

Socrates' Moral Intellectualism

The Socratic position on virtue that we've extracted from the *Protagoras* is this. Virtue is knowledge of (what is) good and bad. Thus, if you know all the goods and bads, you are completely virtuous. Virtue has parts: Courage, Temperance, Justice, and Piety. Courage is knowledge of what is good and bad *in the future*. Temperance is knowledge what is good and bad *for oneself*. Justice is knowledge of what is good and bad *for others*. And piety is knowledge of what is good and bad *for the gods*. None of these virtues is numerically identical to any of the others. But each of them is importantly like the others, in that each is a *kind* of knowledge of (what is) good and bad. Thus, Socrates accepts the Parts-of-Gold version of the Parts Thesis, and rejects the Identity Thesis.

Recall now that the *Apology* suggests that Socrates also accepts the following picture of the relationship between knowledge and happiness. His view is that if one discusses virtue regularly then one will (ideally) arrive at knowledge of virtue. But knowledge of virtue is sufficient for being virtuous. And being virtuous is sufficient for being happy. This is why Socrates says that it is the greatest good...to discuss virtue every day, and why he says that he (Socrates), unlike the Olympian victor, makes others happy (by engaging them in discussions about virtue).

There are arguments and passages in various early dialogues that connect Socrates' position in the *Protagoras* with the picture we've extracted from the *Apology*.

First, there is an argument at *Republic I* (349b-350d) that goes some way toward establishing that justice is wisdom (of a kind). This confirms our interpretation of the *Protagoras*. The argument runs as follows:

1. A just person doesn't outdo someone like herself, whereas an unjust person outdoes both like and unlike.
2. X and Y are alike if and only if X and Y share qualities.
3. A knowledgeable person doesn't outdo those like herself, whereas an ignorant person outdoes both like and unlike.
4. A knowledgeable person is wise.
5. A wise person is good.
- So, 6. A good and wise person doesn't outdo those like herself, whereas a bad and ignorant person outdoes both like and unlike. [3, 4, 5]
- So, 7. A just person is like a wise and good person, and an unjust person is like a bad and ignorant person. [1, 2, 6]

So, 8. Just people are wise and good, and unjust people are ignorant and bad.
[2, 7]

It is a short step from (8) to the conclusion that what *makes* just people just is the fact that they are wise, and that what *makes* unjust people unjust is the fact that they are ignorant.

Second, *Charmides* 174b-d indicates that (for Socrates) knowledge of good and bad is sufficient for happiness. If virtue is knowledge of good and bad (*Protagoras*), then it follows that virtue is sufficient for happiness (*Apology*).

Moreover, *Republic I* 334-335 shows that Socrates takes (human) virtue to be numerically identical to goodness. The argument for this is simple:

1. Human virtue is what makes men good.
2. Goodness is what makes men good. (Causality)
3. So, human virtue = goodness.

If (3) is true, then knowledge of goodness (and badness) just is knowledge of virtue. So, if knowledge of good and bad is sufficient for happiness (*Charmides*), then knowledge of virtue is sufficient for happiness (*Apology*). Moreover, since virtue just is knowledge of goodness (and badness) (*Protagoras*), it follows that virtue just is knowledge of virtue.

There is also an argument at *Euthydemus* 280b-281b for the claim that knowledge is sufficient for happiness, which confirms the view that Socrates thinks that knowledge of good and bad (=knowledge of virtue) is sufficient for happiness (*Charmides* and *Apology*). The argument runs as follows:

1. It is sufficient for happiness to possess (good) things and use them rightly.
 2. Knowledge is what enables us to use possessed things rightly.
- So, 3. Knowledge is what enables us to be happy.

Finally, at *Republic I* 352-354, Socrates argues that virtue is sufficient for happiness. This is to be expected, given that virtue is the same as knowledge of virtue (see above) and knowledge of virtue is sufficient for happiness (*Charmides* and *Apology*). The argument runs as follows:

1. Everything that has a particular function performs it well by means of its own peculiar virtue.
 2. The function of X is what X alone can do or what X does better than anything else.
 3. What a soul alone can do is live.
- So, 4. The function of a soul is to live. [2, 3]
So, 5. The soul lives well by means of its own virtue. [1, 4]

(5) entails that a virtuous soul lives well (i.e., is happy). {Remember that the word for happiness is “eudaimonia”, which literally means the same as “living well”.}