




Framing the Polus Conversation

Gorgias

- Dialog that is framed as examining the nature of rhetoric
- Rhetoric = a technique of persuasive speech on any subject
- Does not require actual expertise on the part of the speaker regarding the *subject*
- Generally pursued for personal advancement, esp. in democratic Athens
- Taught by Gorgias, his student Polus

Dramatis Personae

- Socrates
 - Chaerephon (friend of Socrates)
 - Gorgias
 - Polus
 - Callicles
- Practitioners, teachers,
aficionados of Rhetoric
- 

Calicles' Moral Psychology

- Desires (of various intensities)
- Pleasure
- Courage/cowardice/shame



- Good life = having your desires fulfilled (=pleasure)
- More is better



- Cultivate **POWER** = ability to get what you want
- Rhetoric a key skill b/c it confers power comparable to a tyrant's

NOTE that assumptions about psychology and ethics lead to conclusions about what one ought to DO

What is Rhetoric? Gorgias Section

- The finest of arts
 - Not a definition, just praise, doesn't tell us what it *is*, and have to know what it is to evaluate it
- The art of persuasion through speech
 - The kind that persuades by educating?
 - The kind that persuades without educating?
- What's good about it?
 - Encompasses or leashes all the other arts – you can get the doctor, engineer, general to do what you want without having to learn medicine, engineering, warfare.
- Is that really good? Can't you do harm, like a boxer who murders people?
 - Gorgias: if someone isn't virtuous, I'll teach him that too.
 - (Acknowledges virtue as a distinct topic, perhaps views rhetorical technique as morally neutral)

Polus on Rhetoric

- Rhetoric makes one something equivalent to a tyrant – gives you the **power** so that you can get whatever you want.
 - Implicitly, Polus thinks tyrants live a good (ideal?) life!
- Definition of 'power' that Socrates and Polus agree to
 - Ability to get what you want and benefit yourself
- Polus thinks rhetoric is the key to this
 - A big part of getting what you want is dependent on other people
 - Rhetoric is the art of getting them to do what you want
 - **Socrates:**
 - it isn't an *art* at all
 - It doesn't help the user get what s/he wants or benefit them

Socrates' Analogical Characterization of Rhetoric

	Body	Soul/State
Arts – based on knowledge, aim at good of patient	Physical Training (<i>gymnastike</i>)	
Arts – based on knowledge, aim at good of patient	Medicine	


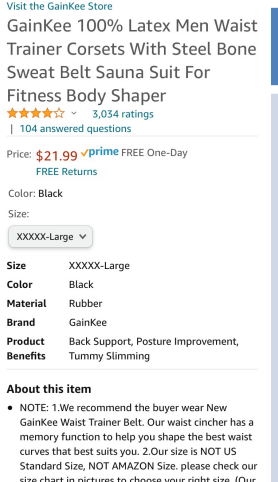
Socrates' Analogical Characterization of Rhetoric

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Builds Up Arts – based on knowledge, aim at good of patient	Physical Training (<i>gymnastike</i>)	
Cures “Illness” Arts – based on knowledge, aim at good of patient	Medicine	

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<p>Builds Up</p> <p>Arts – based on knowledge, aim at good of patient</p> <p>Knacks – counterfeits based on playing to taste, for benefit of practitioner</p>	<p>Physical Training (<i>gymnastike</i>)</p> <p>Beauty culture (cosmetics, fashion, corsetry)</p>	
<p>Cures “Illness”</p> <p>Arts – based on knowledge, aim at good of patient</p> <p>Knacks – counterfeits based on playing to taste, for benefit of practitioner</p>	<p>Medicine</p> <p>Cookery (pastry chefs, confectioners)</p>	

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<p>Cures “Illness”</p> <p>Arts – based on knowledge, aim at good of patient</p> <p>Knacks – counterfeits based on playing to taste, for benefit of practitioner</p>	<p>Medicine</p> <p>Cookery (pastry chefs, confectioners)</p>	<p>Laws (courts, punishment)</p> <p>Rhetoric</p>

Socrates' Analogical Characterization of Rhetoric

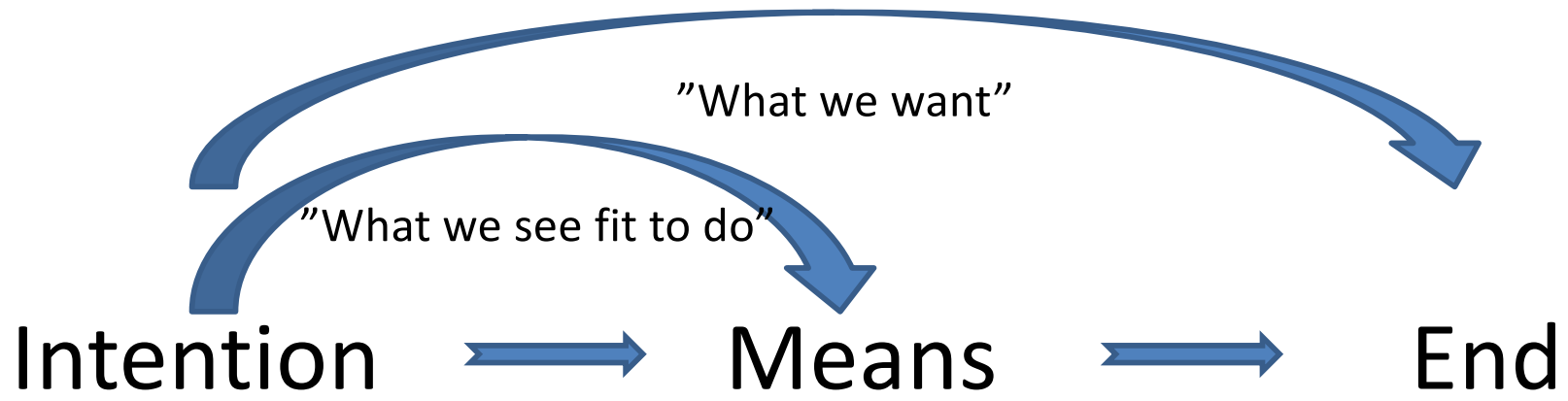
	Book	<p>Claim: Rhetoric is the ART of persuasion through speech</p>	
Builds Up			
Arts – based on knowledge, aim at good of patient	Physic (gymnastics)	Rhetoric not an art (<i>techne</i>) because:	
Knacks – counterfeits based on playing to taste, for benefit of practitioner	Beauty (cosmetics)	1) Not based in knowledge of subject	
	Cookery (pastry chefs, confectioners)	2) Aims at good of practitioner rather than patient	
Cures "Illness"	Medicine	Laws (courts, punishment)	
Arts – based on knowledge, aim at good of patient			
Knacks – counterfeits based on playing to taste, for benefit of practitioner			Rhetoric

