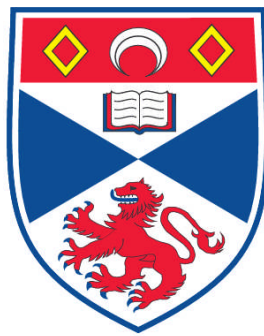


**THE VALUE OF PLEASURE IN PLATO'S *PHILEBUS* AND
ARISTOTLE'S *ETHICS***

Joachim Aufderheide

**A Thesis Submitted for the Degree of PhD
at the
University of St. Andrews**



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**The Value of Pleasure in Plato's
Philebus and Aristotle's *Ethics***

Joachim Aufderheide

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Professor Sarah Broadie
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Abstract

This thesis is a study of the theories of pleasure as proposed in Plato's *Philebus*, Aristotle's *EN* VII.11-14 and *EN* X.1-5, with particular emphasis on the value of pleasure. Focusing on the *Philebus* in Chapters 1 and 2, I argue that the account of pleasure as restorative process of a harmonious state in the soul is in tension with Plato's claim that some pleasures are good in their own right. I show that there are in fact two ways in which pleasure (and other processes of the soul) can have value in the *Philebus*. The tension in Plato's position arises because he focuses exclusively on only one way in which pleasure can have value. Chapter 3 deals with Aristotle's response to Plato in *EN* VII.11-14. According to the standard interpretation only complete activities (such as thinking and seeing) can be pleasures in their own right, but not incomplete activities (such as eating and drinking). Since this interpretation attributes to Aristotle both an implausible view and a bad response to Plato, I offer a novel interpretation of *EN* VII.12 according to which the central contrast is not between complete and incomplete activities, but between states and their use. This interpretation is more faithful to Aristotle's text and gives him a better response to Plato. In Chapter 4 I turn to the central claim of *EN* X.4-5 that pleasure perfects an activity. I argue that we cannot understand how pleasure functions unless we take into account the state whose activation is perfected by pleasure. In particular, the agent's disposition of being a lover of a certain activity (an attitude which belongs to the activated state) is crucial for explaining why the agent takes pleasure in it. The focus on the agent's attitude highlights that the value of pleasure does not depend solely on the value of the activity (as many interpreters assume). I suggest instead that pleasure is valuable when and because it is an appropriate response to a given situation.

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I, Joachim Aufderheide, hereby certify that this thesis, which is approximately 66000 words in length, has been written by me, that it is the record of work carried out by me and that it has not been submitted in any previous application for a higher degree.

I was admitted as a research student in October 2007 and as a candidate for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in October 2007; the higher study for which this is a record was carried out in the University of St Andrews between 2007 and 2011.

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Introduction

Both Plato and Aristotle see that assigning the proper role to pleasure in the best life is of central concern to a moral philosopher. Both philosophers, and many others after them, struggle with this task. One sign of this struggle is that Plato appears to be presenting different views about pleasure and its relationship to the good life in various dialogues such as the *Phaedo*, *Gorgias*, *Protagoras*, *Republic*, *Philebus*, and again in the *Laws*.

Aristotle, too, has something interesting to say about pleasure in almost every Book of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, either in relation to virtue (Books I, II, and X), in relation to action (Book III), in relation to weakness of the will (Book VII), or in relation to friendship (Books VIII and IX). A sign of his struggle with assigning the proper role to pleasure in the best life is that the *EN* contain two essays on pleasure (in VII.11-14, in X.1-5 respectively) which seem to approach the topic from completely different angles (Owen 1971-2) and are possibly in conflict with each other. Since Aristotle did not intend to have them included in the same work (Festugière 1936), I study them independently as self-standing essays on pleasure in Chapters 3 and 4, leaving a brief discussion of their relationship for the Epilogue.

Despite their differences, both essays have in common that they respond to the *Philebus*. In *EN* VII.12 Aristotle refutes the official theory of pleasure found in the *Philebus*, namely that pleasure is a process of coming to be. In *EN* X.4-5 Aristotle seems to model his own theory of pleasure after a more subtle view of pleasure, also found in the *Philebus*, namely that pleasure follows upon certain activities. So, studying the *Philebus* is not only worthwhile for its own

sake, it is also necessary for understanding each of Aristotle's treatises on pleasure.

Although I do contrast Plato's view on pleasure with Aristotle's (for the simple reason that Aristotle develops his own view about pleasure as a response to Plato's), I compare the views, for their philosophical merits, only in a preliminary way in the Epilogue. My aim in this dissertation is to lay the foundation for a fruitful comparison between the conceptions of pleasure found in the *Philebus* and the *EN*. I do so by giving novel answers to the central questions which have to be answered before one can even begin to ask whether the theory discussed in the *Philebus* is Plato's, what the relationship is between the two treatises in the *EN*, and which theory of pleasure is the best.

The central questions are:

1. Is there a theory of pleasure in the *Philebus* which encompasses all kinds of pleasure?
2. Is there a single way of understanding the value of pleasure in the *Philebus*?
3. What is Aristotle's main criticism on the *Philebus* theory of pleasure in *EN* VII.11-14?
4. The central claim of *EN* X.4-5 is that pleasure perfects activity. How does this work?

Why are these questions relevant and what new light do I shed on answering them? The relevance of the first two questions becomes evident from considering a problem which any interpreter of the *Philebus* faces. On the one hand, Plato seems to contend that no

pleasure is good in itself (53c-55c), while on the other hand he maintains that some pleasures contribute in their own right to the goodness of the best life (64c-67b). Now, since it seems also plausible that only things which are good in themselves can contribute to the goodness of the best life in their own right, the interpreter (or Plato) has a problem, namely that Plato's view seems to be inconsistent.

Interpreters try to avoid attributing the inconsistency to Plato in either of two ways: a) Some interpreters (Carone 2000, Hackforth 1945, Gosling 1975, Gosling and Taylor 1982) deny that Plato contends that no pleasure is good by arguing that Plato does not put forward only one theory of pleasure, but at least two. Plato's argument that no pleasure is good in itself, they maintain, is applied only to the pleasures falling under one of the definitions. The other pleasures, those unharmed by the argument, can still be good in themselves and can, thus, contribute to the goodness of the good life. b) Some interpreters (especially Evans 2004; 2008) deny that Plato contends that some pleasures contribute in their own right to the goodness of the best life. They maintain that Plato is interested in ranking all the "ingredients" of the best life, not only those "ingredients" which contribute in their own right to the life's goodness. I argue that neither of these attempted solutions of the problem work.

In Chapter 1 I show that Plato does not put forward two or more theories of pleasure, but that he has a unified theory of pleasure in the *Philebus*, namely that pleasure is a process of restoring an equilibrium in the soul. Since this account of pleasure provides a crucial premise for Plato's argument that no pleasure is good in itself, pleasure would not seem to contribute to the goodness of the best

life. The practical conclusion to be drawn from this argument is that pleasure is never a proper goal pursuit.

I show, in Chapter 2, that Plato also maintains that some pleasures contribute to the value of the good life in their own right because they are good in themselves. Thus, I attribute an inconsistency to Plato. This inconsistency arises, I shall argue, because there is more than one way in which something can have value. I show that Plato acknowledges that certain kinds of knowledge have value in at least two ways: on the one hand, they are good because they are for the sake of achieving some goal, and on other, they are good in virtue of their content which is independent from their goal-directedness. Plato's mistake is that he does not take into account that pleasure has content, and that some kinds of pleasure are good in their own right in virtue of their content, despite their being also processes of restoration. I close, however, by highlighting that this more subtle way of thinking about the value of pleasure does not change the practical consequence that pleasure is never a proper goal of pursuit.

Question 3 is relevant because Aristotle's essay on pleasure in *EN* VII.11-14 is less well studied than that in *EN* X.1-5, and, I think, Aristotle's answer to Plato has not been fully appreciated. Philosophers and scholars interested in Aristotle's thoughts about pleasure usually focus on *EN* X.1-5, for three reasons. First, commentators tend to think that the treatment in Book X is philosophically more advanced than that in VII. Second, they think that only in Book X Aristotle is 'his own man' (Owen 1971-2:145), alluding to the fact that Aristotle develops the account of pleasure in Book VII only in response to Plato's thesis that pleasure is a coming to be (or a perceived coming to be), whereas in Book X Aristotle

professes to show ‘what pleasure is, or what kind of thing’ it is (X. 4.1174a13-14). Third, as it is currently understood Aristotle’s account in Book VII is extremely implausible: it works well for such activities as contemplating and seeing, but it marks out the most commonplace pleasures, such as eating, drinking, and other seemingly pleasurable processes as pleasant only incidentally (*kata sumbebêkos*), but not in their own right.

In Chapter 3, I give a novel interpretation of *EN* VII.11-14, rendering Aristotle’s position more plausible and philosophically more interesting than it is currently assumed to be. It also shows that although Aristotle is mainly concerned with responding to his predecessors, he is “his own man” also in VII. The central thesis of the standard interpretation is that pleasure is found only in complete activities such as contemplating, but not in incomplete activities such as eating and drinking. In this interpretation, Aristotle simply rejects that Plato’s paradigmatic pleasures are pleasures in their own right, and thus begs the question against a proponent of the *Philebus* view. This, however, is not the most problematic feature of the standard view. What I take to be the gravest problem is that the three most prominent versions have great difficulties in making sense of eating or drinking as pleasures at all (whether in their own right or not), while keeping their central tenet that pleasure is confined to complete activities. This is reason enough to reconsider the text which is supposed to support the standard interpretation. I argue that this text rather supports an alternative interpretation according to which Aristotle’s crucial contrast is between states and their use, which allows that some pleasant activities are incomplete activities.

Next, relying on the analogy between nature and craft, as well as on Aristotle's account of causation, I give a novel interpretation of how we should understand incidental pleasures in *EN VII.12*: pleasure is in the agent's activity, not in the patient's undergoing a change. This interpretation gives Aristotle a much better answer to Plato's negative conception of pleasure as remedial good. So, instead of relegating Plato's paradigmatic examples to the incidental (as the standard interpretation has it), Aristotle can account for them as pleasures in their own right, while pointing out that on the correct understanding of pleasures as activities of a good and natural state, even pleasures stemming from remedial processes are also good in themselves besides being instrumentally good. I close by arguing that although Aristotle maintains that normally pleasure is good and that the good is a pleasure, Aristotle is not a hedonist in a normative or a psychological sense.

In Chapter 4, I give an interpretation of *EN X.1-5*. The discussion is divided into two parts: in the first part (*EN X.1-3*), or so I argue, Aristotle establishes the value of pleasure by discussing reputable opinions (*endoxa*) about pleasure' and in the second part (*EN X.4-5*) Aristotle justifies his conclusions. Some interpreters (e.g. Gosling and Taylor 1982, Taylor 2003, Bostock 1988 and 2000) claim that Aristotle gives an account of pleasure in the second part (*EN X.4-5*). However, other interpreters have shown (e.g. Hadreas 2004, Pakaluk 2005) that this is not so: Aristotle does not give a definition of pleasure, but rather explains how pleasure functions. The central function of pleasure is that it perfects an activity. It is important to understand how exactly pleasure is supposed to perfect an activity, and why it should do so, because Aristotle bases the important thesis that

pleasures differ in value on the claim that pleasure perfects activities. Hence the relevance of question 4.

Unfortunately, Aristotle mostly tells us how pleasure does not perfect the activity. The only positive characterisation of how pleasure perfects an activity is given in the form of a simile - which, as I shall argue, is not very helpful as a heuristic tool. Aristotle's reticence has led, I think, to a partial misunderstanding of his conception of pleasure and its value. Interpreters usually take their cue from Aristotle's claim that the value of pleasure mirrors the value of the activity which the pleasure perfects. Since, on this view, the value of pleasure is solely dependent on the activity, it seems plausible that it is solely by reference to features of the activity that we can explain why pleasure perfects it. This approach, I shall argue, is too narrow: Aristotle's conception of pleasure cannot be understood properly by focusing exclusively on activity; one must also take into account the underlying state that is activated in the activity.

The advantage of this novel approach is that it can explain both the value of pleasure and why pleasure perfects the activity. The key is that the agent's values are engrained in the underlying state. If being a lover of a certain activity is part of the state activated in this activity, then the agent will habitually take pleasure in this activity. On my interpretation, Aristotle's thesis is that pleasure perfects an activity only if and because the agent is a lover of this activity. The value of pleasure, then, should not merely be determined by the activity. I suggest that the value of pleasure has to be understood in terms of appropriateness: pleasure is good if and only if (and because) it is an appropriate response to a given situation. In this way, one can explain not only why pleasure mirrors the value of the

enjoyed activity, but also the value of other activities such as anger or pity. I close by arguing that Aristotle's position regarding the value of pleasure is essentially the same as that in *EN* VII.11-14: all pleasure would be good if pleasure was always taken appropriately. However, since this is not the case, there are also bad pleasures. Nevertheless, since it is appropriate to enjoy the activities central to the best life, the good, i.e. the activities in accordance with virtue, will be enjoyable.

Before we start with the work, I should like to pause over two methodological points. First, nothing in what I say requires attributing a certain theory of pleasure to *Plato*. It would be possible to attribute it to the interlocutors in the *Philebus*, Socrates and Protarchus. I have chosen, however, to write as if it is Plato who proposes and defends a theory of pleasure and a view about its value. The main reason for doing so is that Aristotle has no qualms about attributing theses or arguments found in the *Philebus* to Plato (X.2.1172b23-34, discussed in §4.2.5). Since I offer an interpretation of the *Philebus* partly with the aim of giving an interpretation of Aristotle's essays on pleasure, it seems appropriate to share Aristotle's assumption. Less important reasons are that a) the view proposed in the *Philebus* is Plato's, whether he meant to defend or merely to propose it to the reader as something to think about (or both), and b) that Plato vs Aristotle simply makes for a better contrast than Aristotle vs Socrates/Protarchus/Plato. So, for the sake of the argument, I will attribute views, positions, arguments and mistakes to Plato, but the reader is free to adjust this to his or her preferred way of speaking about what Plato discusses in his dialogues.

Second, in interpreting the *Philebus*, I draw only on the text of the *Philebus*, rather than on the whole of the Platonic Corpus in order to make sense of individual arguments, phrases, or words. Although such a “Platonic” approach has its merits (for an admirable example see Delcomminette 2006), I think that a fruitful comparison with other dialogues requires that one interprets them first as self-standing dialogues. Likewise, in interpreting Aristotle’s treatises on pleasure, I think it is unhelpful to read the *EN* VII.11-14 treatise in the light of *EN* X.1-5 and vice versa. I do, however, refer to what Aristotle says about pleasure elsewhere in the *Ethics*, since Aristotle apparently expects this from his readers. In contrast to the interpretation of the *Philebus*, the interpretation of the *EN* invites comparison with passages from the Aristotelian Corpus, as Aristotle sometimes refers to his non-ethical works for a more detailed discussion of the point relevant for the *Ethics*. So, when necessary, I carefully import material from the *Physics*, *De Anima*, and the *Metaphysics* to illustrate and expand on points which Aristotle makes in the *EN*.

Chapter 1: The value of pleasure in Plato's *Philebus* - the official version

1.1 Introduction

Plato's view on the value of pleasure in the *Philebus* is complex. Nevertheless, I think that one can discern two main threads of thought, an official one, introduced with fanfare, and a more subtle one, introduced between the lines. In this chapter I shall deal with the official view. I will argue that this view is recognisably anti-hedonist, claiming that no pleasure is good in itself, and that no pleasure should be pursued for its own sake.

Interpreters have doubted that Plato holds such a stark anti-hedonist view in his most mature work on pleasure, given that even in works extolling the value of philosophy, such as the *Phaedo* and the *Republic*, certain pleasures appear to be worth having. To assimilate the positions defended in the *Philebus* to that of the *Republic* and the *Phaedo*, these interpreters stress that in the *Philebus* too Plato puts forward an argument which concludes that the best life must be a life mixed of pleasure and knowledge. This conclusion, they argue, shows that both pleasure and knowledge are goods which contribute to the goodness of the best life. I will argue, however, that the argument can be interpreted in a way that leaves open the possibility that no pleasure is good. Having set aside this preconception I will turn to Plato's argument against pleasure. I will argue that Plato has a unified conception of pleasure: pleasure is a restorative process of an equilibrium in the soul. Since this account of pleasure encompasses all pleasures, Plato can put forward the argument (discussed in the last section of this chapter) that no pleasure is good

in itself, given that pleasure is essentially only a restorative process. I will begin by discussing the task Plato sets himself in the *Philebus*.

1.2 The task of the *Philebus*

The *Philebus* is a complex dialogue which deals with so many different topics that one could think that there is no single line of inquiry leading through the dialogue. However, on closer inspection, one can see that all the investigations into metaphysics, philosophy of mind, and epistemology are geared towards one goal: to establish what the highest good is.¹ In particular, Plato is interested in assessing pleasure: the lion's share of the dialogue is taken up by the discussion of what pleasure is, in what sense pleasure can be false or bad, and whether pleasure is valuable in its own right. The discussion, however, is not confined to pleasure: the philosopher's favourite, knowledge, is also examined (though in less detail) - as if pleasure and knowledge were the only things relevant for the best life. Thus, the *Philebus* discusses hedonism and intellectualism.

1.2.1 Hedonism and intellectualism

Both hedonism and intellectualism are theories about the good: hedonism claims that pleasure is the good, while intellectualism claims that knowledge is the good. We are used to distinguishing (in the case of pleasure) between at least two different theses, a normative one, and a psychological one. The basic claim of normative hedonism is that pleasure and the good are identical, or that goodness and pleasantness are identical - in which case 'pleasant' and 'good' are but two names for the same property (60a9-b1). Combined with the thesis that all rational action is for some

¹ This is one of the main results of Delcomminette's careful study (2006) of the dialogue.

good, we reach the the view that all rational action should be directed at pleasure. But, of course, this does not mean that all action is aimed at pleasure - this needs extra support which comes in the form of the claim of psychological hedonism: all action is aimed at pleasure.²

Neither Plato, nor Aristotle distinguish, as we do, between psychological and normative hedonism or intellectualism. It seems to have been common practice to run them together, as, for example, Aristotle's report of one of Eudoxus' arguments shows: 'every sort of creature, whether rational or non-rational, seeks pleasure' (X. 2.1172b9-10).³ This is clearly a claim about the psychology of the animals in question; it does not say explicitly that pleasure is what animals should aim at. However, it is supposed to support the thesis that pleasure is the good - which appears to be a normative claim rather than a psychological one. I will mostly follow Plato's and Aristotle's practice (with a few exception) and simply speak of hedonism or intellectualism, where 'hedonism' should be understood as the thesis that pleasure is the good.

² Even if psychological hedonism is true, it does not entail normative hedonism. Normative hedonism claims that pleasure is the only value, or, if there are other values, it is the highest value, where the other values either depend on pleasure or are at least conditional upon pleasure. It is possible that a) agents take other things than pleasure to be their goal - even if, ultimately the value of the other thing is dependent upon pleasure (i.e. psychological hedonism is false, but normative hedonism is true), as well as b) agents aim only at pleasure, but, really there is a variety of values of which the agents are not aware (i.e. that psychological hedonism is true, but normative hedonism is false) - and reminding the agent of these other values may be very difficult, as the discussion with Callicles in the *Gorgias* shows.

³ Hedonism appears to have been the 'philosophy of swine' long before Epicurus and Mill. In the *Philebus*, the defenders of hedonism are placed together with animals right at the beginning and at the end of the dialogue (11b and 67b), thus making us already wary of identifying pleasure as the good in human lives.

1.2.2 Hedonism, intellectualism, and eudaimonism in the *Philebus*

The *Philebus* starts *in medias res*: Protarchus is taking over a thesis to defend, namely that ‘what is good for all creatures is to enjoy themselves, to be pleased and delighted, and whatever else goes together with that kind of thing.’ (11b4-6).⁴ This thesis is, as yet, ambiguous between i) pleasure is a good, and ii) pleasure is the good. However, it becomes clear that Protarchus sets out to defend a hedonist thesis, i.e. the thesis that pleasure is the good (cf. 13b6 and, more explicitly, 60a7-b1). The setting is apparently some sort of competition, for Socrates has a candidate of his own: knowledge and what is related to knowledge. Whether Socrates defends intellectualism is less clear, as he does not assert that knowledge is the good; he only maintains that his candidate is better than pleasure and that it is the most beneficial of all things for those who can grasp it (11b-c).

We learn more about the set task when the interlocutors agree to show that their candidate is ‘the state (*hexis*) or disposition (*diathesis*) of the soul that can render (*parechei*) life happy for all human beings’ (11d4-6). If their candidate is the good, then the good would be that which renders a life happy. What I take Plato to indicate here is that in the *Philebus* the search for the good is conducted within a eudaimonistic framework, i.e. taking for granted that eudaimonia is the good. What this means can be understood in the light of Aristotle’s doxographical reports. Aristotle points out that almost all people agree that the good, i.e. the highest practical good, is eudaimonia.⁵ He takes care to point out, however, that this is not much more than verbal agreement: since people disagree widely

⁴ All translation are taken from D. Frede 1993, sometimes modified.

⁵ EN 1.4.1095a14-20.

over the content of eudaimonia (wealth, honour, and pleasure have been proposed), the lives constituting the pursuit of happiness can be radically opposed to each other.

From this angle, we can understand Plato as reminding us that happiness is the highest good both in the normative and the psychological sense, but that this does not tell us anything about what to do or how to live. It is, in a way, empty to say that one should aim for happiness. So, instead of focusing on this empty claim, the *Philebus* is concerned with two most promising accounts of eudaimonism, namely intellectualism and hedonism. According to intellectualism, knowledge is eudaimonia; according to hedonism, it is pleasure - and in both cases eudaimonia is understood as that which makes a life happy.⁶ Pleasure and knowledge respectively remain, thus, candidates for the good, although there is an important relationship between these candidates and the lives to which they lead.

