

The Value of Socratic Inquiry in the *Apology* (DRAFT)

Abstract

What makes Socratic inquiry valuable? A standard response is what I term *instrumentalism*: Socratic inquiry is merely instrumentally valuable; it is valuable only because it produces valuable results. This paper challenges instrumentalism. First, I present two value puzzles for instrumentalists and argue that these puzzles are best solved by denying instrumentalism. Then, I survey passages in the *Apology* that point to the source of Socratic inquiry's non-instrumental value.

I. The Value Question

What makes Socratic inquiry (SI) valuable?¹ Call this the *Value Question*. A natural response to the Value Question might be that since Socratic inquiry is a goal-directed activity, it is valuable because it achieves its goal. If Socratic inquiry aims to produce some valuable epistemic result (e.g. knowledge, understanding), then it is valuable because the inquirer achieves this result. In short, this response is that Socratic inquiry is instrumentally valuable; it is valuable because it produces valuable results.² If this response is apt, one might wonder whether the value of SI is exhausted by its instrumental value. That is, the following choice point confronts any interpreter who accepts this natural response to the Value Question: Is SI merely instrumentally valuable or does it also bear non-instrumental value?

¹ What is Socratic inquiry (SI)? The answer is controversial. An influential characterization of SI includes the following loosely unified set of features: SI always or usually involves a *formal procedure*, often termed the elenchus. The procedure is often thought to involve Socrates eliciting an answer to a 'What is F?' question (e.g. What is piety?, What is courage?, etc.) from an interlocutor. Socrates then proceeds to secure agreement to other premises that entail the negation of the interlocutor's initial answer. On one account of the elenchus, it only establishes inconsistency (See, e.g., Benson 2000, ch. 4.). On another, it can establish constructive results (See, e.g., Vlastos 1994a, 17–29). A second part of this standard characterization is a *belief constraint*. Socrates usually insists that his interlocutors say what they believe. A third part is the *domain*. Socrates usually inquires within the ethical domain. A fourth part is the *aim*. SI is commonly thought to aim in some way at truth. Each of these features is controversial. (See Scott 2002, 89–157, for criticism of each feature.) The answer to the Value Question I propose here should be compatible both with this influential characterization of SI and with criticism of each of its components, with the exception (I shall argue) of its aim.

² I take it that something is instrumentally valuable *iff* it is conducive to some good. I take it that something is non-instrumentally valuable *iff* it is valuable and it does not derive all of its value from its being conducive to some good.

A standard answer to the Value Question is what I term *instrumentalism*: SI is *merely* instrumentally valuable. The most prominent defender of instrumentalism is Gregory Vlastos. He argues that, because SI is a search for the truth rather than merely an attempt to win arguments regardless of whether one gets the truth, Socratic inquiry is ‘not an end in itself’ (1994a, 4).³ Instrumentalism is *project-defining* in the following sense: If an interpreter accepts that SI is merely instrumentally valuable, then that interpreter can answer the Value Question only by appealing to its valuable results. Perhaps due to Vlastos’ influence or due to the intuitive pull of instrumentalism, interpreters have often engaged in this instrumentalist project without explicitly justifying the project or the assumption that apparently undergirds it.⁴ Few interpreters have directly challenged Vlastos’ instrumentalist position or those who have followed his interpretive lead.⁵

I argue here for what I term a *non-instrumental* interpretation: SI is not merely instrumentally valuable. The argument here proceeds in two stages. In the first stage I present two value puzzles that arise

³ ‘The adversary procedure which is suggested (but not entailed) by the Greek word (which may be used to mean “refutation” but may also be used to mean “testing” or, still more broadly, “censure,” “reproach”) is not an end in itself. If it were, Socrates’ dialectic as depicted in Plato’s earlier dialogues would be a form of eristic, which it is not, because its object is always that positive outreach for truth which is expressed by words for searching... This is what philosophy *is* for Socrates’ (1994a, 4).

⁴ See, e.g., Reeve 1989, 179; Kraut 2006, 238; Both engage in the instrumentalist project without defending the assumption that seems to motivate it. Benson 2000 also appears to be engaged in the instrumentalist project: “The problem is that most of us are unaware of the [ignorant] condition we are in. That is why Socrates believes that the unexamined life, the life in which one’s blameworthy ignorance has not been eliminated in order to procure the knowledge one lacks, is not worth living. Socrates professes not to have the knowledge that would make his life worth living, but he recognizes this and endeavors to acquire it” (188). More recently, Doyle 2012 ‘corrects’ Beversluis 2000 for apparently sliding from describing the value of SI *itself* as the ‘highest form of human happiness’ (2000, 34-6) to evaluating *the results* of SI as the highest form of human happiness. Doyle argues that when Beversluis claims Socrates conceives of practicing SI as the ‘highest form of human happiness’ (2000, 34) this is a ‘misstatement for the ‘precondition of any human good’ (2012, 42).’ Doyle also apparently endorses this evaluative demotion without argument (2012, 52-3). In each of these passages, interpreters present views consistent with instrumentalism, fail to consider non-instrumentalism as a live interpretive option, and (with the exception of Beversluis and Doyle) explicitly engage in the instrumentalist project.

⁵ F.J. Gonzalez 2002, 180-1 is the only interpreter I am aware of that has defended a non-instrumental answer to the Value Question, although other interpreters promote positions that appear to entail non-instrumentalism (See Brickhouse and Smith 1994, ch. 4.5). Gonzalez claims that ‘the very search for virtue and wisdom is itself virtue and wisdom...’ (180). Later, referring to Socrates’ claim that practicing SI is the greatest good for a human in *Apol.* 38a1-7, Gonzalez argues that ‘Socrates is claiming, not that elenctic examination in search of virtue *promises* to produce a great good for us, but rather that it is itself our greatest good’ (ibid.). While Gonzalez and I agree that SI is not merely instrumentally valuable, I do not hold that SI is wisdom for the following reasons. First, this identifies the activity of Socratic inquiry with wisdom, which is not an activity. Second, this identification is at odds with Socrates’ persistence that he lacks the wisdom that he seeks.

for instrumentalists due to Socrates' extravagant claims about the value of SI in the *Apology* and argue that these puzzles are best solved by denying instrumentalism.⁶ In the second stage I present what I take to be a promising candidate for a non-instrumental answer to the Value Question: SI is non-instrumentally valuable because it is an activity of care for one's soul. This thesis does not deny that SI produces valuable results and thus has instrumental value. Rather, it denies that the entire value of SI is dependent upon the value of its results.

II. Two Value Puzzles

Two value puzzles arise for instrumentalists because of the extravagant claims that Socrates makes in the *Apology* about the value of SI. In *Apology* 38a2–5, Socrates provocatively claims that SI is the *greatest good* for a human.

