

# On the Stability View

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## 1 Introduction

In “Socrates on the Strength of Knowledge: *Protagoras* 351B–357E,” Terry Penner argues that the strength of knowledge Socrates talks about in the *Protagoras* is just knowledge’s stability in the face of different perspectives. As we go about our lives, choices are presented in different lights. For instance, say you find rice to be nice, but milkshakes to be much, much nicer. If today I offered you rice in a year or a milkshake in a year plus a day, you could easily choose the milkshake. But, if the choice were presented again in a year, it would look different. The rice would be much more appealing on account of its being available right now. If you have a mere belief that the milkshake is better, then you are at risk of succumbing to deception by the temporal proximity of a pleasure. You might give up a greater pleasure for a lesser pleasure. However, if you have knowledge, then the temporal immediacy of a pleasure will not be able to deceive you. In this paper, I will develop and critique this account of knowledge as stable belief. The next section begins by looking at the strength of knowledge. To make sense of Penner’s account, a closer look at Socrates’s “measuring-art” will be required, so I cover that in the following section. The two sections after trace Penner’s two main textual arguments for his view. The final section then defends the view that Penner argues against.

## 2 Strength of Knowledge

Penner notes that Socrates says that “knowledge is something ‘strong’ and ‘ruling’, which ‘cannot be overcome by pleasure.’”<sup>12</sup> The problem then is to figure out how it is that knowledge cannot be overcome by pleasure. From a commonsense point of view, we seem to act against what we know to be best sometimes. If Socrates is right, though, we must be mistaken in thinking this. Let “akrasia” denote action contrary to what one believes to be best at the moment of action.<sup>3</sup> On many readings, Socrates denies that such a thing is even possible. He affirms that no one errs willingly,<sup>4</sup> and as a result, nobody acts against what they believe to be the best option.<sup>56</sup> Crucially, belief is momentary. It can be sustained over time, but when one acts, the belief at the moment of action is what matters. Given that anything that one knows one also believes, nobody can act against what they know to be the best option.<sup>7</sup> Put more succinctly: to know something is to have a stable belief in it and you always act on your beliefs in the moment, so whenever you have knowledge you must act on it. Penner refers to this as the Direct Corollary View. That is, that denial of akrasia is a corollary of that no one errs willingly.

There’s already something more intuitive here. The denial of akrasia is unintuitive because we seem to believe some things and yet fail to act on them. However, what belief entails makes all the difference. A dispositional account of belief takes someone to believe something just in case she acts as though it were true.

Penner’s view of Socrates’s view of stable knowledge can be further broken down into to pieces. The first is that “What being overcome by pleasure *is*, is diachronic belief-akrasia;

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1. Terry Penner, “Socrates on the Strength of Knowledge: *Protagoras* 351B-357E,” *Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie* 79, no. 2 (1997): 117.

2. Plato, *Protagoras*, trans. C.C.W. Taylor (Clarendon Press, 1976), 352c4–7, 357c2–4; 352d7–e2, 353e6–353a2, 353a5, 353c2, 3536f, 354e, 3546f, 355a3–e3, 357c7–d1, 357e2.

3. Penner, “Socrates on the Strength of Knowledge: *Protagoras* 351B-357E,” 117.

4. *Ibid.*, 118.

5. Plato, *Protagoras*, 358b6–d4, 358e2–359a1.

6. Penner, “Socrates on the Strength of Knowledge: *Protagoras* 351B-357E,” 118.

7. *Ibid.*

(not synchronic belief-akrasia, as it is on the Direct Corollary View).”<sup>8</sup> The second is that the strength of knowledge is not in the impossibility of synchronic knowledge-akrasia, but in the impossibility of diachronic knowledge-akrasia.<sup>9</sup> Together, these two say that for Socrates, when one is overcome by pleasure, one’s beliefs change. While one will always do what she believes is best, the appearance of pleasure can persuade one that some lesser (de re) good is better than some greater (de re) good. A belief has the status of knowledge only if it is immune to this sort of persuasion. So, one who knows what the good thing to do is will always act as such.

