Pleasure and Subjectivity in the Republic IX 'Authority Argument' (580d3-583a10)

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ABSTRACT

I argue that the *Republic* IX 'Authority Argument' (580d3-583a10) embraces both subjectivity of hedonic experience and objectivity of hedonic character. This combination of views undermines the interpretations of both the argument's main critics and its main defenders. A more adequate interpretation, drawing on the idea of inapt hedonic experiences which fail to reflect the pleasantness of their objects, points towards a reassessment of the Argument's place in the sequence ending Bk. IX. On the view presented here, the 'Authority Argument' is not a stand-alone argument, but depends on the 'Olympian Argument' that follows it.

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In Bk. IX of the *Republic*, Socrates gives two successive, seemingly independent arguments for the claim that the life of a Philosopher is the most pleasant. In the first—which I shall call the Authority Argument—Socrates presents a debate about the pleasure of different lives, and cites the Philosopher's authoritative judgment, based in greater experience, wisdom, and reason, to conclude that the Philosopher's life is most pleasant (*R.* IX 580d3-583a10). Though the argument has both critics and defenders, there is one point on which interpreters generally agree: the argument does not seriously consider the subjectivity of pleasure.[1] Against this consensus, I show that the subjectivity of pleasure, in at least one sense, is central to Plato's purposes in the Authority Argument. This will lead to a reappraisal of the argument, and its place in the sequence of arguments that end Bk. IX of the *Republic*.

Since the terms 'subjective' and 'subjectivity' are used in multiple ways, it will be useful to disambiguate two main alternatives at the start. In saying that pleasure is subjective, we might mean that different people experience pleasure differently, taking pleasure in different activities, or in the same activities in different ways or to different degrees. These differences may be idiosyncratic, as between individuals' favorite ice cream flavors, or they may hold between types of people. Alternately, in saying that pleasure is subjective we might make the stronger claim that there is no fact of the matter about how pleasant an object of enjoyment is. Notably, these two alternatives approach pleasure as a subject differently: the first is primarily about variations in the experience of pleasure, that is, in *enjoyment*. The second is primarily about pleasure as a putative characteristic of objects and activities, that is, as *pleasantness*.[2] In what follows, I will refer to the first conception as *subjectivity of hedonic experience*, and the second as *subjectivity of hedonic character*.

In the first part of this paper, I'll show that in the Authority Argument Socrates embraces the *subjectivity of hedonic experience*, highlighting systematic variations in the patterns of enjoyment of different types of people, and rejects the *subjectivity of hedonic character*, insofar as the argument asserts that there is an objectively correct ranking of activities with respect to their pleasantness, and a single most pleasant human life. This combination of claims undermines the interpretations of the Authority Argument's critics and defenders alike. Though critics incorrectly allege that Plato neglects the subjectivity of pleasure, one of their main complaints about the argument is strengthened by his recognition of the *subjectivity of hedonic experience*. Specifically, critics have urged that the argument's reliance on the Philosopher's more extensive experience is spurious, since the Philosopher cannot experience other people's pleasures. Responding to this charge, the argument's defenders have asserted that Socrates is considering long-term patterns of activity or whole lives. What is most pleasant on this scale, they claim, is not a matter of subjective preference; wider experience and better rational calculation ground an authoritative judgment about which life is most pleasant. As I'll argue in the second section, though, this defense fails because the subjective variations in experience which Socrates recognizes range over all of a person's activities, and persist for their whole life. There is no straightforward sense in which the Philosopher can have more extensive experience of the *lives* being compared. Nor is it plausible to assert, as the argument's defenders do, that non-Philosophers simply miscalculate the overall quantity of pleasure

offered by their own lives in comparison to the Philosopher's.

To arrive at a coherent reading of the Authority Argument, we must directly investigate how Plato can coherently maintain *the objectivity of hedonic character* alongside his recognition of *the subjectivity of hedonic experience*. These views are compatible if one regards the experience of pleasure as a fallible gauge of the hedonic character of its object. An experience of pleasure can, on this view, more or less accurately reflect the pleasantness of its object. In the final section, I'll show that an account of this kind is suggested by the criteria on rational authority forwarded in the Authority Argument. It will turn out, however, that a full explication of these criteria requires a *theory* of both the experience of pleasure, where subjectivity resides, on one hand, and the objective hedonic character of any object or activity on the other. Such accounts are not on offer in the Authority Argument; they are provided only in the Olympian Argument that follows, as I will outline in my concluding remarks. Thus, although the Authority Argument presents Plato's position, it does not stand alone. Properly understood, it is dependent on the theoretical account worked out in the Olympian Argument.

I. OBJECTIVITY AND SUBJECTIVITY IN THE AUTHORITY ARGUMENT

Critics and defenders of the Authority Argument agree that Plato does not seriously consider the subjectivity of pleasure. Against this consensus, I'll first show that the argument embraces both hedonic objectivity and hedonic subjectivity of a kind. Plato does this by centering the Authority Argument on a debate between three basic human types, each ruled by a different part of the soul: the Money-Lover ruled by Appetite, the Honor-Lover ruled by Spirit, and the Philosopher ruled by Reason. The debate arises from the fact that each type praises its own life as the most pleasant (*R.* IX 580d2-582a2). Socrates resolves the debate by arguing that the Philosopher alone is a qualified judge (*R.* IX 582a3-583a7). Accordingly, his praise for his own life is authoritative (κύριος γοῦν ἐπαινέτης ὢν ἐπαινεῖ τὸν ἑαυτοῦ βίον ὁ φρόνιμος, *R.* IX 583a4-5). Plato is interested not just in who wins this debate, but in the commitments that underlie it. When we debate another person on how pleasant something is, or which item among several is most pleasant, we implicitly endorse two ideas. The first is that it is appropriate to speak of an object or activity as possessing a single degree of pleasantness.[3] As we shall see, both the terms of the debate and Socrates' argument for the Philosopher's authority assume the *objectivity of hedonic character* of the objects or activities we enjoy. At the same time, if we take our opponents to argue sincerely on the basis of their experience, we will acknowledge that different people take enjoyment from the same objects and activities in different ways or to different degrees. This idea, *the subjectivity of hedonic experience*, is brought to the fore in Socrates' introduction of the parties to the debate, and specifically the *forms* of pleasure he assigns to distinct human types.