[T1] It is the greatest good for a human being [μέγιστον ἀγαθὸν ὃν ἀνθρώπῳ] to discuss virtue every day [ἐκάστης ἡμέρας] and the other things about which you hear me conversing and examining both myself and others [ἐμαυτὸν καὶ ἄλλους ἐξετάζοντος]...⁷

Socrates does not make it immediately clear why he thinks inquiry of this sort is superlatively valuable.⁸ As such, we must consider what answer Socrates is *committed to* given when he says in the

⁶ This paper is primarily concerned with the Socrates of the *Apology*. My core arguments will require support from the text of the *Apology* alone. However, my instrumentalist interlocutors often make use of the so-called Socratic dialogues. I will assume with them that there is a single character named Socrates in these dialogues and will make use of these dialogues for auxiliary points that will support the core arguments. I make no claims about how the Socrates of these dialogues is related to the historical Socrates. Why confine this study to the *Apology*? This paper is part of a larger project that extends to the so-called early, or Socratic, dialogues. Within this set of dialogues, the *Apology* gives us the clearest clues to Socrates' answer to the Value Question since Socrates discusses the value of SI more directly in the *Apology* than in any other Socratic dialogue. It is quite literally a defense of his way of life - practicing SI (*cf.* 16 n. 25). If the textual evidence from the *Apology* favors a non-instrumental answer to the Value Question, then this should constrain any interpretation of the value of Socratic inquiry that applies to the so-called Socratic dialogues generally.

⁷ Unless otherwise noted, all translations are from Reeve 1989 with light edits. T1 is initially presented as a conditional claim, yet in the following sentence Socrates affirms it unconditionally.

⁸ Richard Bett describes this passage as introducing a 'paradox' that he claims is not often recognized: 'There is no suggestion here [*Apol.* 38a2-5] that coming to know the answers to the questions being discussed would confer still greater value on the enterprise [SI]. Rather, the life of inquiry itself is apparently as good as any human life can be, irrespective of whether it yields any definite outcome; and the ignorance that Socrates freely professes is apparently no bar to the achievement of this supremely good life' (2011, 231)." Bett goes on to wonder 'why this necessarily fruitless inquiry itself constitutes the best possible human life, and how [Socrates] can be so sure that this is the

Apology. Instrumentalists hold that Socrates is committed to the view that SI is superlatively valuable because of its results alone. Yet it is hard to see how an mere instrument could be superlatively valuable. Whatever is merely instrumentally valuable derives all of its value from the value of something else. How can the greatest human good derive all of its value from something else? The first puzzle for instrumentalists is this: *How can Socratic inquiry be the greatest good for a human if it is merely instrumentally valuable?*⁹

The second value puzzle concerns Socrates' view of the relation between SI and happiness. As if his praise for SI were not extravagant enough, Socrates goes on to assert that practicing SI in the afterlife would be extraordinary happiness. This claim occurs in the following context. Socrates contends that there is good reason to hope that death is a good thing. He argues that either death is an experiential blank like a dreamless sleep, or that after dying one is transported to another place. When describing the latter possibility, he rhetorically asks, 'What could be a greater good?' before going through a list of the good features of the envisioned afterlife experience (40c–41c). The final and greatest feature is described as follows.

[T2] But certainly the greatest thing [τὸ μέγιστον] is that I could pass my time [διάγω] testing and examining [ἐξετάζοντα καὶ ἐρευνῶντα] the people there [in the next world], just like those here, as to who among them is wise, and who thinks he is, but is not... to talk with, associate with, and examine them would be inconceivable happiness [οἷς ἐκεῖ διαλέγεσθαι καὶ συνεῖναι καὶ ἐξετάζειν ἀμήχανον ἂν εἴη εὐδαιμονίας] (41b5–c4).

Socrates' claim here concerning happiness (*eudaimonia*) presents a second value puzzle to the instrumentalist: *How can practicing Socratic inquiry in the afterlife be inconceivable eudaimonia if it is*

case.' He notes that 'this tension... does not seem to me to have been adequately recognized in most recent scholarship. It raises deep questions about the nature of the Socratic enterprise.' (232) Although Bett does not attempt to resolve the paradox, he cites Nehamas 1998 as one interpreter who has adequately recognized it. Bett's version of the paradox seems to arise only under an instrumentalist interpretation of the value of SI.

⁹ This is not the lone extravagant claim that Socrates makes about the value of SI in the *Apology*. In T2 he claims that practicing SI would be 'the greatest thing' about his envisioned afterlife experience. In *Apol.* 30a5–b2 [T4 below], he claims that 'no greater good has come about in the city than [his] service to the god', practicing SI. Finally, I will argue that the superlative in *Apol.* 36c3–d1 [T5 below] – 'the greatest benefit' – can also be attributed to Socrates' practice of SI.

merely instrumentally valuable? Let's consider the interpretive options available to instrumentalists who would attempt to solve each value puzzle.

III. The First Value Puzzle: *How can Socratic inquiry be the greatest good for a human if it is merely instrumentally valuable?*

The instrumentalist project, as I noted above, is to specify what result could render SI superlatively valuable. What are the interpretive options available to instrumentalists who take up this project and try to specify the superlative result(s) of inquiry? It seems that there are three plausible ways for instrumentalists to interpret the claim that SI is the greatest human good. Either Socrates thinks Socratic inquiry is the greatest human good because it produces the greatest good of all, or because it produces the best of a good (but not the best) lot, or because it produces the best of a bad (or not very good) lot.

Let's consider the most extreme interpretive option first. It might be that Socrates thinks that Socratic inquiry produces the greatest good full stop, where the superlative entails that SI produces a good greater than all other goods. Call this view *Unqualified Maximalism*. An instrumentalist who is committed to Unqualified Maximalism would have to assert that SI produces the unqualifiedly greatest good. While no interpreter that we will survey holds this view, it will be important both to see *why* interpreters avoid this option and to contrast it with those that are taken up by those engaged in the instrumentalist project.

Consider the following version of Unqualified Maximalism. Suppose an instrumentalist holds that SI is the greatest good *full stop* because it produces the greatest good *full stop*. This position is untenable due to the nature of instrumental value. Instrumental value is by nature a kind of *derivative* value: a mere instrument derives all of its value from the value of its results. Since instrumental value is a kind of derivative value, a mere instrument's value cannot be greater than the good(s), taken as a single good or as a set of goods, from which it derives *all* of its value. Let's apply this to Socratic inquiry. If SI is merely instrumentally valuable, then it derives all of its value from its results. Whatever derives all of its value from its results cannot be of greater value than its results. Thus, instrumentalists cannot hold that SI is the greatest good *full stop*, greater than all other goods.

Beyond an appeal to the nature of instrumental value, there is also a plausible textual reason that no instrumentalist is committed to Unqualified Maximalism. Socrates does not claim that Socratic inquiry is the greatest good full stop, but that that it is the ‘greatest good *for a human*’ (*Apol.* 38a2, emphasis added).¹⁰ He thus *qualifies* the superlative value of SI by placing it in some subordinate class of goods (i.e. human goods). As such, we might call this view *Qualified Maximalism*. SI produces the greatest human good, but not the best thing full stop.

C.D.C. Reeve appears to be a Qualified Maximalist.¹¹ He argues that Socratic inquiry is valuable because it is a means to avoiding both blameworthy ignorance and blameworthy vice. Reeve thus explicitly engages in the instrumentalist project:

By means of the elenchus, by living the examined life, we can avoid *blameworthy* vice by avoiding culpable ignorance and thereby come as close to being virtuous as humanly possible. We can achieve *human* wisdom and with it what we might call *human* virtue (1989, 150).