There are two more important points to make sense of Penner’s account. The first is taking Socrates to identify the good with pleasure. This at first appears to be a sort of hedonism. And there are two options: One, that pleasure is narrower than happiness, or two, that pleasure just is happiness.<sup>10</sup> Since Socratic hedonism is just eudaimonism, the latter is correct.<sup>11</sup> While there are objections to this account, I will, from here on, assume a Socratic identity of pleasure with the human good and happiness.

### 3 Measuring-Art

Having knowledge ensures that one is not overcome by pleasure by holding a stable conception of which things are worth exchanging.<sup>12</sup> The second important point to make sense of Penner’s account is the mode of achieving this, namely, the measuring-art. Socrates embraces using the measuring-art instead of the power of appearances.<sup>1314</sup> While appearances can lead us astray in deliberation and lead us to erroneously change our minds about our choices,<sup>1516</sup> the measuring-art provides a way for us to resist the persuasion of misleading

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8. Penner, “Socrates on the Strength of Knowledge: *Protagoras* 351B-357E,” 124.

9. *Ibid.*

10. *Ibid.*, 128.

11. *Ibid.*, 129.

12. *Ibid.*, 132.

13. Plato, *Protagoras*, 356c4–357b6.

14. Penner, “Socrates on the Strength of Knowledge: *Protagoras* 351B-357E,” 132.

15. Plato, *Protagoras*, 356d7–7.

16. Penner, “Socrates on the Strength of Knowledge: *Protagoras* 351B-357E,” 132.

appearances<sup>1718</sup> and keep “intellectual balance.”<sup>1920</sup> While as far as we can tell, Socrates does not think that true beliefs are always diachronically stable, the measuring-art is stable, so he must not think mere true beliefs are stable. The power of appearance can mislead, so, mere true belief is weak. Knowledge, with the power of the measuring-art, is strong.<sup>21</sup>

Given the importance of the measuring-art to Penner’s account, we ought to seek a refinement of the concept. While it’s apparent that the measuring-art is what allows us to keep a stable grasp on which things are worth exchanging for which other things, it’s not apparent whether it’s supposed to be itself a kind of knowledge or a technique or something else. Considering the rice and milkshake example, the measuring-art would allow you to maintain your belief that the milkshake is the greater good, even a day from now, and not worth exchanging for rice today. So, if we abstract a bit, we can say that given the rice has value  $x$  and the milkshake has value  $y$ , you believe from a year away that  $x < y$ , but with diachronic akrasia, you could be convinced that  $x > y$ . But does this occur by the value of  $x$  being misperceived as higher than it is,  $y$  being misperceived as lower than it is, or does one only mix up the ordering relation between the two? All Penner uses is the ordering, but this question gives us some insight into what the measuring-art is supposed to be. If the value of  $x$  can be misperceived even without direct comparison to  $y$ , then we seem to need a measuring-art that allows for this.

Before we can settle this, the prior question of commensurability of values needs to be addressed. The phrasing of the question in terms of values of variables implicates a single axis of value. Namely, pleasure. As Penner identifies pleasure with goodness, perhaps the single axis of value seems obvious. Still, even if the two are the same, there could still be different kinds of goodness (and thus pleasure). Since rice and milkshakes are both foods, they might be intuitively close enough to have their pleasures compared directly. But comparing the

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17. Plato, *Protagoras*, 356d–e.

18. Penner, “Socrates on the Strength of Knowledge: *Protagoras* 351B–357E,” 132.

19. Plato, *Protagoras*, 356d–356e.

20. Penner, “Socrates on the Strength of Knowledge: *Protagoras* 351B–357E,” 136.

21. *Ibid.*, 137.