These two theories about the good are most promising because they restrict the goods in question to the goods of the soul (unlike honour or wealth). This restriction makes sense if we assume with Plato and Aristotle that the soul is the source or seat of life. For differences in psychic states will make, on this conception, an immediate difference to how well the life goes, whereas a difference in non-psychic goods

⁶ This is how Aristotle primarily uses the term, e.g. at *EN* I.4.1095a20-24. Possibly, Aristotle also uses *eudaimonia* to refer to the happy life (at *EN* 1.10.1100b9-10 and at 1101a17-19), but this use is far less central, as shown by S. Broadie 1991:26-7 and esp. 54 n. 15. Cf. J. Cooper 1987:219-20 for a similar claim. In the *Philebus*, Plato uses *eudaimôn* only three times, at 11d6, 22b8, and 47b7. In the last of these occurrences, he reports that a hedonist would maintain that if you have the greatest pleasures, you will be counted as *eudaimonestatos*.

will not have this immediate impact.⁷ Note that the reason for assigning the good to a state of the soul is quite different from e.g. Mill's that tends to equate happiness with pleasure and pleasure with a feeling.

1.3 The value of pleasure: an inconclusive argument

Plato presents an argument early in the dialogue (ten Stephanus pages in) which is designed to show that both intellectualism and hedonism are mistaken because neither knowledge nor pleasure is the good, but something else is (as announced in 20b6-9). I will call this argument the 'the choice of lives argument'. The controversial point of the argument is what it says about the value of pleasure and knowledge: many interpreters take the argument to show that both pleasure and knowledge are good in themselves. However, I shall put forward an alternative interpretation which makes equally good sense of the argument but does not commit Plato to any claims about the value of knowledge or pleasure. The choice of lives argument, then, does not settle the question whether the position defended in the *Philebus* is anti-hedonist (claiming that no pleasure is good) or not (claiming that some pleasures are good).

1.3.1 The choice of lives argument

Let us begin with an overview of the choice of lives argument. This argument has two stages. First, the interlocutors agree on three criteria which the good has to satisfy:

Philebus 20c-d

Socrates: There are some small matters we ought to agree on first, though.

⁷ Cf. *EE* II.1.1219a23-35 where Aristotle proves that happiness is the activity of a well-arranged soul.

Protarchus: What are they?

[d] Socrates: Whether the good is necessarily bound to be complete or not complete.

Protarchus: But surely it must be [1] the most complete thing of all, Socrates!

Socrates: Further: must the good be [2] sufficient?

Protarchus: How could it fail to be that? This is how it is superior to everything else there is.

Socrates: Now, this point, I take it, is most necessary to assert of the good: [3] that everything that has any notion of it hunts for it and desires to get hold of it and secure it for its very own, caring nothing for anything else except for what is achieved together with the goods.

Protarchus: There is no way of denying this.

The characteristics of the good are i) the good is complete (*teleon*); ii) the good must be sufficient (*hikanon*), which means in this context that it is sufficient for making the life lacking in nothing (cf. 22b3-6); and iii) it must be choice-worthy, as expressed in [3].⁸ Without explaining these points further, the criteria are put to work - in the second step of the argument - on the candidates knowledge and pleasure. Instead of applying, as one would expect, the criteria to the candidates, they are applied to the lives centred on pleasure and knowledge. Protarchus functions as testing-stone by judging whether the life of pleasure without the admixture of knowledge and the life of knowledge without any admixture of pleasure satisfy the criteria for the good or not (21a).

⁸ It is possible that these conditions are conjointly sufficient for the good. My argument does not rely on the sufficiency condition, nor is it harmed by it: it is compatible with both interpretations. There is a question how many criteria there actually are: Irwin 1995:332 counts four, Cooper 2003:272-73 and 282-83 argues that (iii) is very close to (ii) (the negation of (ii) implies the negation of (iii)), and hence there might only be two criteria).

The second step of the argument exploits the close connection between criterion ii) and iii). If the life of pleasure or knowledge, without any admixture of the other candidate, is not choice-worthy, then something must be missing from this life, i.e. the life is not sufficient.⁹ It turns out that both candidates fail: neither the life of only pleasure, nor the life of only knowledge is choice-worthy (20d); neither is sufficient (22b). So, neither pleasure, nor knowledge is the good. It is agreed, however, that what is missing in each case is the other candidate. So, the life combining pleasure and knowledge passes the test for the good, but not the lives taken individually (21e-22b).

The argument poses many problems: why is the argument placed in the dialogue where it is? Why is the dialogue not over, given that we now know that the mixed life is best? Why is the argument so weak and uneven? Why does the argument so heavily rely on Protarchus' assent? I am not interested here in answering these questions, in particular because excellent answers have been given by other scholars.¹⁰ The question I am interested in is what this argument tells us about intellectualism and hedonism and, in particular, about the value of pleasure. Both intellectualism and hedonism seem to be ruled out by the argument; neither pleasure, nor knowledge alone can make a life happy, and hence neither is the good. It is clear, then,

⁹ One may wonder what becomes of the first criterion. The explanation depends on how one understands this criterion. There are several possibilities that the good is *teleios* could mean that i) the upper limit of goodness is reached: nothing can be added to make it better (D. Frede 1997:173); ii) the good is a final end (Cooper 2003:271-2 n.2); or iii) the good is something complete, where completeness is to be understood in the light of the general ontology which is offered next in the dialogue (Harte, MS(a):forthcoming).

¹⁰ I have taken the questions raised from V. Harte's MS(a):forthcoming, an excellent paper which answers these questions very satisfactorily.

from the argument that the isolated lives are lacking in something which the mixed life has. The question is: what is it that the isolated lives are missing? The obvious answer is: the life of knowledge lacks pleasure; the life of pleasure lacks knowledge. But this answer does not touch the core of the question: what is it about the absent item that makes the isolated life lacking in something? Or, to put it the other way round: what is it about the ingredients of the mixed life that make the mixed life choice-worthy and lacking in nothing?

1.3.2 Two interpretations

There are two competing ways of explaining what it is about the ingredients of the mixed life that make the mixed life choice-worthy and lacking in nothing. According to the traditional explanation [TRAD] the mixed life is sufficient and choice-worthy because both pleasure and knowledge are goods in themselves; neither the life of knowledge (without any pleasure) nor the life of pleasure (without any knowledge) are sufficient because they lack a good.¹¹ According to a more recent interpretation [NEW] the mixed life is choice-worthy and sufficient not because each candidate is good in its own right, but because only this life counts as a life that we can live, i.e. whatever goodness the lives of pleasure or knowledge have in isolation, they are not choice-worthy because the good is not attainable, as the life is not livable.¹²

It matters whether TRAD or NEW is correct because the two interpretations differ in the value assigned to pleasure: according to

¹¹ Cooper 1977:150-164; Irwin 1995:332-338; Carone 2000; and Cooper 2003:270-308.

¹² For a very similar distinction between possible interpretations of the choice of lives argument see M. Evans 2007b. My discussion is indebted to his paper. Cf. G. Richardson Lear 2004:53-59 whose interpretation focuses on the fact that a *human* life is not possible without either cognition or pleasure. D. Frede 1997:179, maintaining that Protarchus simply realises that he prefers the mixed life and thus gives up hedonism seems to subscribe neither to NEW nor to TRAD.

TRAD, the argument requires as premise that pleasure is good in itself. If this is the only way of understanding the argument, then it rules out anti-hedonism (i.e. that no pleasure is good). NEW, on the other hand, is neutral about the value of pleasure or knowledge and thus does not settle the question about Plato's anti-hedonism in the *Philebus*. Both positions become clearer in the way in which they answer the question whether the mixed life is more choice-worthy than the lives of pleasure or knowledge respectively. I will start with TRAD and then turn to NEW.

1.3.3 TRAD

I will start with Aristotle as the first proponent of TRAD because he provides a first commentary on Plato's argument:

*the pleasant life is more desirable in combination with than apart from wisdom (phronêsis), and if the result of the combination is better (kreitton), then the pleasure is not the good, since there is nothing which when added to the good makes it more desirable (hairetôteron). (EN X.2.1172b29-32)*¹³

The logic of this argument is very simple: the good cannot be made more desirable by adding something to it; pleasure can be made more desirable; hence pleasure is not the good.¹⁴ This is almost a restatement of the choice of lives argument, but it contains some interpretation. For Aristotle writes that the combination is better than the good taken in isolation and that we should, therefore, choose the mixture over the individual ingredients. He seems to assume that the value of the mixture is greater than that of its ingredients because each of the ingredients has some value which cannot be derived from

¹³ All translation from the *EN* are Rowe's (2002), sometimes slightly modified.

¹⁴ Cf. *Phlb.* 60c where possession of the good is sufficient for lacking nothing and being perfectly sufficient.

the other candidate.¹⁵ In other words, the argument seems to rely on the assumption that each of the candidates is good in itself and that the mixed life is better than the life of pleasure or the life of knowledge taken in isolation because it contains goods which are lacking in the other lives.¹⁶ This at any rate is suggested by the setup of the choice of lives argument: the life of pleasure is maximal in terms of pleasure (21a-b), so that the addition of intelligence will not make the life better because it makes it somehow more pleasurable. So the value which knowledge adds cannot be derivative from the goodness of pleasure, and hence knowledge, on this interpretation, would have to be of non-derivative value which is to say that knowledge is good in its own right.¹⁷ A similar point can be made about pleasure: the life of knowledge has all sorts of cognition (21d-e); adding pleasure will not make the life of knowledge better by increasing cognition. Rather, it is a good besides cognition which makes the life of knowledge better. So, proponents of TRAD will claim that the choice of lives argument presupposes that both pleasure and knowledge are good in themselves.¹⁸

Although we know now that the best life is the life combining pleasure and knowledge, and that neither knowledge nor pleasure is the best, the dialogue does not stop here. Rather, the interlocutors

¹⁵ Cf. Aristotle's argument in *Top.* III.118b10-19 that X is more desirable than Y if adding X makes a thing a more desirable whole than adding Y.

¹⁶ The context of Aristotle's discussion makes clear that he endorses Eudoxus's point that pleasure is a good (which must mean that pleasure is good in itself), although he thinks Eudoxus' argument to show that pleasure is the good is fallacious. I will return to the argument in §4.2.5.

¹⁷ This argument can be challenged by the claim that each, pleasure and knowledge, have only extrinsic value, in particular, contributory value: they are good only insofar as they are part of the best life - without being replaceable by each other or anything else. But at least for Aristotle, anything that has this special role is also good in itself (aimed at for its own sake, cf. *EN* I.7.1097b1-5).

¹⁸ See Irwin 1995:334 for this interpretation. Cooper 1977:152 explicitly states that pleasure and knowledge should be good in themselves.

embark on a new contest, namely to show which of the candidates is better:

Philebus 22c-e, Socrates speaking

... we have rather to look and make up our minds about the second prize, how to dispose of it. One of us may want to give credit for the combined life to reason, making it responsible, the other to pleasure. Thus neither of the two would be the good, but it could be assumed that one or the other of them is its cause. But I would be even more ready to contend against Philebus that, whatever the ingredient in the mixed life may be that makes it choiceworthy and good, reason is more closely related to that thing and more like it than pleasure; and if this can be upheld, neither first nor second prize could really ever be claimed for pleasure. She will in fact not even get as much as third prize, if we can put some trust in my insight for now.

Socrates mentions here two different ways of understanding the contest [C], here phrased as questions:

[C1] Which candidate is the cause (*aition*) for the goodness of the mixed life?

[C2] Which candidate is more closely related to (*suggenesteros*) and more like (*homoioteron*) that which makes the mixed life choiceworthy and good?

Whichever candidate is the correct answer to the questions (or perhaps only C2 if neither knowledge nor pleasure are the cause) is better than the other. TRAD, I think, has some trouble explaining the new contest. First, on TRAD both knowledge and pleasure are goods - why is it a question which one is *the* cause of the goodness of the

mixed life? The mixed life, on this interpretation, is most choice-worthy because both pleasure and knowledge are goods in their own right: this is the reason why they are in the mixture. Accordingly, both pleasure and knowledge are causes of the goodness of the mixture. So, why would C1 be a sensible question?

Pointing to C2 does not help much to get rid of this problem because C2 is a stand-in question in case neither candidate is the answer to C1. Suppose, then, that something other than pleasure and knowledge is the cause of the goodness of the mixed life. Again, the question emerges, why should one be more closely related to that which makes the good life good, given that they are both goods in themselves? If the value of one candidate was derivative from the other or in another way dependent on it, we could explain why one should be more of a cause than the other. But there is no hint in TRAD for any such explanation. So, the new contest according to TRAD must be to show that one good is more closely related to the cause because it is better than the other.

The proponent of TRAD needs to explain why one good should be better than the other, while contending that the lesser good is still good in its own right.¹⁹ Note that the easy answer that one is more closely related to the cause of goodness because it is quantitatively better is not borne out by the text: C2 indicates that the question is about a categorial difference (*suggenesteros*), rooted in the nature of the candidates. So TRAD has to explain how there can be a categorial difference in value between pleasure and knowledge, while maintaining that both are good in their own right. Arguably, this is the programme of the remainder of the *Philebus*. The problem is only

¹⁹ For a recent attempt see J. Rawls 1971:37-38 n. 23.

that when Socrates marks out a categorial difference between pleasure and other goods, it turns out that pleasure is not good in its own right (53c-55c). And if so, we are back to the question which TRAD was supposed to answer, namely why the mixed life is better than the life that contains only knowledge, but not pleasure. While these problems are not insurmountable, they are grave enough to wonder whether another interpretation than TRAD may be able to explain the choice of lives argument better.

1.3.4 NEW

The strongest version of NEW is offered by M. Evans 2007b. Evans distinguishes between goods (i.e. goods in their own right) and subsidiaries. Subsidiaries are not goods in their own right, but are accomplished together with the goods. Subsidiaries are those things for which we care because they are accomplished together with the goods, as stated in condition three for the good (§1.3.1). However, they are subsidiaries because ‘there are some goods that we do not (or cannot) acquire or accomplish unless we acquire or accomplish these other things too.’ (Evans 2007b:342).

With the distinction between goods and subsidiaries, we can explain denouement of the choice of lives argument as follows: Protarchus realises that neither the life of pleasure, nor the life of knowledge taken in isolation are choice-worthy because the resulting life lacks some subsidiary (Evans 2007b:344). Now, if it is plausible that one cannot have all kinds of cognition without also having pleasure, nor all kinds of pleasure without cognition, then one can argue that each

life, taken in isolation, would be less choice-worthy than the mixed life because it lacks a subsidiary.²⁰

Note that NEW does not settle the question about the value of knowledge or pleasure: even admitting that the mixed life is best, one may still hold the claim that pleasure is what makes the mixed life good; it is just that knowledge is a subsidiary which is required for living this life as a human being because a human life full of pleasure is not possible without knowledge. Likewise, one may claim that pleasure is not something that contributes positively to the mixed life as a good in itself, it merely accompanies some kinds of intellectual activity when human beings engage in them. So, a life without pleasure would be less choice-worthy than one with pleasure because the pleasureless life excludes some kinds of intellectual activity.

That both options are live options is a virtue of this interpretation, for it leads over neatly to the new competition at 22c-e (quoted in the last subsection). For according to NEW it makes sense to ask

[C1] Which candidate is the cause (*aition*) for the goodness of the mixed life?

²⁰ I diverge here from Evans' argument because he claims that 'for human beings at least, cognition necessarily accompanies pleasure, and pleasure necessarily accompanies cognition' (Evans 2007b:343) - a claim which is neither justified by the text, nor required for the argument. Fear, i.e. expecting something bad to happen, is clearly a case of cognition, but it is not at all pleasant. The claim in the text that one cannot have all kinds of cognition without also having pleasure, nor all kinds of pleasure without cognition works just as well for the argument, and this is supported by the examples Evans cites: 'More specifically, Socrates claims that we achieve both pleasure and cognition whenever we: (1) anticipate that we will satisfy some appetite (32b9-c2); (2) remember either having satisfied an appetite (33c5-6) or having been pleased (21c1-2); (3) learn (51e7-52a3); (4) exercise abstract knowledge (63e3-4); (5) enjoy something for more than an instant (21c2-4); and (6) are aware of being pleased (21c4-5).' (Evans 2007b:343).

Both candidates are still in the race: either can exclusively be the cause of the goodness of the mixed life, making the other one merely a subsidiary. Even if neither of the candidates is *the* cause of goodness, distinguishing between goods and subsidiaries invite the question:

[C2] Which candidate is more closely related to (*suggenesteros*) and more like (*homoioteron*) that which makes the mixed life choice-worthy and good?

Again, it is open which candidate is the correct answer to C2, and it is also plausible to say that there is a categorial difference between the two: whichever turns out to be only a subsidiary will be further away from whatever makes the mixed life good whereas the other candidate is related to the goodmaker in that both are good in themselves.

This distinction also helps to understand the practical implications of the choice of lives argument. For whatever it is that makes life good ought to be pursued as good (or what comes closest to it), while it would be a mistake to pursue a subsidiary good as something that it is not, i.e. an end in itself. These two different modes of pursuit come out more clearly by taking into account another feature of the goods in the choice of lives argument, the idea of maximisation: both Socrates and Protarchus try to show that pursuing their own candidate leads to the best life. According to NEW, the positions taken up by the interlocutors after the choice of lives argument can be very close to their original versions.²¹ There is reason to maximise

²¹ Cf. Evans 2007b:369-70.

that which makes life good; but there is no reason to maximise that which is only a subsidiary good, for the former, but not the latter (once a certain threshold level is reached) will have immediate impact on how well the life goes: the more, the better. So, Protarchus and Socrates can still maintain that one will achieve the best life possible through exclusive pursuit of pleasure and knowledge respectively.

1.3.5 Conclusion

What I hope to have shown is that the choice of lives argument does not presuppose a specific view about the value of pleasure. According to TRAD, pleasure would come out as a good, but I have shown that TRAD is not the only interpretation available, and perhaps not even the most promising one. So, since the value of pleasure is not determined in this argument, we need to look elsewhere for the value of pleasure - which I will do in the next two sections. First, I will sketch Plato's theory of pleasure because it has important implications about the value of pleasure. Then I will turn to an argument which explicitly concludes that, due to its nature, pleasure is not good in itself.

1.4 The theory of pleasure in the *Philebus*

In this section I will sketch Plato's theory of pleasure, as can be reconstructed from the *Philebus*. It has to be constructed because a) Plato does not write a treatise, and b) because there is no one place in the dialogue where Plato would put forward a theory of pleasure. Rather, he starts with a basic model, extends it in the light of criticism, and then subsumes all possible pleasure under this model.

To become clear about the theory of pleasure is important because, as we shall see in the next section, Plato bases his argument that no pleasure is good in itself, on his theory of pleasure. However, some interpreters have doubted that Plato really applies this argument to all pleasures, since they deny that there is one theory of pleasure in the *Philebus*.²² If the theory has to be reconstructed, why should one assume that there is a theory of pleasure, rather than scattered remarks, apt only for their immediate context?

Very briefly, Plato seems committed to providing a unified account of pleasure for two reasons:²³ a) when Socrates predicts that they will find pleasures that are contrary to others (some will be good, some bad), he likens pleasure to colour, for they are contrary to each other, but are still the same insofar as they are colours (12e-13a). b) Socrates introduces the problem of the one and many (14c-15c) which can be solved with the 'Promethean Method'. This method divides subject matters into kinds and subkinds and provides knowledge of how they combine together. Socrates invites Protarchus to use this method on their candidates (18e-19a) which suggests that both pleasure and knowledge are a unity.²⁴ These brief remarks will not satisfy those who doubt that there is a unified theory, but they will be enough to

²² See Taylor 1956:80, Hackforth 1945:106 and Gosling and Taylor 1982:153-4, and Carone 2000:265 for this positions and arguments supporting it.

²³ I draw in my brief exposition on Evans 2004:11-20 who provides strong arguments against the view proposed by Gosling and Taylor 1982:135-40 that pleasures are simply too diverse to be unified.

²⁴ C. Meinwald 2008 argues that this method is only applicable to things which in the fourfold ontological distinction of all things (23b-27c) are in the class of the things mixed from the first class (unlimited) and the second class (limit), i.e. harmonious mixtures. Since pleasure does not belong to this class, but to the unlimited, the Promethean method is not, after all, applicable, although Socrates is dialectically required to invite Protarchus to apply the method to pleasure (which he is unable to do, see esp. 495-6). However, quite why pleasure is unlimited is not clear from Meinwald's discussion. It seems as if she holds that it is unlimited because it is not a *technê* (496), but she does not explain why only things should be divisible and unifiable if they belong to a *technê*.

motivate the search for a theory of pleasure. Perhaps the best answer I can give is simply to construct the theory.

1.4.1 The restoration model

Although Plato does not explicitly give a unified account of pleasure, he nevertheless provides the materials for such an account: he indicates that all pleasure is a restorative process. I will begin with simple bodily pleasures, such cases as eating and drinking, and then extend the account to other pleasures.

Philebus 31e-32b

Socrates: Hunger, I take it, is a case of disintegration and pain?

Protarchus: Yes.

Socrates: And eating, the corresponding refilling, is a pleasure?

Protarchus: Yes.

Socrates: But thirst is, once again, a destruction and pain, while the [32a] process that fills what is dried out with liquid is pleasure? And, further, unnatural separation and dissolution, the affection caused by heat, is pain, while the natural restoration of cooling down is pleasure?

Protarchus: Very much so.

Socrates: And the unnatural coagulation of the fluids in an animal through freezing is pain, while the natural process of their dissolution or redistribution is pleasure. To cut matters short, see whether the following [b] account seems acceptable to you. When the natural combination of limit and unlimitedness that forms a live organism, as I explained before, is destroyed, this destruction is pain, while the return towards its own nature, this general restoration, is pleasure. Protarchus: So be it, for it seems to provide at least an outline.