Because it is a means to avoiding blameworthy ignorance and vice, Reeve contends that Socratic inquiry confers the greatest benefit to humans and makes humans happy.¹² He thinks that, although both knowledge¹³ and virtue are impossible for a human to achieve, *human* wisdom and *human* virtue are possible to achieve. These consist in blameworthy ignorance avoidance and vice avoidance respectively.

¹⁰ Why discuss Unqualified Maximalism here if it is clearly a non-starter? First, I include it for the sake of completeness. Second, our evaluation of it will inform our evaluation of the other interpretive options.

¹¹ Although Reeve does not explicitly claim that SI is merely instrumentally valuable, I consider Reeve to be a Qualified Maximalist because he accounts for the superlative value of SI by the superlative value of its results within the class of *human* goods. The arguments presented here will challenge any similar interpreter to justify their engagement in the instrumentalist project and to consider whether non-instrumentalism is a viable interpretive option.

¹² ‘Even if it is false that virtue by itself produces happiness, then, someone who believes it in this way avoids both ‘the most blameworthy ignorance’ of thinking that he has expert craft-knowledge of virtue when he does not (29b1–2) and the blameworthy vice to which such ignorance often arises. That is why frequent elenctic examination helps someone to become as good or wise or virtuous as it is possible for a human to be. That is why elenctically discussing virtue every day is the greatest good for a human being. That is why Socrates confers the greatest benefit to a human being and makes them really happy’ (179).

¹³ Reeve argues that the knowledge Socrates thinks is impossible to achieve is craft-knowledge. According to Reeve, craft knowledge is explanatory, teachable, luck-independent and certain (43–5).

Is Qualified Maximalism a viable solution to the first value puzzle? Can instrumentalists maintain that SI produces the greatest of a good, but not the best, lot? The same style of argument against Unqualified Maximalism applies to Qualified Maximalism. Above we saw that SI cannot be the greatest good full stop because it would have to derive its value from some other good(s). Similarly, Socratic inquiry cannot be the greatest *human* good if it is valuable merely because it is instrumental to another *human* good. If this were the case, its product would be a human good that is at least as good as it.

But this is too fast. How can an instrumentalist committed to Qualified Maximalism avoid this result? There seem to be two lines of response available. Instrumentalists can either *demote* SI to a merely instrumental subclass of human goods or *promote* its result to a higher class of goods. Each line of response would prevent SI from being both the greatest member of a class and deriving all of its value from another member (or members) of the same class.

The *demotion* strategy might look like this: take a class of goods of which Socrates claims SI is the superlative member (i.e. human goods); divide the class into merely instrumental and non-instrumental subclasses (e.g. human activities and human states); and place SI in the merely instrumental subclass (e.g. human activities). This would successfully demote the value of SI so that it is the greatest member of the subclass by being merely instrumental to a member of a different class. For example, SI could be the greatest human *activity* by being merely instrumental to the greatest human *state*.

The following consideration tells against the viability of this strategy. There is no evidence in the relevant texts that Socrates further qualifies the superlative ‘greatest human good’ by demoting it to a subclass of goods *merely instrumental* to the greatest human good. It is possible that this is what Socrates really meant. But if he really meant this, then he misspoke when claiming it is the greatest human good. According to this instrumentalist strategy, SI is *not* the greatest human good since there is some other human good of equal or greater value, namely its superlative result(s).¹⁴

¹⁴ An instrumentalist might argue that, even so, there is no way to completely rule out such a subdivision. Suppose we grant this despite the evidence at *Apol.* 38a. Even if granted, the demotion strategy appears to be *ad hoc* as it will be available at every subsequent level of subdivision regardless of the textual evidence against it. Suppose one were to successfully forestall this strategy at one level of subdivision – e.g. the division of human goods into human

How does the *promotion* strategy fare? It might be that SI, the greatest *human* good, is merely instrumental to a *divine* good or to a good of some class greater than human. This would preserve the assumption that SI is merely instrumentally valuable while also maintaining that SI is greater than all other human goods. Yet this is precisely what those committed to the instrumentalist project, e.g. Reeve and Vlastos (below), deny. Recall that Reeve argues that SI produces *human* virtue and *human* wisdom. Such interpreters are right to deny that Socratic inquiry results in some divine good since Socrates never asserts, but rather denies, that he or anyone else he has examined has ever achieved the wisdom that has this higher, apparently divine, status (*Apol.* 20d–23b). So it seems that this strategy is not viable for an instrumentalist committed to Unqualified Maximalism. Thus, neither the *promotion* nor the *demotion* strategy seems to provide instrumentalists with a viable solution to the first puzzle.

Before we turn to the final instrumentalist option, let's consider Vlastos' doubt that the desideratum of the instrumentalist project (i.e. specifying the superlative result of inquiry) can be satisfied. Vlastos noted the following tension in the instrumentalist project between the superlative value of SI and the apparently minimal value of its results:

If 'the unexamined life is not worth living by man' (*Ap.* 38A5–6) and the elenchus is its examining, why shouldn't Socrates think the [elenctic] knowledge that issues from it is man's most precious possession? Why then should he be saying that it is 'worth little or nothing' (62)?¹⁵

According to Vlastos, Socrates holds (i) that the elenchus is highly valuable for us and (ii) that its result is of minimal or no value. Yet (i) and (ii) are not inconsistent. Vlastos must also assume that Socrates

activities and human states. The same strategy could, without appeal to textual evidence, divide human *activities* into merely instrumental and non-instrumental subclasses (perhaps theoretical and practical human activities, respectively) and place SI in the merely instrumental subclass. In short, the availability of this strategy in the absence of textual evidence makes it suspect. The burden is on the instrumentalist to provide evidence for such a subdivision. Yet, as noted above, we have ample evidence to forestall such a subdivision: the most explicit textual evidence for Socrates' view – that SI is 'the greatest good for a human' at *Apol.* 38a– would have to be taken as a misstatement under this strategy.

¹⁵ Vlastos' overall theory of Socratic knowledge is complex and need not be fully explicated here to understand his commitment to instrumentalism. In brief, the knowledge that results from the elenchus Vlastos terms *elenctic* knowledge. This is what Socrates ought to think is 'man's most precious possession,' per Vlastos. There is another kind of *certain* knowledge that Socrates disavows, according to Vlastos (1994b, 56-8).

holds (iii) that the elenchus is merely instrumentally valuable and human wisdom is its (most) valuable result. That is, Vlastos must assume instrumentalism. Only if the entire value of the elenchus is derived from producing this result are (i) and (ii) in apparent tension. The tension seems to be that, per Vlastos, Socrates thinks that the mere instrument has greater value than the result from which it derives its value. Yet this is impossible.

Can an instrumentalist who takes the results of SI to be of minimal value avoid this tension? Recall that the desideratum of the instrumentalist project is to specify the superlative result(s) of Socratic inquiry. If we assume that Socratic inquiry is only valuable because it results in human wisdom, then the desideratum might be satisfied if Socrates takes the result of inquiry to be the best of a bad, or not so good, lot. On this view Socratic inquiry is best because it produces the greatest good available, human wisdom, which is of little or no value. Call this view of the value of Socratic inquiry *Minimalism*.