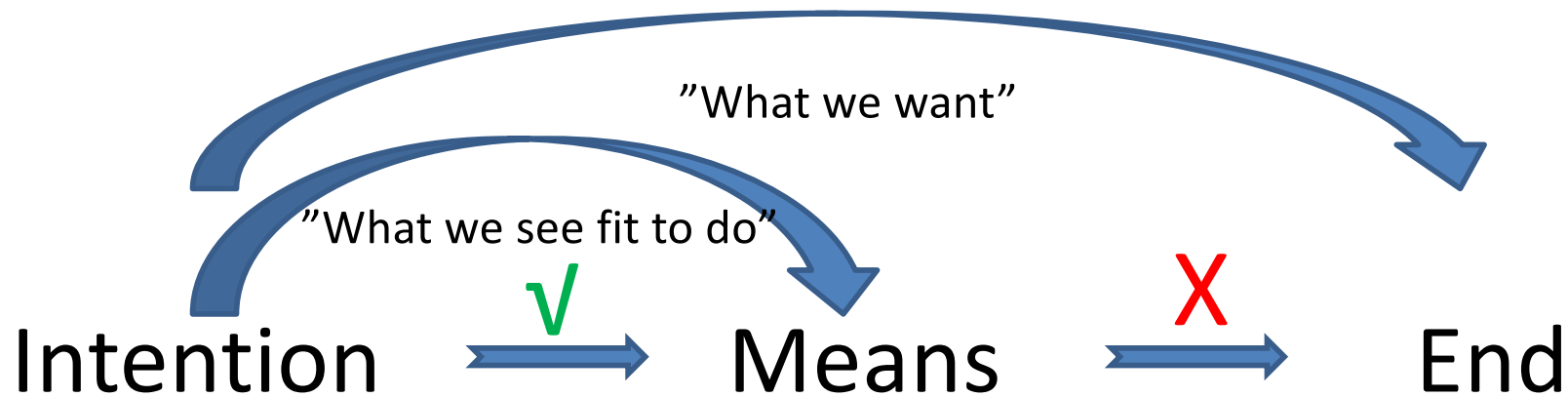
Not an art....so what?

- Polus can still say:
 - Rhetoric allows a person to do/get what they want
 - This amounts to great power – in fact, power like that of a tyrant
 - Does the same things, whether it's an art or a knack: **you can do and get whatever you want!**

Socrates' Odd Claim

- Socrates opines that tyrants and rhetoricians are able to *do what they see fit to do*, but do not *do what they want*.
 - In another translation, they do “*what they think best*” but not “what they will”
- If they don't do what they want, they don't have power
- What distinction is Socrates making here?





Rhetoric (or tyranny) might allow you to execute the strategy you think best (Polus: taking enemies' property, putting them to death)

But if those means don't really bring about the good end – if you've miscalculated the best means – it doesn't get you the good you wanted, and might even do harm

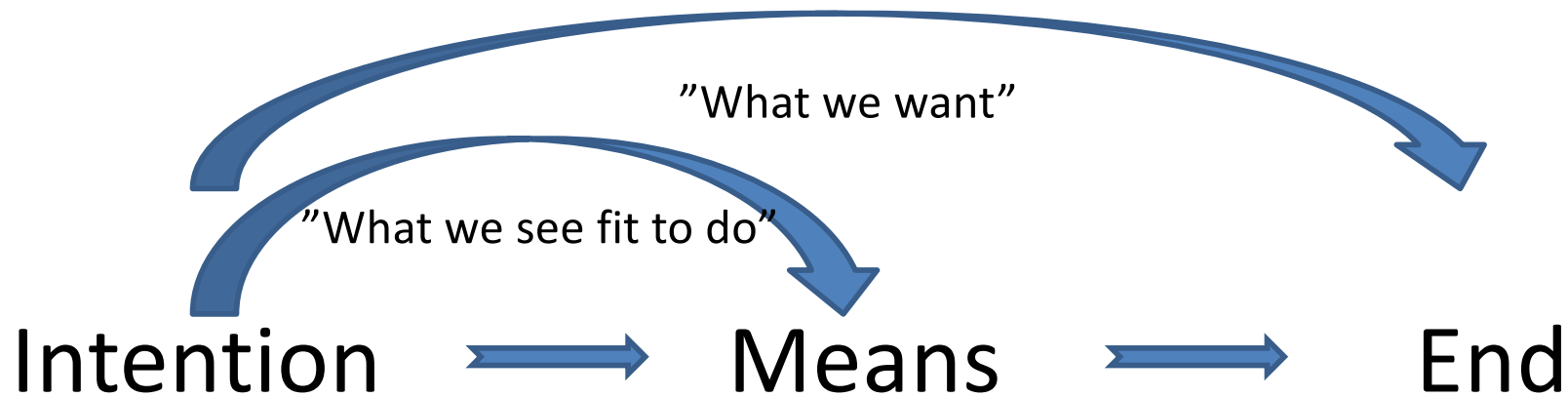
Punishment and Justice

Polus

- Having dictatorial power and taking whatever I want is unjust – but good for me if I can do it and get away with it
- Being punished for it is bad
- One reason rhetoric is good is that it helps you act unjustly and escape punishment
 - Can persuade assembly/court to do something unjust on your behalf
 - Can argue your way out of punishment

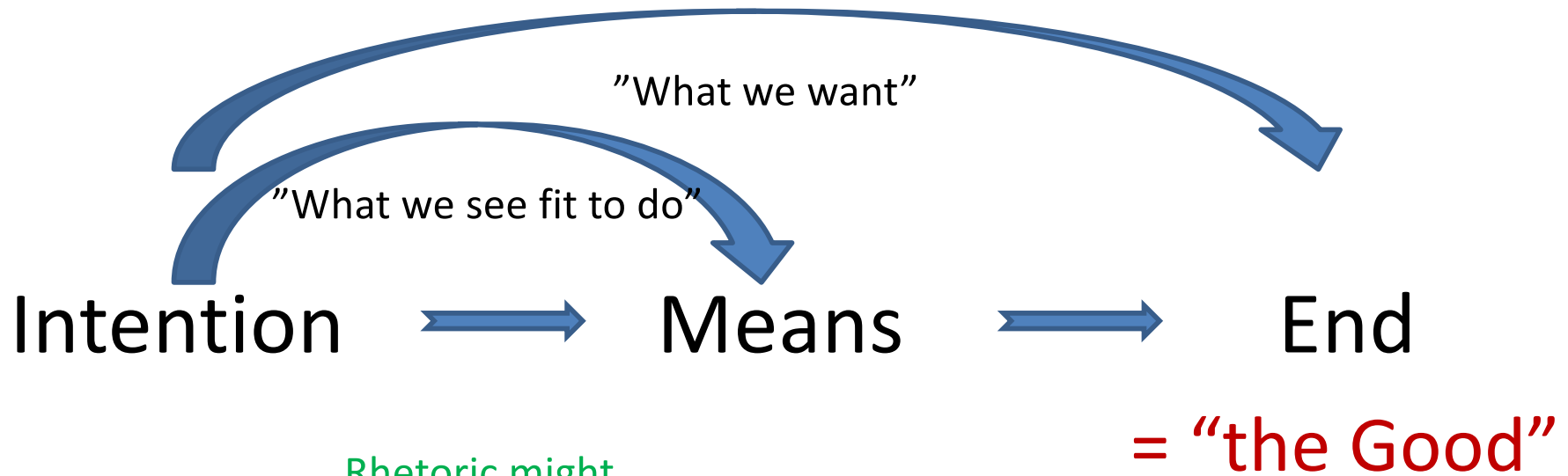
Socrates

- Being an unjust person is bad
- Being punished for injustice makes one less bad – can cure injustice (being unjust analogous to being sick and taking medicine)
- If rhetoric helps you escape punishment for injustice, it is an impediment to your good – keeps you “sick” or makes you worse.

