). It ranks kinds of pleasure less thoroughly and less tidily,³² but at any rate makes clear that the pure pleasure associated with beauty comes first, that the pure pleasure associated with learning comes second, and that mixed pleasures come much lower down (51b–52a). It is evident that, reminiscent of the ninth book of the *Republic*, the value of these pleasures is held to be commensurate with the value of their underlying goods. Finally, the *Philebus* considers pleasures of these kinds to be bound to their respective goods by bonds of peculiar strength: they closely

²⁷ For the sake of simplicity I leave out of account the properties of beauty, moderation, and truth mentioned at 65a; these I take to be 'meta-goods,' not co-ordinate with knowledge and pleasure. (For a persuasive account of these, see Waterfield [29], 32–5.) I say 'surprising economy' because the reader might have expected mention to be made of justice and the rest of virtue, as in the *Republic*, together with mention of other intrinsic goods such as health, as in the *Republic* and *Gorgias*. The reason for the economy is that Plato is concerned with the debate between the two extremes of hedonism and intellectualism. More is said of virtue later on in this section.

²⁸ Plato is fully aware of the distinction between intrinsic and instrumental goods (see 53e–54c), but he does not emphasize it because he has no interest in instrumental goods as such; his purpose is to establish what is ultimately good (*τὰγαθόν*; see e.g. 60a–b, 61b, 64c).

²⁹ I take the *Philebus* to be much later than the *Gorgias* and *Republic*. Waterfield [28] argues that it comes immediately after the *Republic*, but, while my own feeling is against such a dating, my thesis is not upset by it.

³⁰ Some might say that Plato had already done this and more in the *Protagoras*, but I side with those who hold that Plato was not putting forward his own view in articulating the doctrine of hedonism there. See Zeyl [32], *passim*; and, for the opposite view, Irwin [17], ch. 4, and Gosling and Taylor [11], chs 2 and 3.

³¹ See the second proof of *Republic* 9, 580c–583a. I think that in Plato's view the goods can be exhaustively graded, but he does not provide us with an exhaustive grading of pleasures.

³² Partly because there are different schemes of classification suggested, following distinctions between physical and mental pleasures, mixed and pure pleasures, true and false pleasures.

accompany or follow them (*συνακολουθοῦσι*, 63e; *ἐπομένας*, 63e, 66c); they belong to them of their very nature (*ξυμφύτους ἡδονὰς ἐπομένας*, 51d), and they are proper in kind to their goods (*οἰκείας*, 52d).³³ Further, making special mention of the pleasures attendant upon virtue, the *Philebus* says of these that they follow in the train of virtue as handmaids in the presence of their god (*καθ' ἑαυτὰς θεοῦ ὁπαδοί*, 63e).

This emphasis put by Plato on the relation between certain pleasures and their respective goods is taken up and extended by Aristotle in the tenth book of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, and what he says may be taken to shed light on Plato's own thought. For it is with the *Philebus* in mind³⁴ that Aristotle declares the activities constituting happiness to be those that are chosen for themselves (*καθ' αὐτὰς αἰρετῶν*, 1176b3), activities such as sight, memory, knowledge, and the virtues (1174a),³⁵ and that each has its proper pleasure, meaning that its pleasure attaches to it by virtue of what the activity is of itself (*οἰκείαι δ' εἰσὶν αἱ ἐπὶ τῇ ἐνεργείᾳ καθ' αὐτὴν γινόμεναι*, 1175b21–2): the pleasure completes the activity as a sort of supervening perfection (*ὥς ἐπιγινόμενόν τι τέλος*),³⁶ like the bloom perfecting the flower of youth (*οἶον τοῖς ἀκμαίοις ἡ ὥρα*, 1174b33). In fact, says Aristotle, pleasures are so closely connected with their respective activities, and so little distinguishable from them, that they appear to some to be identical with them (1175b35). Finally,

whether we choose life on account of pleasure or pleasure on account of life is a question that may be dismissed at the moment; for it appears that they are closely connected and do not admit of separation (*χωρισμὸν οὐ δέχεσθαι*): as pleasure does not occur without activity, so every activity is perfected by its pleasure. (1175a11–14)

This idea that pleasure does not admit of separation from its relevant activity echoes Plato's view in the *Laws*, shortly to be looked at, that pleasure does not admit of separation from the life of justice (663a–b).

The *Philebus*, unlike the *Gorgias* and *Republic*, does not place any great emphasis on the separate virtues: it does not, for example, mention justice, courage, and temperance in its list of things that are good. On the other hand, it has no need to, since the principal intrinsic good that it names is wisdom (*φρόνησις*), or wisdom and mind (*νοῦς*),³⁷ and for Plato wisdom is inseparable from virtue as a whole, the man of wisdom being the truly good man.³⁸ It follows, according to the *Philebus*, that virtue with all its parts is an intrinsic good, something to be welcomed for its own sake.

³³ It might be said that as early as in the *Protagoras* Socrates points to a necessary tie between pleasure and goodness, when he argues as follows. Going to war is a noble thing and therefore a good thing, and, if a noble and good thing, then a pleasing thing (*εἵπερ καλὸν καὶ ἀγαθόν, καὶ ἡδύ*, 359e–360a). This implies that goodness and pleasingness are inseparable: courage in going to war is a *pleasing good*.

³⁴ See e.g. 1172b28 ff., 1173a15 ff., 1173b7 ff.

³⁵ The similarity between this list and the usual examples of intrinsic goods given by Plato is striking.

³⁶ The supervening perfection is something fully real. According to some recent philosophers, a supervenient property has no reality of its own, but this is not Aristotle's view and it is not my view. Consequently when supervenience is referred to in this paper it is to be taken as an ontological addition. For the non-realist view, see e.g. Armstrong [2], 56, 100.