Minimalism is somewhat paradoxical, but there is evidence that Socrates uses this kind of superlative - 'best of a bad lot' - in his response to the oracle.

[T3] It looks as though, gentlemen, it is really the god who is wise, and in this oracle he is saying that human wisdom is worth little or nothing (23a5–7).

In T3 Socrates interprets the oracle as ascribing a very low degree of value to human wisdom, if any value at all. Socrates continues to interpret the oracle as saying, "That one of you, humans, is wisest who, like Socrates, knows that in truth he is worth nothing in regard to wisdom" (23b1–4).¹⁶ The following paradox arises because of the degree of value Socrates ascribes to his wisdom: Socrates is wisest, yet he is worthless with regard to wisdom. One way to read this superlative is in line with our third interpretive option. With respect to wisdom, Socrates is the best of a bad, or not very good, lot.¹⁷ Socrates is wisest because the comparison class is so poor by his (and the god's) estimation. The interlocutors he describes the *Apology*

¹⁶We might interpret this slippage between of 'little or no' value and 'worthless' in line with Vlastos' analysis of similar ascriptions of minimal value. He claims that these ascribe a value 'too trivial to be worth mentioning' (1991, 219).

¹⁷This is not the *only* way to resolve this paradox. Socrates might be using 'wisdom' equivocally. That is, he might be wisest because of something distinct from his worthless wisdom, namely his higher-order *knowledge* (or awareness) that his first order wisdom is worthless.

– i.e. the politicians, poets and craftsmen – all think they know things that they do not. Because Socrates lacks their blameworthy ignorance, he realizes that he is wiser than they are (22d–e). Since Socrates seems to use the superlative in this paradoxical way in the *Apology*, this use of the superlative ought to be a live option for interpretations of the value of Socratic inquiry as well.

Does Minimalism, the instrumentalist’s third interpretive option, fare any better as a solution to the first value puzzle? That is, can a Minimalist consistently claim that SI is merely instrumentally valuable and the best of a bad lot? As discussed previously, SI cannot be the greatest in a class if it derives all of its value from another member(s) of the same class. Thus SI cannot even be the best of a bad lot, if it derives its value from another member of that lot.

Will the promotion or demotion strategies prove viable for the Minimalist where they proved unviable for the Qualified Maximalist? Minimalism, like Qualified Maximalism, is also constrained by the *qualification* Socrates places on the superlative: SI is the greatest *human* good.¹⁸ The promotion and demotion strategies proved unviable for Qualified Maximalists solely in virtue of this qualification. Since this qualification applies also to Minimalism, instrumentalists will run into the same dilemma: to demote SI to a good merely instrumental to the greatest human good is to make his claim at *Apol.* 38a that it is the ‘greatest good for a human’ a misstatement; yet to promote the results of SI above human goods would seem to put the results of SI in a divine class. As noted above, we have no evidence for (and ample evidence against) Socrates’ achievement of divine goods, or goods ‘more than human,’ via SI (*Apol.* 20e, 23a5-7). Thus, if one is an instrumentalist, even Minimalism appears untenable for the same reasons that Qualified Maximalism is untenable. If Socratic inquiry is merely instrumentally valuable, it cannot even be the best of a bad lot.

Let’s take stock of an instrumentalist’s options for solving the first value puzzle. I have suggested that there are three *prima facie* plausible ways for instrumentalists to interpret Socrates’ claim that Socratic inquiry is the greatest good for a human: Socratic inquiry is greatest because it produces the best of a bad

¹⁸ Minimalism and Qualified Maximalism only differ in the value they ascribe to human goods – minimal (little or no) value and positive value, respectively.

(or not so good) lot, or because it produces the best of a good (but not the best) lot, or because it produces the greatest good of all. Barring the promotion and demotion strategies surveyed above, SI would have to derive its value from a member (or members) of the same class. As long as *greatest* entails *greater than all other* things in the comparison class, none of these three options are on the table for an instrumentalist. This is because Socratic inquiry would have to derive all of its value from another member (or members) of the comparison class.

IV. The Second Value Puzzle: *How can Socratic inquiry be eudaimonia in the afterlife if it is merely instrumentally valuable?*

Recall that at the end of T2, Socrates says that ‘to talk with, associate with, and examine those there [in the afterlife] would be inconceivable happiness [οἷς ἐκεῖ διαλέγεσθαι καὶ συνεῖναι καὶ ἐξετάζειν ἀμήχανον ἂν εἴη εὐδαιμονίας].’ It is hard to see how anything that is (in some sense of ‘is’) inconceivable eudaimonia could be merely instrumentally valuable. Here’s a brief argument for a non-instrumental interpretation of this passage: Socratic inquiry is eudaimonia (or would be in the afterlife). Anything that is eudaimonia (or would be in the afterlife) is not merely instrumentally valuable. So Socratic inquiry is not merely instrumentally valuable.

Interpreters have employed a few strategies to deflate the claim that Socratic inquiry is (in some non-instrumental sense) eudaimonia.¹⁹ Russell Jones takes up the following three deflationary strategies in order to deny that practicing SI is sufficient for happiness.²⁰ The first strategy deflates the eudaimonia claim

¹⁹ This is a *prima facie* identity claim: Socratic inquiry just is eudaimonia. I do not intend to defend the view that this is an identity statement, although it might be. All that I defend here is that SI bears some non-instrumental relation to eudaimonia. SI may be identical to eudaimonia or it may contribute to eudaimonia in some other non-instrumental way (e.g. by (partially) constituting it).

²⁰ ‘First, this passage [T2], like those considered above, occurs in a context in which Socrates is trying to persuade the jurors to fear death less than they fear ignorance or vice. The focus here is not so much on the distinctiveness of the activity (elenctic activity), but on the superior quality of people with whom Socrates can engage in such activity (great heroes), and on the lack of obstacles (like hostile juries) to engaging in such activity. Given such a set of interlocutors and an unlimited amount of time to talk with them, Socrates may even have high hopes that he will find the wisdom he seeks. The state of affairs he describes, then, is a ‘happy’ one’ (2013, 28-9). Jones’ comments are not made in defense of instrumentalism *per se*, but against the view that Socrates is happy in this life because he practices SI, which is sufficient for happiness. I do not argue here that SI is sufficient for happiness, but that it

by relocating the *source of eudaimonia*. Jones argues that the Socratic assertion concerning eudaimonia in T2 does not primarily have to do with practicing SI, but can be explained by Socrates' extraordinary interlocutors or the lack of obstacles to inquiry. These features, rather than the practice of SI as such, are what Socrates thinks would make the experience inconceivable eudaimonia. The second strategy deflates the eudaimonia claim by relocating *the object of eudaimonia attribution*. Jones argues that eudaimonia might not be attributed to Socrates, but instead to a state of affairs. He suggests a reading of T2 in which the thing that is said to be happy is not Socrates, but that practicing SI in the afterlife would be a 'happy state of affairs' (2013, 29). The third strategy deflates the claim that practicing SI in the afterlife is eudaimonia by suggesting that SI might produce something else that would be happiness. Jones suggests that Socrates might have hope for such valuable result of SI in the afterlife, namely acquiring the wisdom he lacks. Thus, for this third deflationary strategy to be successful, the 'is' in T2 must be a productive 'is'. By claiming that practicing SI in the afterlife *would be* eudaimonia Socrates really means that practicing SI *would produce* the wisdom that would make one happy.