I begin with the objectivity of hedonic character, since it is a presupposition of both the initial debate and Socrates's subsequent argument. In brief, the debaters assume that it is appropriate to speak of how pleasant an activity is in its own right. To see this, we must get clear on precisely what their disagreement is about. Although Socrates introduces the

debate by asking whose life is most pleasant (*R.* IX 581c9-11), the speakers do not praise their lives directly, or compare one life as a whole to another.[4] Instead, each speaker assesses the same set of activities—earning profit, being honored, and learning—all three of which are present in all three lives, (*R.* IX 581c11-e3). Each type prefers its own life, presumably, because the activity it deems most pleasant predominates in that life. Nevertheless, the explicit disagreement concerns the comparative pleasantness of these shared activities. This makes sense. If different parties are to debate, there must be some object or objects they can speak about in common. Furthermore, it is only if each object is assumed to possess a single character that the debaters can take themselves to be speaking incompatibly about it, and endeavor to discover who speaks most truly (ἀληθέστατα, *R.* IX 582a1, 582e8-9). The debate at issue is meaningful, then, only if the speakers assume that each activity holds a single degree of pleasure, or pleasantness, in its own right.[5]

This assumption is also at work in Socrates' argument for the Philosopher's authority. At the start of the argument, Socrates introduces three criteria for being a qualified judge: experience, wisdom, and reason (*R.* IX 582a4-6). As the argument proceeds, the latter two criteria are discussed only briefly (*R.* IX 582d4-e2); we will examine them in more detail later. By far, the most developed part of Socrates' argument is the claim that the Philosopher has the most experience with all of the pleasures at issue (ἐμπειρότατος, *R.* IX 582a7, ἐμπειρότερος, *R.* IX 582a9 μᾶλλον, *R.* IX 582a5, c2). To make this point, Socrates repeatedly uses the formulation *the pleasure of* _____, (τῆς ἀπὸ τοῦ____ἡδονῆς, *R.* IX 582a10-b1, c2-3, cf. 582b4, 582c7-8). Socrates refers to each activity in the singular, framing each one as the bearer of a degree of pleasantness proper to it.[6] Thus, all three human types can have *the* pleasure of being honored since "Honor comes to all of them, provided they accomplish their several aims," (*R.* IX 582c2-5).[7] Similarly, in describing the Philosopher's more extensive experience with the pleasure of learning, Socrates treats philosophical contemplation as the repository of pleasure (τῆς δὲ τοῦ ὄντος θέας, *R.* IX 582c7-8). Since neither the Money-Lover nor Honor-Lover can engage in Philosophy, neither can experience "the sort of pleasure *which it holds*," (ὅιαν ἡδονὴν ἔχειν, *R.* IX 582c7-8, my translation and emphasis).[8] Like the debaters, Socrates regards each activity as the bearer of a quantity of pleasantness proper to it. Thus, both the terms of the debate and Socrates' main argument for the Philosopher's authority assume that objects and activities possess a degree of pleasantness in their own right. That is, both the terms of the debate and Socrates' argument assume *the objectivity of hedonic character* for the activities at issue (Cross and Woozley 1964, pp. 264-6; Irwin 1977, p.285; White 1979, p. 228; Annas 1981 p.308; Reeve 1988, p. 145).

There is some vagueness in what exactly it means to assign a single degree of pleasantness to any activity in its own right, that is, irrespective of who is partaking of that activity. On one hand, the notion of a degree of pleasantness present in the activity, and available in some sense to all who participate in it, is required for Socrates' argument. The Philosopher's more extensive experience lends authority to his judgment only if she has experienced the same pleasures as the Money-Lover and Honor-Lover. Conversely, if these activities somehow hold different pleasures for different people, then the Philosopher's more extensive experience is specious; it does not give her access to how pleasant a given activ-

ity is for another type of person (Reeve 1988, p. 146; Gosling and Taylor 1982, pp.328-9). At the same time, asserting the objectivity of pleasantness is implausible if it entails that everyone has an identical experience of pleasure in every instance of participating in the activity. Clarification is needed, then, for Plato's commitment to hedonic objectivity, and the Philosopher's more extensive experience, if they are not to come into conflict with the familiar fact that different people take pleasure in different ways from the same activities.

Plato poses this very problem by highlighting the subjectivity of hedonic experience within the Argument for Authority. To see this, we must return to Socrates' introduction of the debating parties at the beginning of the argument. After reminding Glaucon of the division of the soul into three parts, he posits that each part of the soul is characterized by its own distinctive pleasure (ἑνὸς ἑκάστου μία ἰδία, *R.* IX 580d7). Different individuals are ruled by one of these parts, such that there are three main types of people (*R.* IX 581c4-5), and a different *form* of pleasure belonging to each human type (καὶ ἡδονῶν δὴ τρία εἴδη, *R.* IX 581c7).[9] After introducing these types and their distinct *forms* of pleasure, Socrates introduces the statements that constitute the debate.