³⁷ See at 63c: *πάλιν τοίνυν μετὰ τοῦτο τὴν φρόνησιν καὶ τὸν νοῦν ἀνερωτητέον*. Further, in the final classification, at 66e and again at 67a, it is *νοῦς* that is placed above pleasure and said to be ten thousand times better than pleasure. Plato as usual does not keep to a fixed set of terms, and, as well as speaking of wisdom and mind, he speaks of knowledge and reasoning.

³⁸ The argument of Books 2–4 of the *Republic* is largely designed to establish the supremacy of wisdom, and of reason more generally. In the just man, reason rules the spirited part, and these together rule the appetites (441c). Again, the philosopher as possessor of knowledge (see

To sum up so far. In the *Gorgias* we are told that justice is intrinsically good because it is a form of order in the soul, analogous to health in the body (504d), while pleasures are at best instrumentally good. In the *Republic* we are again told that justice is intrinsically good and analogous to health (443c–d), but we are told too that some pleasures are intrinsically good; later on we are even told that justice is intrinsically good because of its peculiar degree of pleasure. Now in the *Philebus* we are told that pleasures make up one half of what is intrinsically good, the other half being kinds of knowledge, and that a specific kind of pleasure accompanies and derives a commensurate value from each specific kind of knowledge. This last claim may be generalized as a doctrine of ‘commensurate supervenience’, stating that pleasures supervene upon underlying goods and derive a value from them commensurate with the value of the respective goods themselves.

Plato’s thought has travelled far since he wrote the *Gorgias*, and it is to travel as far again in the *Laws*.

IV

At *Laws* 660d, the Athenian asks Cleinias the Cretan and Megillus the Spartan, in a form of question expecting and encouraging the answer ‘yes’, if Crete and Sparta compel their educators to teach that a good man, being temperate and just, is happy (εὐδαίμων) and fortunate (μακάριος), whatever his size, strength, or wealth, whereas if he is unjust he is wretched (ἄθλιος) and leads a miserable life (ἀνιαρῶς ζῆ). Before Cleinias or Megillus can reply, the Athenian turns to speaking, ironically, of the poet Tyrtaeus. Tyrtaeus, he says, declares that he thinks little of a man who possesses the things that are usually said to be good, even fighting stoutly in battle, if that man is unjust.³⁹ Commenting on this, the Athenian affirms that the things usually said to be good are not so, unless their possessor is just and holy: to a man who is unjust, every such good, including sight, hearing, feeling, even life itself, is evil.

When Cleinias says that he disagrees with part of this, the Athenian puts a number of questions to him framed in such a way that he is able to express the following views of his own: a man who is unjust and intemperate (ἀδικίαν δὲ καὶ ὕβριν ἔχοντα) is not happy (εὐδαίμονα) but miserable (ἄθλιον), even if he possesses the things usually said to be good—health, wealth, power, courage, and so on—and is free from the things usually said to be bad (τῶν λεγομένων κακῶν); in addition, such a man lives in a

476d–480a) is *eo ipso* temperate, courageous, and just (485b–486b). As far as the *Gorgias* goes, there is a good case for saying that the leading virtue of temperance is held to be identical with wisdom (see White [31], 125, n. 11).

³⁹ Plato says: οὐτ’ ἂν μνησαίμην, φησὶν ὑμῖν ὁ ποιητής, ἔπερ ὀρθῶς λέγει, . . . Tyrtaeus [6] does not say what Plato attributes to him, or anything like it: he is not interested in the just man, but solely in the man who is good in war (ἀγαθὸς ἐν πολέμῳ). The Athenian’s companions in the dialogue know this, and Plato’s contemporary readers would know it too. Consequently, the phrase must be a piece of not too subtle irony, but it is impossible to translate it a way that brings this out. Bury [3] gives ‘if he speaks the truth’, and des Places [5] gives ‘s’il s’exprime correctement’, but both of these phrases totally submerge the irony. Taylor [23] gives ‘and true words they are’, Saunders [21] ‘and how right he is’, and Jowett [18] ‘as the poet sings, and truly . . .’. These translations might be thought to preserve the irony but do not reveal it. Edmonds [6] in his ‘Life of Tyrtaeus’, 50–9, quotes three other passages from the *Laws* (629a, 667a, 858d), but ignores the present passage. Des Places [5], in a footnote, ad loc., mildly asserts that Plato ‘détourne au profit de la justice les hyperboles (adynata) que Tyrtaée mettait au service du courage’. No doubt he does, but there is more to it than that.

manner that is base (*αἰσχροῦς*), bad (*κακῶς*),⁴⁰ unpleasant (*ἀηδῶς*), and unprofitable to himself (*μὴ ξυμφερόντως αὐτῷ*). Cleinias in answering the Athenian's questions declares himself to be in disagreement with almost all of this, denying that the unjust man in possession of health, wealth, courage, and the rest is unhappy, denying that he lives badly, and especially denying that he lives unpleasantly. In denying these things he may also be taken to deny that justice suffices *per se* for happiness.⁴¹

In reaction to these denials the Athenian reaffirms his own views, declaring them to be as beyond dispute as that Crete is an island, and he now sets about defending the last of his assertions, the one that he takes to be upsetting Cleinias the most, namely that the unjust man, no matter what 'goods' he possesses, lives a life that is unpleasant and unprofitable to himself. In defence of this he presents the following argument (662c–663a). Let us imagine, he says, that we are questioning Zeus and Apollo.⁴² Either the most just life is the most pleasant, we assert, or the two lives, the just and the pleasant, are different (and incompatible).⁴³ On the hypothesis that they are different, which would you say is the happier? Were Zeus and Apollo to answer that it is the most pleasant life that is the happier, not the just, this would be a strange statement for them, as gods, to make,⁴⁴ so let us imagine that the question is put to one of the founding-fathers of Crete or Sparta. If this founding-father answers that it is the pleasant life that is the happier, I shall say the following to him on behalf of any one of his children. You have always wanted me to be happy, but you have never ceased urging me to be just. In this you are inconsistent.