Are these deflationary strategies viable ways to avoid the result that practicing SI is (in some non-instrumental sense) eudaimonia? Let's consider the first deflationary strategy. Is the focus of this passage (and thus the source of value of the experience) the distinctiveness of Socrates' activity, or the quality of his interlocutors and the lack of obstacles to SI? Perhaps Jones' thought is that it is not practicing SI as such that contributes to eudaimonia, but that it is *talking with these interlocutors without obstacles* that really contributes to his eudaimonia, or to the happy state of affairs. These latter components of the experience are doing the real work to explain the eudaimonia claim, not SI.

This deflationary strategy is at odds with the way Socrates transitions to discussing practicing SI in the afterlife. Immediately after describing the quality of his interlocutors and the lack of hostile juries (40e7–41b5), Socrates transitions to discussing SI with the following: 'But certainly the greatest thing is

contributes to happiness non-instrumentally. I include his deflationary statements here because he offers strategies available to instrumentalists who might attempt to deflate this extraordinary claim in a similar fashion.

that I could pass my time examining the people there, just like those here, as to who among them is wise, and who thinks he is, but is not ...' (*Apol.* 41b5–7). If Socrates meant to emphasize the value of interacting with extraordinary interlocutors without obstacles over the value of practicing SI, then this transition to discussing SI is out of place. Socrates singles out practicing SI as the greatest, or most important, part of this experience. It is the climax of his account of what his afterlife experience might be like.²¹ Rather than de-emphasizing the contribution of SI to eudaimonia, Socrates emphasizes it as the greatest contributor to the value of this afterlife experience.

Second, Jones contends that the happiness is not that of Socrates, by arguing that this may be an impersonal use of happiness that refers to a “happy state of affairs”. He enlists an impersonal use of eudaimonia at *Apol.* 25b in support of this possibility. Is this second deflationary strategy viable against the claim that SI contributes to happiness non-instrumentally?²²

Socrates is primarily considering whether this afterlife experience would be good *for himself*. As the practitioner of SI in this scenario, it is surely Socrates who would benefit from doing so. Yet even if this were strictly speaking an impersonal use that attributes eudaimonia to a state of affairs, it is Socrates who would be the one who is in the happy state of affairs practicing the thing that makes it a happy state of affairs. If this second strategy is to be viable for instrumentalists, it must collapse into the third strategy. That is, if SI contributes value to a happy state of affairs or to the happiness of its practitioners, instrumentalist interpreters must argue that it does so *merely instrumentally*.

The third strategy requires us to read the ‘is’ here as a productive ‘is’. When Socrates says that “to talk with, associate with, and examine those there [in the afterlife] would be inconceivable happiness” he

²¹ Smyth § 2847 cites this very passage as introducing a climax. ‘But certainly the greatest thing [καὶ δὴ τὸ μέγιστον]...’ is translated there as ‘*and above all, what is the main thing.*’

²² Again, Jones’ aim of arguing against the sufficiency of SI for happiness should be noted. Something can contribute to happiness without being sufficient for it. Jones argues against the stronger claim that SI is sufficient for happiness, whereas I hope to establish the weaker claim that SI contributes to happiness non-instrumentally. As such, this second deflationary strategy might be successful against the stronger sufficiency claim, yet fail to touch the weaker claim.

means that (he hopes) SI would *produce* the thing which is sufficient for happiness. In short, ‘SI would be happiness’ must be read as ‘SI would produce something else that is happiness’.

As far as I can tell, there is no productive use of the verb ‘to be’ (εἶναι) in Greek.²³ Yet even if this reading is possible, under it instrumentalists must suppose that Socrates holds out hope that in the afterlife practicing SI would produce the wisdom (or some other valuable result) that would make the experience eudaimonia. Barring this result, practicing SI in the afterlife would not be eudaimonia. This would be an interpretation that ‘sees through’ the value of the process (SI) to the value of the result, and then retroactively attributes the value of the result to the process. Thus, a second problem with this strategy is that Socrates never achieves this result (i.e. wisdom) via SI in this life, yet he nevertheless highly values SI. This strategy, then, would not be able to account for Socrates’ other extravagant claims about the value of SI, even if it were able to account for this claim about eudaimonia. A unified interpretation would be able to posit the same value-maker for SI as practiced in this life and SI as practiced in the afterlife.

A third problem with this strategy is that there is no result mentioned in the immediate context of this passage. To claim that a textually absent result is what makes this experience valuable is conjectural. The immediate textual context does not suggest that there is some *other result* of the experience that makes the experience valuable. The experience itself is said to be inconceivable happiness.

In short, each of these deflationary strategies is at odds with the import of the passage itself in its immediate context. Instrumentalists must have some basis other than the passage for reading these texts this way. Yet even if there is some other basis for reading these deflationary readings, I have argued that the passages themselves are deeply in tension with such a reading.

²³ See LSJ s.v.; At *Euthydemus* 278d there is a paradoxical usage of εἶναι: Socrates claims that ‘wisdom is good fortune’ yet later claims that wisdom produces good fortune. Socrates’ subsequent claims undermine the interpretation that εἶναι is an identity statement as Socrates goes on to claim that one can have good fortune without wisdom. Based on this passage alone, one might be tempted to think that Plato freely employs εἶναι as a ‘productive is’. This paradoxical use of ‘is,’ however, does not show that Plato has christened εἶναι with a new semantic role such that Plato freely employs a ‘productive is’ without making the reader explicitly aware of it. This passage shows that, for Plato, the context can undermine interpreting εἶναι within the normal semantic range of the verb. It is perhaps unsurprising that a paradoxical usage of εἶναι that stretches it’s function beyond its normal semantic range is followed by subsequent contextual clarification. Since there is no similar contextual underminer of the Socratic claim that practicing SI would be *eudaimonia* in the afterlife in *Apology* 41b5–c4, we cannot use the paradoxical use of εἶναι in the *Euthydemus* as a model for interpreting this passage in the *Apology*.

It is difficult to see how Socrates could be committed to instrumentalism and hold that SI is the greatest human good and is (in some sense) eudaimonia. These deflationary strategies are not sufficient to blunt the force of Socrates' extravagant claims. As such, I propose that the best way to resolve the tension between these extravagant claims and instrumentalism is to deny instrumentalism.

V. Socratic inquiry: an activity of care for one's soul

So far we have surveyed two puzzles that arise under an instrumental interpretation: How can SI be the greatest good and how can SI be (in some sense) eudaimonia if it is merely instrumentally valuable? The best way to resolve these puzzles, I have argued, is to deny instrumentalism. The positive project for a non-instrumental interpretation is to propose a candidate for a non-instrumental answer to the Value Question. Two desiderata for such a candidate are suggested by the puzzles surveyed above. Whatever makes SI valuable must be superlatively valuable and must be (in some non-instrumental sense) eudaimonia. If something were to satisfy these desiderata, then it would seem to be an excellent candidate for the answer to the Value Question.

