

SOCRATES' ARGUMENT FOR HEDONISM

EXCERPTED FROM PLATO'S *PROTAGORAS* (354C-355A)

TRANSLATED BY W.R.M. LAMB, REVISED BY G. SALMIERI

You regard pain as bad and pleasure as good, since you call the very act of enjoying something bad as soon as it deprives us of greater pleasures than it has in itself, or leads to greater pains than the pleasures it contains. For if there is some other reason that you call the act of enjoyment bad, with a view to some other end, you could tell us what this other end is. But you will be unable to do so....

Is it enough for you to live out your life pleasantly, without pain? If it is, and you are unable to tell us of anything except that the good and bad are that which result in pleasure or pain, [then you have to agree that pleasure is identical with goodness and pain is identical with badness.]