Rendered more freely, the reasoning is that if the pleasant life is the happy life, and in addition the pleasant life is incompatible with the just life, as *ex hypothesi* it is, then it is impossible to have both a just and a happy life, and anyone recommending both recommends what is impossible.

If, on the other hand, the founding-father answers that it is the just life that is the happier, this prompts the following question. What good does the just life contain that is superior to pleasure? That is, what good unaccompanied by pleasure (*χωριζόμενον ἡδονῆς*)⁴⁵ does the just man possess? Is it praise and fame from men and gods that is unaccompanied by pleasure and therefore unpleasant?⁴⁶ Obviously not. Is it, then, not injuring others and being uninjured by them that is good but unpleasant, while their opposites are pleasant (*ἡδέα*)? Again obviously not. The conclusion therefore is that the just life is not different from the pleasant life: the two are inseparable, and from this it follows in turn that the unjust man lives a life that is unpleasant—the assertion that was to be defended in the first place (662a).

⁴⁰ Cleinias quite fairly takes the word *κακῶς* to mean 'miserably' rather than 'wickedly'; it would have been superfluous to assert that the unjust—that is, the wicked—man lives wickedly.

⁴¹ This is because the Athenian's position is that justice is the foundation of happiness. He is making more than the claim that justice is necessary for happiness, and what he argues is much the same as Socrates argues in the *Apology*: through virtue everything else is made good (*ἐξ ἀρετῆς χρήματα καὶ τὰ ἄλλα ἀγαθὰ*, 30b4).

⁴² Zeus was held ultimately to have given the laws to Crete, Apollo to Sparta.

⁴³ Strictly speaking the hypothesis is that the two lives are different, but in ordinary speech when we say that *x* and *y* are different we do often mean, as is meant here, that they are different and incompatible.

⁴⁴ This does not tell us that the gods consider the happy life and the pleasant life to be different; it tells us simply that, if forced to make a choice, the gods could not conceivably assert that the just life is not happy. Notice that the argument has shifted from which life is happier to which is happy *tout court*.

⁴⁵ The use of the present participle suggests something like 'that we are attempting to separate from pleasure'.

⁴⁶ The possibility of a middle state between pleasant and unpleasant is implicitly excluded.

Again rendered freely, the reasoning here is that if the just life is the happier, it must contain some good unaccompanied by pleasure, and therefore unpleasant, that makes it the happier. So what is it? It cannot be praise and fame from gods and men, because surely these are not unpleasant. Nor can it be freedom from injury by others in return for behaving justly towards them, because this too is not unpleasant. In short, on the assumption that there are no other plausible candidates,⁴⁷ *nothing* other than a good that is accompanied by pleasure can account for the just life's being happier. But since being accompanied by pleasure is ruled out by the hypothesis that the just life is different from and incompatible with the pleasant life, it follows that the just life is not the happier life.

The argument in its entirety (662c5–663a8) amounts to an informal *reductio ad absurdum*. The hypothesis that the pleasant life and the just life are different and mutually exclusive is taken to entail that one and only one of the two is happy. But, it is argued, each of the alternatives (the pleasant life is happy, the just life is happy) is false. So the hypothesis that the pleasant life and the just life are different is false.⁴⁸

Much could be written about the correct formulation and validity of this argument, but in the present context it is not the argument as such that is important but what is implied in the course of it, namely that nothing other than a good that is accompanied by pleasure could make the just life happy. What is argued is that if the just life is different from the pleasant life, then it cannot be the happy life, because the only *prima facie* plausible candidates for what added good makes the just life happy are themselves so obviously pleasing. It follows that, if the just life is the happy life, as in the view of the Athenian it clearly is (660e), then it is the presence in it of some pleasing good that makes it happy.⁴⁹

⁴⁷ Grote draws the conclusion from 663a that the Athenian replaces the doctrine that justice will suffice *per se* to make the just man happy with the Epicurean doctrine that happiness follows from the just dealings of others towards the just man and the esteem that they accord him. Such a conclusion is unwarranted, because it ignores the force of the first part of the phrase *μήτε τινα ἀδικεῖν μήτε ὑπὸ τίνος ἀδικεῖσθαι*. What the Athenian asserts in effect is that *being just* and its consequences (being treated justly by others and earning their esteem) are *jointly* good, noble, and pleasing. This is not the doctrine that Glaucon and Adeimantus 'deprecate as unworthy disparagement of justice'. If anything, it is the very doctrine that they and Socrates subscribe to: that justice is good in itself and for its consequences.

⁴⁸ Where J stands for the just life, P for the pleasant life, H for the happier life, the argument in outline is:

1. J is different from (and incompatible with) P.
2. Therefore (J is H) or (P is H).
3. Not (P is H).
4. Not (J is H).
5. Therefore Not ([J is H] or [P is H]).
6. Therefore Not (J is different from P).