Interpreters often hold that there is some intimate relation between Socratic inquiry and care for one's soul.²⁴ In what follows I argue that care for one's soul satisfies each of the desiderata for an answer to the Value Question and is therefore an excellent candidate for a non-instrumental answer to it. In T4-5 below Socrates ascribes a superlative degree of value not only to Socratic inquiry, but also to soul-care. In T4 Socrates claims that there is no greater good for the Athenians than his service to the god, which I take to be Socratic inquiry.²⁵ He describes it as an attempt to persuade the Athenians to care for their souls. In

²⁴ See, e.g., Leigh 2020: 'Care of one's own soul requires, or consists in, cross-examination as practised by Socrates—the elenctic method' (250).

²⁵ Doyle 2012 argues that Socrates' service to the god is a kind of 'missionary philosophy' that is *distinct* from the 'lay philosophy' that Socrates encourages others to practice. If so, then Socrates' service to the god would seem to be distinct from SI. There is a minimal sense in which exhorting others to Φ is distinct from Φ -ing. By exhorting others to practice philosophy, Socrates need not be exhorting others to exhort others to practice philosophy. Doyle goes beyond this minimal sense and argues that there are *formal* features of Socrates' missionary practice that are absent from lay philosophy. These formal features include Socrates occupying the role of questioner and 'coercing' others into conversation by not allowing his interlocutors to avoid interrogation on pain of public shame (45 n. 11). Since 'lay philosophy' lacks these formal features, Doyle seems to think that these two procedures are distinct in such a way as to be incompatible: "...we shall see that Socrates in the *Gorgias* cannot be understood as practicing

T5 he claims that not the service but the benefit conferred is superlatively valuable. This benefit is care for one's self.

[T4] I believe that no greater good [οὐδέν...μειζόν ἀγαθόν] for you has ever come about in the city than my service to the god [τῷ θεῷ ὑπηρεσίαν]. You see, I do nothing else except go around trying to persuade you, both young and old alike, not to care [ἐπιμελεῖσθαι] about your bodies or your money as intensely as about how your soul might be in the best possible condition [ὡς τῆς ψυχῆς ὅπως ὡς ἀρίστη ἔσται] (30a5–b2).²⁶

[T5] I went to each of you privately conferring the greatest benefit [τὴν μεγίστην εὐεργεσίαν], as I believe, by trying to persuade each of you not to care for any of his belongings before caring how he himself will be the best and wisest possible [ἑαυτοῦ ἐπιμεληθεῖν ὅπως ὡς βέλτιστος καὶ φρονιμώτατος ἔσοιτο], nor to care for the belongings of the polis more than for the polis itself, and to care for other things in the same way (36c3–d1).

the missionary procedure he ascribes to himself in the *Apology*” (64). First, if Doyle’s interpretation is correct, this would not affect the textual evidence in the *Apology* (with the exception of the claim that there is ‘no greater good’ than Socrates service to the god T4) that both SI and care for one’s soul are superlatively valuable and are in some sense happiness. Thus, the majority of the textual support and the core arguments in this section are compatible with Doyle’s distinction. Second, although I agree with Doyle that SI is distinct from exhorting one to practice SI in the minimal sense, I do not hold that the formal features Doyle proposes are essential to Socrates’ divine mission, nor do I hold that practicing SI is incompatible with Socrates’ divine mission. When Socratic practice fails to have these formal features, interpreters have a choice: either Socrates is no longer engaged in the divine mission, or these features are not essential to the divine mission. Doyle takes the first option, which requires positing *two* Socratic practices where there seems to be one. I take the second option because these formal features are explicitly stated as conditional in the text Doyle cites in favor of his view, ‘if one of you disputes this and says he does care, I will not let him go at once or leave him, but I will question him...’ (29e), and because I take it that the best explanation for Socratic practice failing to conform to these formal conditions is that they are inessential to Socratic practice, not that there are two distinct Socratic practices. On the interpretation offered here, the way that Socrates *encourages others* to practice SI, and thus to care for their souls, is for Socrates himself to practice SI, and thereby to care for his soul.

²⁶ Translation from Reeve 2002.

To care (*epimeleisthai*) is to engage in an activity that is set over an object.²⁷ Plato often uses *epimeleisthai* to refer to an activity of a subject stationed over an object for its well-being or improvement.²⁸ In the texts above the object of care is complex: one's soul or self - how it will be best and wisest.²⁹ Socrates exhorts the Athenians to care for some objects prior to and more intensely than others. Thus, there is a ranking of the objects of care. One's soul, or self, is first in this ranking. One's body and external goods are subordinate objects of care, if they are objects of care at all. The ranking of objects of care corresponds to the value of the objects and their goods. Socrates takes the goods appropriate to the soul to be the ranked highest. The bodily and external goods are subordinate in value if valuable at all. Finally, this activity of care is characterized by certain attitudes.³⁰ These attitudes include accurately valuing the object of care (e.g. the soul) in relation to other rival goods (e.g. bodily goods, external goods), desiring that the object be made better by the goods appropriate to it (e.g. by being in the wise, or virtuous, condition) and fearing lest it be made worse (e.g. by blameworthy ignorance of virtue or acts of injustice).³¹

²⁷ The *epimel-* lemma occurs in 11 times in the *Apology*: 29d9-e3 (4X), 30b1, 31b5, 36c6-d1 (3X), 41e1-7(2X). The objects of care are diverse: wisdom, virtue, truth, the city, the soul or self so that it will be in the best and wisest condition. These diverse objects of care (perhaps with the exception of the city) are often consolidated by interpreters into a single object: wisdom (*See*, e.g., Stump 2020, 3 n. 11; Rowe 2007, 75; de Stryker and Slings 1994, 187 and 331-2). de Stryker and Slings explain this consolidation in the following way: 'To strive for insight is evidently to care for truth, the object of knowledge. Now ἐπιμελεῖσθαι τῆς ψυχῆς or ἑαυτοῦ is the same as ἐπιμελεῖσθαι ἀρετῆς (31b5; 41e5), and φρόνησις is for Socrates the ἀρετή *par excellence*' (1994, 331-2).

²⁸ In Euthyphro 2c9-d4 Socrates ironically praises Meletus, his accuser, for his care for the youth of Athens by comparing him to a farmer who correctly cares first for the well-being of young plants. Conversely, in *Apology* 25c1-3 Socrates upbraids Meletus for exhibiting a *lack of care* (*ameleia*) for the well-being of the Athenian youth. In *Gorgias* 515b8-516c1, Socrates expects Pericles will make the men set in his care more just so long as Pericles has political expertise. This passage in the *Gorgias* contains five of the eight uses of the *epimel-* lemma in the dialogue. While this passage emphasizes the valuable expected results of Pericles political activity, it is clear that these valuable results are expected under the condition that Pericles cares for the citizens *while having political expertise* [εἴπερ [516ξ] ἐκεῖνος ἐπεμελεῖτο αὐτῶν ἀγαθὸς ὢν τὰ πολιτικά] (516c1). Finally, at *Gorg.* 520a4 Socrates uses the locution 'to care for [the city] so that it is as good as possible' [ἐπιμελεῖσθαι ὅπως ὡς βελτίστη], a locution nearly identical to the one in *Apol.* 36c6-d1.