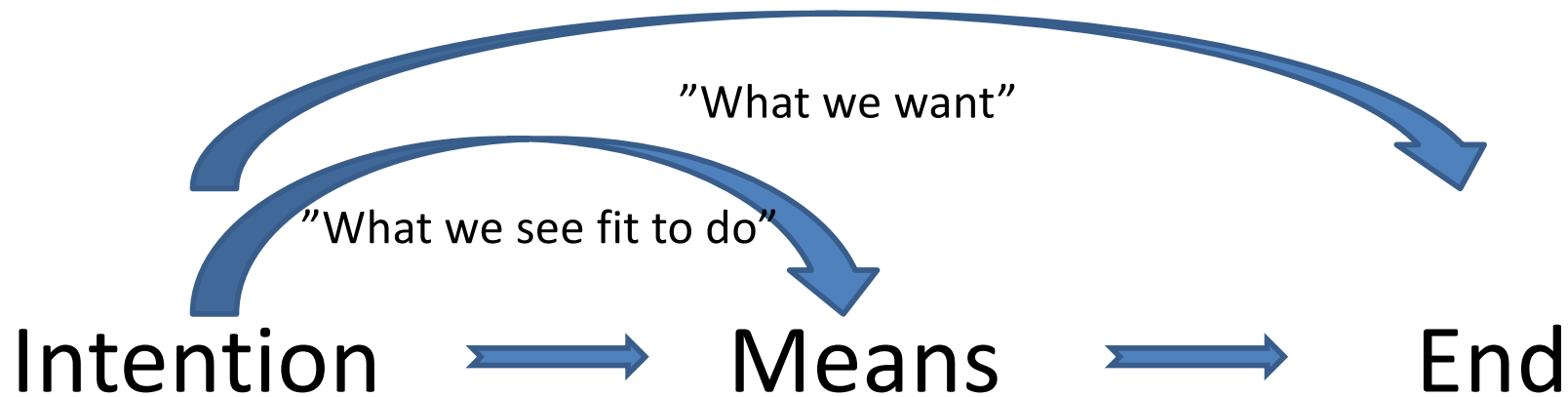


Rhetoric (or tyranny) might allow you to execute the strategy you think best (Polus: taking enemies' property, putting them to death)

Socrates speaks of something that *all* our actions aim at – perhaps a **final end**



Rhetoric might
allow you to
execute the
strategy you
think best



= "the Good"

Rhetoric might allow you to execute the strategy you think best

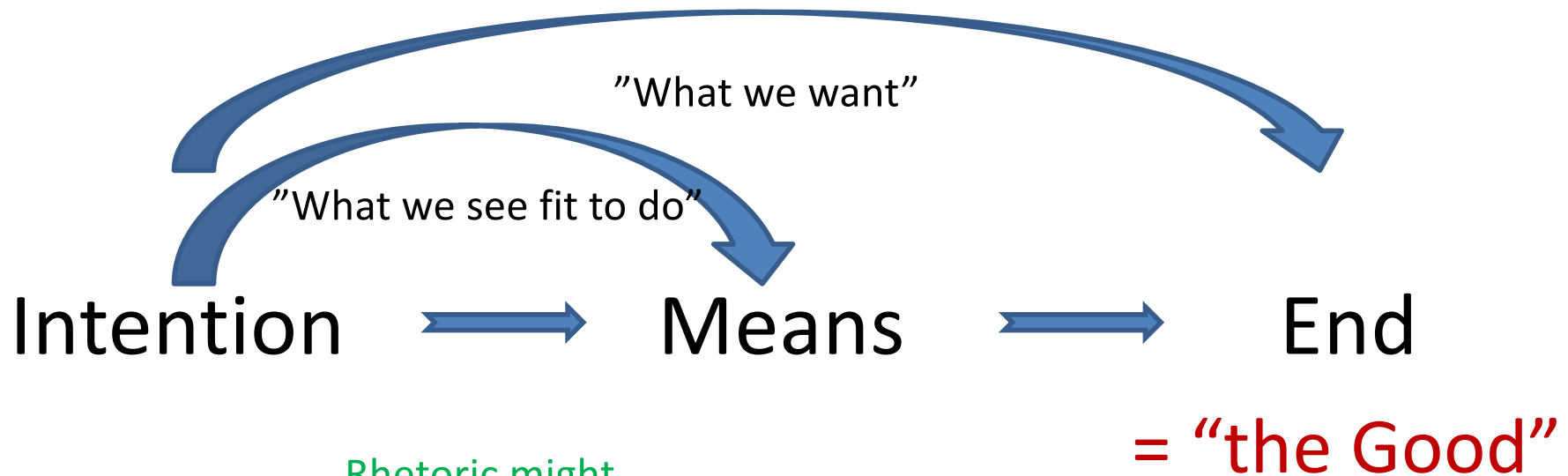
- No real elaboration on what this means in *Gorgias*
- Probably should not assume things from later Platonic dialogs like *Republic*
- Perhaps just "whatever will truly benefit oneself, whatever that might turn out to be"

Moral Psychology



Moral Psychology of The *Gorgias*

1. **What we want is the good**
2. We do what we see fit/think best – i.e., what we believe to be the best means to achieve the good
 - So what differentiates the good and bad person, the person who does or does not achieve the good they set out to get?
 - Whether they have the right beliefs about what will really bring about the good – *knowledge* of the good
 - **“Virtue is knowledge of the good”**
 - Relevance given the characterization of rhetoric?
 - Supposed to not require *knowledge* – a way to pursue what you *think best*, but whether it achieves its end depends on whether you were right



Rhetoric might help you here – executing the means

- But not here
- What you need is knowledge of what will really bring about the good end
- (Socratic) philosophy is aimed at finding knowledge (esp. Of the Good)

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A claim about what motivates us – determines how we act:

ONLY OUR BELIEF/CALCULATION of what will bring about the good.