⁴⁹ It is worth noting that the Greek words *χωριζόμενον ἡδονῆς* considered independently of context can mean 'apart from pleasure', in the sense of 'different from pleasure' or 'other than pleasure', and if that were what they meant here, the Athenian would be asserting that nothing other than pleasure—that is, that pleasure alone—could account for the happiness of the just life. This, it would seem, is how Grote understands the words, since he says that according to the *Laws*, 'there neither is nor can be any good, apart from pleasure or superior to pleasure'. But, given the context, Grote is wrong: the words mean 'unaccompanied by pleasure', or, more simply, 'not pleasing'. Bury [3] translates 'apart from pleasure' and given that this phrase is flanked by commas it seems that Bury understands the phrase to mean 'different from pleasure' or 'other than pleasure'. Taylor [23] more accurately translates 'unattended by pleasure', and Saunders [21] in effect as 'separable from pleasure'. Des Places [5] gives 'Quel bien, en effet, le juste pourrait-il

The Athenian now goes on to say that any form of teaching that refuses to separate the pleasant life and the just life is able to persuade people to live a just and holy life, and that consequently to deny that the two are inseparable would be considered utterly shameful and loathsome by the lawgiver, 'because no one would willingly let himself be persuaded to do something unless it involves more pleasure than pain'.⁵⁰ In asserting this he is asserting a central tenet of hedonism.⁵¹

The Athenian now concludes by saying that injustice looks pleasant to the unjust man and justice unpleasant, while justice looks pleasant to the just man and injustice unpleasant. But the judgement of the just man is more authoritative (*κυριωτέραν*) than that of the unjust man. It follows that the unjust life is not only more disgraceful (*αἰσχίω*) and depraved (*μοχθηρότερον*) but more unpleasant (*ἀηδέστερον*) than the just and holy life.

A related passage of the *Laws*, 732d–734e, develops these points and brings them into sharper focus.⁵² It is fundamental to human nature, the passage begins, to experience pleasures, pains and desires, and because of this we should commend (*δεῖ* . . . *ἐπαινεῖν*) the noblest life, not only because it is superior in being highly reputed, but because it is superior in what we all seek, namely a lifelong predominance of pleasures over pains.⁵³ We all desire more pleasures than pains, taking into account their frequency, magnitude, intensity, equality, and the opposites of these; and, whether a life contains many intensive feelings or few that are moderate, we desire always a predominance of pleasures over pains. Indeed, if we assert that we desire anything beyond this predominance of pleasures over pains (*παρὰ ταῦτα*), we speak from ignorance and want of experience (733d).

When a man wishes to choose what he will find congenial (*φίλον*), pleasant (*ἡδύ*), and noble (*ἄριστόν τε καὶ κάλλιστον*),⁵⁴ the passage continues, what sorts of lives are there for him to select, if he is to live as happily as is possible for a man? There are the

avoir s'il ne s'y mêle du plaisir?' What makes it plain in the context that the phrase means 'unaccompanied by pleasure' or simply 'not pleasing' is that *ἀηδές* is twice used as a substitute for it (663a4, 6), and *ἡδέα* as a contrast to it (663a7).

⁵⁰ οὐδεὶς γὰρ ἂν ἐκὼν ἐθέλοι πείθεσθαι πράττειν τοῦτο ὅτῳ μὴ τὸ χαίρειν τοῦ λυπεῖσθαι πλέον ἔπεται. Saunders [21] puts this assertion in brackets, thereby effectively treating it as of little importance, and in his translation he takes no account of γάρ. Note that the phrase ὅτῳ μὴ . . . ἔπεται is usually translated as something like 'unless it involves as a consequence', but it will be recalled from Section III that ἐπομένως is used in the *Philebus* to speak of pleasures as following in the sense of *accompanying* things

⁵¹ Aristippus (see Hicks [16]), or at any rate the followers of Aristippus, held that pleasure is agreeable and pain repellent to all creatures, and that happiness is the sum total of all particular pleasures (p. 216). Eudoxus held that all creatures seek pleasure, and that pleasure is therefore the supreme good (*Nicomachean Ethics*, 1172b9–15). It seems evident from the *Philebus* that Plato was aware of these and similar doctrines, and that they worried him. But see Waterfield [28], 273–4.

⁵² There is another passage much earlier, at 636d–e: 'Pleasure and pain, you see, flow like two springs released by nature. If a man draws the right amount from the right one at the right time, he lives a happy life (εὐδαιμονεῖ); but if he draws unintelligently at the wrong time, his life will be the opposite.'

⁵³ That the Athenian says we *should* commend it is an indication that a normative form of hedonism is at issue, not one that is merely psychological. More generally, the fact that the Athenian attempts to *justify* a pursuit of the virtues on the grounds that they secure a balance of pleasure over pain shows that the hedonism of the *Laws* is normative.

⁵⁴ It cannot be concluded from the fact that the *pleasant* is cited as additional to what is *best* and *most noble* that what is now to be discussed is the life that is most pleasant as well as *intrinsically* good. The reason for this is that 'the best and most noble' can mean what results in a good reputation and other worthwhile things, as at 663a and 732e.

lives of temperance, wisdom, courage, and health, and their opposites, folly, cowardice, licentiousness, and disease. In the temperate life, pleasure outweighs pain, while in the licentious life, pain outweighs pleasure, and from this it is obvious that the temperate life is to be chosen: indeed, if a man is licentious, it is without his intending to be so. Similarly, the pleasure of the healthy life outweighs its pain, and the same holds of the life of wisdom and the life of courage. In brief, the life of virtue in body or soul is pleasanter than that of depravity, and is superior in other ways too, in nobility (*κάλλει*), rectitude (*δρθότητι*), virtue (*ἀρετῇ*), and good reputation (*εὐδοξία*),⁵⁵ which ensures that it is the happier life.