²⁹ An objection to this proposal might be that soul-care appears to be (merely) instrumentally valuable. It seems to be a mere means to soul-improvement. As such, it does not seem to be a good candidate for the value-maker for SI. I address this objection in the final section of the paper.

³⁰ In *Apology* 29d-30b Socrates makes it clear that care for one's soul requires having appropriate evaluative attitudes. If an interlocutor says he cares, but fails a Socratic examination of such a claim, Socrates 'reproach[es] him because he attaches little importance to the most important things and greater importance to inferior things.' Socrates urges the jury to reproach own his children in the same way at 41e1-7.

³¹ Jacob Stump argues that to care (*epimeleisthai*) or to value something is 'to believe that it is important and, motivated by that belief, to act on behalf of it and pay attention to it' (2020, 16). Stump locates a similar use of *epimeleisthai* in Xenophon's *Memorabilia* 2.4.2-4 (14 n.47). There Xenophon's Socrates describes the great value of friendship and the carelessness that many often exhibit in acquiring friends. Similar to the instances of

Before we examine whether care for one's soul is a viable candidate for an answer to the Value Question, I must flag a potential objection to the characterization above: having the best condition of the soul (i.e. the wise, or virtuous, condition) seems to be the greatest human good, greater than practicing SI. If this is right, then practicing SI cannot be the greatest human good.

There is sufficient textual evidence in the *Apology* alone that Socrates thinks the best condition of the soul is not a *human* good but is a *divine* good. In T3, we have seen that Socrates contrasts human wisdom with the wisdom of the god: 'It looks as though, gentlemen, it is really the god who is wise...' At *Apology* 20e1, Socrates calls the apparent wisdom of the Sophists a wisdom 'more than human'.³² In each of these passages, Socrates does not seem to think that obtaining these goods is a characteristically human achievement (he certainly does not believe the Sophists have achieved it), although perhaps he thinks it is possible for humans to obtain them. Since there is strong textual evidence that Socrates considers the best condition of the soul, wisdom, or virtue, to be a *divine* good – this is consistent with his evaluation of SI as the greatest *human* good.

Let's now consider whether care for one's soul satisfies the two desiderata for an answer to the Value Question. Does Socrates think that it is superlatively valuable and that it is (in some non-instrumental sense) eudaimonia? For now let's focus solely on how its superlative degree of value might cohere with Socrates' other value ascriptions. Socrates not only asserts that Socratic inquiry has superlative value in T1 and T2, but he also asserts that care for one's soul has superlative value in T5. If each superlative entails the comparative, then both Socratic inquiry and soul-care would be greater than all other human goods. Yet

epimeleisthai in Plato's *Apology*, Xenophon's Socrates emphasizes how one with disordered care will often claim to care for what is most valuable while failing to act to promote and attend to the well-being of the purported object of care (cf. *Sym.* 8.25, 8.43).

³² I take *divine* goods to be goods of divine *origin*. While it is in principle possible for humans to attain divine goods, attainment of such goods would not make these *human* goods. I take the textual evidence in the *Apology* to be sufficient to show that Socrates does not think the wisdom he lacks is characteristically achieved by humans but is of divine origin. However, it is worth noting that Socrates consistently expresses this view elsewhere, e.g. *Euthydemus* and *Meno*. At *Euthydemus* 273e–74a, he expresses his amazement at the divine nature of the wisdom of virtue that the eristic brothers, Euthydemus and Dionysidorus, claim to have. There Socrates addresses them 'as if they were gods'. At *Meno* 99b–100a, Socrates claims that the virtue that successful politicians have, which is considered to be true belief at that stage of the dialogue, is a divine gift. In each case Socrates talks as if wisdom (or virtue) is both in principle attainable by humans and something of divine origin.

two distinct superlative things in the same class cannot be greater than each other. So if the superlative is read this way and these goods are in the same class, Socratic inquiry and soul-care cannot be distinct members of the class.³³ They must be either identified or related in some other intimate way such that they are not considered as wholly distinct.³⁴ If this conclusion is right, then we can see how a non-instrumental interpretation can make sense of Socrates' ascriptions of the degree of value of Socratic inquiry: Socratic inquiry is the greatest human good because it is an activity of care for one's soul.³⁵

Care for one's soul satisfies the first desideratum for a non-instrumental answer to the Value Question as Socrates takes it to be superlatively valuable. Does it also satisfy the second desideratum? That is, does Socrates also take it to be (in some sense) eudaimonia? In T6 below Socrates offers free meals at the Prytaneum as a counter-penalty to his death sentence. Socrates defends the appropriateness of this counter-penalty by arguing that his work as a benefactor, exhorting the Athenians to care for their souls, makes the Athenians happy.

[T6] What is suitable for a poor benefactor (εὐεργέτη) who needs leisure to exhort you? Nothing is more suitable, gentlemen, than for such a man to be fed in the Prytaneum, much more suitable for him than for any one of you who has won a victory at Olympia with a pair or team of horses. The Olympian victor makes you think yourself happy; but I make you happy [ὁ μὲν γὰρ ὑμᾶς ποιεῖ εὐδαιμόνας δοκεῖν εἶναι, ἐγὼ δὲ εἶναι] (36d4–e1).³⁶

T6 follows immediately after T5 and picks up on the language of *benefit* as Socrates calls himself a poor *benefactor*. In T5 the benefit Socrates attempts to provide is soul-care.³⁷ In fact, this is the greatest benefit, according to Socrates. Here in T6 he claims that his work as a benefactor – giving the Athenians soul-care

³³ Soul-care is described as the greatest benefit. 'The greatest [τὴν μεγίστην]' is a relative superlative that has the comparative force of 'greater than' (See Smyth § 1085).

³⁴ There are a number of non-instrumental options for the relation between Socratic inquiry and care for one's soul that I leave undetermined at this point, e.g., constitution, partial constitution and identity.

³⁵ There might be ways of caring for one's soul that are not SI. This leaves open the possibility in logical space that some other practice of care is more valuable than SI. Socrates' assertion that SI is the 'greatest good for a human' precludes the following possibility from being a consistent Socratic commitment: some way of caring for the soul that is not SI is a greater human good than practicing SI.

³⁶ Translation from Grube 2002

³⁷ Cf. *Apol.* 31a7-b5. In this passage Socrates claims that his self-neglect and his concern for the citizens is evidence that he is a divine gift to the city. He claims his divine mission is 'to persuade the Athenians to care for virtue.'

– makes the Athenians happy. In short, these texts suggest that Socrates thinks that both care for one's soul and Socratic inquiry are (in some sense) *eudaimonia*.³⁸ Since care for one's soul satisfies the two desiderata for an answer to the Value Question, it is an excellent candidate for what makes SI superlatively valuable.

I noted above that interpreters often take care for one's soul to be intimately connected to SI in some way. How exactly is care for one's soul related to SI? At first glance these might seem to be distinct activities. Suppose Socrates were to ask an interlocutor to inquire into what piety is. Would he also be asking his interlocutor to care for his interlocutor's own soul?