pleasures of smelling a rose, drinking a milkshake, drinking some bourbon, and a runner's high seems far more challenging. They vary in which senses they evoke, how long they last, how much pain is involved at the same time, and so on. Agnes Callard argues that in *Protagoras* 352b–355a, Socrates argues through the positions that values of actions are comparable, to that they are commensurable, to that they are commensurable with pleasure, at least for an akratic hedonist. While these divisions are not in the text, they do provide a clear conceptual progression.<sup>22</sup> The difference between comparability and commensurability here is that commensurability requires a covering value.<sup>23</sup> So if eating rice and drinking a milkshake are comparable, then we can say that drinking a milkshake is better than eating rice. If they are commensurable, then we can go further to say that the milkshake has more of some value than the rice. There are of course many values that one could pick and compare on. For goods and services, we often use the monetary market value of goods and services to compare value. A computer is more valuable than a loaf of bread because it costs more. If we talk about tastiness, the bread is better. Sometimes the objects chosen make the choice of value obvious. Without specifying some other value like size, one pizza is better than another just in case it tastes better. But asking whether Pluto or Neptune is a better planet has no clear meaning without further clarification of what “better” means here. The same applies for “more valuable.” Thankfully, Socrates has a particular value in mind: pleasure, i.e. goodness. This is made more obvious as he argues that someone who finds her akratic action to have been in error must do so on the basis of the bad outweighing the good.<sup>24</sup> The only way this makes sense is if there is something to compare, and that comparison being on the axis of goodness.<sup>25</sup>

Let's return now to the question of whether we take  $x$  and  $y$  to have values independently of their relation to each other. An objection Callard considers against commensurability provides more clarity. One might object that all Socrates is committed to (or is committing

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22. Agnes Callard, “Akratics as Hedonists: *Protagoras* 352b–355a,” *Ancient Philosophy* 36 (2016): 1–3.

23. *Ibid.*, 4.

24. Plato, *Protagoras*, 355d–e.

25. Callard, “Akratics as Hedonists: *Protagoras* 352b–355a,” 4.

the akratic to) is comparability. There might be a lexical ordering via some rules providing a way to compare actions without any sort of covering value.<sup>26</sup> For example, one might just take as a rule that tastes are more pleasant than smells, so eating rice is more pleasant than smelling a rose. No rose, no matter how pleasant-smelling can ever smell better than rice tastes on this rule. While Callard argues from Socrates's argument that the value of one option "outweighs" the other and must therefore be commensurable,<sup>27</sup> this much is unnecessary unless we take there to be some sort of unit of goodness. That much is not affirmed in the *Protagoras*, and instead we only have reference to the ordering of things. While an account could be constructed with some basic unit of pleasure or some whole of pleasure that everything else takes some division of, this is not needed. What's important is that any pair of two values can be weighed against each other on the metric of pleasure. While "outweighing" does better fit ordinal values, the rest of his argument fits easily with cardinal values. So the question of which is better might not be so much like looking directly at some absolute value but rather like seeing who placed higher in a race. In a race, runners finish with times and are then put in a cardinal ordering relation with each other based on those times. We often do similar things with sizes. Many items today are sold not by absolute size but rather by being small, medium, or large. These sizes mean nothing more than their being bigger or smaller than the other sizes. Likewise we can understand pleasures as being weighed in such a way that they can be ordered but not absolutely measured.

In this case, the measuring-art seems to be some sort of skill or knowledge of keeping pleasures in order. What exactly that distinction amounts to is complicated and I will not go into depth here, but the biggest worry the question hints at is that if the measuring-art is how one has diachronic stability of belief in what is more pleasurable than what, we might worry about what provides diachronic stability to the measuring-art. If it's a kind of belief, then we would need another belief to keep it stable, and then a belief to keep that belief stable, and so on. There are at least three solutions to this regress. One, there could be a

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26. Callard, "Akratics as Hedonists: *Protagoras* 352b–355a," 7.

27. *Ibid.*, 8.

virtuous circle of beliefs keeping each other stable, a la epistemic coherentism. Two, beliefs about pleasure might be special, and other beliefs might not be so diachronically vulnerable. Three, the measuring-art isn't a belief. With these three options, this general account of the measuring-art seems rather plausible.

## 4 Exegesis of *Protagoras* 351b–357e

Penner proceeds along two main lines of argument to defend his interpretation. First, he uses exegesis of *Protagoras* 351b–357e to explain why does Socrates think that knowledge cannot be overcome by pleasure. Second, he looks at why that section of discussion regarding *akrasia* is apparently plopped in a discussion about the unity of the virtues.