To sum up the teaching of the *Laws* so far. We all seek a lifelong predominance of pleasure over pain, and anyone asserting that we desire something beyond this speaks from ignorance; the life of justice is inseparable from the life of pleasure, and the pursuit of the other virtues is justified on the grounds that they are able to secure a balance of pleasure over pain; no one willingly does, or should do, a thing unless it involves more pleasure than pain; it is the possession of good accompanied by pleasure that accounts for happiness.

All of this amounts to a form of hedonism that at first glance reflects Grote's summary given at the beginning of this paper,⁵⁶ and from now on it will be referred to as the hedonism of the *Laws*.

V

Is there any reason to believe that this hedonism of the *Laws* is not to be taken seriously? I believe there is none.

To begin with, when the Athenian asserts that no one willingly lets himself be persuaded to do something unless it involves more pleasure than pain, there is no hint that this assertion is false or that it is limited to 'the many'. It may be true that in the *Protagoras* 'Plato is only teasing us, and Socrates teasing Protagoras',⁵⁷ but nothing of the sort is true of the *Laws*. There is no Socrates in the dialogue, and no sophists to be teased and refuted. Further, as was brought out earlier on, from the time of the *Gorgias* onwards the claims of pleasure are treated with increasing seriousness, the *Laws* itself stressing its influence without seeking to depreciate it (e.g. 636d–e, 644c, 653a–c). There are no good reasons, then, for thinking Grote wrong in his view that the hedonistic assertions of the *Laws* are meant seriously. On the other hand, there are good reasons for thinking him wrong in believing that the *Laws* departs from the doctrine that virtue is good in itself and sufficient for happiness. However, these reasons need to be set out in full, partly because they are largely indirect in nature,

⁵⁵ Saunders [21] translates the first part of this as 'beauty, an upright posture', plausibly interpreting Plato to be referring to characteristics that accompany bodily health. (The word *δρθότης* does sometimes refer to uprightness in bodily posture.) But this brings out the difficulty of understanding what Plato means to assert here, and it cannot be concluded simply from his saying that the life of bodily and mental virtue (*τὸν ἀρετῆς ἐχόμενον*) is pleasanter and superior *κάλλει*, *δρθότητι*, *ἀρετῇ*, *εὐδοξία*, that the life of bodily and mental virtue is intrinsically good as well as pleasant.

⁵⁶ The principal difference, and of course it is enormous, lies in Grote's claim that pleasure is the only good, which is often held to be the one claim necessary to hedonism. (See e.g. Frankena [10], ch. 5.)

⁵⁷ As Rowe [20], 94 neatly puts it.

partly because the hedonism of the *Laws* on first encounter appears so much to favour Grote.

At 726–732d, the Athenian describes the manner in which we should behave and the kind of individuals that we should be. To cite a few examples: we should value virtue above physical beauty and riches; we should honour our parents and relatives; we should respect foreigners; we should seek the truth; we should neither commit nor allow others to commit crime; we should practise virtue and get others to do the same. When the Athenian has made these and other recommendations, he says: ‘what is divine (*θεία*) has now been pretty completely dealt with but not what is human (*ἀνθρώπινα*), and this must now be done, since we are talking to men, not to gods’,⁵⁸ and he goes on to discuss the part that pleasure, pain, and desire play in men’s lives. E. B. England, the principal commentator in English on the *Laws*, analyses what the Athenian says here as the assertion that ‘such conduct as has been recommended is not only right in itself, and so pleasing to heaven; it is best and pleasantest for man’.⁵⁹

As an analysis of the text this will not do,⁶⁰ because nowhere is it said there that the conduct recommended is right or good *in itself*,⁶¹ still less that such conduct is pleasing to heaven because it is right *in itself*. Nor is anything of the kind explicitly said elsewhere in the dialogue. Nowhere, that is, is it said of virtue, or of anything else, as is said of justice in the *Republic*, that we love it for its own sake (*αὐτοῦ χάριν*). What is more, in the very passage where, if anywhere, we might expect such an assertion, none is made. This is at 730c, where we are told that ‘of all things good, for gods and men alike, truth comes first; for him who is to become blessed and happy my prayer is that he be endowed with it from the first, so that he may live all the longer a true man’. But what is said immediately after this is disappointing to the reader who favours the views of the *Republic*, for it is said, not that one who is to be blessed and happy (cf. *Republic* 358a) should be endowed with truth because truth is something to be loved for its own sake, but because it makes men worthy of trust,⁶² and men who are not worthy of trust are without friends and lonely in old age. In short, only consequences are mentioned, and the sort of argument is advanced that Adeimantus considered to be both inadequate and, if taken by itself, an encouragement to wrongdoing (365a ff.).

Nonetheless, if the *Laws* does not say that truth, justice, temperance, and the rest of virtue is good in itself, even in contexts where readers of the *Gorgias* and *Republic* might feel that it ought to, much that it does say implies it. As in the *Gorgias* and *Republic*, virtue is held there to matter more than anything else on earth or in heaven;⁶³ the sole proper aim of legislation and education is said to be the furthering of virtue;⁶⁴ injustice or vice is said to be a disease, an object of disgust, often contrary to nature

⁵⁸ It is not clear what is meant by ‘divine’ here and different translators interpret it differently. Saunders [21] has ‘from the point of view of religion’; Bury [3] has ‘of divine sanction’; Taylor [23] has ‘what divinity has to say’; des Places [5] has ‘nous avons exposé à peu près ce qui relève des dieux.’

⁵⁹ England [7], vol. 1, 22.

⁶⁰ Specifically, as an analysis of 732d8–733e6.

⁶¹ I take England to mean ‘right in itself’ in the wider sense of ‘good in itself’.