I think he would be. As noted above, care for one's soul requires trying to effect the best possible condition of one's soul. Socrates mentions a number of psychological goods in the *Apology*, with wisdom and virtue ranked among the primary psychological goods.³⁹ The virtuous or wise condition of the soul is what the practitioner of care for the soul seeks.⁴⁰ As Socrates inquires, he seems to aim above all at gaining knowledge of virtue.⁴¹ If Socrates thinks that virtue just is a kind of knowledge, then he is aiming at these primary psychological goods as he inquires. In the very act of inquiring into virtue (and into *virtues* like piety), Socrates is attempting to make the soul in the best possible condition.⁴²

³⁸ I take it that the gift that makes one *eudaimon*, soul-care, contributes to the happiness of the recipient. Socrates does not mention a further product of this gift, so it seems that an instrumental interpretation of the relation between soul-care and *eudaimonia* would be forced here.

³⁹ See, e.g., T5 above, *Apol.* 29d2–30a1; Since wisdom and truth are among the objects of care at *Apol.* 29e, if SI is an activity of care for one's soul, then SI must aim in some way at the truth.

⁴⁰ At *Gorg.* 521d–e, Socrates claims he is the only one who attempts the 'true political craft' that aims 'not at gratification but at what's best.' In the *Gorgias*, Socratic inquiry is often compared to the craft of medicine. While the craft of medicine cares for and aims at the good condition of the body, Socratic inquiry cares for and aims at the good condition of the soul.

⁴¹ See, e.g., Benson 2000 ch.2. Benson posits eight aims of elenchus. Moral knowledge, according to Benson, is 'perhaps the ultimate' yet 'most remote' aim (23).

⁴² Beyond the *Apology*, two passages in the *Euthydemus* suggest such an intimate relation between SI and care for wisdom and virtue, the excellent condition(s) of the soul. At 274e7–275a6 Socrates asks Dionysidorus whether he is best able to 'turn one to philosophy and care for virtue' [προτρέψαιτε εἰς φιλοσοφίαν καὶ ἀρετῆς ἐπιμέλειαν]. When Dionysidorus says he is, Socrates asks him to persuade Cleinias that he ought to 'practice philosophy and care for virtue' [φιλοσοφεῖν καὶ ἀρετῆς ἐπιμελεῖσθαι]. That the *καὶ* in each phrase is epexegetic (and thus that philosophy is an activity of care for wisdom and virtue) is confirmed by 278d3 where Socrates again urges Euthydemus and Dionysodoros to exhort Cleinias towards 'care for wisdom and virtue' [σοφίας τε καὶ ἀρετῆς ἐπιμεληθῆναι]. In this last passage, 'philosophy' has been replaced by 'care for wisdom'. We also see this at *Charmides* 173a, where Socrates links care for oneself with the activity of examination in the following way: 'Still it is necessary to examine what occurs to one, and not idly ignore it, if one cares even a little for oneself.'

VI. Isn't care for one's soul merely instrumentally valuable?

One might wonder whether care for one's soul is a plausible non-instrumental answer to the Value Question. An objection might be the following: Isn't it only valuable because it achieves valuable results, namely the improved condition of the soul? A general problem arises when we attempt to evaluate instruments. The problem, as I see it, is that our evaluative intuitions are often swamped by an instrument's instrumental value. Socrates practices SI as a means to certain ends. He has aims that are not practicing Socratic inquiry itself. As such, it is tempting to say that the value of this activity is exhausted by the value of the results it achieves.

I have tried to make room for a non-instrumental interpretation such that the value of SI is not exhausted by the value of its results. Why isn't its value exhausted by its results? Because it is an activity of care for one's soul, or so I have argued. Yet, the same objection might arise for this answer to the Value Question. Care for one's soul is also instrumental; it is a means to psychological goods. Thus, the same problem apparently arises at a different level. An objection to this non-instrumental proposal, then, might go something like this: activities of care for some good are not valuable apart from achieving that good. Care for a good without results is no better than a lack of care. As such, this proposal is not a viable non-instrumental answer to the Value Question.

The following case is meant to meet this objection. Compare a doctor who cares about finding the cure for Alzheimer's with a mercenary doctor that does not care about finding the cure as much as profiting from the cure.⁴³ The first doctor cares for the goal of the activity, finding the cure, and is motivated by this disposition to care. The mercenary doctor performs the same activities (to the degree possible) with the same results, not out of care for finding the cure, but out of a care for profit. For the mercenary doctor, trying to discover the cure is a mere means to self-aggrandizement. Neither doctor successfully finds the cure.

⁴³ The mercenary doctor is akin to those whom Socrates reproaches for 'attach[ing] little importance to the most important things and greater importance to inferior things' (*Apol.* 30a1–2).

Does the caring doctor's activity contribute value to her life apart from its results? Does the mercenary doctor's? To answer these questions, first consider whether the value of a life project such as trying to find the cure of Alzheimer's is wholly dependent upon the results of the project. Our lives go well or poorly in part because of the projects that we engage in. One might be an instrumentalist or a non-instrumentalist about the value of such life projects. On an instrumental view, the value of the life project is exhausted by the valuable results of the project. On a non-instrumental view, the value of such a life project is not exhausted by the valuable results of the project.

I take the non-instrumental view to be quite plausible. A life spent caring for but failing to find the cure for Alzheimer's can be a life that goes well in part because of this life project. It also seems plausible that the project of the mercenary doctor would not be as valuable because she doesn't care about finding the cure. Yet the only relevant difference in the doctors' activities is the disposition to care that characterizes and motivates their activities. So if one evaluates the activities differently, one should conclude that care for finding the cure accounts for the difference in evaluation.

How does the mercenary doctor case apply to Socratic inquiry? Just as the caring doctor cares for the cure but fails to find it, so Socrates cares for his soul but fails to find the wisdom he seeks. Does Socrates think that Socratic inquiry is valuable nevertheless? He claims that it is the greatest good for a human and that practicing it in the afterlife would be inconceivable eudaimonia. Must one specify *some other* result that might account for these extravagant claims? If one were to take up the project of specifying which other results make SI valuable, then one would encounter the two value puzzles that arise for instrumentalists. It is hard to see how something that is the greatest human good and is in some sense eudaimonia could be merely instrumentally valuable.

VII. Conclusion

In the *Apology*, Socrates claims that both Socratic inquiry and care for one's soul are superlatively valuable and in some sense are eudaimonia. I have argued that the best way to make sense of these claims is to deny instrumentalism and accept a non-instrumental answer to the Value Question.

On a non-instrumental interpretation, lives of Socratic inquiry are made valuable by the activity of inquiry apart from its results. Why is this the case? On the interpretation offered here, it is because Socratic inquiry is an activity of care for one's soul. Just as the doctor's activity of care for finding the cure for Alzheimer's contributes value to her life apart from its results, so Socrates' activity of care for his soul contributes value to his life apart from its results.

An upshot of this interpretation is that Socratic inquiry is more than what it is sometimes taken to be. It is not merely a formal procedure, but it is an activity of care for one's soul and for the best condition of the soul – the wise or virtuous condition. If one conceives of Socratic inquiry as primarily a formal procedure aimed at some valuable epistemic result, then one might rightly think that Socratic inquiry is neither thick nor rich enough to be anything other than merely instrumentally valuable. On this non-instrumental interpretation Socratic inquiry is more than this. It is a rich activity that demands something of its practitioners. It demands that one inquire as a way of caring for one's soul.

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