Looking directly at the text, we have to ask, why does Socrates think knowledge cannot be overcome by pleasure? Given that pleasure is identical with the human good,<sup>28</sup> then we can affirm the following conditional: if someone who knows what's best does otherwise because she is overcome by pleasure,<sup>2930</sup> then the pleasure that one is overcome by must be a lesser good than the good that one would have gotten by opting for that which was best.<sup>31</sup> Putting this together with the identity of pleasure with the good, we get that someone who knows what's best but chooses otherwise must be choosing for the sake of something less good.<sup>3233</sup>

On the Direct Corollary Theory interpretation, the exegesis can end here, at 355e2. Since someone choosing something lesser while knowing something else is greater contradicts that no one errs willingly, we must deny the possibility of *akrasia*.<sup>34</sup> Socrates must think that there is not actually any such thing as being overcome by pleasure, and the many are wrong

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28. Plato, *Protagoras*, 353C9–354E2.

29. Ibid., 355A5–B3.

30. Penner, "Socrates on the Strength of Knowledge: *Protagoras* 351B-357E," 126.

31. Ibid.

32. Plato, *Protagoras*, 355c–d.

33. Penner, "Socrates on the Strength of Knowledge: *Protagoras* 351B-357E," 126.

34. Ibid., 127.

in thinking so.<sup>35</sup> But while we know that he believes that knowledge cannot be overcome by pleasure,<sup>36</sup> there is still room for belief's being overcome by pleasure. "Because one is ignorant, one is deceived, wavers from the view one holds throughout most of the temporal context of the action, and then acts on a false belief."<sup>37</sup> So, the job is not done at 355e2; only at 357e2.

Previously, we put together the identification of the human good with pleasure and that someone who knows what's best is only overcome by pleasure to infer that someone who knows what's best who chooses a lesser good does so knowingly. But, we can also put them together to get that someone who chooses something less pleasant over something more pleasant does so for the sake of something less pleasant overall.<sup>38</sup> If we follow Socrates, we see how this is possible. He says that someone choosing the pleasure by which she is overcome does so because of a momentary pleasure. That is, someone who is aware of a better pleasure but nonetheless chooses a lesser pleasure does so because of a momentary ignorance in which the lesser pleasure appears greater.<sup>3940</sup>

We should note, then, that Socrates says that while appearance can lead to someone being deceived about how much pleasure an action will bring, *knowing* what is worth exchanging for what via the measuring-art will prevent one's being deceived.<sup>4142</sup> Put together with choosing a lesser pleasure being because of a momentary ignorance, we must conclude that to be overcome by pleasure is to be (momentarily) ignorant of which exchanges of goods or pleasures are worthwhile.<sup>4344</sup> We then have what Penner calls his Stability View of Socrates on the strength of knowledge.

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35. Penner, "Socrates on the Strength of Knowledge: *Protagoras* 351B-357E," 127.

36. *Ibid.*, 128.

37. *Ibid.*

38. *Ibid.*, 126.

39. Plato, *Protagoras*, 355e3-356c3.

40. *Ibid.*, 126.

41. *Ibid.*, 356c4-357e2.

42. Penner, "Socrates on the Strength of Knowledge: *Protagoras* 351B-357E," 126.

43. Plato, *Protagoras*, 357c1-e2.

44. Penner, "Socrates on the Strength of Knowledge: *Protagoras* 351B-357E," 127.

## 5 Relevance to the Unity of the Virtues

We have, then, an exegetical argument for the Stability View. The other argument Penner presents for his reading is that the Stability View makes more sense of this argument's placement in the dialogue. Immediately before the portion of the text in question, Protagoras admits, "[D]aring results both from skill and from animal boldness and madness, like capability, but courage from a good natural condition and nurture of the soul."<sup>45</sup> At the end of a discussion of whether courage is unified with knowledge and the rest of the virtues, this makes sense. But then Socrates responds, "And you you maintain, Protagoras, that some men live well and others badly?"<sup>46</sup> and proceeds into his argument for the strength of knowledge. On the Direct Corollary View, Penner argues that we're left with no real explanation for this sudden shift in topic. However, if we trust Plato to bring the dialogue back to the main point, then with the Stability View we can understand the strength of knowledge argument to be very relevant to the discussion of courage and the general scheme to get Protagoras to believe in unity of virtues.