⁶² Some translators obscure what is being said by not translating the word *γάρ* in line 730c4. Bury [3] translates: ‘He is a trusty man.’ Des Places translates: ‘Cet homme-là est sûr.’

⁶³ For example 707d, 727a, 728a–b, 731c, 770c–e, 870b; cf. *Letter 7*, 328d–e, 332c–d, 335c–d, 345b. The importance of *Letter 7* is that it shows what Plato’s personal views were concerning, *inter alia*, the importance of virtue. Whether or not Plato himself wrote the letters is not important in this context: there is at the very least no reason to doubt that they express the views that he held in the last years of his life. (For succinct comments on this, see Raven [19], 20–6.)

⁶⁴ See *Gorgias* 521d–e, 515e, 517b–c; *Republic* 590e–591a; *Laws* 630b–c, 643e, 652e–653c, 963a.

and hateful to the gods;⁶⁵ death is said to be preferable to injustice;⁶⁶ the gods, who are supremely good, are said uniformly to favour, foster, and delight in virtue, while at the same time they are said to detest vice and never turn a blind eye to it;⁶⁷ and the gods are said handsomely to reward the good and punish the wicked.⁶⁸ Again, it is stressed in the *Laws*, as in the *Gorgias*, that our desires and pleasures need to be restrained: our excessive, irrational pleasures need to be conquered in favour of what is *really* good, victory over self and pleasure being as glorious as victory in wrestling or some other physical contest, and failure spelling disaster.⁶⁹ It is lack of control over pleasure, it is lust, envy, and the like, we are told, that give rise to iniquity of every sort, and the three instincts for food, drink, and sexual gratification, when these reach the stage of being diseased, must be channelled away from the so-called most pleasant to what is the greatest good.⁷⁰

This litany of assertions provides more than adequate grounds for concluding that the Athenian holds virtue to be intrinsically good and sufficient for happiness. For only a man who believed this would go out of his way to emphasize that virtue is more important than anything else on earth or in heaven, that the proper end of all legislation and education is the fostering of virtue, that vice is the foulest of diseases, abhorred by men and gods alike, and that even death is preferable to injustice. The Athenian plainly expresses the attitude to virtue characteristic of the dramatic Socrates, and probably of the historical Socrates, as early as the *Apology* and *Crito*: what is to be valued above all else is a just life, even death being unimportant compared with it (*Apology* 28b–d, *Crito* 48b–d). The Athenian even repeats Socrates' argument presented in the *Apology* (30a–b) that virtue is the source of all else that is good (660e–661d).⁷¹

VI

Contrary to what might now be expected, the steady opinion of scholars has been that the *Laws* does not propound the doctrine termed in this paper the hedonism of the *Laws* and the doctrine that virtue is sufficient for happiness. That was Grote's opinion, and in more recent years it has been the opinion, stated or implied, of scholars like England, des Places, Findlay, Grube, Guthrie, and Taylor.⁷²

Since of these it is Taylor and Guthrie who focus most sharply on the hedonism of the *Laws*, it will be convenient to attend principally to their comments. To begin with, Taylor asserts:

⁶⁵ See *Gorgias* 505a–b, 524d–e; *Republic* 445a–b; *Laws* 853d, 862c, 656b, 836c, 838b–c, 841d.

⁶⁶ See *Gorgias* 512a–b; *Laws* 854c; cf. *Letter* 7, 331c.

⁶⁷ See *Laws* 887b, 901e, 904b, 931e, 879c, 901a, 885d, 907a–b.

⁶⁸ See *Gorgias* 523a ff.; *Republic* 614b ff.; *Laws* 905a–b, 959b; cf. *Letter* 7, 335a.

⁶⁹ See *Gorgias* 491d–e, 493a–d, 500–501, 507e; *Laws* 840b–c, 714a; cf. *Letter* 7, 326c–d.

⁷⁰ See *Laws* 783a, 831d–e, 869e, 908c; cf. *Letter* 7, 335b.

⁷¹ See Vlastos [25], 192ff.

⁷² England [7] shows no awareness of the importance of the tenets of hedonism in the *Laws*. In his comments on 636d4–e3 he ignores the suggestion made there that it is pleasure and pain that determine the degree of a person's happiness, and he passes no comment at all on the crucial passages 663a2–7, 663b4–6 and 733c1–d6. In general, he holds that the *Laws* contrasts what is right in itself with what is pleasant for men (vol. 1, 22), and he seems to regard pleasure and pain as of little importance in themselves: they are mere agencies (vol. 1, 3) and raw material (vol. 1, 231) that the educator and lawgiver can make use of in getting people to like what is right. For the views of the others, see Grube [13], 85–6; Findlay [8], 333–5; des Places [5], xlii–xliii; and for Taylor [22, 23, 24] and Guthrie [14], see the rest of this section.

Plato, unlike hedonists of the type of Mill, rests the case for the superiority of virtue to vice on grounds entirely independent of 'hedonic consequences'. But he is fully ready to add that virtue is not only more appropriate to 'the dignity of human nature' than vice; it is also, *in point of fact*, attended by a 'surplus of pleasures over pains', if once the rules for calculating the respective 'lots' of pleasures and pains are correctly formulated and the sum worked right.⁷³