An “intellectualist” psychology (no non-rational forces like appetites, emotions – unless these can be reconstrued as beliefs)

Belief-Desire Psychology

- People's actions can be understood in terms of
 - What they believe
 - What they want
- E.g., “Mary went to the refrigerator because she **wanted** a soda and **believed** there was soda in the fridge”

Belief-Desire Psychology

- People's actions can be understood in terms of
 - What they believe
 - What they want
- Prominent type of action theory in
 - Philosophy of Mind
 - Economics
 - Decision Theory/Game Theory

Moral Psychology of The *Gorgias*

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Note: treats desires as beliefs about what is good (or what will lead to the good)

So a peculiar subclass of belief/desire psychology, or indeed belief-only psychology (except in irreducible wanting of the good)

Moral Psychology of The *Gorgias*

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Ambiguous:

- 1) Particular things we take to be good (e.g., health or wealth) – but could we be wrong about these being good as well?
- 2) “The Good” in some abstract ideal sense – we always aim at “the Good”
 - 1) **What is really good for oneself?**
 - 2) A more inclusive moral good?
 - 3) An ideal standard (as in later Plato)

In terms of desire-mapping

Desire → Desire

Desire → Desire

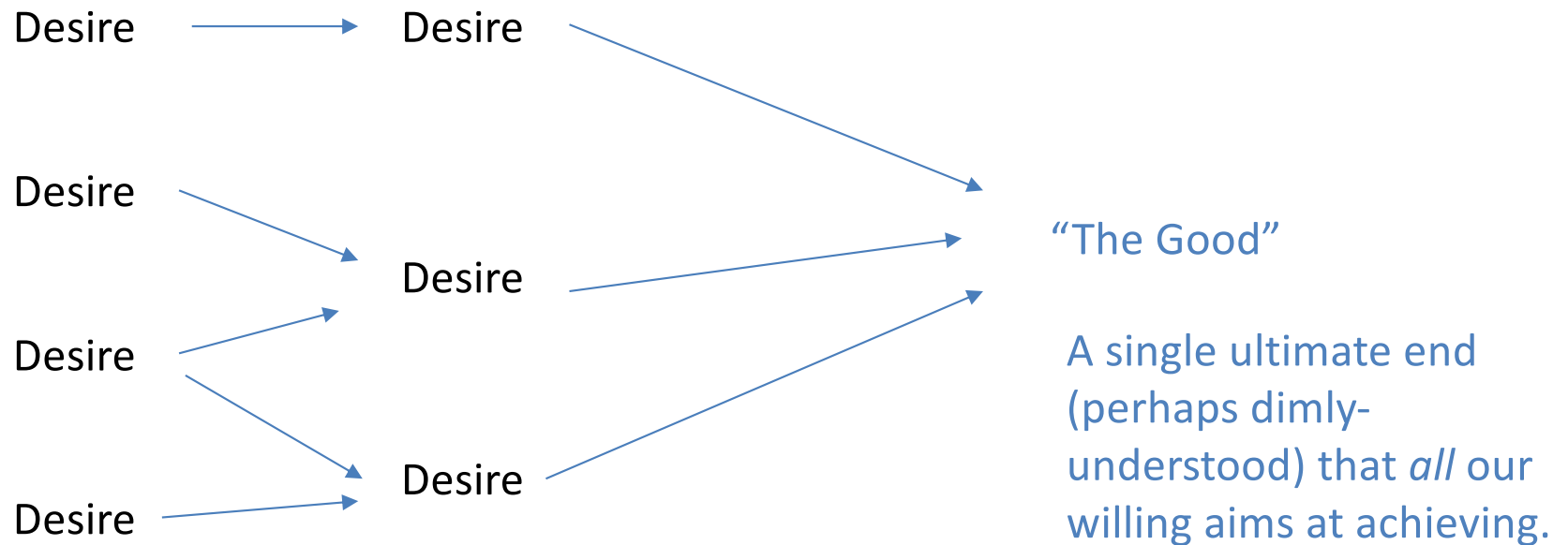
Desire → Desire

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At least the “means”
desires are beliefs about
what will bring about
the good we want

Various *particular* goods
(or things thought to be
good): health, wealth,
honor, pleasure, etc.

In terms of desire-mapping



Various *particular* goods
(or things thought to be
good): health, pleasure,
etc.

(For now, assume this
just means “what will
really turn out to be
good for me”)

Argument that Virtue is Knowledge (of the Good)

1. We always want the good
2. We always do what we see fit/think best (believe what will bring about the good for ourselves)
3. **Therefore**, If a person knows what is really good (what she thinks best corresponds to what really is best), she will do it (1 and 2)
4. **Therefore**, If a person does not do what is good, it is because she had mistaken beliefs about what is good (lacked knowledge of it). (1 and 2)
5. Virtue is whatever personal trait makes a person good.
6. **Therefore, virtue consists in knowledge of what is really good (3,4,5)**

First Written Assignment

- Reconstruct in your own words:
 - What Socrates means by distinction between “what we want” and “what we see fit”
 - The implied account of action/psychology
 - How, based on this, he can make a case that virtue is knowledge of the good and that no one does what is bad willingly.
 - Zeyl translation of kakos as evil is suspect. Better “what is bad for oneself”

Socrates' Moral Psychology



Socrates' Moral Psychology

- What we always want is The Good
- We always do what we believe will be best (be good or bring about the Good)