So, first, ask, do the courageous go into fearful things while thinking that they are fearful? No. No one does bad stuff thinking that it's bad.<sup>4748</sup> So, if a courageous person goes into battle, she must think it's honorable<sup>49</sup> and therefore good, and therefore pleasant.<sup>5051</sup> Then the cowardly (and reckless) must just then have false beliefs about what is good or pleasant.<sup>52</sup> Moreover, the same the measuring-art that allows us to see which goods are worth trading for which other goods and thereby avoid being misled by the appearances of pleasure must be the same thing involved in being appropriately courageous.<sup>53</sup>

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45. Plato, *Protagoras*, 351a–b.

46. *Ibid.*, 351b.

47. *Ibid.*, 358C6–D4.

48. Penner, "Socrates on the Strength of Knowledge: *Protagoras* 351B–357E," 139.

49. Plato, *Protagoras*, 359e5.

50. *Ibid.*, 360a1–3.

51. Penner, "Socrates on the Strength of Knowledge: *Protagoras* 351B–357E," 139.

52. *Ibid.*, 140.

53. *Ibid.*, 141.

## 6 Evaluating the Stability View

We have, then, three interpretations of Socrates on the strength of knowledge in the passage: Penner's Stability View, the Direct Corollary View, and then also a motivational view. A drawback of the Direct Corollary View is that it just doesn't account for strength of knowledge. Since we always act as we believe best, there's no room for a stronger belief or knowledge to overcome a weaker belief. The motivational view, which I have thus not given much attention to, considers the multi-parted nature of the soul. Each part has some sort of motivational force, and the strength of knowledge is in its overcoming other motivational forces. For this to be true, Socrates would have to believe in some irrational desires that can effect actions. Penner takes his Stability View to overcome each of these problems while being a plausible reading of the text.<sup>54</sup>

If this all right, then indeed knowledge is something strong that cannot be overcome by pleasure, and that just means that seeing objects of pleasure from different perspectives over time will not lead one's beliefs to change in error. That there's no room for one belief to overcome another belief, though, does not directly follow from the direct corollary view. The view is not that nobody ever changes their beliefs. That's obviously not true. Presumably, someone holding the view would agree that beliefs can change when presented with more evidence of the truth. Is there any need to deny that beliefs can change when presented with convincing falsehoods? Skilled rhetoricians can convince people with true beliefs of falsities. Likewise, a very good-looking display can persuade someone that a certain food is better to eat than it is. The stronger a belief, the harder it is to change. If I have a very strong belief that rainbows have ends, then taking me on a fruitless pursuit of an end won't change my mind. If the belief is strong enough, even an education on what rainbows are won't change my mind. So there are strong false beliefs. Knowledge is at least a kind of strong true belief, on Socrates's account, and it cannot be overcome by pleasure. We might assume that in fact nothing can overcome knowledge. Once one knows something, one always knows

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54. Penner, "Socrates on the Strength of Knowledge: *Protagoras* 351B-357E," 142-143.

something. This makes handling forgetfulness cumbersome. Perhaps then once someone knows something, if the knowledge is occurrent, it cannot be shaken by anything. It can fall out of focus, and then one may take up a false belief later. Then if knowledge happened to be remembered, it can always overcome the false belief. But then an account of pleasure overcoming knowledge indirectly is easy to come by. The pleasant appearances merely need to make someone forget their knowledge and then swap in a false belief. The experience of infatuation makes this rather easily to see. Someone seems to know better, and will affirm later that she knew better, but in the moment, she will be so swept up by the false appearance of pleasure that she forgets her purported knowledge entirely. While indirect, this is a rather common form of pleasure overcoming knowledge. So that can't be right.