Socrates' introduction is bookended by references to two *pleasures*: the first are the pleasures assigned to each part of the soul; the second are the *forms* of pleasure assigned to human types. It is unclear how we should think of either pleasure, or how they are related. One might suppose they are identical, i.e., that the *forms* of pleasure belonging to the human types simply are the pleasures assigned to the distinct parts of the soul. On this reading, the *form* of pleasure belonging to the Money-Lover just is the pleasure of Appetite, that of the Honor-Lover is the pleasure of Spirit, and the Philosopher's is the pleasure of Reason. Against this, however, Socrates stresses that there is one *form* of pleasure belonging to each human type. (καὶ ἡδονῶν δὴ τρία εἴδη ὑποκείμενον ἕν ἑκάστῳ τούτων, *R.* IX 581c7). The reference of τούτων in this remark is unambiguously the human types. Socrates is assigning the *forms* of pleasure—whatever they are—to the *people*, not their psychic parts. Consequently, if the *forms* of pleasure were identical to the pleasures of the psychic parts, Socrates would be saying that each human type has the pleasure of only its ruling part. But this is not Plato's view. At the end of the Olympian Argument, Socrates states that Spirit and Appetite will experience better and truer pleasures when ruled by Reason (586d4-587a2). The Philosopher has an Appetite and Spirit, and the ability to enjoy things appetitively and spiritedly. More broadly, he makes clear that each type of person has all three parts of the soul and can experience the pleasures of all three parts. Whatever the *forms* of pleasure are, they are not identical with the pleasures assigned to the psychic parts.

Instead, the relationship between the two pleasures can be seen in the developmental arc that links them. In this passage, Socrates is building the human types and their *forms* of pleasure from the parts of the soul and their proper pleasures. He introduces the pleasures belonging to the three psychic parts, along with the rule proper to each (ἑνὸς ἑκάστου μία ἰδία…ὡσαύτως καὶ ἀρχαί, *R.* IX 580d6-7). Socrates next explains that one part of the soul rules in each person. Only then does he introduce the *forms* of pleasure that belong to the human types ruled by different parts of the soul. The idea must be that the ruling part shapes how the pleasures of all three parts are experienced (cf. *R.* IX 586d4-587a2). The pleasures assigned to the psychic parts are

elemental capacities for pleasure common to all human beings. A *form* of pleasure, by contrast, is a complex hedonic disposition composed of these elemental capacities, disposed and interrelated as they are by the ruling part. This is confirmed by the types' rankings of the common activities, which immediately follows the introduction of the *forms* of pleasure. Each human type is capable of enjoying all three activities—making money, being honored, and learning—even if the activity does not satisfy the desires of the ruling part. The Money-Lover enjoys being honored even when it does not lead to profit.[10] The elemental capacities assigned to the three parts of the soul are all present and expressed irrespective of which part rules. Nevertheless, the specific way each part's elemental hedonic capacity is realized depends on which part of the soul rules.

Let us clarify the way the types' ranking statements evince the *forms* of pleasure that have just been introduced. As we have seen, in order for there to be a meaningful disagreement, the debaters must speak about a set of subjects commonly accessible to all. Those common subjects – what they are talking about – are shared activities. But the *forms* of pleasure are distinctive to the human types; a different *form* belongs to, or inheres in, each human type. Accordingly, the *forms* of pleasure cannot be the subject matter of these statements. I suggest instead that the *forms* represent the experiential basis for each type's ranking of the activities in question. Socrates stresses that the speakers are offering evaluations of the pleasure of these activities, and not their worth or nobility (*R.* IX 581e6-582a1). How has each speaker formed his or her judgment about the pleasantness of the activities at issue? Typically, when we forward claims about how pleasant, funny, or tasty something is, we do so because that is how we have experienced it. Seeing the forms of pleasure as the experiential basis, but not the subject, of the types' ranking of the activities explains a curious detail in the text. Pivoting from the testimonials to the debate itself, Socrates says, "since the pleasures of each *form*, and the lives themselves, are debating this way…" (Ὥτε δὴ οὖν…ἀμφισβητοῦνται ἑκάστου τοῦ εἴδους αἱ ἡδοναὶ καὶ αὐτὸς ὁ βίος, *R.* IX 581e5-6).[11] Strikingly, Socrates frames the *forms* of pleasure as parties to the debate, that is, as *speakers* of the conflicting statements, not as their subject-matter. This makes sense if the *forms* of pleasure represent dispositions for the experience of enjoyment; the conflicting statements are a kind of testimony, expressing the way each type has experienced the activities in question. The Honor-Lover derides the pleasure of profit as vulgar because *in her experience* that pleasure is tinged with feelings of degradation. The Money-Lover has enjoyed being honored, even when it does not lead to profit, as a frivolous delight. The Philosopher experiences the pleasures of food and drink as necessary because, presumably, she feels these pleasures as unavoidable responses, even though she assigns little value to the activities by which they are provoked. The debaters do not speak *about* the *forms* of pleasure, but *from* them.

In the *forms* of pleasure, then, Plato highlights the fact that one's hedonic experience is shaped by one's character. Each *form* of pleasure is grounded in the associated type's distinctive psychic structure, determined by the part of the soul that rules, and specifically the *love* proper to that psychic part, (διὰ ταῦτα, *R.* IX 581c4). One's psychic structure shapes not only what one tends to value, desire, and believe, but also one's subjective hedonic experience. A *form* of pleasure is an

integrated hedonic disposition—a distinctive, comprehensive way of experiencing enjoyment in all the activities of one's life—composed of elemental hedonic capacities based in the three parts of the soul. By assigning different *forms* of pleasure to the different human types, Plato recognizes the *subjectivity of hedonic experience*.