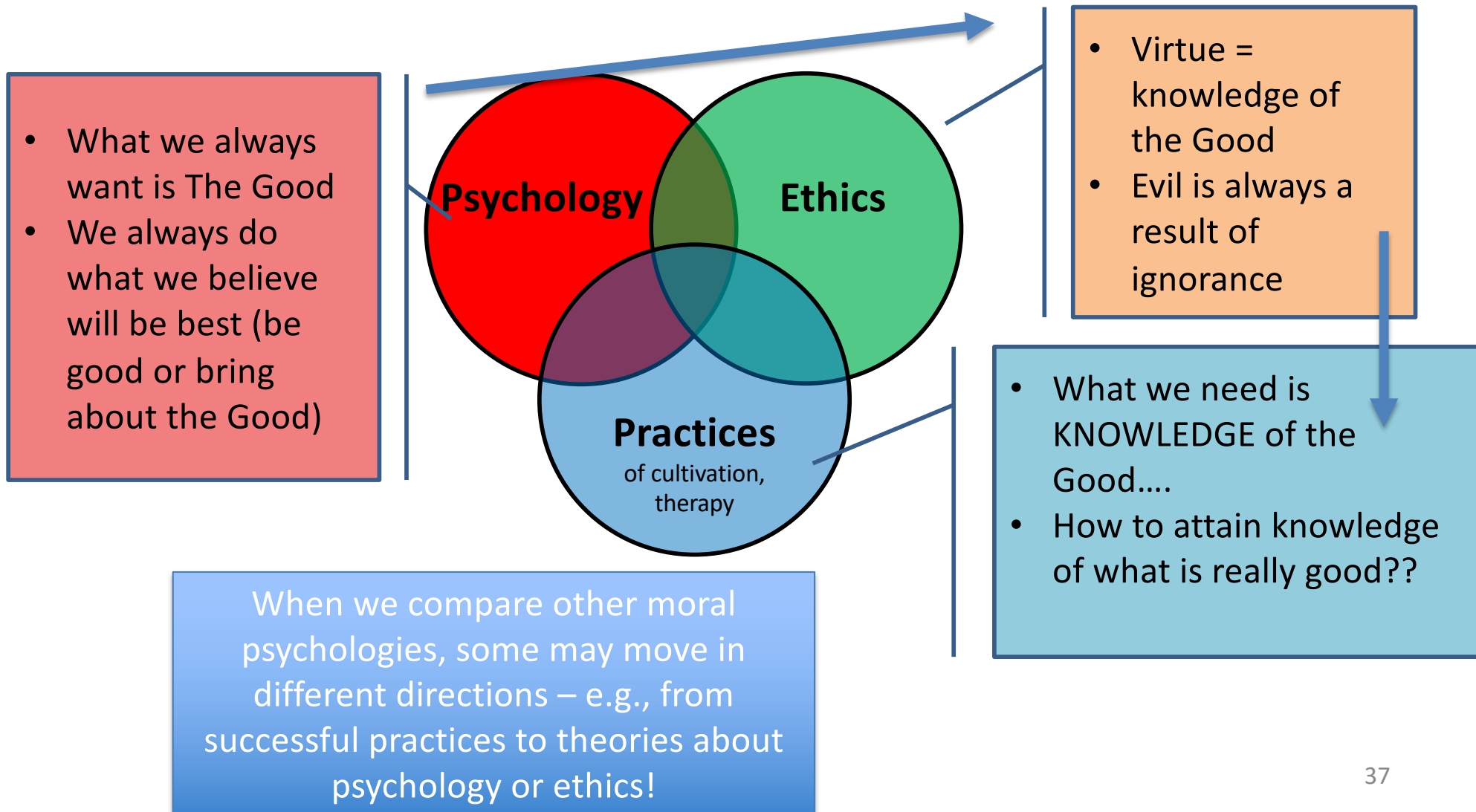
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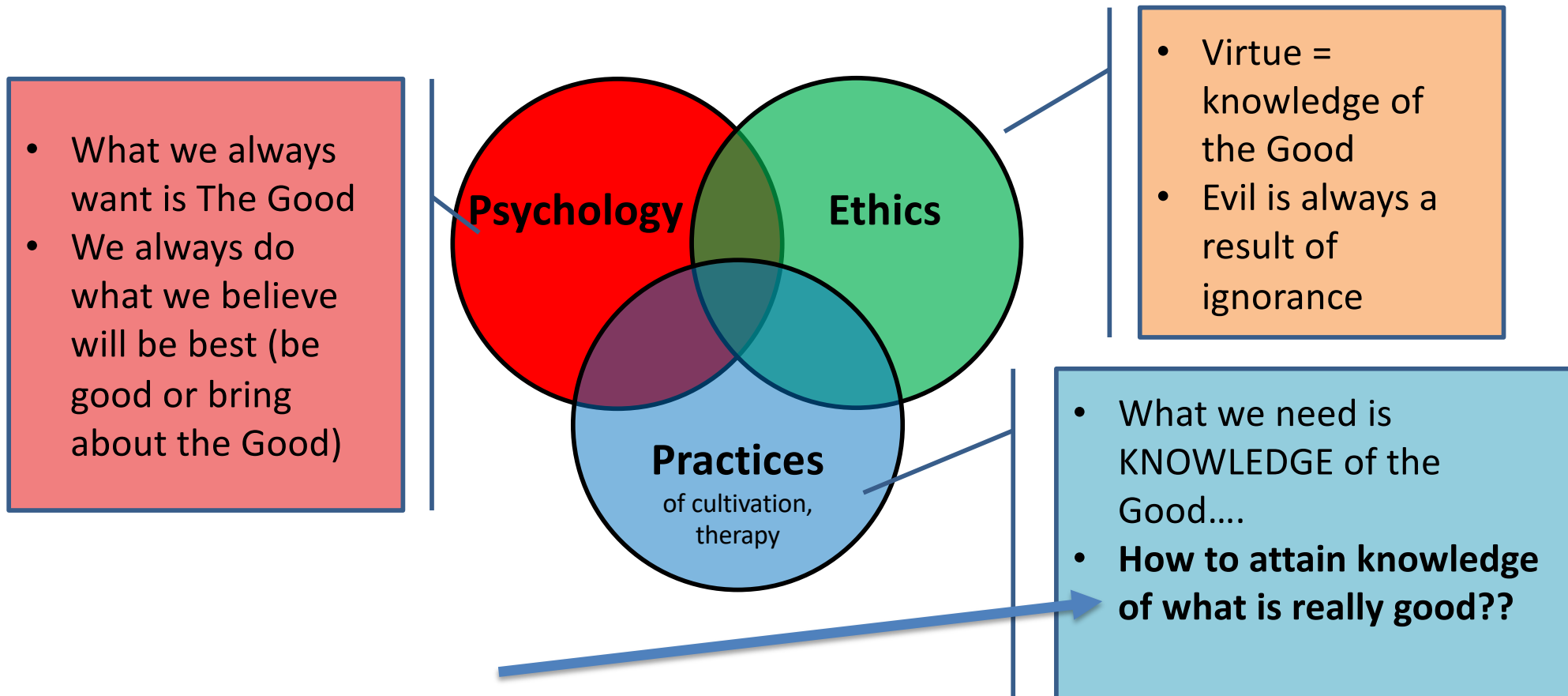


- Virtue = knowledge of the Good
- Bad action is always a result of ignorance

Socrates' Moral Psychology



Socrates' Moral Psychology



An invitation to
philosophy



Ask Socrates?



*“The only true **wisdom** is in **knowing** you know **nothing**.”*

Socrates

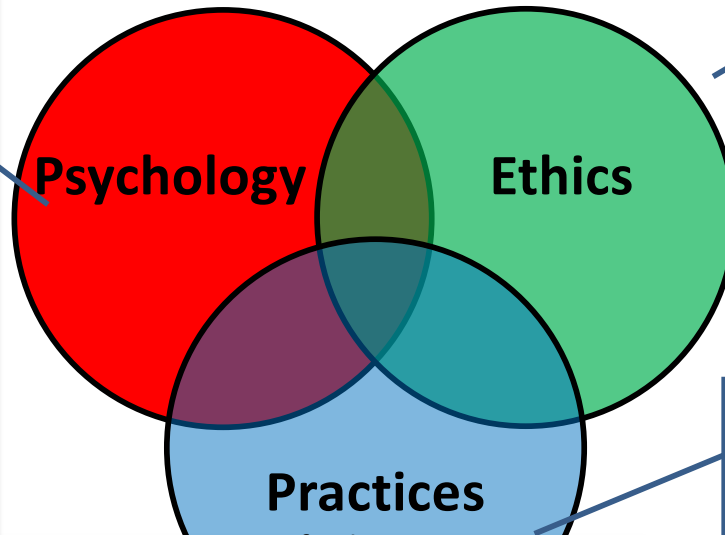
Goalcast

Socratic Method

- Socrates
 - Claims to have no knowledge of his own
 - Describes himself as a “midwife” of ideas in others
 - *elenchus*
- Elenchic discussion
 - *Might* find someone who knows (but still need to test it to see if it is really sound)
 - Best means we have to develop, test our ideas about how to live, hence most important thing to do. (Why Socrates is always doing it!)