We would do well then to zoom in on Socrates's concern with pleasure in particular with regard to the strength of knowledge. Perhaps strong false beliefs can be developed and take on knowledge. Perhaps some further analysis of knowledge would reveal that knowledge in fact is unstoppable. Regardless, we know that Socrates takes knowledge to be something strong enough the pleasure in particular cannot overcome it. The forgetfulness case might then be a symptom of something besides pleasure misleading someone. The problem there brings us back to the measuring-art. We know that knowledge gets its strength via a stable method of coming to belief and reaffirming belief. By being able to consistently determine in one's mind which of two goods is the greater good, one is able to maintain knowledge through time. So since this is what strength requires, strong false beliefs must also need something stabilizing them. Since we've established that there must be strong false beliefs, there must also be something analogous to the measuring-art for them.

In the case of the coward, who does not know that the courageous act is better than the cowardly act, surely just telling the coward the truth is not enough to convince her to be courageous. Penner argues that between knowledge being the virtues and also the importance of its diachronic feature of stability, philosophical reflection and dialogue takes

a special place as the cultivator of knowledge (and therefore virtue).<sup>55</sup> Elsewhere, in the dialogue between Socrates and Callicles in the *Gorgias*, Socrates suggests that part of the way to cultivate virtue is to restrict the vicious from satisfying their appetites.<sup>56</sup> Mark Jonas argues that the point Socrates makes in this passage is that this development of virtues is also a development of self-control. And to cultivate self-control requires some assistance in developing the right habits. So, one becomes virtuous through practice.<sup>57</sup> While he argues that this means the orator has to do more than merely impart knowledge,<sup>58</sup> if knowledge just is self-control, i.e. diachronic belief stability, then this view of practice is compatible with the stability view. To exercise self-control, be courageous, or have knowledge is just to be proficient in the craft of maintaining one's beliefs in the face of otherwise-compelling appetites. We can then explain strong false beliefs just as beliefs habituated in a similar way, but leading to ruin. An analogy can be made with strong and weak and good and bad states. One might take the ideal government to be strong enough to resist any invaders or usurpers, but only if the government is good. If it's bad, then its strength is a detriment. Nonetheless, it's strong in the sense of being hard to damage, infiltrate, or destroy. So knowledge is like the ideal good and strong state while being bad or weak is a deficiency.

Taking knowledge to come from something akin to habituation, or habituation itself, we can account for its being immune to appearances of pleasure overcoming it via forgetfulness. A habit is not something that one needs to remember. The process of habituation usually involves consciously deciding to repeat an action many times over time. It requires reminders at first, but over time one simply no longer needs to remember the habit anymore. If you have a habit of getting out of bed and making waffles first thing every morning, then the prospect of cake for breakfast cannot tempt you because you never enter deliberation. Likewise, if you know that you ought to go to work, the prospect of just taking a nap instead doesn't really

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55. Penner, "Socrates on the Strength of Knowledge: *Protagoras* 351B-357E," 144–145.

56. Plato, *Gorgias*, trans. Walter Hamilton and Chris Emlyn-Jones (Penguin, 1973), 504e–505b.

57. Mark E. Jonas, "The Role of Practice and Habituation in Socrates' Theory of Ethical Development," *British Journal for the History of Philosophy*, 2018, 4–6.

58. *Ibid.*, 6.

tempt you because it isn't really an option. Understood this way, knowledge is strong because it diminished the frame of deliberation to the point of no other (tempting) possibilities. So, for instance, for the courageous, cowardly action is not even a live option.

Let's return to the Direct Corollary View. If take it in tandem with this understanding of the strength of knowledge, then it is possible for one to explain the strength of knowledge while holding the Direct Corollary View. Recall that the View is that the denial of akrasia follows from that no one errs willingly, and the strength of knowledge is just a corollary of the strength of belief in general. Since we always act on our beliefs and knowledge is a kind of belief, we always act on our knowledge. This seems incompatible with the notion of strength I have just outlined. However, part of one's beliefs is what one believes to be the realm of possibilities. If you believe that waffles are a good breakfast food and that cake is a good breakfast food, then your beliefs will give you room to deliberate. Whichever you choose you will acting on something you think is good. The only problem is that which belief prevails in effecting action will be unstable without a measuring-art. So over time, one's idea of which is the greater good may change.