In this passage, Socrates seems to identify pain with a disintegration, and pleasure with the corresponding restoration. What is destroyed and restored is the animal's nature, or, as Socrates says in other places, the harmonious state. The details of this view still need to be filled in, but this account is sufficient, at least in outline. This suggests that further refinements are to come, but that these examples convey the basic idea of how pleasure works, and this basic idea is that pleasure is a process of the restoration of a natural state. This means that it is not the case that certain activities as such are pleasant; rather, whether something counts as pleasure (or pain) depends entirely on its relation to the natural state. Cooling down can be either pleasant (when you are too hot) or painful (when you are already cold).

1.4.2 The restoration model extended: perception

The view, presented in outline, might suggest that pleasure is identical to the bodily restorative process, and hence the value would stem from the harmonious state in the body. But this suggestion turns out to be false; the view is modified in a passage where more philosophical rigour is required and where the outlined approach to pleasure is found insufficient (cf. 42d5-7).²⁵ The thesis that pleasure is restoration is clarified in the light of some wise people's (*sophoi*, 43a2) doctrine that everything is in constant movement.²⁶ If everything is in constant movement, then everything in the animal should be in movement as well, and a fortiori the movements which are, or necessitate, pleasure or pain should occur constantly. There would seem to be no time at which the animal has neither pleasure nor pain.

²⁵ It is clear that Socrates here refers to the earlier definition: "We have accepted from us (*par hêmôn autôn*) that pleasure is..."

²⁶ I can leave it open whether Socrates is portrayed as accepting or rejecting the flux-doctrine. This is an interesting point for the interpretation of the *Philebus*, but not immediately relevant here.

One way for Socrates to rebut this point would be to argue that there are periods in which we are at rest, and where no restoration or disintegration takes place and hence the flux doctrine would be rejected (or its scope limited). Yet, he goes another route. He argues that even if we were in constant movement, it would still not follow that we are constantly pleased or pained (cf. 43a6-8). The key to evade the apparently wrong consequence that we are pleased or pained all the time, given that the flux-doctrine is true, is to introduce the distinction between two kinds of changes, namely the difference between big changes on the one hand, and measured and small ones on the other (43c4-6), and only those of sufficient size produce (*apergazomai*) pleasure and pain (43b7-9). This causal language that bodily restorative processes produce or make (*poiousi*, 43c4-6) pleasure suggests strongly that pleasure is not identical to the restorations of sufficient size. Rather, the suggestion is that when changes occur which are not of sufficient size, we are oblivious (*lanthanomai*) to them; and we are aware (*aisthanomai*) only of those of sufficient size (43a9-b4). So, one could think that pleasure is the perception or awareness of the bodily restorative process.²⁷

This interpretation is on the right tracks, but it is insufficient. For as it stands, one can have pleasure only if an actual restorative bodily process takes place. That the theory is not yet sufficient is clear from the existence of such pleasures that do not require current bodily processes, such as the pleasures of anticipation or remembering past pleasure (36c-41b). So, if all pleasures are to be explained in the same way, pleasure cannot simply be the perception of a bodily restorative process.

²⁷ This view is attributed to Plato by Gosling and Taylor 1982:181, and perhaps by D. Frede 1992:441 and 444.

In fact, reconsidering the pleasures of eating may indicate that the perception model cannot be the last word. In normal cases, the pleasure of eating entails the perception of restoration. However, people sometimes eat too much, and they seem to do so because it is pleasant to them (at the time of doing it). Yet, if pleasure were the perception of an actual restorative process, then overeating would not be pleasant (and, I suspect, would rarely happen). So, the fact that overeating is a pleasure (sometimes) to some people would suggest that pleasure cannot simply be the perception of a bodily restorative process. Since there is independent reason to go beyond the perception model (the existence of the pleasures of anticipation), we are justified in assuming that even the bodily pleasures are not merely pleasant because they are perceptions of restorations, although, of course, perception (or awareness) plays an important role.

1.4.3 Pleasure, pain, and the soul

The account of pleasure which best takes on board these observations is developed and defended by M. Evans, namely that pleasure is a psychological restorative process.²⁸ I cannot here do full justice to the arguments put forward by Evans; instead I will provide a sketch of the argument which will at least make plausible the theses a) that pleasure is a psychic process (i.e. a process taking place in the soul), b) that even bodily pleasure has content, and c) that psychic pleasures (e.g. the pleasures of anticipation) are restorative processes.

²⁸ He develops this view at length in his 2004:22-52 and, specifically for pain, in his 2007a.

The argument proceeds, largely, by considering pain. In doing so, I follow Plato. For Plato has Socrates warn Protarchus when they try to determine 'in what kind of thing each of them resides and what kind of condition makes them <sc. pleasure and knowledge> come to be when they do' that 'we will not be able to provide a satisfactory examination of pleasure if we do not study it together with pain.' (31b2-6) The reason for it is fairly simple: pleasure and pain (as we saw (§1.4.1) are interdefinable: each is definable as the opposite of the other. Pleasure is the restoration of a the natural state, whereas pain is the destruction of a natural state. So, it is reasonable to assume that the accounts of pleasure and pain should be analogous for all kinds of pleasure. And this, I take it, is borne out by the text. For Socrates tries to explain another kind of pleasure which 'belongs to the soul itself' (33c5-6) by speaking about desire, hunger, and thirst - and these, as we will see shortly, are pains. So it is at least Socrates' intent to transfer what is true about pain to pleasure. I will follow Socrates' exposition and show points a) and b) by showing their counterparts a*) that pain is a psychic phenomenon and b*) that bodily pain must have content.

The much simplified argument for thesis a*) goes like this: hunger is said to be a pain and a disintegration (31e6). Yet it is also a desire (34d10-e1). But, Plato argues, desire is not at all a state of the body (35c6-7), because desire has a specific object which is not physically present (or else it would not be desired), but is present only through memory (35b11-c1). So, if hunger is both a pain and a desire, then it is not the body that suffers hunger and thirst (35d5-6), but it will be the soul that is, properly speaking, thirsty and hungry. This at least shows that pain is something psychic.

On this understanding of bodily pain, we can show b*) that bodily pain must have content by interpreting the following passage:

Philebus 35c6-d3

Socrates: Our argument forces us to conclude that desire is not a matter of the body.

Protarchus: Why is that?

Socrates: Because it shows that every living creature always strives towards the opposite of its own experience.

Protarchus: And very much so. Socrates: This impulse, then, that drives it towards the opposite of its own state signifies that it has memory of that opposite state?

Protarchus: Certainly.

Socrates: By pointing out that it is this memory that directs it towards the objects of its desires, our argument has established that every impulse, and desire, and the rule over the whole animal is the domain of the soul.

The explicit conclusion of this passage is that the soul rules over the body. This is an important result because the soul rules over the body via desires and impulses. Now, since it is unlikely that the soul rules over the body in an a priori fashion (such as a Leibnizian pre-established harmony), the soul will need to obtain information about the bodily states. When the body is out of the equilibrium, the soul will desire the opposite of the current condition: a thirsty person who is currently running dry will desire to be filled with water (35a3-4). For the soul to rule over the body and to take care of it, the soul must have awareness of the current bodily condition. If the current condition is far from the state it should be in, the soul desires what would cure the lack: this is what keeps the animal alive (cf. 35e1-5). However, lacking in water does not only result in desire, for being

thirsty is frequently also a pain. The pain, or the unpleasantness, is due to the lack of water, and it is specific to it: the pain that is hunger and the pain that is thirst will be different, for their function is different. Thirst will “tell” the animal to drink something, hunger will “tell” it to eat something. This metaphor reflects the thesis that pain contains information; it is information that the animal needs in order to counteract the deficiency to which it is alerted by pain. So, pain as a function of the soul will have content, and this content will be specific kinds of disintegration, depending on what the pain is about. That pain has content is plausible only on the previously established point that pain is a function of the soul.

Now, given that pain is something belonging to the soul, and given that it is about certain bodily disintegrations - what does this tell us about pleasure and pain? First, given that pleasure and pain are opposites (not merely contradictories), what the interlocutors have shown about pain transmits to pleasure: if pain belongs to the soul, so will pleasure. Further, pleasure will have content, for the role of pleasure is to signal that the deficiency is being remedied, i.e. that the animal is on the way back to its natural state and that it should keep doing what it does until the damage is repaired: in theory, pleasure will stop then. Again, the pleasure will have to be specific to the kind of restorative process, as not any pleasure will restore any deficiency (e.g. quenching one’s thirst does not help with hunger).

1.4.4 The restoration model extended: the soul

In the last subsection, we saw that pleasure (and pain) are about restorative processes. It remains to be shown that pleasure and pain are restorative processes themselves. There are three reasons why pleasure and pain should be psychic processes of restoration and

destruction respectively. First, the account provided in outline (31d3-32b5) clearly states that pleasure and pain are restorative processes. Of course, the simple account is modified (as we saw in §1.4.2), but there would be nothing right about it if pleasure and pain were not restorative processes - and yet, the account is said to be sufficient in outline.²⁹ The account is modified such that pain and pleasure cannot simply be identified with bodily processes: so, in either case, for “bodily” and “psychic” pleasures, there is a psychic component playing the key role in the experience of having pleasure or pain.³⁰

Second, in a passage where Plato introduces the faculties necessary for having pleasure, he defines perception as the motion (*kinêsis*) that occurs ‘when the soul and body are jointly affected and moved by one and the same affection (*pathos*)’ (34a3-4). Since bodily pleasure is about a bodily process, this pleasure can be had only if there is an awareness of the process which will require that ‘soul and body are jointly affected and moved by one and the same affection’. But what is this ‘same affection’? A hint is given a bit earlier: the affections (*pathêmata*) which are perceived ‘penetrate through both body and soul and provoke a kind of upheaval that is peculiar to each but also common to both of them’ (33d4-6). So, the affection is common to

²⁹ In fact, Socrates introduces two kinds of pleasure, and the first one is, in outline, that pleasure is a restorative process of the natural state. So the question is whether this account applies to both kinds or not. That the account of pleasure applies to all kinds of pleasure is held by Frede 1992:440, and 1997:229-31; Tuozzo 1996; van Riel 2000:20-29; Evans 2004:9-82 and Delcomminette 2006:303-5. See A. E. Taylor 1966:57 and Gosling and Taylor 1982:136-7 for the opposing view. Delcomminette helpfully explains that the real difference between the two kinds is not the difference between bodily and psychic pleasures, but rather the difference is that the first kind of pleasure and pain are synchronic with bodily restoration and dissolution (cf. 31d5-6), whereas the second kind is not (303-4).

³⁰ That pleasure should be a *psychic* process in any case is also understandable in the light of the initial contest: at the beginning pleasure is proposed as a candidate for the state of the soul which makes a life happy (11d). If pleasure were something belonging to the body, it would be disqualified from this contest.

both soul and body, but it is peculiar to each. The most plausible explanation here is that, in the case of a bodily pleasure, the relevant bodily movement is a restorative process, and likewise, the perception of it, the motion in the soul, is also a restorative process. These motions are peculiar to each because the psychic restoration is not necessarily a material restoration, and they are common to both because these two motions are in an important way the same: the one incorporates the other by being about it so that they are restorations of a harmonious state with the same subject-matter (e.g. food or drink).³¹

Third, if pain were not the destruction of psychic harmony, then it would be difficult to see how pain could motivate the animal to do anything. As we saw, the motivation is entirely relegated to the soul. If there were no “alarm bells ringing” in the soul, the animal would carry on undisturbed. Yet, pain is disturbing. And given that it belongs to the soul, it is disturbing the soul, or better the order in the soul. Although it does not follow strictly, it would seem reasonable to describe pain as a disruption of the psychic harmony. If so, pleasure will just be the restoration of this harmony. Pleasure and pain are, in this way, deviations from the ideal harmonious state of the soul.³²

³¹ See Evans 2004:35-41 for a more detailed discussion. Delcomminette 2006:318 agrees that the movement of the soul is ‘taking consciousness of the first’ motion, i.e. of the bodily one.

³² One may wonder whether the bodily disintegration *causes* the psychic disintegration. Delcomminette 2006:318-9 argues that ‘the soul is always the principle of its own movement’ because it is the soul that needs to lend its awareness to the bodily disintegration, thus being active, rather than merely passive.’ However, since the bodily disintegration in some way determines the content of the soul’s awareness, it would seem as if the disintegration is a cause in some non-efficient way.

1.4.5 Pure pleasure as psychic restoration

With the model of pleasure as a psychic restorative process established, I turn now to the so-called 'pure pleasures' (52c2), discussed at 50e-55c.³³ I will show that, contrary to the opinion of some interpreters, the restoration model applies even to the pure pleasures. Why this is important can be seen by anticipating what will be discussed in the next section: if *all* pleasures are restorative processes, it is hard to see how they can be good in their own right. Yet, pure pleasures appear to be good most of all: they are part of the best life (66c4-6), and this would be easily explicable if these pleasures were goods in themselves, and hence not merely restorative processes.³⁴ However, I will argue that pure pleasures are processes of restoration.

What are 'pure' or 'true' pleasures?

Philebus 51b3-7

Socrates: Those related to colours we call beautiful (kala), for instance, or to shapes, most pleasures of smell, and those of hearing, and generally any where the deprivation is imperceptible and without pain and which supply

³³ The MSS set these pleasures in connection with purity already at 51b6-7, they are said to be pure of pain (*katharas lupôn*). Burnet follows Badham in secluding the two words, presumably because they object to the repetition: these pleasure are called 'painless' (*alupous*) in l. 6. Almost all interpreters follow Burnet.

³⁴ This is the reason why the interpreters mentioned in n.22 argue that there is no unified account of pleasure and that, in particular, pure pleasures cannot be explained by the restoration model. It will be sufficient for my argument to show that pure pleasures are restorative processes rather than to go through all the different varieties of pleasure to make sure that the restoration picture applies to all of them. This work has already been done by authors mentioned in n. 29. See in particular Evans 2004:52-81.

*perceptible replenishments which are pleasant. (tr. Gosling, slightly altered)*³⁵

Socrates gives here four examples of pure pleasure which share a general feature: they are all based on an unperceived lack (51b5). This explains why they are pure, for ‘purity’ means here that they are not mixed with their opposite, pain, as happens in most cases of pleasure (e.g. since eating is pleasant only when one is hungry, it is a mixed pleasure, 52d6-53c2). However, they can be pleasures only when whoever is being restored is aware of this restorative process (given that pleasure is the awareness of such a process).³⁶ That these pure pleasures are restorative processes comes out clearly in a further example, the pleasures of learning (51e7-52b9).

Philebus 51e7-52a7

Socrates: Then let us also add to these the pleasures of learning, if indeed we are agreed that there is no such thing as hunger for learning connected with them, nor any pains that have their source in a hunger for learning.

Protarchus: Here, too, I agree with you.

Socrates: Well, then, if after such filling with knowledge, people lose it again through forgetting, do you notice any kinds of pain?

³⁵ I prefer Gosling’s translation of this passage to Frede’s because his is more faithful to the Greek. Note that nothing in the Greek corresponds to Gosling’s ‘in general’; the Greek word linking the two clauses is *kai* (Frede translates similarly). This is why G. Carone (2000:266-7 and n.19) disputes that ‘all those that are based on imperceptible and painless lacks’ are the same as the pleasures named in the examples. On her reading, Plato adds a different kind of pleasure to the pleasures of pure colours etc. which fits with her agenda to show that not all pleasures are comings to be. Carone’s rendering is possible, but not very likely. The *kai* alone is too weak to express a stark contrast (between pure pleasures and those that rely on an unperceived lack). So, Gosling’s (and Frede’s) rendering conveys the meaning correctly. Perhaps the *kai* could be understood as epexegetical.

³⁶ Things are a bit more complicated. As indicated earlier, one can be pleased without an actual restorative process taking place. All that is required is that there is a mental state which represents (correctly or incorrectly) a restorative process. I will return to some of the pure pleasure in more detail in §§2.5.1-3.

Socrates makes clear that the pleasures of learning are pure only on condition that a) we do not 'hunger' for learning, i.e. we are not painfully keen on knowing something that we do not know, and b) that forgetting the lesson is not painful. So, the condition that learning is painless can be satisfied. That learning is to be understood as a restoration is also clear: Socrates speaks of 'filling with knowledge'. Now, since Socrates 'adds' (*prostithêmi*) the pleasures of learning to the others, there is little doubt that not only the pleasures of learning are restorative process based on an unperceived lack, but likewise the others mentioned: some pleasures of perception, most pleasures of smell, and those of hearing. Just what it is that is being restored in each case is left for the reader to think about - at any rate, Plato does not say.³⁷

Note that this account of the pleasures of learning is useful insofar as it makes out the pleasures of learning to be pure, but this seems a high price to pay. For the downside of making the pleasures of learning out to be pure is that being ignorant is not painful. There will be no automatic painful signal of lack which spurs the person on to make good the lack of ignorance. In order to be motivated to overcome our ignorance, we need some means of realising our ignorance, and to be painfully aware of lacking some cognitive fulfillment. Socrates, of course, could do this, but since not everybody is lucky enough to be close to some Socrates, this model of the pleasures of learning may be a possibly damaging source of ignorance.³⁸

³⁷ I commend Frede's (1997:296-306) and Delcomminette's (2006:455-80) commentaries to the reader for help in thinking in two very different ways about pure pleasures.

³⁸ I thank S. Broadie for sharing this point with me.

1.4.6 Conclusion

In this section I have argued that Plato extends the simple restoration model (pleasure as process of bodily restoration to a good state) to more complex cases by making awareness a requirement for pleasure. In doing so, Plato can show that pleasure is a psychic process of restoration. I have argued that the account of pleasure as a restorative process of a natural state applies at least to so-called “bodily” pleasures and of pure pleasures. In both cases, the restoration is a restoration of a psychic state. What implications this has for the value of pleasure we will see in the next section.

1.5 The value of pleasure in the *Philebus*

In this section I will present and defend what I will call the ‘genesis argument’. The argument is centrally important for Plato’s discussion of pleasure; not only because it comes at the end of the discussion of pleasure, but also because it completes the enquiry about the value of pleasure. Remember, the question whether pleasure or knowledge are closer akin to what makes the mixed life good is still open. For it is not answered by the investigation into the different ways in which pleasure can be false or otherwise bad (36c-50e), or in the discussion of the true pleasures. Only in the genesis argument Plato shows that pleasure is in the wrong category of being: given the nature of pleasure, it cannot be what makes other things good, as pleasure is not good in itself. This, or so I shall argue, is what the genesis argument aims to show.

1.5.1 The *genesis argument*

The argument which I will call the ‘genesis argument’ can be represented thus:

Philebus 54c-d [The genesis argument]

1. Pleasure is a coming to be (*genesis*) (54c6).
2. If X is a coming to be, then X is for the sake of something else (cf. 54c6-7).
3. If X is for the sake of something else, then X is not good in itself (54c10-11).
4. Hence: Pleasure is not good in itself (54d1-2).

The argument validly concludes that pleasure is not good in itself. I shall in the subsequent subsections explain and defend the premises.

1.5.2 Pleasure as genesis

Plato introduces the thesis that pleasure is a coming to be as follows:

Philebus 53c4-7

Socrates: But what about the following point? Have we not been told that pleasure is always a process of becoming, and that there is no being at all of pleasure? There are some subtle thinkers who have tried to pass on this doctrine to us, and we ought to be grateful to them.

Some subtle thinkers suggest that pleasure is a coming to be, and Socrates applauds their thesis.³⁹ He uses their thesis in the argument to show that pleasure is not in the class of the good. That Socrates so ceremonially invokes others, calling them ‘subtle’ (*kompsoi*), to support the premise raises questions about the status of this premise.

³⁹ I speak of pleasure as ‘coming to be’ which translates the Greek word *genesis*. This is not the only interpretation of this word, and construing pleasure as a coming to be of some state is not the only way in which pleasure’s being a genesis can be explained. For example, Evans 2008 argues that if Y is a genesis of X, then Y is essentially regulated by X (roughly: criticisable in the light of Y). So, what he needs to show is that all pleasures are essentially regulated by something, rather than showing that they are a coming to be of something.

Some scholars argue that this premise (and hence the whole argument) does not stand scrutiny.

First, the abrupt introduction of this passage and the ensuing argument has led scholars to suppose that it is not really a part of the dialogue, but at best some hastily written passage which, once written, Plato felt obliged to stick in, or something that should be relegated to a footnote or appendix.⁴⁰ It would be more charitable, or so it is argued, to disregard the section, in particular because, secondly, it is attributed to some subtle thinkers (*kompsoi*) which could be Plato's way of flagging the uncertain truth-value of this premise. Plato would bring in the argument based on their view because it would help the argument against hedonism greatly if pleasure were genesis. Plato, thus, would not be committed to the argument but rather set it out as something to think about.⁴¹

We have already encountered a weaker version of the view that Plato is not committed to the conclusion of the genesis-argument: it is

⁴⁰ See Gosling 1975:220 for the first possibility, and Hackforth 1945:105 for the second.