Elsewhere Taylor says that in the *Laws* Plato contends that 'even by the rules of the hedonic calculus, if you only state the rules correctly and work the sum right, the morally best life will be found to be also the pleasantest'. But, he adds, in the *Laws* the moral superiority of the better life 'is not identified with nor inferred from its greater pleasantness but is taken to have been already established independently'.⁷⁴ It follows from these comments, which *contrast* the morally best life with the pleasantest life, that according to Plato in the *Laws* virtue is the superior good, pleasure following from it merely *as a matter of fact* and as a *consequence* of it. In Taylor's opinion, then, it is the doctrine of the *Laws* that while the hedonist looks to the consequences of virtue, the truly moral person looks to the goodness of virtue itself. Elsewhere he asserts that a man of judgement would pronounce that 'even in respect of hedonic consequences virtue has the advantage over vice', and this expression, 'even in respect of', plainly implies that the hedonist's pursuit of virtue for its hedonic consequences is according to the *Laws* decidedly inferior to the pursuit of virtue for its own sake.⁷⁵ A final comment is that in the *Laws* Plato:

regards the moral goodness of the life he recommends and its pleasantness as two distinct things, and only allows himself to mention the second, as he says, because we have to consider the human weakness of the person whom we want to exhort to virtue and dehort from vice.⁷⁶

Guthrie, though more brief, is more extreme. In a footnote referring to the Athenian's assertion that no one would willingly let himself be persuaded to do something unless it involves more pleasure than pain,⁷⁷ Guthrie asserts that

this is one indication that most of the *Laws* is concerned with 'popular virtue', not the philosophic virtue to which the calculation of pleasures and pains is irrelevant. These simply 'nail the soul to the body', escape from which should be its highest endeavour (*Phaedo* 69a–b, 83b).⁷⁸

This reference to the *Phaedo* makes Guthrie's view abundantly plain: he thinks that the *Laws* reverts to the *Phaedo*'s teaching that hedonism produces 'an illusory façade of virtue (σκιγραψία τις; cf. *Republic* 365c), fit for slaves and destitute of all soundness and truth'. (*Phaedo* 69b.) If Guthrie is right, there is the widest possible gulf between the hedonism of the *Laws* and the morality of the philosopher.

To sum up. On the one hand we have Grote maintaining that in the *Laws* Plato rejects the doctrines of the *Gorgias* and *Republic* in favour of hedonism; on the other hand we have Taylor, Guthrie, and others maintaining that Plato continues to hold those doctrines, while dismissing hedonism as a calculus of pleasures that at best happens to lead to virtue, and at worst results in a mockery of virtue fit only for slaves. Both parties agree in contrasting the hedonism of the *Laws* with the philosopher's morality as described in the *Gorgias* and *Republic* and implied in the *Philebus*.

It is possible to hold that neither party is right, and that Plato makes the Athenian

⁷³ Taylor [23], xxxiii (my italics). ⁷⁴ Taylor [22], 476–7.

⁷⁵ See Taylor [23], xxxiv. ⁷⁶ Taylor [24], 95.

⁷⁷ Guthrie in fact alters what is said to: no one would voluntarily act in a way that brings him more pain than pleasure ([14], 326).

⁷⁸ Guthrie [14], 326.

state and endorse positions that are contradictory. Instead I shall now argue that, while the Athenian does state and endorse the two positions that have been discussed, they are not contradictory. At any rate, there is a way of reconciling them if Plato's own developing views are attended to.

VII

There are many words in English that are close in meaning to *pleasure* (and, *mutatis mutandis*, to pleasant or pleasing), examples being *enjoyment*, *delight*, and *gladness*. Correspondingly, there are many words in Greek that are close in meaning to ἡδονή (and, *mutatis mutandis*, ἡδύς), examples being εὐφροσύνη, τέρψις, and χαρά. The experiences denoted by these words when they are employed by Plato are experiences of the soul or of the body,⁷⁹ they are enjoyed by the gods as well as by men,⁸⁰ and they are of the intellectual faculties as well as of the senses.⁸¹ Since the use of these words and others of their kind, together with the diversity of experiences denoted by them, is well established in the dialogues preceding the *Laws*,⁸² there are no grounds for thinking that the *Laws* itself is concerned solely with bodily pleasure or with pleasure in any other narrow sense of the word. Consequently, when the Athenian says that men seek a predominance of pleasure over pain, he is rightly taken to mean, and will be taken in this section to mean, that they seek pleasure, enjoyment, delight, gladness or the like, in preference to the opposites of these.

The word *pleasure*, like the word ἡδονή, also has differences of meaning of a more important kind, the chief of which may be illustrated by the following sentence from the *Protagoras* (351d–e). ‘Things are called pleasing (ἡδέα) that partake of pleasure (ἡδονῆς) or cause pleasure (ἡδονήν).’ Here the first ‘pleasure’ means ‘pleasingness’, the second ‘pleasedness’, and the whole sentence means that things are called pleasing if they instantiate the attribute of pleasingness, and are such that they cause pleasedness in us.⁸³ This distinction may further be illustrated by a sentence from the *Philebus* that speaks of beautiful geometrical figures as having their own special pleasures (τινας ἡδονὰς οἰκείας ἔχειν, 51c). In this case, having their own special ‘pleasures’ means having a special sort of pleasingness and so causing a special sort of pleasedness in us,⁸⁴ and similar analyses may be given of other sentences in which there is talk of ‘pleasure’. Thus, if learning is said to have its own pleasure, this means that learning is a specially pleasing activity and one that induces a special sort of pleasedness in us; if contemplating beauty is said to have its own pleasure, this means that contemplating beauty is a specially pleasing activity; if eating is said to have its own pleasure, this means that eating is a specially pleasing activity. And so on. To generalize, talk about

⁷⁹ See e.g. *Phaedo* 59a, 114e; *Republic* 485d; *Philebus* 52a, 66c.

⁸⁰ See e.g. *Phaedrus* 247d, θεοῦ διάνοια . . . ἀγαπᾷ . . . καὶ εὐπαθεῖ; *Laws* 931d, γέγηθεν ὁ θεός. But see *Philebus* 33b and *Epinomis* 985a.