Socrates' Moral Psychology

- What we always want is The Good
- We always do what we believe will be best (be good or bring about the Good)



- Virtue = knowledge of the Good
- Evil is always a result of ignorance

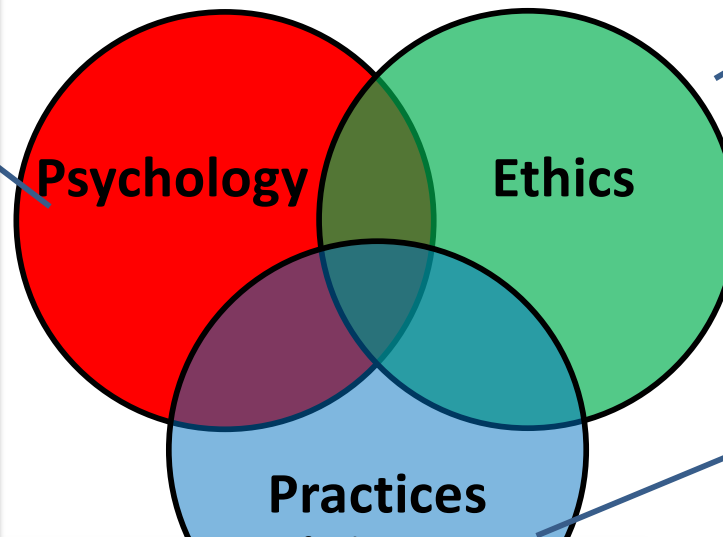
- What we need is KNOWLEDGE of the Good....
- How to attain knowledge of what is really good??
- **Philosophical inquiry!**

Empirical claims – can test against experience, experiment

(how?)

Socrates' Moral Psychology

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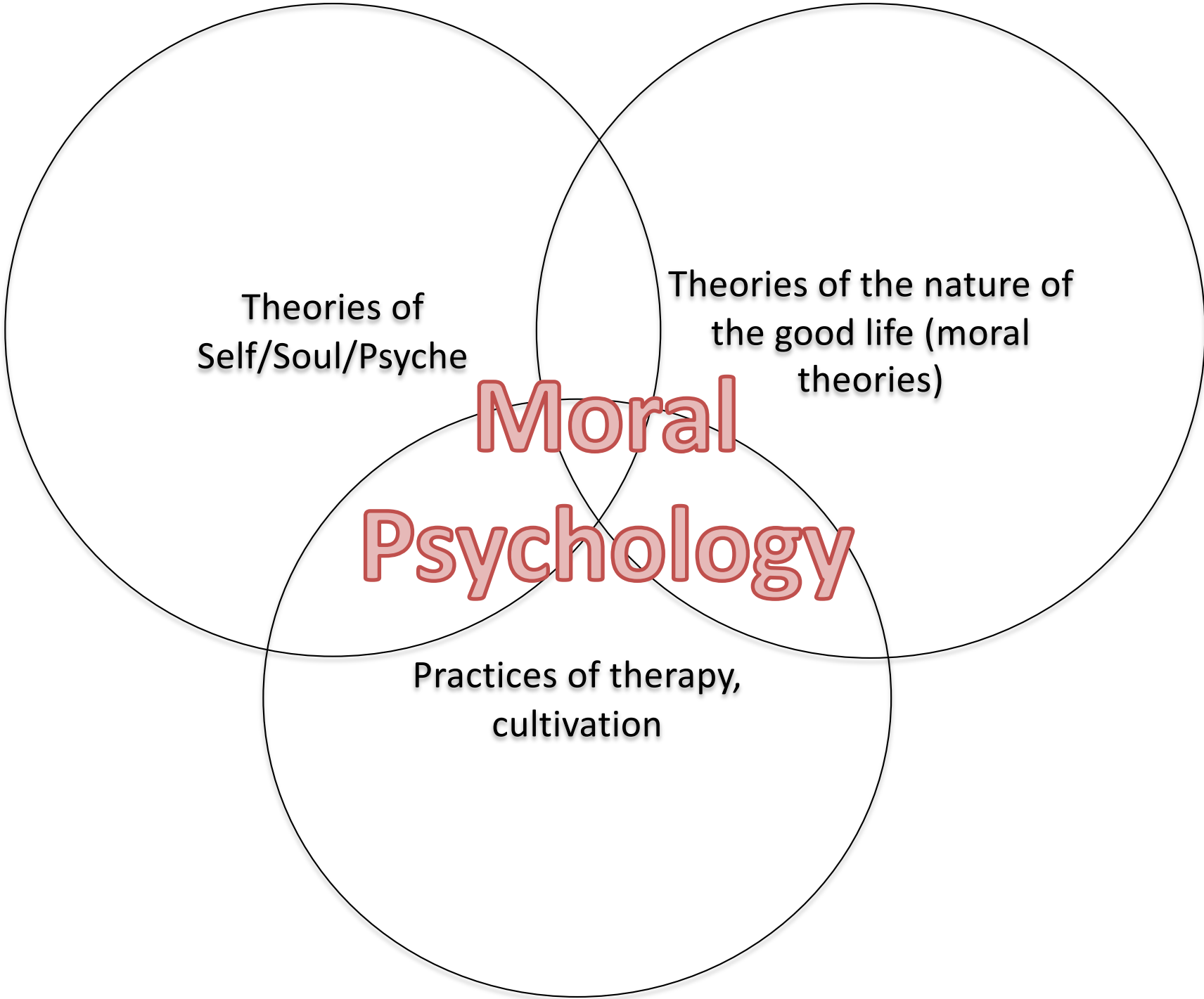
- What we need is KNOWLEDGE of the Good....
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- **Philosophical inquiry!**

Do we ever do something, believing it to be bad?

Is believing something good sufficient motivation to cause us to do it?

Exercise

- Reflect and jot down for yourself one or more of the following:
 1. Have you ever done something, believing it to be bad/wrong?
 2. Have you ever believed something good, yet not done it? Found yourself unable to make yourself do it?
 3. Are there things on your desire list that you do not in fact consider good?