⁴¹ One question that is somewhat relevant to the point in the text is the question of the identity of the clever people. Attributing the view to some clever people might either be a commendation or a reason to be cautious. A strong case for Plato's commending the view can be made on the basis of D. Frede's argument that the clever people are to be identified with Plato himself (namely to what he has proposed in the *Republic*, see 1997:306-18). One difficulty for this identification is perhaps that in the *Gorgias* Socrates attributes the story that desiring pleasure is like filling a leaky jar to an unnamed *kompsoi anêr*, 493a5. Given the standard chronology that the *Gorgias* is earlier than the *Republic* and that the *Republic* is earlier than the *Philebus*, it is implausible that in the *Gorgias* as well Plato pays thanks to himself: unlike in the case of the *Philebus*, there is no earlier dialogue to which the *Gorgias* could allude. So there seems to be at least one instance of paying thanks to a 'clever man' who is not Plato. But if so, then it is not implausible that also in the second instance Plato does not hide himself behind some 'clever people.' That Plato is referring to the same (group of) person(s) in both the *Philebus* and the *Gorgias* is possible, but there is no immediate philosophical reason for it: the story of the leaky jar and the view that pleasure is a genesis do not interentail one another.

possible that Plato endorses the argument, but restricts it in scope. For there are at least two kinds of pleasures in the *Philebus*: those that occur only together with some bodily affection, such as eating, and, on the other hand, those that can occur also without a present affection of the body (32b6-c5). It has been argued that the genesis argument applies only to bodily pleasures, but not to the other kind, or that it applies only to a certain kind of bodily pleasure, namely the violent ones.⁴² But these arguments rely on the mistaken view that the two kinds of pleasure have a radically different nature. However, we saw in the last section that all pleasure is a restoration of a natural state.⁴³

What Plato does by stating that pleasure is a coming to be (*genesis*) is to highlight the ontological standing of pleasure; he intends to draw a conclusion about the value of pleasure from its ontological standing. His point is that the nature of pleasure (being a restorative process) makes out pleasure as something that belongs to the realm of coming to be. Yet, as we will see, if something belongs to that realm, it cannot be good in itself, for only things in the realm of being can be good in themselves. The deviation into metaphysics can be explained. For if you ask a hedonist whether pleasure is good only because of something else, he will of course deny that. If, however,

⁴² For the negative view that Socrates does not endorse the clever people's points fully, see Taylor 1956:80 who argues that pure pleasures are not a coming to be and hence the argument holds only for some pleasures. Similarly, Hackforth 1945:106 and Gosling and Taylor 1982. The latter argue that the present argument is only directed against sybaritic pleasures, i.e. those pleasures that can be taken easily to excess. So at least Socrates uses the subtle thinkers to attack the hedonist (1982:153-4). Carone 2000:265 agrees with their reasoning and adds some observations about the language used in the relevant passage and concludes that Socrates only agrees hypothetically to what the clever people say which is mirrored by the many "if"s he uses (e.g. 54c6 and 54d1).

⁴³ For what it is worth, Aristotle takes the genesis theory to be a theory about pleasure in general, not only about a kind of pleasure. We will see this in the next two chapters.

you can establish first a general scheme of what things have value, and then pick out a special case and locate pleasure in this special case - then it is hard for the hedonist to withdraw the given assent. It is surely not an easy task to show that the metaphysical points about value must be false because they deliver the wrong results for pleasure.

1.5.3 The for-the-sake-of relation and value

Socrates introduces the metaphysical background and its relation to value by pointing out that there is a fundamental distinction between two sets: in the first one are the things that are for the sake of something else, and in the other one are those for the sake of which the other things are:

Philebus 53d2-e7

Socrates: Suppose there are two kinds of things, one kind sufficient to itself, the other in need of something else.

Protarchus: How and what sort of things do you mean?

Socrates: The one kind by nature possesses supreme dignity; the other is inferior to it.

Protarchus: Express this more clearly, please.

Socrates: We must have met fine and noble youths, together with their courageous lovers.

Protarchus: Certainly.

Socrates: Now, try to think of another set of two items that corresponds to this pair in all the relevant features that we just mentioned.

Protarchus: Do I have to repeat my request for the third time? Please express more clearly what it is you want to say, Socrates!

Socrates: Nothing fanciful at all, Protarchus; this is just a playful manner

of speaking. What is really meant is that all things are either for the sake of something else or they are that for whose sake the other kind comes to be in each case.

This text contains three examples from which Protarchus is supposed to guess that the relation Socrates has in mind is 'Y is for the sake of X'. The examples are

- (i) X is something 'itself by itself' while a Y 'aims always at something else' (53d3-4);
- (ii) X is 'always most venerable by nature' while a Y is 'falls short of X' (53d6-7), and
- (iii) X is to Y as 'fine and good youths' are to 'their manly lovers' (53d9-10).

What these examples are supposed to illustrate, and what is needed for the genesis argument (premise 3), is that if X is for the sake of Y, then there is a categorial difference in value between X and Y. The difference, here, is between things that are good in themselves, and those that are not. This comes out most clearly in example (ii): X is said to be 'most venerable' (*semnotaton*), this is a term of highest praise that should only be applied to things which deserve this praise. Y, on the other hand, is inferior to X: it does not deserve this praise.

If it is in the nature of Y to be for the sake of X, then Y cannot be defined except by reference to X - which is at least one way of cashing out the idea that Y 'aims always at something else'. It is in its nature to be dependent on X. X, on the other hand, is not dependent in this way (at least not on Y): it is 'itself by itself'. But since Y is

dependent on X, but not X on Y, it seems clear that Y is more important, more venerable, and generally better than X.

This, too, is suggested by the last example: The youths are described as 'fine and good' (*kalos kai agathos*). These are obviously evaluative terms which praise the youths in question. While 'manly' (*andreios*) can be a term of praise, 'lover' is not - or at least not as such. Being a lover of Y does not only mean being fond of Y, but also being desirous of Y. But again, being desirous is not, as such, a good state to be in - it depends on what is desired. Likewise, it depends on what is loved whether it is a good thing to be a lover of it or not.⁴⁴ So, while it is good without any further specifications to be loveable (as the fine and good youths are), this is not so for being a lover. This shows again that the lover, being for the sake of the beloved, is not 'himself by himself', but is defined by reference to something else (whatever or whoever he is a lover of). The basic point is that it is better to be loveable than to love what is loveable.

1.5.4 Genesis as for the sake of

The general point, then, that Socrates is trying to convey is that if Y is for the sake of X, then X is not good in itself (but dependent for its value on X). This seems to be hardly a controversial point, in particular when we take a widespread example of the for-the-sake-of relation: coming to be.

⁴⁴ This point is made clear in the "ascent of love" passage in *Symp.* 209e5-212a7. There is, however, no need to suppose that Socrates expects Protarchus to be versed in Diotima's mysteries. It is an everyday phenomenon to evaluate somebody in terms of what he or she is a lover of. Think, for example, how art lovers tend to look down on "low-brow" art lovers, or dog lovers on cat lovers (and vice versa). A problem for my interpretation might be that K. Dover 1989:202 points out that the Spartans held that the lover transfers his value to the value of the beloved. I think this is not a problem for my view because even in Sparta, without beloved ones, the lovers are worth nothing as lovers. What it does undermine is the idea that the beloved ones are already *kalokagathoi* - but this might be a difference between Sparta and Athens.

Philebus 54a3-b5

Socrates: So let's take another pair.

Protarchus: Of what kind?

Socrates: Take on the one hand the generation of all things, on the other their being.

Protarchus: I also accept this pair from you, being and generation.

Socrates: Excellent. Now, which of the two do you think exists for the other's sake? Shall we say that generation takes place for the sake of being, or does being exist for the sake of generation?

Protarchus: Whether what is called being is what it is for the sake of generation, is that what you want to know?

Socrates: Apparently.

Protarchus: By heavens, what a question to ask me! You might as well ask: "Tell me, Protarchus, whether shipbuilding goes on for the sake of ships or whether ships are for the sake of shipbuilding," or some such thing.

Socrates: That is precisely what I am talking about, Protarchus.

Socrates here introduces an important case of the for-the-sake-of relation. He introduces it as 'another pair' because 'Y is for the sake of X' and 'Y comes to be X' are not the same.⁴⁵ For example, the lover's activities are for the sake of the beloved, but clearly the lover does not become the beloved (nor, in fact, does shipbuilding become the ship). All Socrates needs for the argument is that all instances of Y's coming to be (*genesis*) some being X (*ousia*) are instances of Y being for the sake of X - this we can see in premise 2 of my representation of the genesis argument.

⁴⁵ According to many interpreters, e.g. Hackforth 1945:106, the whole argument is about the difference between *genesis* and *ousia*, and hence examples (i) to (iii) are usually moulded into that scheme. I disagree with this way of understanding the argument, as becomes clear from the text.

The text, in my view, clearly supports this way of reading the argument, for Socrates takes pains to introduce the for-the-sake-of relation with three examples, then he turns to two more familiar entities, being and becoming, and asks how they fit into the scheme just introduced. Protarchus, once he understands what Socrates wants, cites shipbuilding as a particular example of Y being for the sake of X; and it is clear that shipbuilding is for the sake of the ship and not vice versa.⁴⁶ The crux is that the point about value carries over:

Philebus 54c9-12

Socrates: But that for the sake of which what comes to be for the sake of something comes to be in each case, ought to be put into the class of the things good in themselves (en tê(i) tou agathou moira(i)), while that which comes to be for the sake of something else belongs in another class, my friend.

Protarchus: Undeniably.

Socrates here justifies premise 3 by arguing that Y, that for the sake of which something comes to be, is to be put into the class of things which are good in their own right (*tou agathou moira*), given that Y is

⁴⁶ Socrates adds some further refinements which are not essential to the argument. He argues at 54c1-4 that 'all drugs (*pharmaka*), as well as all tools (*organa*), and quite generally all materials (*hulê*), are always provided for the sake of some process of generation (*genesis*). I (sc. Socrates) further hold that every process of generation in turn always takes place for the sake of some particular being, and that all generation taken together takes place for the sake of being as a whole.' Thus, he makes clear, once more, that Y is for the sake of X is not the same as Y becoming X, for drugs and tools are obviously not processes of coming to be, but they are for the sake of something. He further points out that even a process of coming to be can be that for the sake of something else is (e.g. tools), but that this process is not the primary locus of value. Rather, the value is to be found in that for the sake of which the process of coming to be takes place.

not in its turn for the sake of yet something else.⁴⁷ By contrast, that which comes to be for the sake of Y, X, is not in this class - this was the whole point of introducing the for-the-sake-of relation in the first place.

The point seems not very difficult to grasp: the value of shipbuilding is dependent upon the value of ships. If ships were completely useless, then shipbuilding, too, would be useless.⁴⁸ It does not matter that ships may not have value in their own right, for a) it is Protarchus' example and it is not clear whether Socrates merely accepts that this is the sort of thing he is speaking about, or whether he genuinely accepts the example as instance of his schema, and b) the argument is not designed to tell us what things are goods in themselves. The argument is supposed to show which things are not goods in themselves, namely those things which are for the sake of other things, and in particular things which come to be for the sake of something else: these things are not in the class of the things which are good in themselves.

1.5.5 Pleasure is not good in itself

The results gained can now explicitly be applied to pleasure. We saw that pleasure is a restorative process. Restorative processes are processes of coming to be. Since every process of generation is for the

⁴⁷ Most interpreters agree that the argument does not merely show that pleasure is not the good (pace Delcomminette 2006:493-4), but that pleasure is not intrinsically good (Carone 2005:108), or unqualifiedly good (Frede 1993:lv), or a perfect end (Evans 2008:135). Evans points out that the same phrase, *moira tou agathou*, appears also in 20d1-10 where it, being complete and sufficient, contains all and only things which are worth pursuing as ends in themselves - and these things would be good in themselves.

⁴⁸ I will address complications arising from this simple scheme in the next chapter. The complications I have in mind are for example that a filled in crossword puzzle seems to be useless, but filling it out is not completely useless. These complications can be set aside for the moment, as Plato is obviously not discussing them.

sake of something, and given that being for the sake of something entails not being good in itself, it follows that pleasure cannot be good in itself - just as the conclusion of my representation of the genesis argument states.

To conclude that pleasure is not good in itself is, surely, part of an anti-hedonist argument. It does not only show that pleasure and the good are not identical, it also shows that pleasure is once and for all ruled out as a candidate for that which causes the goodness of the good life: only something that is good in itself could be the cause of the goodness of the mixture.

Note, however, that the argument does not conclude that pleasure has no value at all. For pleasure, as any process of coming to be, is defined by reference to a certain goal, and if the goal is good, then pleasure will have value - derivative value - insofar as it is for the sake of that good state. That the value of pleasure is dependent on something that is better than pleasure has also important practical consequences, as Socrates points out:

Philebus 54e1-55a11

Socrates: But this same person will also laugh at those who find their fulfillment in processes of generation.

Protarchus: How so, and what sort of people are you alluding to?

Socrates: I am talking of those who cure their hunger and thirst or anything else that is cured by processes of generation. They take delight in generation as a pleasure and proclaim that they would not want to live if they were not subject to hunger and thirst and if they could not experience all the other things one might want to mention in connection with such conditions.

Protarchus: That is very like them.

Socrates: But would we not all say that destruction is the opposite of generation?

Protarchus: Necessarily.

Socrates: So whoever makes this choice would choose generation and destruction in preference to that third life which consists of neither pleasure nor pain, but is a life of thought in the purest degree possible.

Protarchus: So a great absurdity seems to appear, Socrates, if we posit pleasure as good.

Socrates: An absurdity indeed, especially if we go on to look at it this way.

Socrates points here to something absurd in taking pleasure to be the goal, i.e. an end in itself. The fault lies in the nature of pleasure: pleasure is only a coming to be of something, and Socrates finds it implausible that one should 'find ... fulfillment in processes of generation' (54e1-2). If only goods in themselves are ends in themselves, then the argument follows straightforwardly from the genesis argument: a process of coming to be cannot be an end in itself because it is, by its nature, directed at something that is better - and *this* might be an end in addition to being the end of the process of generation. But it is not clear that this is all that Socrates relies on. Rather, Plato points to something odd about pursuing pleasure, where pleasure relies essentially on a lack, i.e. a bad state - even if pleasure only occurs when the bad state is turned into a good one. The point, I think, is that either i) the bad state has to be pursued as part of pursuing pleasure - in which case pleasure is a goal that has two diametrically opposed sub-goals, or ii) the bad state is not pursued as part of pleasure, but then pleasure ceases to be a self-

sufficient goal, since it is dependent upon lack.⁴⁹ Neither option is typical for things that are ends in themselves. In fact, one may wonder whether pleasure is a suitable object of pursuit at all.

Socrates mentions only bodily pleasures, but there is no reason why the argument should not apply even to pure pleasures. Surely, learning is for the sake of knowing; one tries to pass the stage of being a learner in order to become a knower. It is more difficult to make the other pure pleasures fit. Smelling or seeing something beautiful does not point beyond itself in the way that learning or eating when hungry do. Nevertheless, as we saw, Plato postulates that enjoying a beautiful sight requires a perceived process of restoration. Perhaps it is because the lack is not perceived that the relevant activity does not point at a goal whose achievement cures the lack.

1.5.6 Conclusion

In this chapter I have shown that there is good reason to attribute anti-hedonism, i.e. the thesis that no pleasure is good in itself, to Plato. He argues that all pleasures are processes of coming to be. This shows, for him, not only that pleasure and what is good are not in the same class; it also shows that one should not pursue pleasure.

⁴⁹ Pleasure is not the only thing to have this feature: exercising courage depends on being in situations that require courage; they are dangerous. But there is something wrong with a person seeking out dangerous situations in order to exercise her courage: this does not seem to make the life better. Cf. Aristotle *EN* X.8.1178b2-14.

To categorise Plato as anti-hedonist is not a recent development; it seems to have been the official view *ab initio*. This can be seen from Aristotle. In both essays on pleasure (to be discussed in Chapters 3 and 4) he discusses a *Philebus*-style theory of pleasure: at VII. 12.1152b12-15 he reports that those who think that pleasure is a *genesis* argue that pleasure is not good at all. Likewise, at X. 3.1173a29-31 he briefly sketches an argument that very closely resembles that in the *Philebus*: what is good is complete; processes (*kinêseis*) are not complete; hence pleasure is not good. Whether this is in support of my interpretation or not, I leave for the reader to decide.

Chapter 2: The value of pleasure in Plato's *Philebus* - the subtle version

2.1 Introduction

In the last chapter I have interpreted the position defended in the *Philebus* as anti-hedonist. Given that all pleasure is a process of restoration, it cannot be good in itself. This, I take it, is the position that stands out most clearly in the *Philebus*: the argument against pleasure as good comes at the end of the discussion of pleasure, and its crucial role can hardly be missed. This is why this anti-hedonist view (no pleasure is good in itself) can be described as the official view.

In this chapter I shall argue that the official view is not the only one found in the *Philebus*. I shall argue that, after all, some select pleasures turn out to be good in themselves. Reason for doubting that no pleasure is good in its own right is that some pleasures appear on the list of ingredients of the best life (66c). I shall argue that this means that they are good in their own right. But how is this possible, especially given the genesis argument? I have discussed already that some interpreters deny that Plato has a unified theory of pleasures (§§ 1.4; 1.4.5), and that the genesis argument applies only to those pleasures that are restorative processes. However, I have also shown that they are mistaken: *all* pleasures are processes of restoration. I shall argue that the genesis argument does not necessitate the conclusion that no pleasure is good in its own right by showing that it is too strong, as it would show that many kinds of knowledge cannot be good in their own right either. Then I turn to the question what it is that makes things good in order to explain how some kinds of knowledge can be both for the sake of something

and be good in their own right. After having shown that some kinds of pleasure are good in themselves, although they are restorative processes, I shall discuss the practical relevance of this more subtle conception of pleasure.

2.2 The final ranking of goods

In this section I will discuss what it means that some pleasures appear on the final list of ingredients of the good life. I will argue against the view that this list also contains subsidiary goods (those that are achieved together with achieving some good in itself, §1.3.4). Rather, all the things on this list are good in themselves. Since some pleasures are on this list, they must be good in themselves.

2.2.1 Ingredients of the best life: the necessary

We saw in the choice of lives argument that the best life is a mixture of intelligence and pleasure, because the interlocutors agree that no life lacking in either of them can be the best (21e-22b, discussed in §1.3). But what exactly does the mixture contain? This is an important question because not all kinds of knowledge combine favourably with all kinds of pleasure: some pleasures seem to be fairly incompatible with certain exercises of knowledge, as witnessed by Aristotle: no one could be actively intelligent (*phronein*) when enjoying sex (*EN* VII.11.1152b16-19). Similarly, Plato points out in the *Philebus* that there are many pleasures which are linked with being out of one's mind, rather than using one's intelligence (47a).¹ Socrates addresses the problem of what forms a coherent mixture by

¹ So, it is not always true that adding a pleasure to an exercise of knowledge will make it better. For example, the pleasure of being drunk will destroy many intellectual activities. So, the value of the mixture of pleasure and knowledge will not always be the sum of the value of pleasure and knowledge taken in isolation. In other words, the mixture is an 'organic unity', a term coined by G.E. Moore, by which he means, 'the fact that a whole has an intrinsic value different in its amount from the sum of the values of its parts.' (1903 §22).

emphasising that the best life must be well-blended, a coherent whole, not a rag-bag of items (61b8-9). But which kinds of pleasure and knowledge blend well?

The interlocutors agree that all kinds of knowledge are to be admitted to the mixture: not only the best and purest kinds of knowledge, the ones that deal with objects that are eternal and self-same (61e1-2; e.g. dialectic, theoretical mathematics) will belong to the mixture, but also lesser kinds of knowledge. Without including kinds of knowledge that are less precise, the life would hardly be a human life, and hence housebuilding, music, and simply all kinds of knowledge are admitted into the mixture (62a7-c8). Note that Protarchus twice remarks that these lesser kinds of knowledge are *necessary* (62b8; 62c3): you would not find your way home if you had knowledge only of eternal things, and we need music 'if in fact our life is supposed to be at least some sort of *life*' (62c3-4). There is, then, presupposed a contrast between *mere* life and a recognisably human life: one could live without music in caves, but this is not the sort of life that is acceptable to anyone who has experienced how different from this mere life human life can be. Now, although the distinction between mere life and a recognisably human life does not quite line up with the distinction between living and living well, it is clear that living well for human beings will mean a recognisably human life. Thus, the mixture which constitutes the best life will not only contain things because they are good, but also because they are necessary for a life to be recognisably human.

The distinction between those kinds of knowledge that are necessary for a human life and those that are simply good is very important because it helps us to become clear about the value of pleasure.

Intense and violent pleasures are not a good match for knowledge: they will destroy it (63d4-e4) and are hence excluded from the mixture that is the best life.² The non-violent pleasures, on the other hand, are welcome, it seems, for their own sake: these are the 'true and pure' pleasures (63e3-4).³ But these are not all pleasures in the mixture. For Protarchus and Socrates agree that if there are pleasures that are necessary, they ought to be in the mixture as well (62e8-10) and these seem to be identified with 'the pleasures of health and of temperance' (63e4-5), pleasures probably stemming from exercising, eating, drinking, and having sex - moderately.⁴ So, the mixture not only contains the best kinds of pleasure, but also necessary pleasures - just as it is the case with knowledge.

2.2.2 Ingredients of the best life: the good

Having established what is in the mixture, Socrates and Protarchus can turn now to the question what it is that makes the mixture good and, after that, turn to the relative ranking of pleasure and knowledge:

Philebus 64c5-9

Socrates: What ingredient in the mixture ought we to regard as most valuable and at the same time as the factor that makes it precious to all

² I will come back to these pleasures in §2.6.2.

³ I will soon discuss the question *why* they are welcome.

⁴ See J. Cooper 1977:160 for this identification. Note, however, that this does not show that *pleasure* is required, for we might always eat little bits so as to never be hungry. So, even a life that requires restoration does not in itself require pleasure. But living a life without pleasure would be rather impracticable, as there are sometimes more important things to do than simply to keep filling up deficiencies before they arise, and this is perhaps why these pleasures are necessary. Cf. *Tim.* 72e-73a where Timaeus describes that the function of the intestines: they are so long that we do not have to eat all the time - which would be incompatible with doing e.g. philosophy.

mankind? Once we have found it, we will inquire further whether it is more closely related and akin to pleasure or to reason, in nature as a whole.

The interlocutors here set a task which will result in the ‘final ranking of goods’ (Frede 1993:79), i.e. a ranking of the ingredients of the good life according to their contribution to the life’s value. Why should one assume that this list contains only things which are good in themselves? One could think that the new task, namely to establish which candidate, pleasure or knowledge, is more closely related (*prosphuesteron*, 64c8) and akin (*oikeiotes*, 64c9) to the factor that makes life good indicates that each candidate is related and akin to the life’s good-maker. If one further assumes that they are related and akin because they are all good, then both pleasure and knowledge would turn out to be good in themselves. I think that this line of thought arrives at the correct conclusion, but it does not conclusively show that those pleasures on the list are good in themselves. This requires more work.