⁸¹ The distinction between soul and body is not the same as the distinction between intellectual faculties and senses, since Plato holds, or at any rate at times holds, that all experiences take place in the soul. (See e.g. the lengthy analysis of perception in the *Theaetetus*, 156ff.)

⁸² See e.g. *Protagoras* 337c, 358b (where the distinctions should be taken seriously despite Socrates' banter); *Phaedo* 114d–e; *Republic* 357b, 581e; *Philebus* 11b, 19c.

⁸³ The word ἡ in the phrase μετέχοντα ἡ ποιούντα does not indicate an alternative, since Plato is not saying that things are pleasing because *either* they instantiate pleasingness *or* cause pleasedness in us.

⁸⁴ The difficulty facing the translator is not slight. Fowler [9] gives ‘have peculiar pleasures’; Hackforth [15] gives ‘they carry pleasures peculiar to themselves’; Waterfield [29] gives ‘have their own special pleasantness’, which gives the principal part of the meaning I am suggesting.

'pleasure' may be reduced to talk about *things* that are *pleasing* and induce *pleasedness* in us, where the word 'things' denotes activities, states, or experiences.

With the use of these distinctions, the ninth book of the *Republic* may now be interpreted as teaching that the activity of the knowing part of the soul is a specially pleasing activity that induces a corresponding sort of pleasedness in us, and that the same holds of the activities of the soul's spirited and appetitive parts; similarly the *Philebus* may be interpreted as teaching that different kinds of knowledge are specially pleasing activities that induce corresponding sorts of pleasedness in us. At the same time the *Philebus*, and to a lesser degree the *Republic*, may be interpreted as teaching a doctrine of commensurate supervenience, stating that pleasingness and pleasedness form a hierarchy, each member supervening upon and receiving a value commensurate with the goodness of its underlying activity: knowledge, for example, is a greater good than physical gratification, and its supervenient pleasingness and pleasedness are commensurately greater. Finally, the hedonism of the *Laws* may be interpreted as teaching that we all seek a lifelong predominance of what is intrinsically⁸⁵ pleasing and induces a corresponding pleasedness in us, and that no one willingly lets himself be persuaded, or should let himself be persuaded, to do something unless in the end it involves more of what is intrinsically pleasing and induces pleasedness in us.⁸⁶

When the hedonism of the *Laws* is interpreted in this way, together with the exclusion of bad pleasures⁸⁷ and the application of the doctrine of commensurate supervenience, what results is the doctrine that we should seek a predominance of things that are intrinsically pleasing, their pleasingness and associated pleasedness being due to the fact that these supervene upon, and are commensurate with, activities, states, and experiences that are intrinsically good.

This doctrine has the following implications. Since it holds things to be intrinsically pleasing by virtue of the fact that their pleasingness supervenes upon their being intrinsically good, it is compatible with, indeed it requires, the teaching of the *Gorgias*, *Republic*, and *Philebus* that some things are intrinsically good. Then, since it presupposes that the domain of intrinsically pleasing things is coextensive with the domain of intrinsically good things,⁸⁸ every intrinsically good thing being superveniently pleasing, and every intrinsically pleasing thing being subveniently good, it is compatible with the doctrine of the *Gorgias* and *Republic* that we ought to seek only what is intrinsically good.⁸⁹ Next, since it implies that before all else we ought to seek whatever is most pleasing,⁹⁰ it is compatible with the teaching of the *Gorgias* and

⁸⁵ For the sake of simplicity no mention will be made here of instrumental goods, because what we seek, when all is said and done, are intrinsic goods: if we could do without those that are instrumental, we would. The same applies, *mutatis mutandis*, to things that are instrumentally pleasing.

⁸⁶ I say that the hedonism of the *Laws* 'may be interpreted' in this way, not that this is the only way of interpreting it, still less that it is what Plato explicitly intended. In the context of this paper all that is needed is *one* way of interpreting it that is in keeping with Plato's thought and at the same time allows for the compatibility of the hedonism of the *Laws* with the doctrines of the *Gorgias* and *Republic*.

⁸⁷ We *have* to exclude them, because it is obvious from his many condemnations of evil that the Athenian would insist on excluding them.

⁸⁸ There is, of course, no question of the *properties* of pleasingness and goodness being identical. This is the point that I take Socrates to be making at *Philebus* 60a–b when he asserts: τὸ τε ἀγαθὸν καὶ τὸ ἡδὺ διάφορον ἀλλήλων φύσιν ἔχειν.

⁸⁹ That is, as usual, we ought *at bottom* to seek only what is intrinsically good, instrumental goods being of no ultimate importance.

⁹⁰ If we ought to seek what is pleasing, and only what is pleasing, I take it to follow straight off that we ought to seek before all else what is most pleasing.

Republic that we ought to seek justice before all else. For, according even to the *Laws*, justice is the greatest good, and it is therefore, given the doctrine of commensurate supervenience, the most pleasing.⁹¹ Finally, it is compatible with the teaching of the *Gorgias* and *Republic* that justice is sufficient *per se* for happiness, since, again given the doctrine of commensurate supervenience, if justice is good enough to make the just man happy, it is commensurately pleasing enough to make him happy.

To conclude. Not only does the Athenian *qua* hedonist not recede from the 'lofty pretensions' of the *Gorgias* and *Republic*: he has no reason to.

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⁹¹ It was said in Section II of this paper that it is puzzling at first blush to find the *Republic* appealing to pleasure in support of the claim that justice is intrinsically good. In retrospect it is no longer puzzling. For if justice is the most pleasing thing there is, as Socrates claims to prove in *Republic* 9, then, given the principle of commensurate supervenience, it is the greatest good.

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