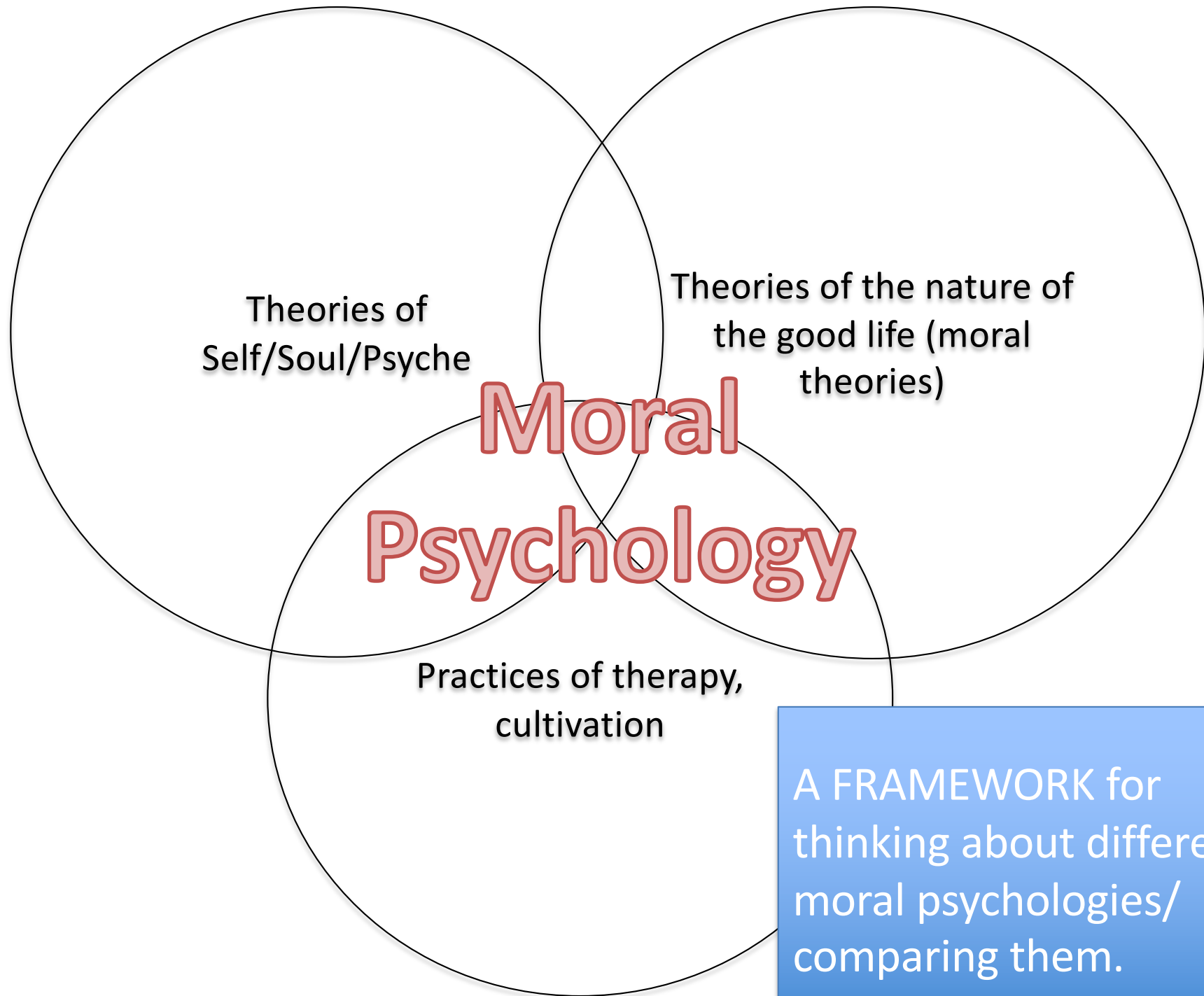


Theories of
Self/Soul/Psyche

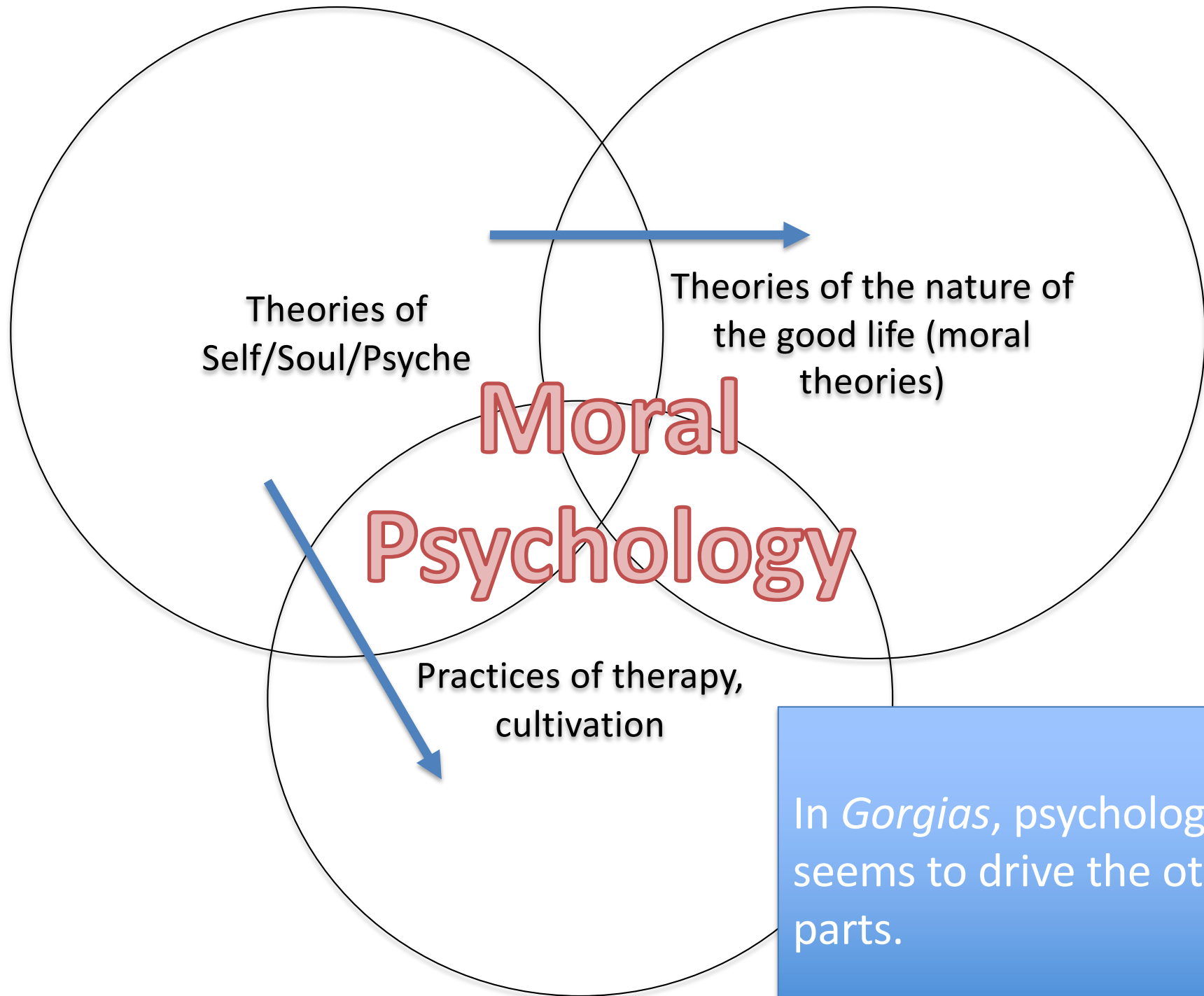
Theories of the nature of
the good life (moral
theories)