The beginnings of a better answer to the question why only goods in themselves should be on the list emerges by looking again at the list: for only ‘those pleasures we set apart and defined as painless’ appear now on the list of goods, i.e. ‘the soul’s own pure pleasures, since they are attached to the sciences, some of them even to sense-perception.’ (66c4-6). The omission of the necessary pleasures is significant: although they are in the mixed life, they do not in their own right contribute anything to the value of this life, and hence are not mentioned in the final ranking of goods.⁵

⁵ Pace Cooper 1977:160-62. Gosling 1975:224 points out correctly ‘that the prize-giving is not between elements in the good life, but elements that make some contribution to its goodness.’

There is, of course, the question how even the pure pleasures can contribute to the value of the best life, given that they are restorative processes. I suspect that precisely the fact that Plato does not explicitly show that the pure pleasures are good in themselves has led scholars to suppose that the ranked goods must, after all, contain things which are not good in themselves. In support, they can point out that not only 'reason and intelligence' (66b5-6) are on the list of goods, but also 'those things that we defined as the soul's own properties, ... the sciences and the arts, and what we called right opinions, since they are more closely related to the good than pleasure at least.' (66b8-c2). Since we have just seen that at least some sciences are contained in the best life because they are necessary (sciences, crafts and even true opinion, 63e9) - does this not show that the final ranking is not of goods in themselves, but of all ingredients of the good life?⁶

I will argue that the answer is negative, for there is, as I will show in the next sections, an important difference between necessary kinds of knowledge and necessary pleasures: the former, but not the latter, are good in themselves. The necessary kinds of knowledge are not ranked insofar as they are necessary, but insofar as they are good in themselves. After having revised the genesis argument by taking into account this distinction, I will show that pure pleasures, too, will come out as good in themselves according to the criteria used, but that necessary pleasures do not make the cut.

2.3 Knowledge and the good

In this section I will discuss the relation between knowledge and the good. I will argue that all kinds of knowledge are good in

⁶ This is M. Evans' view, 2004:161-2.

themselves, even if they are for the sake of something else. In the next section I will, in the light of this result, revise the genesis argument.

2.3.1 *The good*

If we are to find out what makes the mixture good, we need some idea of the goodness of the mixture. In other words, we need to know what it is about a good mixture that distinguishes it from a bad one. The result of exactly this comparison is that beauty, proportion and truth are the marks of a good mixture, whereas these three features are absent from a bad mixture (if it is a mixture at all). Socrates sums up their findings as follows:

Philebus 65a1-5

Well, then, if we cannot capture the good in one form, we will have to take hold of it in a conjunction of three: beauty, proportion, and truth. Let us affirm that these should by right be treated as a unity and be held responsible for what is in the mixture, for its goodness is what makes the mixture itself a good one.

The good is said to be in the conjunction of three properties i) measure and proportion, ii) beauty, and iii) truth. These aspects of the good are not ad hoc; they have played an important role in the dialogue already. For example, some pleasures were marked as bad because they are false (36c-50e), which indicates that a pleasure can be good only if it is true. Further, in the general ontology sketched at 23b-27c it turns out that only harmonious mixtures are good things, and all (real) mixtures are good and beautiful (25e-26b). Measure and proportion are responsible for the coherence of these mixtures to be mixtures: they hold them together and are thus responsible for those

mixtures to be mixtures (64d9-e2).⁷ So, measure and proportion play a very important role in explaining the goodness of things and are more important, in fact, than beauty: despite the unity of these three properties, they do not seem quite on equal footing, 'for measure and proportion manifest themselves in all areas as beauty and excellence.' (64e6-7). So beauty may only be a manifestation of the presence of measure and proportion. This means that, if we can show that something is true and measured, beauty will 'come for free', i.e. no extra argument is required to show that whatever has the other two properties has beauty as well.⁸

2.3.2 *Knowledge: purity and truth*

Let us begin, then, with knowledge. Socrates and Protarchus set out to examine knowledge in the same way as pleasure to find out 'what is by nature purest in them' (55c7). Socrates leads Protarchus to accept the following classification. Knowledge is divided into five kinds: (i) manual arts with little precision; (ii) manual arts with precision; (iii) applied mathematics; (iv) theoretical mathematics; (v) dialectic.⁹ If the task was to sort the kinds of knowledge according to purity (repeated in 57a9-b2), then the notion of purity is spelled out, here, in terms of accuracy (*akribeia*, 56b5; 56c5; 56c8). Flute-playing is somewhat imprecise: there is not much precision in e.g. tuning the flute and hitting the right notes. Of course, one can learn this by experience (*empeiria*, 55e6), but this cannot achieve the same precision as e.g. building where measuring tools guarantee some precision (55e6). This is why medicine, agriculture, navigation, and strategy are ranked below crafts that use measuring instruments

⁷ Cf. V. Harte 1999:390.

⁸ See Delcomminette 2006:582 for the stronger view that all three aspects of the good are interentailing.

⁹ Cf. Hackforth 1945:115 for a similar way of grouping the kinds of knowledge.

(56b1-c2). The point is not that the body of truths constituting medicine is less precise, the difference is our access to these truths: instruments give us good access to truths in building, but no comparable instruments were available for medicine in 4th century BC Athens.

In addition to our access, there is something about the nature of the truths in a domain of knowledge that makes one branch of knowledge more precise than another. By asking 'how could we ever hope to achieve any kind of certainty about subject matters that do not in themselves possess any certainty?' (58b4-5) Socrates points out that only if the subject matter has definite and stable truths we can speak of real or true knowledge.¹⁰ This is why the other three kinds of knowledge surpass the first two in precision still. Given that practical mathematics is only concerned with perishable and mutable things, while theoretical mathematics deals with unchangeable things, theoretical mathematics must be 'infinitely superior yet in precision and truth in its use of measure and number' (57c10-d2). It is no surprise that dialectic is still much more precise because it is 'the discipline concerned with being and with what is really and forever in every way eternally self-same' and is thus 'by far the truest of all kinds of knowledge' (58a1-5). This discussion shows that the notion of precision is wedded to the notion of truth: the more precise a craft or science, the "truer" it is.

The upshot of this brief discussion is that all the kinds of knowledge reviewed here have some truth, i.e. they are genuine kinds of

¹⁰ The notion of 'definite truth' is explained in terms of stability. For example, what is funny or a good subject or a joke changes all the time - that is why there is no science of joking. On the other hand, for music, there is a fact of the matter which chords are harmonious how to tune your flute and how strong you have to blow to get the clearest note. It is just difficult to get scientific access to these facts.

knowledge - even if some are better than others. To say that a given discipline has truth means for Plato not only that it is about things that are the case, but also that this science is somewhat capable of accessing these truths.¹¹ In virtue of being true, then, the kinds of knowledge are akin to the good.

2.3.3 Knowledge: proportion and beauty

It is in virtue of having a certain content that knowledge should contain measure and proportion. This becomes clear from the earlier discussion of the “Promethean method” in 16c-18d: scientific knowledge does not merely consist in knowing the “raw material” of a given science, but, more importantly, in knowing the entire structure of this domain. The raw material of music, for example, is high and low pitched sounds, as well as fast and slow sequences of sounds. Knowing this, however, does not suffice for being an expert in music: in order to understand each individual note and rhythm, one must understand its place in, and relation to, the whole system.¹² Thus, there can be no science without knowledge of structure, that is, without knowledge of how a certain domain is ordered. Given that the content is an integral part of the knowledge in question, we can say that the knowledge has measure and proportion. Since beauty supervenes on being ordered, beauty would also be an attribute of the knowledge via its content.¹³

¹¹ It might be unusual for us to compare sciences in terms of truth. However, there surely is a distinction between alchemy and modern chemistry: even though they are (in part) about the same subject matter, modern chemistry is “more scientific”. It is this difference which, I think, Plato wants to capture when he says that building is truer than music.

¹² I rely here on Harte’s excellent interpretation of this difficult passage (2002:199-208). J. Cooper 1977:155 also argues that ‘subjects like music and the seasons, which are among the objects of knowledge, are on Plato’s view structured by ratio and proportion...’.

¹³ See Delcomminette 2006:459-63 for a good explanation of the relationship between beauty and measuredness.

2.3.4 Conclusion

To conclude this brief sketch of the critique of knowledge: all kinds of knowledge are good insofar as they are about things with a given structure or order, thus having measure, and because they are true (even if to varying degrees, depending on their accuracy). We can see, then, that all kinds of knowledge are good in themselves, insofar as they take share in the good: insofar as they instantiate the qualities of i) measure and proportion, ii) beauty, and iii) truth they are good in themselves.

2.4 The genesis argument reconsidered

In this section I will come back to the genesis argument. This argument seems to be a stumbling block for my claim that some pleasures are good in themselves. If, as I have argued in the previous chapter, it concludes that pleasure cannot be good in itself, it seems futile to try to argue that, after all, pleasure is good. However, the results of the previous section help to show that Plato overplays his cards in the genesis argument. In this section I will show that if all knowledge is good in itself, the crucial premises in the genesis argument falters: knowledge will be a counterexample to the claim that if Y is for the sake of X, then Y is not good in itself. If so, the argument does not cogently conclude that pleasure is not good in itself.

2.4.1 The faulty premise

I represented the genesis argument thus:

1. Pleasure is a coming to be (*genesis*) (54c6).

2. If X is a coming to be, then X is for the sake of something else (cf. 54c6-7).
3. If X is for the sake of something else, then X is not good in itself (54c10-11).
4. Hence: Pleasure is not good in itself (54d1-2).

The problematic premise here is premise 3: this premise apparently relegates anything that is for the sake of something else to the class of things that are not good in themselves. Initially, this principle is not implausible, for the goal seems to be better than that which is for the sake of the goal. However, if we take premise 3 as it stands it would state that some kinds of knowledge are not good in themselves. The clearest example is perhaps that of building: shipbuilding is mentioned as an example for a coming to be (54b3), and it is clearly aimed at something which is the source of the activity's value. However, at 56b-c building is mentioned as a branch of knowledge which is better (because more precise) than e.g. medicine, agriculture, navigation, and strategy (56b) - all of which are clearly for the sake of some goal. So, if premise 3 holds true, all these kinds of knowledge will not be good in themselves. However, we have just seen that all of these kinds of knowledge should come out as good in themselves - at least insofar as they share in the good (cf. §2.2.4).

2.4.2 Having value in different ways

The problem with premise 3 is that it does not take into account that things can have value in more than one way. We are, of course, familiar with the idea that something can have value in more than one way: a painting may be good in itself, but also good because it contributes to a collection, or because it is a status symbol, or has monetary value, or has sentimental value, or historical value - and so

on. In the *Republic* II.357c1-3 Plato shows that he, just as we, allows that some things are valuable in more than one way: knowledge (*phronein*), among other things, is said to be desired for its own sake but also for its consequences.¹⁴ In the *Philebus*, too, knowledge is acknowledged to be valuable in two ways:

Philebus 58b9-c4

What I wanted to find out here, my dear friend Protarchus, was not what art or science excels all others by its grandeur, by its nobility, or by its usefulness to us. Our concern here was rather to find which one aims for clarity, precision, and the highest degree of truth, even if it is a minor discipline and our benefit is small.

We find here a clear distinction between what is useful and what is true (the virtue of knowledge), and Socrates is not interested in the usefulness, but in the value that knowledge has in itself. It is of course true that many kinds of knowledge are for the sake of something, such as building, or the art of medicine: since they are for the sake of a goal, they are derivatively good. However, as we saw in the critique of knowledge (cf. §2.4.2), all kinds of knowledge are (to different degrees) also good in themselves because they instantiate the good-making features of the good. Neither of these ways of having value undermines the other: they can happily co-exist.¹⁵ If, however, knowledge has value in two ways (in itself and in relation to something else), then premise 3 of the genesis argument is too strong: it is false to say ‘if X is for the sake of something else, then X

¹⁴ The comparison with the *Republic* is interesting because there enjoyment and harmless pleasures are said to be good in their own right (357b6) - this is not what one would have expected given the official theory of pleasure in the *Philebus*.

¹⁵ J. Cooper 1977:154 similarly observes that in the critique of knowledge ‘[t]he medical art, for example, is here being valued as a form of intellectual discipline, not merely because of the value of health, to which it may serve as a means.’

is not good in itself' (premise 3, [P3]), for knowledge is both good in itself and for the sake of something else. All Plato is entitled to holding is [P3*] 'if X is for the sake of something else, then X is derivatively good', where P3* does not exclude the claim that X is also good in itself.¹⁶

2.4.3 Conclusion

I have shown in this section that the genesis argument as discussed in the last chapter is too strong: its crucial premise, relegating all things that are for the sake of something else to the class of things that are not good in themselves, is undermined by the example of useful kinds of knowledge. What can be supported would be a revised argument:

The revised genesis argument

1. Pleasure is a coming to be (*genesis*) (54c6).
2. If X is a coming to be, then X is for the sake of something else (cf. 54c6-7).
3. If X is for the sake of something else, then X is derivatively good.
4. Hence: Pleasure is derivatively good.

If this is how the argument should look like, the argument could show that pleasure cannot be the good, given that Plato accepts Aristotle's thesis that the highest good is never for the sake of

¹⁶ Plato might accept such a principle in *Rep.* II.357c1-3 where notably knowledge is good in itself and for its consequences: 'And is there is a kind of good we like for its own sake and also for the sake of what comes from it - knowing, for example, and seeing and being healthy?' (tr. Grube/Reeve).

anything else (EN I.7.1097a28-34).¹⁷ However, that pleasure is not *the* good is clear since the choice of lives argument at 20c-22e. What it is supposed to show, namely that no pleasure is good in itself, it cannot show, at least not without further argument, as there are things which are both derivatively good *and* good in themselves (medicine is one of them). The revised argument shows only that pleasure is derivatively good, but it needs extra argument to determine whether pleasure is good in itself. I will argue in the next section that, in addition to being good insofar as it brings about the harmonious state, some pleasures are also good in themselves.

2.5 The value of pleasures reconsidered

In this section I will show that the so-called ‘true’ or ‘pure’ pleasures are akin to the good insofar as they instantiate the properties essential to the good. What needs to be explained in order to show that these pleasures are good is why these pleasures have measure, and why they have truth.¹⁸

2.5.1 Pure pleasures, again

In the discussion of true pleasures, Socrates aims to show two things: i) that there is a kind of pleasure which is unmixed, and ii) that this is the truest kind of pleasure. It will be expedient to provide a brief

¹⁷ In the *Philebus* he seems committed to a similar thesis, as can be gleaned, perhaps, from the specifications of the good (in particular that it must be *teleios* and *hikanos*, cf. 20d). Note however, that in the *Republic* the finest goods are good in themselves and for their consequences (358a). Perhaps the point is that the finest goods are not dependent on the goods they produce in the way discussed in §1.5.3.

¹⁸ Note that when Socrates states the aspects of the good, he uses the word *summetria* (65a2), not *emmetria*, as he does when stating that pure pleasure have ‘fit measure’ (52c4). However, it appears that *summetria* is equivalent to *emmetria*: when these three criteria are used to rank pleasure and knowledge relative to each other, they conclude in respect of measure (*metriotês*, 65d4) that nothing is less measured than pleasure taken in isolation (*ametrôteron*, 65d9), and nothing more measured than intelligence and knowledge (*emmetrôteron*, 65d10). So, all the “measure-terms” seem to be used interchangeably. Cf. Hackforth 1945:133 n. 2.

overview of the argument to show *that* pure pleasures have these characteristics, before explaining *why* they should be measured and true in the following subsections.

The interlocutors agreed that the most intense pleasures are commingled with pain and that due to this contrast they are so intense (cf. 51a6-9). These mixed pleasures fall under the category of false pleasures - apparently just because they are mixed with pain. But not all pleasures are necessarily mixed with pain, there are also the pure pleasures.

Philebus 51b3-7

Socrates: Those related to colours we call beautiful (kala), for instance, or to shapes, most pleasures of smell, and those of hearing, and generally any where the deprivation is imperceptible and without pain and which supply perceptible replenishments which are pleasant. (tr. Gosling, slightly altered)

Since all these pleasures are based on an unperceived lack, they will not involve any pain or desire or pain of not having something desirable. So, 'there is no inevitable pain mixed with them' (speaking of the pleasures of smelling, 51e2), nor is there any pain 'that could be called inherent by nature' (speaking of the pleasures of learning, 51a8). Of course, one can worry in addition to the relevant activity that something might go wrong, but, as Socrates points out, 'we are here concerned only with the natural affections themselves, apart from reflection on them.' (52b2-3) So, the idea is that unlike e.g. the pleasure of eating or sex, there is no inherent pain in the above-

mentioned pleasures.¹⁹ The relevant point here is that Socrates goes on to assign these pure pleasures 'to the class of things that possess measurement.' (52c7-d1) - and in this they differ widely from their impure kin. Their purity, finally, also makes sure that these pleasures are also the truest pleasures (52d6-53c2).

2.5.2 Pure pleasures: measure

Unfortunately, Plato does not say very much about why the pure pleasures are measured. A clue, however, is given in the following passage:

Philebus 52c1-d1

Socrates: But now that we have properly separated the pure pleasures and those that can rightly be called impure, let's add to our account the attribution of lack of measure (ametria) to the violent pleasures, but fit measure (emmetria), in contrast, to the others. That is to say, we will assign those pleasures which display high intensity and violence, no matter whether frequently or rarely, to the class of the unlimited (apeiron), the more and less, which affects both body and soul. The other kinds of pleasures we will assign to the class of things that possess measurement (emmetria).

The pleasures that are mixed with pain are lacking in measure, while the unmixed ones have measure. Why so? The clue is given by the mention of the *apeiron*, which relates this passage to the ontological

¹⁹ One might object that this is not even empirically true. Why should I not be able to enjoy food without being hungry? This is how it sometimes happens: one starts eating nibbles; they taste good - but one is not painfully aware of being hungry. Plato could say either of two things: a) this is not the pleasure of eating, but of tasting, since eating is pleasant, by definition, because it is the refilling of a lack. Or b) if the pleasure of eating likewise were to depend on an unperceived lack, there is still the difference between it and the pure pleasures in that once one has started eating, one does not want it to stop, while the activities yielding pure pleasures might be interrupted at any time. So, eating carries a desire to continue eating until one is full, whereas this would not be the case for pure-pleasure activities - and this seems to have at least some empirical support.

framework discussed at 23c-27c. Things belonging to the class of the *apeiron* were said to lack limit (*peras*) and completion (*telos*, 24b8). Instead, they are always ‘becoming more and less’ (24e7–8). If something is in the class of the *apeiron*, it ‘flows and does not rest’ (*ou menei*, 24d4).²⁰ This is contrasted with a limit which, once imposed, makes things remain what they are by introducing measure (*metron*, 25a6–b2).²¹

Seeing pleasure in the scheme of the general ontology also highlights a point of crucial importance, namely that there must be a cause for the imposition of limit, and that this can only be intelligence (30d10–e2).²² The important difference, then, between limited pleasures and unlimited pleasures would be that the limited ones are in a way subordinate to intelligence, whereas the unlimited pleasures “run free”. This is crucial because those pleasure which contribute to the goodness of the best life are ‘are attendant upon (*hepomenas*) the sciences, some of them even upon sense-perception.’ (66c4–6). This is to say that one can have these pleasures only as an effect of some activity of intelligence. But how does intelligence impose order? The answer is: through content. Remember that pleasures have content and that the content is an integral part of the pleasure. For example, the pleasures of anticipation are similar to judgements (36c–41b, esp. 39a–40b). However, I have shown already that having a content is not confined to these kinds of pleasure, but that even “bodily” pleasures have content (cf. §§1.4.3–4). The content is not in any way external to the pleasure, just as the content of a belief is not external to the belief. Belief without content does not exist: it is an integral part of the

²⁰ I will return to these pleasures in the next section. For now let us concentrate on the pure pleasures.

²¹ Cf. G. Carone 2005:108.

²² I will come back to the role of knowledge as cause in §§2.6.2–3.

belief. Likewise, or so Plato argues, pleasure does not exist without content.²³

How pleasure can be good in virtue of its content is particularly clear in the case the pure pleasures associated with seeing. The content of the pleasures associated with perception is provided by special objects.²⁴ The objects must be 'beautiful by themselves' (*kath'hautos*) and not merely 'beautiful in a relative sense' (*pros ti*, 51c1-d1). The exact meaning of this is unclear; the only hint Socrates offers is that animals or paintings are not beautiful in themselves, and that seeing mathematical planes and solids, or again patches of pure colour, is what provides pure pleasures because these objects are beautiful in themselves and not merely in relation to something else (51c). At any rate, Plato seems to make a point about the things that provide the pleasure, rather than about our attitude to these things: they have beauty in virtue of themselves, not in virtue of any relation to other things.²⁵ Given that beauty is manifest due to measure and

²³ That the content is an integral part of the pleasure can be seen in the first argument to show that there are false pleasures. The general argument is that a) it is possible to represent things incorrectly, and b) one can be pleased about things that are or will not be the case, yet c) the pleasure one has is a genuine pleasure, even though it is false (just as false belief is genuine belief). So, d) there are false pleasures. It is crucial for Plato's argument to show that it is not merely the content that is false, but the pleasure itself. The quality of the content, being false, transmits to pleasure of which it is part. It is understood that these pleasures are bad because their content is bad (37d2-4; 40e6-41a4).

²⁴ Similarly D. Frede 1997:303-4.

²⁵ See C. Meinwald for the latter suggestion. She suggests that having a felt lack of X is the way in which we would take X to be beautiful in a relative way - relative to our desires (2008:498-499). This suggestion is interesting, but I do not think that it can be sustained. For example, discussing sound, Socrates speaks of a *katharon melos*, a pure note or melody (51d7) which is supposed to explain why the object of the pure pleasure is not beautiful in relation to anything else. Meinwald would have to maintain that this means 'pure of desire' - and this is implausible. Note that Plato does say that the pleasures of learning are pure only on condition that we do not desire the object of knowledge - but this case is introduced as next point (*eti*, 51e8), after the group of four pure pleasures first mentioned together at 51b3-7 have been discussed (in the order of first mention), and it is thus implausible to assume that this extra reason is supposed to be true of the other pleasures as well.

proportion, the objects will be proportionate and measured as well (64e, cf. 51e, 53b). Now, given that the pleasure is taken in these objects, the content represented will mirror the structural features of the object enjoyed.²⁶ So, due to their content, the pleasures of seeing mathematical objects will be beautiful and measured.