Three qualifications are important here. First, saying that a *form* of pleasure comprehensively shapes one's enjoyment does not mean that Plato thinks an experience of pleasure has one's life as a whole life as its proper object. The comprehensive scope of a *form* of pleasure is compatible with the object of enjoyment on any occasion being a specific episodic activity (Russell 2005, pp.123-6). The idea is simply that one's *form* of pleasure ranges over all of these episodic activities. Second, we should not overstate the difference between the hedonic experiences of the three types. Presumably, the shared elemental pleasures belonging to the psychic parts will ground experiential commonalities. The Philosopher's pleasure in eating ice cream may in some respects be phenomenologically akin to that of the Money-Lover. Nevertheless, this common aspect need not comprise, for either type of person, the whole of their hedonic experience in that moment. Rather, the individual's experience of pleasure on any occasion may involve the responses of all three parts of the soul. For instance, the Money-Lover's pleasure in being honored seemingly combines spirited joy with appetitive disdain. Third, in grounding the *forms* of pleasure in one's psychic orientation, Plato need not construe the experience of pleasure as a kind of reflective assessment. The fact that an hedonic experience is infused with one's ethical perspective need not mean that the experience expresses one's considered evaluative judgment.[12] Each human type's *form* of pleasure—a complex disposition for episodic enjoyment—is grounded in its distinctive psychic structure. Some pleasures in that disposition will express or align with one's values, but some will not.

By centering the Authority Argument on a debate, Plato asks the reader to examine the commitments implicit in arguing with others about the pleasure of shared activities. When we enter into such a debate, we simultaneously accept that there is a single, rationally correct position on how pleasant the activities are—*the objectivity of hedonic character*—and that others have experienced those activities in a different way, *the subjectivity of hedonic experience*. Plato wants both commitments to be in view as we consider which life is most pleasant.

II. A CRITIQUE REVIVED

Here we encounter a problem. Plato's recognition of hedonic subjectivity seems to invalidate the argument Socrates has given, centered on the Philosopher's more extensive experience. Specifically, the Philosopher's claim to more extensive experience seems to be negated by the recognition of subjectivity. If two people experience pleasure in the same objects in different ways, the notion that one might straightforwardly have all the pleasures of the other, *plus more besides*, is dubious at best. The Authority Argument may not be negligent for overlooking a familiar aspect of our experience—the subjectivity of hedonic experience— but it is apparently internally incoherent. In this section, I'll show that this problem, now augmented by the *forms* of pleasure, confronts the most common defense of the Authority Argument. If we are to make sense of the Authority Argument, we will need

a different way of understanding its account of the Philosopher's authority.

The defense I wish to consider is offered in response to the critique that Plato neglects to consider the subjectivity of pleasure in the Authority Argument. Against this, interpreters have stressed that the pleasures under evaluation are not momentary episodes, but long-term patterns of activity, or lives. They claim that it is reasonable to assert that pleasure, considered on this scale, is objectively evaluable, and that experience and reason promote better judgment about how pleasant a life is overall. As Reeve (1988, p. 145) puts it, to evaluate pleasures on this scale is to ask "… whether they are absorbing, whether they are completely satisfying, whether they become boring in the long run, whether they can be engaged in throughout life…whether they necessarily involve pains or frustrations of any sort." This defense depends on a distinction between the kinds or aspects of pleasure that are subjective and those that are not. Plato's defenders allow that there is subjectivity with respect to idiosyncratic preferences, variations in taste which are not subject to rational scrutiny (Annas 1981, p.308-9; Russell 2005, p.124; Reeve 1988, p. 145). But besides these small-scale variations, there remain regularities in human hedonic experience concerning broad patterns of activity over long periods of time. As Annas (1981, p. 309) puts it, "Particular tastes may very well be subjective. But judgments about the pleasantness of a life are not clearly subjective." So long as we are assessing the pleasures of whole lives we needn't worry about idiosyncratic subjective differences, since these are negligible compared to the objective patterns pertaining to a lifetime's worth of pleasure and pain. Plato says little about the subjectivity of pleasure because he is interested in these large-scale patterns.

The *forms* of pleasure block this defense. Beyond showing that Plato does not neglect the subjectivity of pleasure, they also show that he does not accept a distinction between small-scale pleasures that exhibit subjective variation and large-scale pleasures that do not. Plato is surely aware of idiosyncratic differences between, say, two individuals' favorite foods. As we have seen, though, the *forms* of pleasure represent comprehensive, patterned differences in the way different human *types* enjoy different *categories* of objects or activities. That Plato would focus on variation on this scale makes sense. There is not really an interesting difference between the lives of two gluttons who disagree about which cuisine is most delicious. More important is the difference between the glutton and the Philosopher. For even though the Philosopher may prefer the same cuisine as the glutton, the two will enjoy food overall in a significantly different way. The glutton will regard the enjoyment of eating as the most significant and desirable gratification life affords, whereas the philosopher will see it, however intense it may occasionally be (*R.* IX 584c5, 586c1-2), as meager compared to the pleasures of learning, a necessary and perhaps illusory result of the body's condition. Differences of this kind are far more salient to the shape of one's life and how pleasant it is overall. Moreover, because the *forms of* pleasure are grounded in fixed psychic structures, they are stable dispositions of enjoyment. Rather than varying from individual to individual, they are displayed regularly by members of the same type. In the *forms* of pleasure, then, Plato recognizes wide-ranging, durable patterns of subjective variation in human hedonic experience.

