

GORGIAS 494a-499b

These passages contains four separate arguments designed to show that hedonism (the thesis that the good is pleasure) is false.

The Context

Socrates' interlocutor, Callicles, insists at 491e that "the man who'll live correctly ought to allow his own appetites to get as large as possible and not restrain them" and claims at 492c that "wantonness, lack of discipline, and freedom, if available in good supply, are excellence (*arête*) and happiness (*eudaimonia*)." Socrates responds at 493a-494a by comparing the undisciplined soul to a rotten jar that is constantly being filled because it is constantly leaking. Socrates' hope is that the analogy will bring Callicles to recognize that "the orderly life is better than the undisciplined one" (494a). But Callicles continues to insist that a good life is a life full of pleasure, i.e., a life of constant desire-fulfillment. This, then, is the thesis that Socrates attacks:

(D*) The good life = the pleasant life = the life of constant desire-fulfillment

(D*) itself is merely a consequence of (D):

(D) The good = pleasure = constant desire-fulfillment

First Argument (494a-495a)

- So,
1. The perpetual itch-scratcher (the catamite) constantly fulfils his desires.
 2. The perpetual itch-scratcher (the catamite) lives well (i.e., is happy).
[1, D*]
 3. The perpetual itch-scratcher (the catamite) is not happy.

If (1) and (3) are true, then (D*), and hence (D), must be false.

Second Argument (495c-497a)

1. Those who do well have the opposite experience of those who do badly. (495e)
 2. A man cannot have opposite experiences at the same time. (Induction) (495e-496c)
- So,
3. A man cannot do well and do badly at the same time. [1, 2]
 4. Every appetite/deficiency is painful. (496d)
 5. Hunger is an appetite. (496d)
- So,
6. A hungry man experiences pain. [4, 5] (496d)
 7. Eating is the filling of a deficiency. (496e)
 8. Filling a deficiency is pleasant. (496e)
- So,
9. A hungry man who eats experiences pleasure. [7, 8] (496e)

- So, 10. A hungry man who eats experiences pleasure and pain at the same time. [6, 9] (496e)
- So, 11. Doing well isn't the same as experiencing pleasure, and doing badly isn't the same as experiencing pain. [3, 10] (497a)
- 12. Doing well is the same as experiencing the good, and doing badly is the same as experiencing the bad.
- So, 13. The good is not the same as pleasure, and the bad is not the same as pain. [11,12] (497a)

Third Argument (497a-d)

- 1. No one stops having good and bad things at the same time.
- 2. Each of us stops feeling pleasure at the same time as he stops feeling hungry.
- 3. Feeling hungry is feeling pain.
- So, 4. Each of us stops feeling pleasure and pain at the same time. [2, 3]
- So, 5. It isn't the case that good things are pleasant things and bad things are painful things. [1, 4]
- 6. If the F is the same as the G, then all F things are G and all con-F things are con-G.
- So, 7. The good is not the same as pleasure, and the bad is not the same as pain. [5, 6]

Fourth Argument (497e-499b)

- 1. The presence of goods in X is sufficient to make X good, and the presence of bads in X is sufficient to make X bad. (497e)
- 2. Foolish men and intelligent men, cowardly men and brave men, feel enjoyment and pain to pretty much the same degree, though perhaps the foolish and cowardly men feel them more. (498c)
- So, 3. Foolish men and intelligent men, cowardly men and brave men, possess goods and bads to pretty much the same degree, though perhaps the foolish and cowardly men possess more of them. [2, D, Substitutivity]
- So, 4. Foolish men and cowardly men are good and bad to pretty much the same degree as intelligent men and brave men, perhaps better. [1, 3]
- 5. Foolish men and cowardly men are bad; intelligent men and brave men are good.
- So, 6. Bad men are good and bad to pretty much the same degree as good men, perhaps better. [4, 5]
- 7. Bad men aren't as good as, and are in fact worse than, good men.

Contradiction at 6 and 7. So 1, 2, 5, 7, D, or Substitutivity must be false. Socrates points the finger at (D).