A similar account can be given of the pleasures attached to the sciences. The pleasures of the sciences receive their content through cognition - or else they would be reducible to the pleasures attached to the senses.²⁷ I take it that what is distinctive about these pleasures is that their content is given by what is distinctive about science and scientific knowledge, and this is, as we saw in §2.3.3, that they are about ordered or well-measured domains. So, if the pleasure taken in these sciences preserves the structural features of the object enjoyed, the pleasure will be itself measured, due to its content.

2.5.3 Pure pleasures: truth

Having shown that the pleasures following the sciences and some sense perception are measured, I return now to the question about the truth of pleasure. It would be easiest (and true) to say that pure pleasures are true pleasures because their content is true. Unfortunately, this is not Plato's argument. Rather, he forges a connection between being unmixed and being true. He drives home this point by an analogy: if you have a lot of white that is mixed with something else, and you have also a small quantity of pure white,

²⁶ For the connection between perception, belief, hope and pleasure, see 38e12-40e8, a passage in which a 'scribe' and a 'painter' are introduced to explain the link between perception and belief.

²⁷ To be sure, the pleasures attached to the sciences will often involve some of the pleasures attached to the senses, given that the sciences deal with mathematical shapes or pure colours or sounds: builders use a rule, a straight-edge and a compass (56b-c) - the same instruments which are required to bring about pure shapes (51c).

then you should think that the pure white is 'the truest and most beautiful of all instances of white' (53a9-b2). So, it is purity, not quantity, which makes the white the truest white: however much mixed white you have, it will not surpass the unmixed white in being really white.

Now, this same reasoning is applied to pleasure: 'every small and insignificant pleasure that is unadulterated by pain will turn out to be pleasanter, truer, and more beautiful than a greater quantity and amount of the impure kind.' (53b9-c2). So, pleasures are true because they are not mixed with their opposite, pain. Although this is surely only one notion of 'true' or 'real' pleasure,²⁸ it is the right notion here. A hedonist might hold that the truest pleasures are the most intense pleasures. However, since intensity has nothing to do with the notion of truth as an aspect of the good, the hedonist's favourite pleasures would not be good according to Socrates' and Protarchus' standards. For them 'truth' as an aspect of the good states the absence of opposites: the good is in no way not good. So, if pleasure is to instantiate the good, it must instantiate this notion of truth, to contain no opposite.²⁹ Given what we know about pure pleasures, it is even impossible that they should be admixed with pain - which means that they are the true and paradigmatic pleasures, and as such

²⁸ If pure pleasures are the real pleasures, then pleasure has undergone quite a transformation: the paradigmatic pleasures of a hedonist (the real ones for him) have been shown to be false. And now we learn that real pleasures are in fact incompatible with being intense: only pleasure which cannot be taken to insane levels of intensity are said to be real pleasures. Cf. Hackforth 1945:102.

²⁹ The same applies to the sciences. Earlier I have spelled out the notion of truth in relation to *akribeia*. J. Cooper 1977:155-58 shows convincingly how the notions of *akribeia*, purity and truth hang together. Roughly, the idea is that the more a discipline rests on unargued assumptions and guesswork, the more imprecision it will contain, that is, it will have elements in its domain which are not knowledge and is thus less pure.

they are not only “truer” than the other pleasures, but also ‘more pleasant’ (53c1).

2.5.4 Conclusion

In this section I have shown why pure pleasures are good in themselves: insofar as they instantiate the aspects of the good, they are good in themselves. I have shown how the good pleasures have measure, and why they are true. Given that pleasant objects are beautiful (either directly in the case of pure visual pleasures, or indirectly through being proportionate) the pleasures are, in addition to being true and measured, also beautiful.

The absence of necessary pleasures in the final ranking of the good can, thus, be explained. They are not, and cannot be, good in themselves, as they essentially rely on perceived lack (eating without being hungry is not pleasant). So, necessary pleasures cannot be pure in the sense required here - and hence they cannot instantiate the properties of the good. But this means that they are not good in themselves.

2.6 Plato’s positions reconsidered: anti-hedonism or not?

In the last chapter we saw that there is good reason to take anti-hedonism as the official thesis in the *Philebus*. This position was gained through the genesis argument which concludes that no pleasure is good in itself. Since this argument, as I have argued, does not reach its desired conclusion - what does this mean for Plato’s anti-hedonism? At first glance it might seem as if Plato would have to give up anti-hedonism to maintain the more sensible view that most pleasures are not good in themselves, and only a few select ones are good in themselves. However, in this section I will argue

that the practical aspect of Plato's anti-hedonism remains unchanged: no pleasure is to be pursued as if it was good in itself.

2.6.1 Practical implications of the genesis view

Let us recall the exchange between Socrates and Protarchus after the genesis argument at 54e1-55a11 where they draw out the practical consequences of the genesis view:

Philebus 54e1-55a11

Socrates: But this same person will also laugh at those who find their fulfillment in processes of generation.

Protarchus: How so, and what sort of people are you alluding to?

Socrates: I am talking of those who cure their hunger and thirst or anything else that is cured by processes of generation. They take delight in generation as a pleasure and proclaim that they would not want to live if they were not subject to hunger and thirst and if they could not experience all the other things one might want to mention in connection with such conditions.

Protarchus: That is very like them.

Socrates: But would we not all say that destruction is the opposite of generation?

Protarchus: Necessarily.

Socrates: So whoever makes this choice would choose generation and destruction in preference to that third life which consists of neither pleasure nor pain, but is a life of thought in the purest degree possible.

Protarchus: So a great absurdity seems to appear, Socrates, if we posit pleasure as good.

Socrates: An absurdity indeed, especially if we go on to look at it this way.

One may think that Protarchus and Socrates here merely make explicit what is implicitly contained in the conclusion of the genesis

argument: if pleasure is not good in itself, then there is something dubious about 'those who find their fulfillment in processes of generation' and 'a great absurdity seems to appear ... if we posit pleasure as good'. If this were the argument, then the practical conclusion would stand and fall with the genesis argument. And since the argument has fallen, the practical conclusion that we should not posit pleasure as good would no longer follow.

However, this is not how the exchange goes: the absurdity does not follow from the genesis argument, but from the thesis that all pleasure is a process of coming to be. Yet, since this is left intact, there is no reason to abandon the practical conclusion. But why should those pleasures that are good in themselves not be goals?

2.6.2 Pleasure and the unlimited

In explaining why pleasure is not to be pursued as a goal I shall focus on one important feature of pleasure, namely that pleasure itself, taken in isolation, does not have a limit: it is, in this sense, unlimited (cf. 31a8-10).³⁰ Why is pleasure unlimited? From a practical point of view, pleasure is unlimited because, qua pleasure, it does not have a clear cut-off point.³¹ This is due, ultimately, to the fact that pleasure is a restorative process of a harmonious state. If pleasure

³⁰ This is not meant to be an interpretation of 54e1-55a11, although I do provide material for explaining what is wrong with a life in which people pursue pleasure as good. I have indicated, briefly, what is wrong with pursuing pleasure as a goal in §1.5.5. Evans 2008:134-140 is particularly interesting: he contends that that the absurdity is that the devotee of pleasure is committed to regarding pleasure both as an end and not as an end, and is thus committed to practical irrationality. See also Evans 2008:136 for good criticism of the most common interpretation that the pleasure-lover is committed to an unsatisfiable life.

³¹ Pace D. Frede 1997:303 who argues that pleasures are unlimited because they can be more or less intense. I am simplifying here a quite complex question about the nature of the unlimited as used in the general ontology at 23b-27c. Note also that we are not given explicit reasons which find Socrates' approval in the dialogue why pleasure would be unlimited.

were the goal, then, clearly, being in the harmonious state would not be the goal, for pleasure is a movement, not a state. In order to have pleasure, you need to be moving towards the harmonious state, not be in it. So you can try to go only very slowly towards it, but you will reach it eventually. So what will you do, as a good hedonist? You will induce a lack, so that you can have more pleasure in restoring the harmonious state.

The characteristic unlimitedness comes in because, as far as pleasure is your goal, there is no end to the activity of filling and emptying: this is what you have to do to get pleasure. Remember, the choice of lives argument in part turns on the premise that each life contains a maximum of the good: either life is supposed to be the best. And a hedonist will of course claim that the goodness of one's life can be maximised by pleasure. So, in order to get the best life possible, you should maximise pleasure. The practical implication is that you cannot simply stop at some point, because this would indicate that there is reason not to have more pleasure, which would indicate that pleasure is not all that counts in your life (and that you are, hence, not a hedonist).³² So, making pleasure one's goal results in a see-saw activity for which there is no hedonistic reason to stop it. This, I think, captures the idea that pleasure is unlimited (cf. 27e).³³

³² J. Timmermann 2005:144-146 presents the consequence that sometimes one might seem to have too much pleasure as another paradox for hedonism. But not all varieties of hedonism need necessarily involve the maximisation claim in the way required for Timmermann's paradox, as argued by A. Hills 2008:51-54.

³³ Note that the *Philebus* does not offer anything like the "hedonistic calculus" in the Protagoras. If such a technique was available, then one could justify that one has to sleep or stop one's bulimic activity. But in this case the life is not so much governed by pleasure rather than by knowledge. Knowledge, again, would limit the pleasures such that the pleasures pertaining to given activities would not be sought for their own sake, but insofar as they contribute to the overall good.

What is so bad about pleasure, if it is both a goal and unlimited? That pleasure is unlimited when taken as a goal is a problem because this sort of activity will undermine the coherence of the mixture of the best life, as described in

Philebus 63d1-e3

Socrates (in a fictional dialogue with all kinds of knowledge) : ... "Will you have any need to associate with the strongest and most intense pleasures in addition to the true pleasures?" we will ask them [sc. all kinds of knowledge]. "Why on earth should we need them, Socrates?" they might reply, "They are a tremendous impediment to us, since they infect the souls in which they dwell with madness or even prevent our own development altogether. Furthermore, [e] they totally destroy most of our offspring, since neglect leads to forgetfulness.

This passage shows that the pursuit of strong and intense pleasures, those that are necessarily mixed with pain, will lead to neglect of intellectual activities because these pleasures are incompatible with intellectual activity. Pleasure, because it is unlimited, has the tendency to push away the other goals whose successful pursuit makes life better.³⁴ The pursuit of pleasure is thus incompatible with the pursuit of other goods.

2.6.3 Pure pleasures and the primacy of knowledge

That it is absurd to pursue pleasure and that pleasure is unlimited go hand in hand. Pure pleasures, however, are not unlimited. Does this

³⁴ For Plato, the other goals do not have this tendency. Since the other goals are intellectual activities and these activities are dependent on intelligence and reason, and reason is responsible for putting limit onto what is unlimited (26e with 30e), these activities will be properly limited. One may doubt Plato's optimism, however: doing too much philosophy is harmful to health (cf. *EN* VII. 12.1153a19-20).

mean that pure pleasure, because they are limited, are an appropriate goal for pursuit?

As we saw, these pleasures differ from their impure kin in that they are 'attendant upon the sciences and some sense perception', or 'following' them (66c4-6), which at least means that they are dependent on cognition.³⁵ For the pleasures of sense-perception and the sciences are described as 'following' (*hepomai*) these activities, which indicates that pleasure cannot be had without the relevant activity. Pure pleasures are dependent on intelligence and knowledge, in the sense that their purity depends on being limited - and intelligence is the only thing able to impose limit (26e-30e; cf. §2.5.2). Reason and intelligence impose a limit on pleasure by subordinating it to the activity in question. This has an important practical consequence, for the goal and end is no longer set by pleasure (or the desire for pleasure), but by the working of intelligence. The goal and end is the goal of the activity upon which pleasure follows, but not the pleasure itself. For example, once one has learned a certain lesson, the process of learning is over, and so is the pleasure of learning. Aiming at pleasure itself is not part of doing the relevant science or having pure sights: the goals are set by intelligence and knowledge, not by pleasure.³⁶ Given that pleasure is in this way subordinate to the activity, there will be no reason to continue the activity just for the sake of pleasure. The duration of pleasure and its *raison d'être* is thus set by the activity of intelligence.

³⁵ See P. Lang 2010:155-59 for a good account of why pleasure dependent on knowledge.

³⁶ The role for reason and intelligence as primary leader is illustrated in the dialogue by the staged dialogue between Socrates and knowledge. Socrates addresses reason and intelligence which kinds of knowledge they permit to be part of the best life (63c).

As long as it is the goal of the activity upon which the pure pleasure follows that is pursued, the pleasure will be measured. This changes when pleasure is set as the goal. For if you desire a pure pleasure (which seems to be implied by pursuing it), the pleasure will cease to be pure, for two reasons. First, this is because a desire is some kind of pain. So, if it is integral to your pleasure that you should desire it, it would seem that you are aware of a lack which the pleasure is supposed to fill. Yet, since pure pleasures are possible only because they rely on an unperceived lack, one cannot desire them as pure pleasures: desiring them will render them impure. Only if pleasure is consequent upon some activity, aiming at some goal other than pleasure, can this pleasure be pure. This is why pure pleasures must be subordinate to intelligence.

Second, if pleasure is not subordinate to intelligence, but is pursued for its own sake (i.e. the goal of a given activity is pleasure, rather than the proper goal of that activity), intelligence is deprived of its role as leader. Since only intelligence can impose limit, the pleasure will no longer have limit. This means that it will, just as any other pleasure, have the tendency to spill over, to push other pursuits out of the way, and, in particular, to make it difficult for knowledge to find a foothold in the life.

2.6.4 Upshot

In this section I have argued that the practical consequence of the Plato's anti-hedonism is not affected by the criticism of the genesis argument. Although the genesis argument does not show that no pleasure is good in itself, it is nevertheless true on Plato's conception of pleasure that we should not pursue any pleasure as good. Even those pleasures which are good should not be pursued as good

because pursuing them deprives them of one good-making feature, measuredness. For they can be measured only when they are subordinate to intelligence, where being subordinate to intelligence entails that pleasure cannot be pursued as good, since pleasure is not the goal of any science.³⁷ So, although Plato is not an anti-hedonist in the normative sense (for he is committed to holding that some pleasures *are* good in themselves), he is an anti-hedonist in the practical sense that pleasure is never a proper goal of pursuit.

2.6.5 Sidgwick's paradox of hedonism

Before I move on to Aristotle in the next two chapters, I should like to compare Plato's somewhat curious position with the paradox of hedonism, as introduced by Henry Sidgwick. Plato's position is curious because he claims that a) pure pleasures are part of the best life which means that they contribute to the value of the best life (cf. §2.2.2). However, b) as soon as you start pursuing the pure pleasures they cease to be pure and good, and hence will no longer contribute to the value of the life. So c) there are some goods which make one's life better only on condition that they are not pursued.

Sidgwick has brought out a related awkwardness for hedonism, which he calls the 'fundamental paradox of hedonism': according to Sidgwick the paradox for a hedonistic theory of the good is that the goal of getting the maximum of pleasure is undermined by pursuing

³⁷ One may argue that doing-philosophy-for-the-sake-of-understanding and doing-philosophy-for-the-sake-of-pleasure are two different activities, given that activities are at least partly individuated by their goals. A consideration in Platonic spirit is this (cf. *Gorgias* 464a-465a): subordinating a science into the service of pleasure makes it into a pseudo-science: pastry-baking will take up the place of proper diatetic art. The latter is concerned with understanding health, something that can be studied (and understood); pastry-baking is unable to state the cause of things (and that is required for a science). So, when you're aiming at pleasure, you will not be engaging in a science, but in a bastard-science.

pleasure. This problem comes out most strongly in pleasures associated with active pursuit:

it may certainly be said that we cannot attain [enjoyments], at least in their highest degree, so long as we keep our main conscious aim concentrated upon them. It is not only that the exercise of our faculties is insufficiently stimulated by the mere desire of the pleasure attending it, and requires the presence of other more objective, 'extra-regarding', impulses, in order to be fully developed: we may go further and say that these other impulses must be temporarily predominant and absorbing, if the exercise and its attendant gratification are to attain their full scope ... Similarly, the pleasures of thought and study can only be enjoyed in the highest degree by those who have an ardour of curiosity which carries the mind temporarily away from self and its sensations. In all kinds of Art, again, the exercise of the creative faculty is attended by intense and exquisite pleasures: but it would seem that in order to get them, one must forget them: the genuine artist at work seems to have a predominant and temporarily absorbing desire for the realisation of his ideal of beauty. (Sidgwick 1907:48-9)

The examples given by Sidgwick plausibly support the conclusion that

[A] Aiming at pleasure will not give you maximum pleasures. You have to concentrate on the activities in order to get the most pleasure.

Why is this a paradox? According to normative hedonism, pleasure is the good, and, ultimately, all other value is dependent upon pleasure. This means that the activities of thought and study are good only insofar as they bring pleasure. However, if they are pursued with the view to please, they will fail to yield the maximum

of this good. That is, pursuing these activities as pleasures or as yielding pleasures will be contrary to the goal of attaining the good, i.e. the maximum of pleasure. So, the good can be attained only if these activities are not pursued as yielding pleasure, i.e. not as good. This brings out more clearly the underlying paradox:

[B] The good cannot be attained (or maximised) by aiming at it.

The problem with this view is that one's conception of what is good and what is a self-standing practical goal (i.e. a non-instrumental goal) comes apart. Think again about hedonism: how is an agent supposed to pursue those activities that yield the maximum pleasure? There are two possibilities: either i) the agent pursues the activity of the sciences as goal insofar as it yields pleasure, or ii) as a self-standing goal. In the first case, the agent correctly conceives of the activity as good only insofar as it yields pleasure. However, if Sidgwick is right, then the pleasure will not be maximal, and hence the agent will fail to achieve the good. In the second case, the agent pursues the activity to be valued for its own sake, that is, he takes the activity to be a self-standing goal. In this case, he will get the maximum pleasure, i.e. he will achieve the good, but only at the cost of taking the activity to be what it is not: the activity is not to be pursued for its own sake, but only insofar as it promotes pleasure.

That one should either have to misconceive of certain activities as self-standing goals in order to maximise the good, or, sticking with the correct conception of what is good, be doomed to forfeit the good, seems an unacceptable conclusion. In fact, since it is plausible to assume that 'one mark of the good life is a harmony between one's

motives and one's reasons, values, justifications',³⁸ it would seem that one simply cannot live the best life, as this would require a disharmony between one's values (only pleasure is good) and one's reasons (to treat activities as self-standing goals).

2.6.6 Conclusion

Plato's position in the *Philebus* is similar to that of Sidgwick's hedonist. Although Plato is not committed to the claim that one cannot attain the good by aiming at it, on his view, nevertheless, one cannot aim at all the things that contribute in their own right to the value of one's life. So, one still cannot maximise the value of one's life by aiming at all the things that are good. Plato's position is like Sidgwick's in the sense that it requires a disharmony between what is good and what one has reason to pursue. In another sense, Plato's position is even more extreme than Sidgwick's. For if Sidgwick's hedonist pursues pleasure, he will fail to achieve pleasure 'in the highest degree', i.e. the maximum value, but he will get some good nevertheless. On Plato's view, it is impossible to achieve any good by pursuing pleasures: whether they are usually pure or not: they cease to be pure and good when they are made one's goal or pursuit.

In a way, Sidgwick's paradox confirms what Plato tries to say about pleasure: in order to obtain the best pleasures (for Sidgwick this means highest quantity, for Plato highest quality) we have to focus not on the pleasure but on the activity or its goals. If we regard these pleasures with Plato as the most genuine and hence most paradigmatic pleasures, we can discern a shift away from conceiving

³⁸ This quote is not from an ancient source, but from M. Stocker's 1976:453. He calls the split between one's motives and one's reasons, or, in my terminology between one's ends and one's goods, 'moral schizophrenia'. I have learnt much from his paper.

of pleasure as process of restoration towards a conception of pleasure that ties pleasure very closely to activity. So, we can see here that Plato's own theory contains the seeds for Aristotle's criticism that we should understand pleasure as activity (in *EN* VII.11-14) or as supervenient on activity (in *EN* X.1-5) rather than confining it to restorative processes. I will discuss this criticism in detail in the next two chapters.

Chapter 3: The value of pleasure in Aristotle's *EN* VII.11-14

3.1 Introduction

In Chapter 1 we saw that Plato's official theory of pleasure in the *Philebus* can be called anti-hedonist: according to that theory, no pleasure can be good in itself. Aristotle responds to the theory that pleasure is a coming to be in Book VII of the *EN* very critically, since it is simply implausible and against most of the reputable opinions to maintain that no pleasure is good in itself, as I will argue in section 2.

Aristotle rejects the *Philebus* theory and replaces it, tentatively, with his own view. Yet, just what his own view is, is not easy to ascertain. Although it is clear that Aristotle replaces Plato's thesis that pleasure is a coming to be (*genesis*) with the thesis that pleasure is an activity (*energeia*), it is not clear what this amounts to. Most interpreters, as I will show in section 3, assume that Aristotle draws an exclusive contrast between *energeia* and *genesis* in *EN* VII.11-14. I shall first identify the central claims of the standard interpretation and then show that the three most prominent versions have great difficulties in making sense of Plato's paradigm pleasures, eating and drinking, while keeping their central tenet that pleasure is found only in complete activities (*energeiai*) such as contemplating, but not in incomplete activities (*geneseis*) such as eating and drinking.