For much the same reason, the *forms* of enjoyment are also insular: a person of one type cannot experience another type's *form*

of pleasure except by becoming that type of person. Together, the durability and insularity of these forms undermine any claim the Philosopher might make to more extensive experience in a straightforward sense. The Philosopher will not experience the pleasures of making profit or being honored as the type of person who loves these pursuits or, consequently, as one who cultivates them to the utmost (Reeve 1988, pp.145-6; Gosling and Taylor 1982, pp.320-33; Cross and Woozley 1964, pp. 265-6). Just as the Philosopher alone experiences the utmost rational pleasures of philosophical contemplation, his opponents may insist that only avid pursuers of honor or material gratification will experience the most gratifying enjoyment these pursuits offer.[13] This point holds especially against an interpretation which emphasizes that the argument compares whole lives, rather than episodic activities. If the scope of comparison is an entire life, then the point that the Philosopher has experienced the pleasures of eating and honor "from youth" is irrelevant (*R.* IX 582b1-3). More broadly, Plato's argument is incoherent if it claims that the Philosopher has an authoritative vantage point, based in experience, from which to assess the pleasures of *multiple whole lives*. A straightforward appeal to more experience cannot ground the Philosopher's authority.

The defenders of Socrates' argument do not take it to rely exclusively on the Philosopher's wider experience. They also invoke the Philosopher's superior wisdom and facility with reason to explain why she is a better judge of how pleasant any life is (Annas 1981, pp.308-10; Reeve 1988, p.145). But a similar point can be made concerning these criteria. Since the debate centers on a ranking of activities, the claim that the Philosopher's life is most pleasant is the claim that the activities that comprise the Philosopher's life represent the most pleasant human life. The defenders assert that the Money-Lover and Honor-Lover miscalculate or misjudge the pleasure of different lives, inflating the pleasantness of their preferred activities, underestimating those of dis-preferred ones, overlooking the way their preferred pleasures diminish over time, incur pains, and so forth. But if they were to consider activities or lives in a comprehensive and rational way, they would come round to the Philosopher's view. That is, if they were to consider the pleasures of the Philosopher's life carefully and with an open mind, they would recognize its superior pleasantness for all, *themselves included*.[14]

This might be right when we consider disorderly character types—e.g., drug addicts—whose lives contain short-lived and diminishing pleasures, and a high proportion of pain to pleasure.[15] Plausibly, the people who live such lives are incapable of rationally evaluating their own lives because of their psychic disorder. However, even though Socrates has just been discussing the tyrannic personality (*R.* IX 577b10-580c8), he does not consider lives of this sort here. Rather, he directs us to compare the claims of those who pursue their aims in a more coherent way, so as to be honored for excelling in their respective endeavors (*R.* IX 582c4-5). For the purposes of this argument, the individual ruled by Appetite is not an addict but, more likely, the successful executive who has secured a life of material comfort for herself and her family.[16] For such a person, the experience of making money and spending it on appetitive indulgences is deeply satisfying and achievable without a great deal of pain. Moreover, because of the stability of her character and the associated *form* of pleasure, it will remain so throughout a long life. Most importantly, for this sort of

person the activities that comprise the life of the Philosopher are charmless, frequently painful, and will remain so permanently. It is simply implausible to claim that a Money-Lover is miscalculating or reasoning poorly when she concludes that her own life is more pleasant than the Philosopher's. She's simply not wrong about which life s*he* would enjoy most.

The leading defense of the Authority Argument holds that it is unproblematic for Plato to overlook the subjectivity of pleasure because he is considering the pleasure of whole lives. When we consider whole lives rationally, and from a basis of thorough experience, we can legitimately conclude that the Philosopher's life is most pleasant. The *forms* of pleasure block this reading because they describe subjective variations in enjoyment that range over all of one's activities, and endure through the course of one's whole life. As a result, first, the *forms* undermine the possibility of the Philosopher experiencing the lives of other human types. An argument for authority based in greater experience, in a straightforward sense, does not hold up. Furthermore, the *forms* of pleasure confirm and explain the following hard truth: those ruled by Spirit and Appetite experience more enjoyment in non-philosophical lives.[17] When the Money-Lover and Honor-Lover assert that their own lives are more pleasant, they are not guilty of miscalculation. We need a different way of understanding the Authority Argument.

III. A WAY FORWARD

There is something puzzling about engaging in a debate about what is most pleasant, while acknowledging that your opponent does not enjoy your preferred activity as much as you do. How do we explain our opponent's position while maintaining that ours is the correct assessment? Anyone who has argued with their teenager about music is familiar with this. One can insist that Beethoven holds greater pleasures than Taylor Swift, but there's no denying whose music the teen enjoys more. The Authority Argument presents a debate of this kind. The defense we have just considered locates non-Philosophers' error in their calculations or reflective judgments about the comparative pleasantness of their own lives versus the Philosopher's. This is akin to telling the teenager that they're just not giving Beethoven an open-minded chance: "Listen more closely, and do a better job of assessing your listening enjoyment, and you'll see that you enjoy Beethoven more." This reading of the argument, however, is blocked by the *forms* of pleasure which describe comprehensive, stable, insular differences in enjoyment. The Money-Lover and Honor-Lover, like the teenager, are correct about what they enjoy most.

Plato has a better way of resolving this puzzle. On the reading I propose, Plato locates the non-Philosopher's mistake not in their judgments about hedonic experience, but in the experience itself. Specifically, Plato can maintain *the objectivity of hedonic character* alongside *the subjectivity of hedonic experience* if he holds that *experiences* of pleasure can more or less correctly reflect the pleasantness of their objects. In this section, I'll explain this view and show that it best fits Socrates's argument for the Philosopher's authority. A full defense of Plato's position is admittedly not provided in the Authority Argument. I'll therefore close with some remarks about how the Olympian Argument answers the questions that remain, and what this means, tentatively, for the relationship between Socrates' two arguments about pleasure in Bk. IX.