**Moral
Psychology**

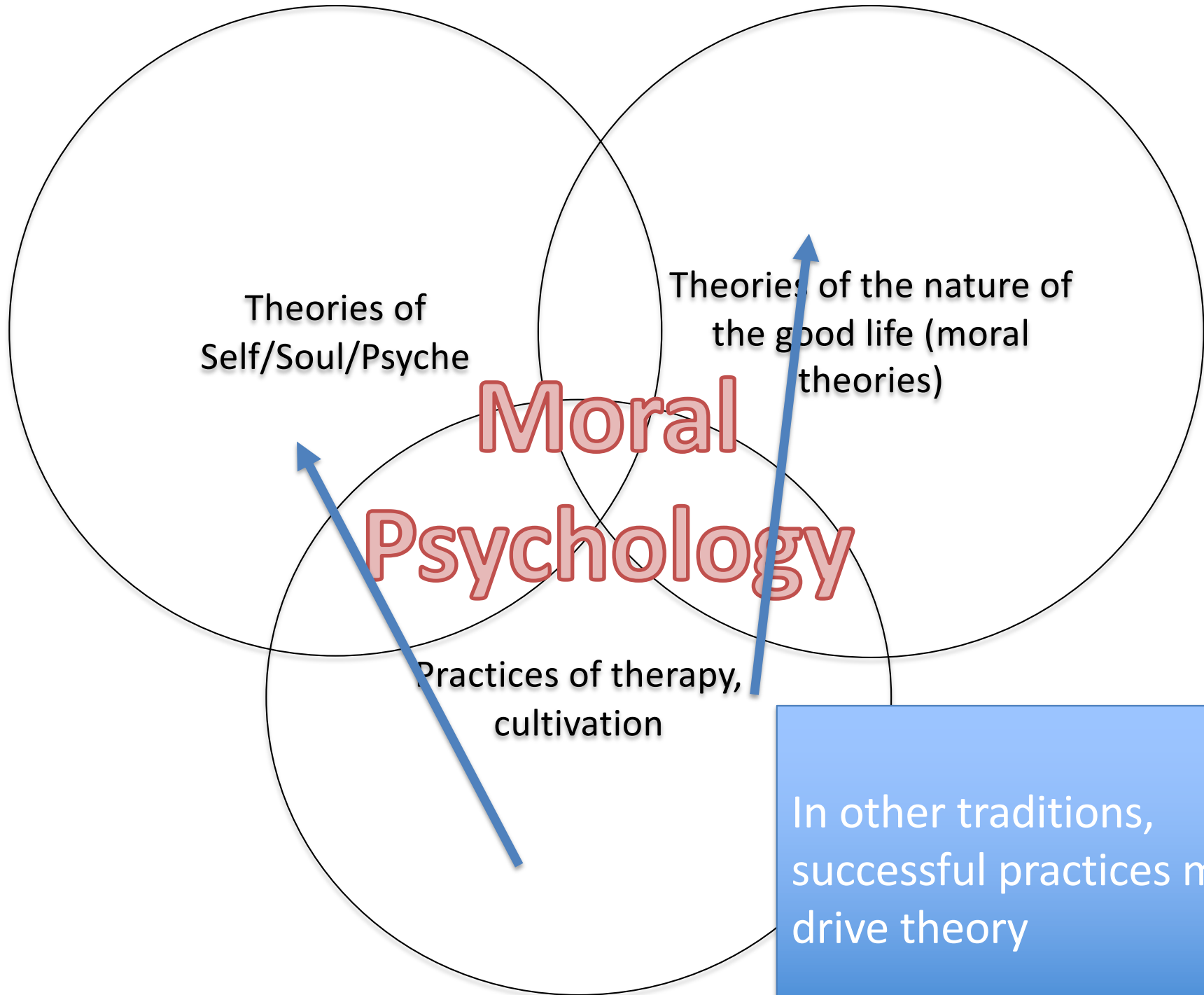
Practices of therapy,
cultivation



A FRAMEWORK for thinking about different moral psychologies/ comparing them.



In *Gorgias*, psychology seems to drive the other parts.



Theories of
Self/Soul/Psyche

Theories of the nature of
the good life (moral
theories)

**Moral
Psychology**

Practices of therapy,
cultivation

In other traditions,
successful practices may
drive theory

Comparing Moral Psychologies

- Can compare what they have in each circle, and how they interact.
- An example: the psychology of the *Gorgias* vs. Plato's later psychology in *Republic*

Psychologies of *Gorgias*, *Republic*

Gorgias

- Psychology only has intellectual components – beliefs about what's good and rational deliberation
- These are only determiners of action
- So the road to improvement would have to lie in knowledge and reasoning

Republic

- Still a rational part of the soul
- But also two other kinds of faculties:
 - *Appetites* like hunger, fear, anger (non-rational)
 - *Thumos* – an honor-loving faculty
- These compete for control
- Justice consists in having the parts in order, under the governance of Reason
- *See Macintyre reading for some comparison*

Tripartite Soul Depicted as Many-Headed Beast in *Republic X*

- Human head – **Reason**
- Lion head – ***Thumos***
(love of honor, hatred of what is shameful/ignoble)
- Many heads of diverse animals – Various **appetites**

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- Many heads of diverse animals – Various **appetites** (hunger, anger, fear, sexual desire, etc.)

Different psychological faculties that can motivate behavior

Compete for control of behavior

If the soul is not properly ordered, it is at war with itself and acts stupidly and blindly

Only Reason can decide when other desires *should* be fulfilled, so it should be in control and govern the others – then the soul is just and healthy

Tripartite Soul Depicted as Many-Headed Beast in *Republic X*

- Human head – **Reason**

- Lion head – ***Thumos***

Different psychological faculties that can motivate behavior

(love of honor, what is shameful)

- Many headed animals – **appetites** (anger, fear, desire, etc.)

Optional Exercise: Draw your own Beast

Draw your soul as a many-headed beast. Identify different sources of motivation in yourself and depict each with an appropriate animal head.

behavior

self
ly

men
filled,
nd
ne soul

is just and healthy

Plato's View

- Did Plato change his view?
- Are *any* of the views in the dialogues safe to assume as Plato's? (He never speaks in his own voice)

Next Time....

- A contemporary movement: Positive Psychology
- Video by Jen d'Andrea, director of Wesleyan's behavioral health services