By reconsidering the text which is supposed to support the standard interpretation, I argue in section 4 that it rather supports an alternative interpretation according to which Aristotle's crucial contrast is between states and their use, which allows that some

pleasant activities are incomplete activities.¹ Next, relying on the analogy between nature and craft, as well as on Aristotle's account of causation, I shall give a novel interpretation of how we should understand incidental pleasures in *EN* VII.12: pleasure is in the agent's activity not in the patient's undergoing a change. In section 4, I will show that Aristotle has the resources to score against Plato's negative conception of pleasure as remedial goods because all of the relevant pleasant activities are activities of a good and natural state, which entails that, besides being instrumentally good, restorative pleasures are also good in themselves. I shall close in section 5 by turning to the question whether Aristotle's arguments against the enemies of pleasure make him a hedonist.

3.2 The value of pleasure: *preconceptions*

In this section I will briefly state Aristotle's view about the value of pleasure. Aristotle's view is in line with the common conception that pleasure is very closely linked to happiness. Since Plato's official view in the *Philebus* draws a different picture, Aristotle has to show that his view of the value of pleasure (gained in the discussion of virtue in Books I and II) is not threatened by it.

¹ F. Ricken 1995:214-16 and M. Burnyeat 2008:266-67 also observe that some pleasures are incomplete activities. Since both of them have other interests in their papers, they argue for a non-standard interpretation only in passing. Gosling and Taylor 1982:301-314 argue, correctly, that some pleasures are processes in Book X. Their intricate arguments are helpful in understanding *EN* VII. G. van Riel's position in his 2000 is difficult to classify. On the one hand he sees correctly that the distinction between complete and incomplete activities is not at issue in *EN* VII. 11-14 (p. 64 n. 83). However, since he maintains on the other hand that the distinction in question is between activities at rest (such as contemplating) and activities in movement (such as housebuilding), and that pleasure in movement is only pleasurable per accidens (p. 65), his position has affinity with the standard view.

3.2.1 Aristotle's preface

Aristotle says near the beginning of the essay on pleasure in *EN* VII. 11 that

it is actually a necessary requirement that we inquire into pleasure and pain, in so far as we laid down that excellence and badness of character had to do with pains and pleasures, and most people say that happiness involves pleasure - which is why the 'blessed' [makarioi] are so called after 'bliss' [chairein]. (VII.1.1152b3-8)

Aristotle points out that excellence of character has to do with pleasure and pain. He refers back to Book II where he shows that 'it is part of virtue to take pleasure in and be pained by the things one should' (II.3.1104b12-13, cf. IX.9.1170a8-10). This would imply that the virtuous life 'has no need of pleasure in addition, like a piece of jewellery fastened on, but contains pleasure within itself' (I.8.1099a15-16). If Aristotle's view of virtue is correct, then, given that virtuous activity is central to happiness (I.7.1098a16-17), he can explain why a) most people say that happiness involves pleasure, and b) why there is (in Aristotle's view) an etymological connection between 'blessed' (*makarios*, i.e. supremely happy) and 'bliss' (*chairein* which also means 'to enjoy'). Whether or not everyone knows it, virtue is central to happiness, and virtuous activity must be pleasant to the virtuous person (cf. I.8.1099a17-21). It is in virtue of this relation that common usage of language as well as common understanding closely link pleasure and the highest good.

3.2.2 Philosophers against pleasure

In the text quoted, we can see that it is commonly recognised that pleasure and happiness go together. However, this has not stopped

philosophers dissenting, as Aristotle reports: there are those who argue that (i) no pleasure is good, either in itself or incidentally, (ii) some pleasures are good, but most are bad, and (iii) even if all pleasures are good, pleasure cannot be the chief good (*EN* VII. 11.1152b8-12).

Aristotle concentrates on positions (i) and (iii), for if they were true, Aristotle's view would be in danger, and hence his explanation for the truth of the widely recognised facts about pleasure. Surely, if no pleasure is good, then there is no link between pleasure and excellence (and hence happiness). And if pleasure cannot be the highest good, then it is very hard to explain why everybody thinks that happiness (i.e. the highest good) involves pleasure. For what people mean is not merely that pleasure is something that cannot be avoided, but rather that pleasure plays a crucial role in happiness in virtue of what it is in itself. So, why would one want to hold such a paradoxical view as (i)?

At the root of both (i) and (iii) is the thesis that pleasure is a process of coming to be, a thesis familiar from the *Philebus*.² Aristotle elucidates the structure of the arguments for (i) and (iii) by an example: if pleasure is a perceived process of coming to be in the natural state, then pleasure does not belong to the same kind as the end towards which it leads, just as no process of housebuilding

² The only hint Aristotle gives for understanding how the claim that pleasure is a coming to be could support both positions (i) and (iii) is that the reason that no pleasure is good is that the good and pleasure are not the same thing (*EN* VII. 11.1152b9-10).

It may perhaps not be too much of a surprise to see the same thesis supporting two different views about the value of pleasure. For the *Philebus* contains the same ambiguity: initially it is not clear whether the hedonist claims that pleasure is good or that pleasure is the good (cf. §1.2.2. We have also seen that the interpreters see the genesis argument as establishing either that pleasure is not good (in itself) or that it is not the good. (§1.5.4).

belongs to the same kind as a house (*EN* VII.11.1152b13-14). The contrast, thus, is between ends and the process of coming to be which only brings about the end (cf. *EN* VII.11.1152b22-23). The example also indicates another point in question, namely that the values of house and housebuilding are different in kind. The house is an end (*telos*), and ends are where value is primarily located, whereas the value of a process of coming to be seems to be restricted to the value it derives from contributing to bringing about the end.

Aristotle cites no reason why pleasure should be a process of coming to be. Perhaps it was not necessary for him to do so, because the theory that pleasure is a coming to be appears to have been discussed in detail in the Academy and was familiar to Aristotle's audience. Readers of the *Philebus* will find not only the view that pleasure is a process familiar, but also the argument that the end is better than the process: Aristotle here appears to recast the genesis argument, discussed in Chapters 1 and 2 (§§1.5.1-6 and §§2.4.1-3). The official view in the *Philebus*, remember, is that pleasure is a coming to be because pleasure is a restorative process of a natural state: pain is identified with a certain kind of dissolution; pleasure with the restoration. Pain (and dissolution) is a process contrary to nature (*para phusin*, 32a2), whereas pleasure (and restoration) is a process according to nature (*kata phusin*). Nature, thus, is the frame of reference for pleasure and pain: the natural state is that for whose sake the process of restoration, i.e. pleasure, takes place. Plato bases the crucial argument on this point: leaning on some 'subtle thinkers' (*kompsoi*, 53c6), he argues that pleasure cannot be good in itself. Something can be in the class of the good only if it is not for the sake of something else. Yet a process is for the sake of something else, namely the resulting state. So, given that pleasure is a process, it

cannot be good in itself (and, *a fortiori*, pleasure cannot be the highest good). In recasting the argument, Aristotle uses his own terminology: he renders Plato's 'that for the sake of which' in terms of 'ends'. Both versions of the argument make the point that pleasure is not good in itself, because value appears to be restricted to the ends of processes, and in the case of pleasure it is the natural state which is valuable from which pleasure, at best, derives value.³

3.2.3 Aristotle's task

Aristotle's conception of the value of pleasure as found in Books I and II of the *Ethics* has the consequence that the happy life will be interwoven with pleasure *qua* happy life, not (only) *qua* human life (cf. VII.13.1153b14-5). The contrary idea that the best life is pleasant merely *qua* human life, where 'human life' means a life filled with imperfection and the need for remedies, is a consequence of the official theory of pleasure in the *Philebus*. Aristotle balks at this negative image of pleasure, partly because in his view God is most supremely happy, and for Aristotle there is no question that God has pleasure (cf. VII.14.1154b26). So, pleasure cannot be exclusively understood as a remedy, or else God could not have pleasure. In the human sphere, too, the best life is pleasant in itself: it is the life of virtuous activity which, in turn, is pleasant and good in itself (cf. I. 8.1099a7). To capture what Aristotle takes to be the truth about pleasure is impossible if pleasure were a coming to be, as the *Philebus* affirms.

The professed goal of *EN* VII.12 is to show that the arguments fall short of establishing the conclusion that pleasure is not good or not

³ I will come back to the connection between value and nature in connection with Aristotle's arguments against the *Philebus* view.

the chief good (*EN* VII.12.1152a25-6). There are three possible ways of doing so. The first strategy is to point to a flaw in Plato's argument: Plato apparently forgets that some things which are for the sake of something else might still be goods or ends in themselves (cf. I.7.1097b2). If so, pleasure might be good in itself even if it is essentially a process of coming to be. Aristotle does not pursue this line of argument, probably, because it leaves (iii) untouched: since the highest good is not for the sake of anything (I.7.1097a30-b1), pleasure could not be the highest good if it were a process of coming to be.

A second possible argument would be to provide a counter-example to Plato's thesis: Aristotle could accept that many pleasures are only restorative processes, and he may agree with Plato's schema of value that a process is not good in itself, but if he can show that at least one pleasure (or kind of pleasure) is not a coming to be, he can show that at least one pleasure (or kind of pleasure) is good or (a candidate for) the good.⁴

While the second strategy is a possible interpretation of what Aristotle does, I will argue that it is not the most plausible one, as it concedes too much ground to Plato: it would leave the question untouched whether Plato's account of pleasure is correct for restorative pleasures. Rather, Aristotle pursues a third strategy, namely to argue that the model of restoration is never an adequate explanation of any pleasure; pleasure is an activity, and being a

⁴ Aristotle, explaining the attractions of bodily pleasures, i.e. those of food, wine, and sex (1154a17-18), points out that some people use pleasure as if it was a remedy (leaving open whether it really is one, ὥς οὐσης ἰατρείας, 1154a28). See also 1154a34 where bodily pleasures are clearly said to be remedies for a lack (αἱ δ' ἰατρεῖαι [ὅτι] ἐνδεοῦς). At 1154b2-5, Aristotle explicitly classifies eating when hungry and drinking when thirsty as pleasures and as a cure.

process is just a special case of an activity. If Aristotle can successfully show that Plato's restoration model is inadequate by proposing a better one, Aristotle can show that pleasure is not essentially a remedial good. Hence neither (i) nor (iii) are inevitable.

3.3 The theory of pleasure: standard interpretation

In this section I shall discuss what I identify as the standard interpretation of *EN VII*. I shall first identify the most important tenets of the standard interpretation, and then argue that the most prominent versions of the interpretation are problematic because they cannot explain Plato's paradigmatic pleasures.

3.3.1 Aristotle's criticism of Plato on the standard interpretation

Most commentators maintain that Aristotle responds in Book VII to Plato's view that pleasure is a coming to be by denying that in Plato's paradigm pleasures such as eating and drinking are pleasures in their own right, because they hold that '... the central claim of [VII. 11-14] is that only self-contained activities and not end-directed processes are enjoyable.' (Owen 1971-2:147). Aristotle, or so it is argued, '... rejects the identification of pleasure with *genesis* and replaces it with his own account of pleasure as an "unimpeded activity of a natural disposition". Generation and activity are thereby treated as mutually exclusive.' (Frede 2009:196, commenting on VII. 12.1152a8-17).

In these quotations we can find two assumptions:

- 1) Aristotle draws an exclusive contrast in *EN VII* between activity (*energeia*) and coming to be (*genesis*), in the spirit of the contrast between activity and movement (*kinêsis*) in *Met.* 9.6.1048b18-34.

There, Aristotle draws an exclusive contrast between activities (*energeiai*) and processes (*kinêseis*). Processes of coming to be do not have their end within themselves, whereas activities do: processes are incomplete because it is true at any given time that the process is taking place that it has not yet reached what it is aimed at; an activity, by contrast, is complete because there is no goal that is not yet reached when the activity is going on.⁵

- 2) Pleasure is confined to activities; no process of coming to be, properly speaking, can be a pleasure.

These two assumptions are made by almost all interpreters, as Bostock 2000:149: testifies: ‘In both treatments [sc. VII.11-14 and X. 1-5] Aristotle associates pleasure with activities, and contrasts activities with processes...’ In a footnote he elaborates that ‘it is *not* obvious, from the *Ethics* itself, that Aristotle means to claim that no process is also an activity. But the point is generally accepted by interpreters ...’⁶ If only complete activities can be pleasures, but never processes of coming to be, then, it seems, Aristotle is committed to relegating apparently pleasant processes to the incidental.

⁵ An example for a process is walking from A to B, whereas an example for a complete activity is seeing. When walking from A to B, I have not yet reached the goal, B. Yet, when I have reached B the process is over: I am no longer walking from A to B, but have walked from A to B. Contrast seeing as a complete activity: I have x in view and I see x at the same time; there is no further goal that, when achieved, completes my seeing. See Burnyeat 2008:251 for emphasis on the aspect rather than the tense of the Greek perfect tense. I borrow his translation of the Greek perfect of seeing with ‘have got sight of’, rather than the customary ‘have seen’. Note that in the *Physics* and other scientific writings, Aristotle does not contrast processes and activities in the same way as in *Met.* 9.6.1048b18-34; rather processes are taken to be activities, but incomplete ones (e.g. *Phys.* III.2.201b31-33). I shall use both ‘incomplete activity’ and ‘process’ in the text, depending on the context.

⁶ Apart from Owen, Frede, and Bostock, others who take 1) and 2) for granted are Penner 1970:440-41, esp. n. 40; Gauthier and Jolif 1970:795; Weinman 2007:113-14; Rudebusch 2009:406; and Broadie 2002:401-2.

We have thus identified what I take to be the standard interpretation of *EN VII.11-14*:

[STANDARD] i) there is a mutually exclusive contrast between coming to be and activity in *EN VII.11-14*; ii) pleasure (properly speaking) is a certain activity, never a coming to be; iii) a process of coming to be can be pleasant only incidentally.

With STANDARD, we can turn to a passage in which Aristotle sums up his criticism of Plato. I will start with the Greek [G]:

[G]: *VII.12.1153a7-15*

[1] ἔτι οὐκ ἀνάγκη ἕτερόν τι εἶναι βέλτιον τῆς ἡδονῆς, ὥσπερ τινές φασι τὸ τέλος τῆς γενέσεως· [2] οὐ γὰρ γενέσεις εἰσὶν οὐδὲ μετὰ γενέσεως πάσαι, [3] ἀλλ' ἐνέργειαι καὶ τέλος· [4] οὐδὲ γινομένων συμβαίνουσιν ἀλλὰ χρωμένων· [5] καὶ τέλος οὐ πασῶν ἕτερόν τι, ἀλλὰ τῶν εἰς τὴν τελέωσιν ἀγομένων τῆς φύσεως. [6] διὸ καὶ οὐ καλῶς ἔχει τὸ αἰσθητὴν γένεσιν φάναι εἶναι τὴν ἡδονήν, [7] ἀλλὰ μᾶλλον λεκτέον ἐνέργειαν τῆς κατὰ φύσιν ἕξεως, ἀντὶ δὲ τοῦ αἰσθητὴν ἀνεμπόδιστον.

This text cannot be translated into English without interpretation.⁷

Irwin, a proponent of the standard interpretation, translates thus:

Text 1 [T1]: VII.12.1153a7-15

[1] *Further, it is not necessary for something else to be better than pleasure, as the end, some say, is better than the becoming. [2] For pleasures are not becomings, nor do they all even involve a becoming. [3] They are activities,*

⁷ Especially controversial are G2 and G7. I shall present the standard way of reading the text in this section, and will offer an alternative reading only after having shown some difficulties for the standard interpretation.

and an end [in themselves], [4] and arise when we exercise [a capacity], not when we are coming to be [in some state]. [5] And not all pleasures have something else as their end, but only those in people who are being led toward the completion of their nature. [6] That is why it is a mistake to call pleasure a perceived becoming. [7] It should instead be called the activity of the natural state, and should be called not perceived, but unimpeded. (Irwin 1999:115)

In this passage, Aristotle turns against Plato's claim that pleasure cannot be the chief good because pleasure is a coming to be. This, Aristotle would point out on the standard interpretation, is mistaken because it is a mistake to think that pleasure is a becoming: no pleasure is a coming to be (T1.2).⁸ Instead, pleasures are activities (T1.4) that comprise their own goal (T1.3). So, given that pleasure is not, strictly speaking, a process of coming to be, but always an activity, Aristotle can reject the Platonic view and propose, tentatively, a definition of his own in T1.6-7:

[DEF] Pleasure is the unimpeded activity of a natural disposition.⁹

On Irwin's reading, this passages confirms that pleasure is confined to complete activities, for Aristotle maintains that pleasures are ends in themselves (T1.3), which would seem to be impossible if they were processes of coming to be. This is why Aristotle denies this explicitly in T1.2. What needs to be explained away is that Aristotle seems to

⁸ So taken by Aspasius 147.16-19, Stewart 1892:235, Burnet 1900:333, Dirlmeier 1959:163, and Gauthier and Jolif 1970:795, Frede 2009:196, and probably Owen 1971-2:141-2.

⁹ The replacement of 'perceived' with 'unimpeded' comes out of the blue. It is not motivated in the way the replacement of 'process of coming to be' with 'activity' is. I take it that introducing this new point marks a transition to what is to be discussed. 'Unimpeded' will be explained at VII.13.1153b16-19. Since the exact meaning is irrelevant for my present purposes, I shall largely ignore this here.

say in T1.5 that there are pleasant activities that have their goal outside themselves. The trick is to make these pleasures out as ‘incidental pleasures’.¹⁰

3.3.2 *Incidental pleasures*

Leading up to T1, Aristotle argues that restorative processes are only incidentally pleasant

Text 2 [T2]: VII.12.1152b33-1153a2

*[1] Further, given that what is good is part activity, part disposition, [2] it is only incidentally that the processes of restoring one to the natural state are pleasant; [3] the activity in the case of appetites belongs to one’s residual natural disposition, [4] since there are also pleasures unaccompanied by pain and appetite, [5] like the activities of reflection, [6] where there is no depletion of the natural state.*¹¹

Aristotle claims that pleasure belongs only incidentally to the process of restoration, but belongs, really, to the activity of the healthy part. This is because there are other pleasures which have nothing to do with the restoration of a lack (T2.4-6).¹² Now, this only has any bearing on restorative pleasures if Aristotle assumes that all pleasures fall under the same definition, an assumption which, although not explicitly stated, can be safely made. For if there were two definitions of pleasure, Aristotle would have to say that the

¹⁰ That the pleasures which have an external goal must be incidental pleasures is implicitly held by all proponents of the standard interpretation (cf. Bostock 1988:267). S. Broadie makes this assumption explicit in her commentary *ad loc.* 2002:401-2.

¹¹ Unless stated otherwise, translations of the *EN* are all taken from Rowe 2002, and sometimes slightly modified.

¹² Perhaps Aristotle chooses the example of contemplation because it is clear that the intellect itself is not corruptible (*DA* I.4.408b18-25), and hence the activity of contemplation would never stem from a deficient state.

word 'pleasure' is an equivocation is it is applied to both, or else that pleasure in one sense is central, while the other use is derivative and dependent on a relation to the first.¹³ Nowhere in *EN* VII.11-14 does Aristotle say that 'pleasure' is used equivocally, nor that there is a central and a derivative use.¹⁴ Further confirmation is that DEF is supposed to capture all kinds of pleasure, not only the pleasures of contemplation.¹⁵ Given, then, that all pleasures fall under the same definition, and that the paradigmatic pleasure is a complete activity, it seems natural to suppose that processes of restoration cannot be pleasant in their own right - which is why Aristotle maintains that they are only pleasant incidentally. He elaborates on incidental pleasures a little later:

Text 3 [T3]: VII.14.1154b17-19

What I call incidentally pleasant are the remedial sort; for what makes a thing seem pleasant in this case is that one happens to be cured, with the part that remains healthy being active.

T3 suggests that the process of being restored seems pleasant (but is not really pleasant), whereas the activity of the healthy part is (really) pleasant (even if it does not seem so). However, as in cases of curing

¹³ For a similar claim about the use of the word 'happiness' see D. Charles 1999:211-18 with a good set of examples to explain the relation between central and derivative uses of words. Cf. S. Broadie 2002:77-78.

¹⁴ C. Rapp 2009:229 also points out that it would have been easy for Aristotle to say that pleasure is a *pollachôs legomenon*, but that he does not do so. Note, however, that Aristotle does tentatively put aside some "pleasures" as not real, but only seeming pleasures (VII.12.1152b31-33), but a) the class of these pleasures is not the same as the class of restorative pleasures, and b) if one enjoys the pleasures of food, wine and sex as one should, there is nothing wrong with it, in particular it is not the case that they are not real pleasures, cf. VII.14.1154a17-18.

¹⁵ Aristotle is also justified to assume that all pleasures have the same definition by the dialectic: Plato, after all, relies on this assumption when he argues that even those pleasure which do not obviously contain a lack must, nevertheless, presuppose an imperceptible lack - so that they fit into the restoration model (cf. 51b5-7)

being restored co-occurs with the activity of the healthy part, 'is pleasant' can be incidentally predicated of the restorative process. So, at first glance (to be refined in the following subsections), it would seem as if there are two things going on: an activity and a process; the activity is pleasant, while the process is so only incidentally. According to the standard interpretation, this activity is a pleasure in its own right and must therefore fall under DEF. Since on the standard interpretation all pleasures falling under DEF are complete activities, the relevant pleasant activity of the healthy part cannot be for the sake of anything, but, like contemplation, must have its goal within itself and is thus an end (cf. T1.3).

The task, then, for proponents of the standard interpretation is to explain the relationship between the complete activity that is the pleasure and the restorative process which seems pleasant. There are three versions of the standard interpretation which share the three tenets that i) there is a mutually exclusive contrast between coming to be and activity in *EN* VII.11-14; ii) pleasure (properly speaking) is a certain activity, never a coming to be; iii) a process of coming to be can be pleasant only incidentally. They differ in explaining why restorative processes are only incidentally pleasant because they conceive differently of the pleasant activity. None of them, I shall argue, is satisfactory.

3.3.3 The two entity view via causation

I will begin with the 'two entity view' [TEV]. According to TEV, (i) when an agent engages in an incomplete activity, there are really two action-like activities, a complete activity, and an incomplete one. (ii) These two activities occur at the same time, but they are not the

same; there is a real difference between them.¹⁶ (iii) Pleasure is confined to only one of the two entities, namely the complete activity.