The solution I have in mind emerges from the conceptual space between the two formula-

tions of subjectivity with which I began. The *subjectivity of hedonic experience* states that different people take enjoyment in different ways from the same objects and activities. This is the idea Plato recognizes in the *form*s of pleasure assigned to distinct human types. The *subjectivity of hedonic character* says that there is no fact of the matter about how pleasant any object or activity is. This is the idea Plato rejects by arguing in a way which assumes there is an objectively correct ranking of the pleasantness of human activities and lives. The question before us is how to make sense of this combination of claims. One might think that the second of these ideas follows directly from the first. On this view, the mere recognition of differences in enjoyment of some activity entails the denial of any fact of the matter regarding the hedonic character of that activity itself. Given that some enjoy mint chocolate chip ice cream while others do not, one concludes that there is no fact of the matter about whether it is pleasant or not. There is an inference here, though, which depends on the assumption that no experience of pleasure is privileged as a gauge of the hedonic character of its objects. Call this the *parity of hedonic experience*. If all hedonic experiences reflect the pleasantness of their objects equally well, then whenever a single object is enjoyed differently by different people, there can be no single fact of the matter concerning the pleasantness of that object. On the other hand, if one denies *parity*, and allows that an experience of enjoyment can surpass another as a gauge of the pleasantness of its object, then one can block the inference from the recognition of differences in enjoyment to the conclusion that there is no fact of the matter regarding the hedonic character of objects and activities. That is, one can consistently maintain both the *objectivity of hedonic character* and the *subjectivity of hedonic experience* with respect to the same set of objects and activities, including whole lives.

Let us say that an experience of pleasure is more *apt* when it surpasses another as a gauge of the pleasantness of its object. In fact, the notion that hedonic experiences can vary in aptness is suggested within the Authority Argument, specifically in Socrates' brief explication of the Philosopher's superior wisdom: "[The Philosopher] alone will come to have experience along with wisdom," (μετὰ γε φρονήσεως μόνος ἔμπειρος γεγονὼς ἔσται, *R.* IX 582d4-5, translation adapted from Reeve). Socrates is not saying that wisdom improves the Philosopher's judgment regarding pleasantness. That role is assigned to the third criterion of authority, reason or argument, in the next line (κρίνεσθαι, *R.* IX 582d7-13; Reeve 1988, p.146).[18] Rather, what Socrates says here is that the Philosopher's wisdom improves her experience of the pleasures in question *as they are occurring*: they come about in the presence of (μετὰ) wisdom. The idea seems to be that in virtue of her wisdom the Philosopher's enjoyment of an activity is a better gauge of the pleasantness of the activity itself. By way of illustration, consider that an expert in music might be said to hear and enjoy a sonata better than a novice. The sonata offers the same pleasure to all, but only the expert is capable of taking all the pleasure it holds because of their more acute musical discernment. More broadly, what is implied is that there can be a disparity between the pleasure an activity offers and what we take from it. Some experiences of pleasure are inapt because of a lack of receptivity in the subject. But it is also possible for enjoyment to be exaggerated by flawed orientation or condition; we may take more pleasure than an activity in fact holds. Socrates' claim is that the philosopher's wisdom

enables him or her to experience pleasure most aptly, taking from any activity just as much pleasure as it holds.

Equipped with such a view, Socrates can assert that the Money-Lover's experience of enjoyment misgauges the pleasantness of both his own characteristic activities and the Philosopher's, taking too much in the former and too little in the latter. To be clear, the Money-Lover may be correct about how much she enjoys her own life, and even correct about how much she would enjoy the Philosopher's life, but incorrect in moving from the fact of that experience to a judgment about the pleasantness of the objects and activities in their own right. There is, then, a twofold error. The first part is in the experience of inapt pleasure (or pain). But, again, inapt pleasure and pain are still real experiences of pleasure and pain.[19] The second involves the uncritical assumption that one's experience transparently reveals the hedonic character of its object, resulting in a *judgment* assigning a mistaken degree of pleasantness to the activity itself. As we have seen, Plato dramatizes this step in the Authority Argument, in the transition from the experiential *forms* of pleasure to competing judgments explicitly about the pleasantness of shared activities. The Philosopher's experience of any activity is most apt, rendering her enjoyment superior not only in quantity or extent but also in aptness. The philosophical life *offers* the greatest pleasures, even though only Philosophers are capable of experiencing that pleasure fully and aptly.

Thus, taking Plato to hold that experiences of pleasure can be more or less apt yields an interpretation of the Authority Argument which both fits the text and avoids the problems of the most common defense, revealing how Plato can coherently maintain the subjectivity of hedonic experience alongside the objectivity of hedonic character. It must be admitted that while the Authority Argument presents this view, it does not defend or explain it fully. In concluding remarks, I'll outline how the subsequent Olympian Argument addresses the main questions raised by the Authority Argument. This will shed further light on the Authority Argument, and in particular Socrates' appeal to the Philosopher's greater experience, and the third and final criterion of reason.

To defend the view I have ascribed to him, Plato must explicate two main points. The first is an account of what it is about an object or activity that makes it pleasant in an objective sense. The second is an account of the experience of pleasure, i.e. enjoyment, which explains how that experience can be inapt. Though there are numerous interpretive questions concerning the Olympian Argument, we can readily locate answers to these questions within it. In the latter part of the argument, Socrates offers an account of pleasure as "being filled with what is appropriate to our nature," (*R.* IX 585d11). This definition meets the first demand, offering a description of what makes an activity or process objectively pleasant.[20] Insofar as our true nature resides in reason, and the pleasures of reason are more genuine fillings, this account licenses the claim that the pleasures of Reason are greater than those of Spirit or Appetite (*R.* IX 585511-c14).