This reading has at least one benefit over the Stability View. It captures long-term changing views better. Take an instance of buyer's remorse. Someone spends a day plotting the purchase of a new computer. She carefully deliberates over each feature and how it will be good for her over time. She has what seems to be a stable belief in the bestness of the computer she chooses. Then she makes the purchase in line with this deliberation. Then, the next morning she feels regretful. She wishes she had chosen another, or just stuck with her old computer. While she believed one to be best, she no longer believes that one to be best. This is the same as the description of what one takes to be akrasia, except more thought-through. If she had merely been tempted by a tantalizing novel feature and then regretted it, we would have no trouble placing this in the category of akrasia. But in comparing the two, we can see that what's really changed is which beliefs are most prominent in her mind. Knowledge is simply different in that the other options have left the possibilities she believes

are live options. If she had believed that one feature is absolutely mandatory and only one computer for sale had that feature, she would be immune to remorse because no other options were available, and so she cannot come to doubt her choice. But, in the case with multiple good options, the buyer will move on as every option but just living with what she has falls out of the realm of apparent possibilities.

The Stability View has some trouble with these cases. The View is good at explaining instances of someone momentarily being tempted into a bad choice. If you make a bad decision in the moment and then believe it was a bad decision, then explaining it via the diachronic instability of beliefs makes sense. If you make a good decision from a rather stable position but then come to regret it because of other beliefs intruding, it struggles in ways that the Direct Corollary View plus a model of strength (the phenomenon Penner describes) via the frame of deliberation, then both of these can be handled. Likewise, while the Stability View doesn't make sense of why we apparently can have very bad and wrong but incredibly stable beliefs (which would then appear to qualify as knowledge—a virtue), just closing the frame of deliberation to only include the bad option(s) explains this and why it can, as a strong belief, be difficult or impossible to overcome.

Finally, one might object that Penner's textual evidence still compels us to read Socrates as arguing the Stability View. The first textual evidence Penner takes as distinctly in his favor is Socrates saying that momentary ignorance is what misleads us. But, there Socrates just makes an analogy with visual appearances of things near and far away. Measurement is what allows us to overcome misleading appearances.<sup>59</sup> If you see an object but have nothing to give a sense of its scale, then you won't be able to make a clear judgment. Likewise, if presented with pleasures with no way to compare them, you cannot make a clear judgment. Socrates even advocates for including the temporal proximity of the good and bad things in weighing them against each other.<sup>60</sup> It is something to consider, just as the distance from oneself is something to consider when measuring geographic scales. While Socrates does

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59. Plato, *Protagoras*, 356c5–356e2.

60. *Ibid.*, 356a6–356c2.

say at once the measuring-art will save our lives and that therefore knowledge will save our lives, he says, “And since [the technique that will preserve our lives is] measurement, then necessarily it’s an art which embodies exact knowledge.”<sup>61</sup> Having exact knowledge closes the frame of deliberation. Again, an analogy to other kinds of measurements helps. If you see a pile of rocks with no other objects to give a sense of scale, you have conflicting beliefs to consider. It could be a pile of pebbles or a pile of boulders. (Photographs of either can look remarkably similar.) But, with something to give a clear comparison, or better yet an exact measurement, of size, you can narrow down the possibilities and not be left second-guessing any actions you make on the belief.

The second textual argument Penner makes is the relevance of the akrasia discussion to the unity of the virtues. But part of explaining this account of closing the frame of deliberation was explaining how one with the Direct Corollary View can understand the courageous and the cowardly. The courageous just has fewer options to consider. She does so because she is somehow able to measure the pleasures and pains and therefore close deliberation off from the possibility of cowardice.

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61. Plato, *Protagoras*, 357b4–5.