In the first part of the argument, Socrates tackles the phenomenon of different people (or the same person at different times) experiencing the same conditions in different ways (*R.* IX 583c10-584a10).[21] The aim of this investigation is to explain the possibility of illusory hedonic experiences (*R.* IX 584a7-10, cf. 583b2-7). The central example is the experience of taking pleasure in health after sickness, or the cessation of pain (*R.* IX 583c6-e2). On

Socrates' account, the pleasures in question are hedonic illusions which result from the contrast with previous pain, an analysis which characterizes the experience of pleasure in representational terms, as forms of appearance (φαντασμάτων).[22] In short, the illusory experience of pleasure is a misrepresentation of the state of health *as fulfilling*. In latter stages of the argument, Socrates applies this account to explain the especially intense but, on his view, inflated pleasures of those ruled by Spirit and Appetite, (*R.* IX 586b7-d2). In this way, he explains how one can experience pleasure in activities that are not objectively pleasant, or fail to enjoy those that are (*R.* IX 584d1-585a7),[23] concluding that the Philosopher experiences pleasures that are not simply greater in degree or quantity than another, but also in *truth* (583b3, 586e4-587a1).[24]

If this is right, the Olympian Argument provides an answer to the two questions raised by the view presented in the Authority Argument. As a result, we can now provide a more detailed account of the way the Philosopher's experience grounds her authority. The Philosopher will have more extensive experience insofar as she alone among the human types will have engaged in the activity that provides the purest and greatest pleasure of reason: philosophical reflection and contemplation. To the objection that the Money Lover and Honor Lover can claim greater experience in their own respective pleasures through exorbitant wealth, haute cuisine, or international fame, the Philosopher is in position to make two points. The first is that none of these pleasures represents a true pleasure of Appetite or Spirit. Each is exaggerated by the distorted orientation of the subjects to whom they appeal (cf. *R.* IX 586b7-d2), etc.). The second is that even if the Philosopher has not engaged in the specific activities cited here, they will have had experience with appetitive and spirited pleasures that are distorted in essentially the same way. This is the import of the commonplace example Socrates employs in the Olympian Argument. Just as the Philosopher will have experienced the pleasure of health after sickness, she will also have experienced from youth the intense pleasures of drinking when very thirsty, or finding company when lonely. In this way, a case can be made for the claim that the Philosopher has more extensive experience, though it is not the straightforward claim that the Philosopher has experienced each and every one of the pleasures experienced by other types, and more besides. Rather, the Philosopher can explain in what way specifically she has experienced fundamentally the same sort of illusory pleasures as the Money Lover and Honor Lover, without partaking of every instance of these pleasures. And she can explain why the intensity of their experience does not count as a reflection of the activities' genuine pleasantness (cf. *R.* IX 5896c1-2).

The philosopher's superior experience can be explained, but the explanation depends on the *theory* of pleasure that is developed in the Olympian Argument. In this light, I propose a similar reframing for the third criterion on the Philosopher's authority, his or her superior facility with reason (*R.* IX 582b11-e5). Beyond calculative skill at weighing up the pleasures and pains that occur in a life, the Philosopher is distinctively capable of developing a theoretical account or *logos* of what pleasure is. This theory coherently integrates the objective and experiential aspects of pleasure, so as to explain the patterned variety of hedonic experience displayed by different types of people, and provide a rational standard for analyzing and evaluating those experiences as pleasures. The Philosopher is able to distinguish the intensity or magnitude of a pleasure (or pain)

from its truth or aptness, and factor each aspect into an overall rational assessment. In fact, there is reason to think that possession of this account is part of the wisdom that improves the Philosopher's moment-to-moment experience of pleasure insofar as it enables her to resist exaggerated, illusory pleasures through understanding their true origins.[25]

In short, on the reading presented here the first two criteria of the Philosopher's authority—more extensive and wiser experience—depend on the third, the Philosopher's possession of a *logos,* where this refers specifically to the possession of a theoretical account of pleasure. This *logos* legitimates the claim that the Philosopher genuinely has more extensive experience in the first place, answering the objection that the Money Lover and Honor lover can each claim their own greater experience. And this theoretical understanding guides and informs the Philosopher's hedonic experience, making it *apt,* as it occurs. Socrates' oblique remarks on the Philosopher's superior *logos* look forward to the argument he is about to provide in the Olympian Argument. The Olympian Argument is "the most authoritative" proof that the Philosopher's life is most pleasant (κυριώτατον, *R.* IX 583a6), because this argument provides the theoretical underpinnings of the authority that is asserted, but not fully explained, in the Authority Argument.

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ENDNOTES

1 The Authority Argument is not regarded as one of Plato's most important arguments. Notably, there is no consideration of it in either of two recent companions to the Republic. See Ferrari 2008 and Santas 2006. Likewise, there are few stand-alone scholarly articles about the argument. Instead, it has received consideration primarily in works providing systematic treatment of Plato's works or the Republic, such as Cross and Woozley 1964, Murphy 1967, White 1979 Annas 1981, and Reeve 1988 or in works addressing Plato's ethics or theory of pleasure, Irwin 1977, Gosling and Taylor 1982, and Russell 2005.

2 For an influential discussion of how these two framings figure in the Nicomachean Ethics discussion of pleasure, see Owen 1972, p. 138. Notably, a distinction of this kind is not found in Plato's works prior to the Republic, on a standard dating of the dialogues. In passages on pleasure in both the Gorgias and Protagoras, Socrates speaks exclusively of objects or activities, such as eating, drinking and sex, calling these activities pleasures themselves, (Gor. 496c6-e2, Prot., 353c6-8). At no point in these dialogues does Socrates locate pleasure in the soul, or characterize pleasure as a kind of experience. Discussion of pleasure occurring in the soul or as a form of appearance (phantasma) becomes explicit in the next Olympian Argument (R. IX 583c6-7, 583e9-10, and 584a9-10), on which, see Wolfsdorf 2013.

3 This is compatible with restricting one's claims to a specific kind of subjects, e.g. human beings. So, one might think that musical harmony is objectively pleasant for (all) human beings, even if it is not at all pleasant for dogs. Such claims are backed by an account of pleasantness in relation to the common nature of the type of subject for whom objects and activities are pleasant. See R. IX 585d11-12.

4 Pace Russell 2005, p. 123 and Annas 1981, p. 309.

5 By contrast, on some subjectivist accounts statements overtly about the pleasantness of activities are to be interpreted as statements about subject experience or preference. On such an account, "Chocolate ice cream is yummy," really means "I like chocolate ice cream." Apparent disagreements about pleasure dissolve into compatible claims about what different subjects enjoy. See Annas 1981, p. 307-8.

6 By locating the name of the activity between the article and the genitive ἡδονῆς, Socrates suggests a proprietary connection between the pleasure and the activity whence it comes. In two other uses, Socrates employs a simple genitive in place of the ἀπὸ τοῦ construction, but the meaning is clearly the same (582b4, c7-8).

7 Unless otherwise noted, translations are from Reeve 2004.

8 There is some tension between this claim and the earlier testimony of the Money-Lover and Honor-Lover, to the effect that both experience some pleasure in learning (581d2, d6). An outright contradiction is avoided by Socrates' specification that the Philosopher's pleasure is taken in contemplation, as opposed to other forms of learning. But this opens up a different charge, to the effect that the Philosopher lacks experience with the pleasures associated with the most dedicated appetitive and spirited pursuits. Just as the Honor-Lover cannot experience the pleasure of philosophy, the Philosopher cannot experience the pleasure of international fame.

9 There is little reason to suppose that Socrates' use of ἴδιη is intended to invoke the Forms that are central to Plato's metaphysics and epistemology.

10 See 554b-c on the oligarchic person's need to suppress 'dronish' appetites by force, or 549a-b on the timarchic individual's secret love of money and its effects over a lifetime.

11 I follow Reeve 2004, p.283 in reading ἀμφισβητοῦνται in the middle voice. But see Adam 1902, p.45. Adam admits that reading ἀμφισβητοῦνται in the passive is awkward, perhaps because there is no identification of the agent by whom the pleasures are debated. Additionally, reading it in the passive renders redundant the latter part of the sentence, where Socrates specifies that the debate is about pleasure. Finally, contra Adam, I see no problem for the singular αὐτὸς ὁ βίος. The pleasures and the life of each form, ἑκάστου τοῦ εἴδους, are debating.

12 But see Russell 2005, pp. 125-6. It is hard to square Russell's interpretation with the Philosopher's remarks on appetitive pleasures. According to Russell, pleasure is a reflection of "the value one's emotions" assign to an activity as part of one's whole existence. This reading blurs the line between pleasure and reflective endorsement, and it is undermined by the presence in each type's life of pleasures they do not endorse.

13 Plato may signal his awareness of this problem in restricting the Philosopher's greater experience with learning to that of contemplation, (τῆς δὲ τοῦ ὄντος θέας, R. IX 582c7-8), while allowing that both Money-Lover and Honor-Lover take pleasure in learning of some less philosophical kind.

14 Annas 1981, p.308 is subtle on this point. On her reading, Plato does not deny that the Money and Honor-Lovers enjoy their lives "as much as they think they do." Their mistake is in not recognizing that they would enjoy the Philosopher's life even more.

15 Interpreters refer to addiction frequently in explicating Plato's point here. See Cross and Woozley 1964, p.266, Annas 1981 p.309-10, and Reeve 1988, p.146.

16 This explains why that Socrates' argument ignores the distinctions between appetitive types previously

delineated in Bks. VII and IX. To demonstrate the superior pleasantness of the philosophical life, it must be compared to the most coherent of appetitive and spirited lives. But see Annas 1981, p.306.

17 This has ramifications for the political project of the Republic. Philosopher-rulers must know that members of the craft and auxiliary classes experience different forms of pleasure if they are to give all citizens a life they can enjoy, something presumably vital for achieving civic moderation. See 430d-e, cf. 586e, 590c-e.

18 Note Reeve's strained translation of phronêsis as "dialectical thought," p. 284. Cf., Annas 1981, pp. 308-9, White 1979, pp.227-8, and Adam, 1902, p. 346 ad loc..

19 Cf. Phil. 40c8-d10 for a clear articulation of this idea. Just as one who judges falsely really judges, so one who experiences false pleasure really experiences pleasure. Similarly, at Republic 584c-6 Socrates allows that illusory pleasures are among the most intense we experience.

20 Note that Socrates' examples to illustrate this definition include activities or processes in the body: eating when hungry, drinking when thirsty, etc. (R. IX 585a8-b8).

21 On this passage, see Butler 1999 and Warren 2011.

22 For the view that appearances are representational states, see Storey 2014 and Franklin 2023.

23 See Butler 2005, pp. 614-618.

24 For very rich discussion of the notion of truth at work in the Olympian Argument, see also Wolfsdorf 2013

25 This may be akin to the way an account of mimêsis is said to provide an antidote to the harmful appearances of imitative poetry (R. IX 595b3-7.) On the interaction of reasoning, calculation, and appearance, see Prot. 356c-d and R. X 602c-e.