There are two ways of spelling out TEV, depending on the role of the complete activity. I shall begin with the view which assigns a causal role to the complete activity. One may distinguish between potentials and powers: bricks and mortar have the potential to change into a house, whereas the builder has the power to build. When the potential of brick and mortar are actualised, i.e. when the house is built, they are no longer a pile of bricks and a tub of mortar, but they are arranged in a special way so as to constitute the house: they are no longer only potentially a house, but actually so. The builder, on the other hand, does not change as he acts: his power to build remains in him even while and after building the house. The controversial, but crucial, claim to support TEV is that examples such as these show an important difference between actualising potentials and acts of powers: the actualisation of a potential is an incomplete activity (there is a change in the material), whereas that of the power is a complete one (there is no change in the agent). The pleasure is found in the act of power, not in the actualisation of the potential.¹⁷ So, we can characterise one version of TEV as

[TEV-A]: (i) when an agent engages in an incomplete activity, there are really two action-like activities: the act of a power, and the actualisation of a potential. (ii) The act of power causes the actualisation of the potential. (iii) Pleasure is found in the act of the

¹⁶ Rudebusch 2009:409 contends that there is a real distinction between the two acts, 'although the coincidence [of the two acts in the same body or mind] hides it from ordinary observation.' He must mean that this is more than a conceptual difference. Cf. Penner 1970:439-440.

¹⁷ This is Rudebusch's interpretation 2009:407-9. The examples are also taken from his text.

power. (iv) The actualisation of the potential is only incidentally pleasant.¹⁸ (v) The act of power is a complete activity.

The problem with TEV-A is that there is a conflict between (ii) and (v). According to TEV-A, the causal relationship between the builder and the material is that of agent and patient: the builder's power to build causes the bricks and the mortar to turn into a house. It is correct to point out that there is no change in the agent, but this does not imply that the act of power is a complete activity. In fact, when the agent causes an incomplete activity, then the act of power will also be an incomplete activity. For the causal relation between the agent's act of power and the patient's actualisation of a potential consists in just one activity:

... the activity of that which has the power of causing motion is not other than the activity of the movable; for it must be the fulfilment of both. A thing is capable of causing motion because it can do this, it is a mover because it actually does it. But it is on the movable that it is capable of acting. Hence there is a single activity of both alike... (Phys. III. 3.202a14-18, tr. Hardie & Gaye, slightly altered)

The basic point of this passage is that something capable of causing a change can do so only when it acts on something that is capable of being changed. The two potentialities, being capable of causing change and being capable of being changed, are actualised in one activity: this is the change.¹⁹ There is, then, only one action-like entity, being both the activity of what is capable of causing change

¹⁸ Rudebusch 2009:409. The original proponent of TEV, Penner 1970, is silent about the relation between the complete and the incomplete activity, except that the one cannot, perhaps, occur without the other (Penner 1970:446).

¹⁹ This rough interpretation goes well with Aristotle's definition of change in *Phys.* III.1.201a27-29. I will come back to this passage in section four.

and the activity of what is changeable - which conflicts with TEV-A (i). Further, for Aristotle there is no question that the activity which is both the act of the agent's power and the actualisation of the patient's potential is an incomplete activity²⁰ - which conflicts with TEV-A (v). So, when the activity of housebuilding (an act of power) is a pleasure, it will be an incomplete activity. So, the claim, TEV-A is incapable of confining pleasure to complete activities because it holds (ii), that the purported two entities are causally related.

3.3.4 The two entity view via perception

Given that TEV combined with the claim that the complete activity causes the incomplete one is not tenable, I turn now to an interpretation of TEV which does not make the claim about causation. If the complete activity does not cause the incomplete one, how are they related? And what is the complete activity anyway? David Bostock has proposed ingeniously that the complete activity is the activity of perception or thought.²¹ On Bostock's take on the two entity view [TEV-B], restorative pleasures are explained as follows:

[TEV-B]: (i) there are two entities, the restorative process and the perception (or awareness) of it; (ii) perception is a complete activity, and (iii) the pleasure is found in the perception of the restorative process.²²

²⁰ E.g. *Phys.* III.1.201b7-15.

²¹ Bostock proposes this view in his 1988, defended further in his 2000, in part as explicit interpretation of *EN* VII.11-14 (see esp. 1988:268-9). His thesis is endorsed by F. Gonzalez 1991 (see esp. 147-8 n.11). It is taken up and developed further by C. Taylor 2003. In contrast to Bostock, Taylor does not clearly say that only a complete activity can be pleasant.

²² One can extract these points from Bostock 1988:269.

The problem specific to this version of TEV is that TEV-B(ii) and TEV-B(iii) stand in tension. As Bostock himself points out, Aristotle appears to have overlooked that perceiving a restorative process, or any incomplete activity, will itself be an incomplete activity (1988:272). For example, playing a sonata is a process by all criteria for a process: it has a beginning, a middle, and an end, it takes time, and it can be interrupted. Listening to the sonata, then, will also be a process, since the same criteria apply: I can listen to a full sonata (which takes time), and I can be interrupted half-way through. So, if pleasure is perceiving a restorative process, pleasure would be an incomplete activity.

There is but one possibility to avoid giving up either of the key tenets TEV-B(ii) or TEV-B(iii), namely to argue that the perceived activities are complete activities after all. Apart from the fact that this would render reference to perception redundant in confining pleasure to complete activities, there is the more serious problem that this proposal relies on TEV-A. The proposal would be that what I am perceiving is not the pianist's playing the sonata, but rather that I am perceiving his exercising his musical skill which will be a complete activity on this interpretation. Now, the problem is that the exercise of the pianist's skill surely cause the sonata being played. Yet, since the sonata being played is an incomplete activity, the exercise of the pianist's skill must also be an incomplete activity if the latter causes the former (as we saw in the discussion of TEV-A). Since this proposal does not help TEV-B, this leaves the options of either giving up TEV-B(ii) or TEV(iii) - hence this interpretation is untenable. So, invoking perception in the explanation of restorative pleasures will not help to confine them to complete activities. And since Aristotle forgets to state in *EN* VII.11-14 that pleasure is confined to thought or

perception we should move on to the next version of the standard interpretation.²³

3.3.5 The two descriptions view

A more promising approach than the two entity view is the 'two descriptions view' [TDV]. According to TDV, (i) there is only one activity in a process of coming to be, but (ii) this activity can be described as both a complete activity and an incomplete activity, and (iii) the activity is a pleasure under the description of a complete activity.²⁴

TDV improves on TEV insofar as it allows that restorative processes can be pleasures. However, it shares with TEV the implausible assumption that pleasure must be a complete activity. Thus, the ontological restriction of TEV to complete activities becomes in TDV a psychological restriction (either on the side of the observer or on that of the agent). An incomplete activity can be a pleasure only if one describes it as a complete activity without, it seems, thereby having to deal with the ontological commitment of postulating two action-like entities. Filling in a crossword puzzle is a goal-directed activity. Supporters of this view take the fact that contemplating the completed puzzle is boring, while filling in the clues is pleasant, to indicate that the agent conceives of his activity as 'working on the puzzle' which is a complete activity, rather than as 'completing the puzzle'.²⁵ If a similar explanation can be given for all other pleasures, then Aristotle can make good the 'central claim of [VII.11-14 is] that

²³ Though see Bostock 1988:270-71 for an attempt to explain why Aristotle does not state TEV-B(iii)).

²⁴ This view finds classic expression in Owen 1971-2. A version of this has been discussed by Gosling and Taylor 1982 (see esp. pp. 313-14).

²⁵ Owen 1971-72:142-43.

only self-contained activities and not end-directed processes are enjoyable.' (Owen 1971:147).

The problem with this view is that it cannot explain restorative pleasures, at least not the central case of health. I quote again T3

What I call incidentally pleasant are the remedial sort; for what makes a thing seem pleasant in this case is that one happens to be cured, with the part that remains healthy being active. (EN VII.14.1154b17-19)

Aristotle implies here that there is a difference between what seems to be a pleasure (but is so only incidentally) and what is a pleasure in the proper sense. This difference cannot be captured by TDV. For according to TDV, the pleasure proper will be in what the agent takes to be a self-contained activity, regardless of whether the activity so taken is complete or not. So, when I happen to be cured and take this to be a self-contained activity, then my happening to be cured is the pleasure, it not merely so by incident.

The difference between incidental and non-incidental pleasures could be captured if there were norms according to which some, but not other, activities should be described as self-contained or complete activities. If this entails that some but not other activities are correctly described as complete activities, then the agent is able to enjoy incomplete activities only when he is mistaken about the description under which he enjoys them. This is a very implausible consequence, and the burden of proof is on the proponents of TDV to explain why everyone should be so mistaken about the most common pleasures. Unless such an explanation is given, TDV does not seem to explain pleasure in restorative processes at all, but to replace one question

(How can we enjoy incomplete activities?) with another one (How is it that we are systematically mistaken about pleasure in restorative processes?).

3.3.6 Conclusion

The upshot of this section is that the three main versions of the standard interpretation fail to explain Aristotle's incidental pleasures. What all these interpretations share is the assumption that pleasure can be found only in complete activities, which is why they propose that not the process of restoration is pleasant, but some co-occurrent complete activity, or the perception of the process, or that the agent mistakenly has to take himself as engaging in a complete activity.

3.4 The theory and value pleasure: alternative interpretation

In the last section we saw that the standard interpretation, claiming that pleasure is exclusively found in complete activities, is highly problematic. Although it is possible that it is in fact Aristotle's view which is problematic, I think we should attribute such a problematic view to Aristotle only when there is no alternative. In this section I will revisit Text 1 to argue that the assumption that only complete activities can be pleasant is not mandated by the text. Rather, the text supports an alternative interpretation according to which the crucial contrast is not between complete and incomplete activities, but between states and their activation. This, I will argue, is enough to show that Plato's theory of pleasure is mistaken and that his conclusions about the value of pleasure do not follow.

3.4.1 The crucial text revisited: the alternative interpretation

Text 1 tends to be adduced in support of the standard interpretation. However, this is not the only way of translating G (here quoted again

for ease of reference), and a different translation will support the standard interpretation much less.

[G]: VII.12.1153a7-15

[1] ἔτι οὐκ ἀνάγκη ἕτερόν τι εἶναι βέλτιον τῆς ἡδονῆς, ὥσπερ τινές φασι τὸ τέλος τῆς γενέσεως· [2] οὐ γὰρ γενέσεις εἰσὶν οὐδὲ μετὰ γενέσεως πάσαι, [3] ἀλλ' ἐνέργειαι καὶ τέλος· [4] οὐδὲ γινομένων συμβαίνουσιν ἀλλὰ χρωμένων· [5] καὶ τέλος οὐ πασῶν ἕτερόν τι, ἀλλὰ τῶν εἰς τὴν τελέωσιν ἀγομένων τῆς φύσεως. [6] διὸ καὶ οὐ καλῶς ἔχει τὸ αἰσθητὴν γένεσιν φάναι εἶναι τὴν ἡδονήν, [7] ἀλλὰ μᾶλλον λεκτέον ἐνέργειαν τῆς κατὰ φύσιν ἕξεως, ἀντὶ δὲ τοῦ αἰσθητὴν ἀνεμπόδιστον.

Text 1* [T1*]: VII.12.1153a7-15

[1] *Further, it is not necessary that there be something else better than pleasure, in the way people say the end is better than coming to be.* [2] *For not all pleasures are comings to be, or are accompanied by a coming to be,* [3] *but rather they are activities, and an end,* [4] *nor do they occur because a coming to be is in train but because capacities are being put to use;* [5] *and not all pleasures have something else as end, but only those involved in the bringing to completion of one's nature.* [6] *Hence it is not right to say that pleasure is a perceived process of coming to be;* [7] *rather one should say that it is the activity of a natural disposition, and replace 'perceived' with 'unimpeded'.²⁶ (tr. Rowe)*

²⁶ Rowe translates G7 as 'it is *an* activity of a natural disposition, and replace 'perceived' with 'unimpeded'.' (my emphasis). Nothing in the Greek corresponds to 'an' (cf. T. Irwin 1999:270). The difference between the stronger reading adopted in the text and Rowe's (and Irwin's) rendering is that on the stronger reading, all unimpeded activities of a natural state are pleasures, whereas on the weaker reading only a certain kind of unimpeded activities are pleasures. I will justify this decision in §3.5.1.

Support for the standard interpretation, as we saw, might be found in G2 and G3. However, it is not crucial for Aristotle's argument that no pleasure should be a coming to be. All he needs to show is that not all pleasures are a coming to be. Since Aristotle is very conservative here, trying to make only minimal changes to what others have said (as is clear from G7), it would perhaps be unexpected if he were to claim that no pleasure is a coming to be, seeing that this is not required for his argument. The Greek can bear this out: if we do not restrict the scope of the quantifier ($\pi\acute{\alpha}\sigma\alpha\iota$) in G2 to the second conjunct only, we might translate it as e.g. Rowe: 'not all pleasures are comings to be, or are accompanied by a coming to be...'²⁷ If this is the correct translation, then Aristotle implies that there are some pleasures which are processes of coming to be - and this would be just those pleasures mentioned in G5.²⁸

Moreover, the crucial phrase that pleasures are activities and an end (G3) does not necessarily support the standard interpretation. It would support it only if it were the case that only complete activities could be an end. However, this is not the case: in *Met.* 9.8.1050a4-b3 where Aristotle tries to show that actuality is prior to potentiality, Aristotle is happy to point out that activities are ends (relative to states), regardless of whether they are complete or incomplete. Building, the prime example for an incomplete activity, is said to be more of an end than the capacity to build because it is closer to the house, the product of building (1050a23-34).

²⁷ Pace Gauthier 1970:795 who claims that the Greek cannot mean this. This assessment seems biased by his interpretation.

²⁸ There is, thus, no need to have Aristotle speak in G5 about incidental pleasures. This would at any rate be dialectically unwise, since Aristotle tries to make his case for proposing a definition of his own where this definition captures the pleasures in restorative processes only incidentally.

The contrast required for Aristotle's argument in G and T2 is between state and activation of the state, not between complete and incomplete activities. Aristotle's opponents obviously assign great importance to states, including natural states, as they are the primary bearers of value.²⁹ The only activity related to a state acknowledged by the opponents is a coming to be of the state - which is why pleasure, not being a state, would turn out not to be good itself. The opponents have apparently overlooked that the coming to be of a state is not the only activity relevant here, but that there is also the use of a state. Aristotle reminds them of this 1152b33 (T2.1). This oversight seems to be at the root of their misguided account of pleasure: pleasure is always found in the use of a state, not in its coming to be (G4), which is why he ventures to replace the Platonic definition with DEF. This point does not at all require to assume that the use of a state should be a complete activity. To account for G3, all that Aristotle needs to claim is that the activation or use of a state is an end, and if pleasure is such an activation, it will be an end.³⁰

So, instead of supporting the standard interpretation, G and T2 would seem to lend support to an interpretation according to which there is no significant distinction between complete and incomplete activities. What is significant is that pleasure should be found in the activity of a certain state (in DEF it is a natural state). In other words, the texts seem to support an alternative interpretation:

²⁹ Remember, in the *Philebus* Socrates and Protarchus seek to identify 'the state (*hexis*) or disposition (*diathesis*) of the soul that can render life happy for all human beings' (11d4-6).

³⁰ In *Met.* 9.8.1050a9-10 Aristotle maintains that the activity of a state is the end; it is for the sake of the activity that the state is had. Among the examples to illustrate this point is building, an incomplete activity: people have the art of building (a *hexis*) in order to build, so that activating this state is an end.

[ALTERNATIVE*] i) there is no exclusive contrast between coming to be and activity in *EN* VII.11-14; ii) pleasure (properly speaking) is a certain activity; iii) some pleasures are comings to be.

3.4.2 *Three cases of healing*

The alternative interpretation is liberating in the sense that it can obviously explain all sort of pleasures, such as building, learning, eating when hungry, but also contemplating or just seeing something. But why, then, would Aristotle say that restorative processes are only incidentally pleasant? Restorative processes are activities, so why would they not be pleasures in their own right, but only incidentally? The answer emerges by considering, carefully, what it is that is only incidentally pleasant. I will do so by focusing on three cases of healing.

Case 1: A doctor cures an ill person.

The ill person is in a deficient condition: he is deprived of health. The point of the cure is to restore the ill person's health. On this simple model it is entirely through the agency of the doctor that the ill person's health is being restored; the patient is merely passive. The doctor is successful if he succeeds in imposing the form of health on the patient.³¹

This simplified model highlights two points. First, the doctor must have the form of health. But this does not mean that the doctor must be healthy himself (save that he must be sufficiently healthy to function as a doctor). Rather, the doctor has the form of health *qua* doctor: a doctor must have mastered the art of medicine, and this

³¹ See *Phys.* III.2.202a9-12 for this model of agency.

entails that he knows what health is.³² This knowledge enables him to impose the form of health on his patients.

Second, there is a clear difference between the doctor as the source of change and the patient as the subject of change. There is clearly a change in the patient, the subject of change: the patient changes from being potentially healthy to being actually healthy. A sign that the patient is the subject of a change (i.e. that it is predicated of him) is that after the doctor has cured the patient, there is nothing the doctor qua doctor can do for the patient - unless the patient falls ill again, i.e. changes back to being potentially (but not actually) healthy. Since the doctor cannot heal this healthy person - does this mean that there is also a change in the doctor? To see why Aristotle would answer negatively, it is useful to distinguish between 'change belonging to X' and 'change in X'.³³ There is a change that belongs to the doctor, since he is the originator of this change. But it is crucial for Aristotle that this does not entail that there is also a change *in* the doctor.³⁴ To this effect, Aristotle argues in *Phys.* III.3 that agency can take place in a suitable medium distinct from the source of the change. Thus, to explain that the activity of healing belongs to the doctor, we need only one change: the change occurring in the patient. It is in virtue of the change in the patient that the successful doctor can no longer

³² In *Met.* 12.3.1070a28-30 medical art is said to be the form (*logos*) of health.

³³ Aristotle makes this distinction in *Phys.* III.3.202b5-8. U. Coope 2004:205 captures this distinction as distinction between 'change of' vs 'change in', whereas A. Marmodoro 2007:210-11 speaks of it as distinction between 'change belonging to' vs 'change occurring in'.

³⁴ To be absolutely correct, this claim needs to be qualified in two ways: (1) given Aristotle's account of causation, there is also a change in the agent when the agent's acting involves touch, see *Phys.* III.2.202a3-7. This, however, is an additional process of change and can be left aside for present purposes. (2) There is, of course, a difference in the doctor: at one point he does not use his medical knowledge, at another he does. But Aristotle has reservations about calling this 'change', cf. *DA* II.4.416b2-4 and II.5.417b5-9 with Kosman 1969:55. See also *EN* X.4.1174b12.

heal the patient; there is no extra change in the doctor. So, one could say that there is only one activity, the process of restoring health, but that the doctor and the patient stand in different relations towards it. The doctor is related to this activity as agent, whereas the ill person is related to it as patient. I shall refer to the agent's relation to this activity as 'agent-activity'.³⁵

Case 2: A doctor is ill and cures himself.

That the doctor and the ill person are identical should make no difference to what holds true in the Case 1: agent and patient just happen to be the same person, and can be separated, logically, by the qua-locution. So, in this case, when the person heals himself, he is active qua doctor. Note that it is only qua patient that the person is in a deficient state, but not qua doctor: being curable essentially relies on privation of a certain state; being able to cure does not rely on privation.

Case 3: A person becomes healthy without a doctor.

The model of healing in this case also underlies the other two cases, if they are not simplified. For usually the doctor's job is to stimulate the patient's organism to heal itself (e.g. by inducing a fever). If there is no doctor - what is the source of the change in the patient? The only thing that could fill the bill is the agent-activity of the residual natural state, mentioned in both T2 and T3.³⁶

³⁵ In describing causation as different relations to one activity, I remain neutral between the interpretation of causation as one event with two description (Waterlow 1982:180-82) and as 'one-in-two entity' (Marmodoro 2007:228)

³⁶ D. Frede thinks that it is problematic to assign the process of restoration and the activity of the healthy part to different parts because there would be no connection between them (2009:195). On my interpretation, there is a causal connection: the residual healthy part heals the unhealthy part.

3.4.3 *Incidental pleasures explained*

That a *natural* state is active in healing is significant insofar as for Aristotle craft and nature are analogous in that they tend to be goal-directed. Restoring health is clearly a goal-directed activity which a craftsman (here: a doctor) can carry out. Yet, the same goal can be achieved by the activity of nature. In *Phys.* II.1, Aristotle uses the analogy to craft to explain how nature can be the source of change in a thing.³⁷ A craftsman is clearly the source of the change in the subject of change (as in Cases 1 and 2 above). Nature is likened to a craftsman because it is the source of the change, too. When nature is the source of change, however, cause and effect do not merely happen to be in the same subject (as in Case 2), but are necessarily found in the same subject because of what the subject is. In general, it is in an animal's nature to sustain itself (which includes carrying out curative processes). Aristotle likens this function of self-sustenance to a craftsman at *DA* II.4.416a34-b3 where he points out that the animal is nourished by food, but that the food does not cause a change in the animal; rather, the animal changes the food - just like a carpenter is not changed by the wood, but the wood is changed by the carpenter. Note that Aristotle is not mistakenly claiming that there is no change in the animal. The point is that given (i), it is in the nature of the animal to sustain itself, and (ii) the source of change is the nutritive soul, and (iii) nature is like craft, then (iv) the nutritive soul is the source of the change from having too little water or nutrients to having enough of them, yet (v), without being subject to change

³⁷ At *Phys.* II.1.192b20-27, Aristotle writes: 'The nature of a thing, then, is a certain principle and cause of change and stability in the thing, and it is directly present in it - which is to say that it is present in its own right and not coincidentally. By 'not coincidentally' I mean that if a doctor, say, is responsible for curing himself, this does not alter the fact that it is not qua being cured that he possesses medical skill: it is just a coincidence that the same person is both a doctor and being cured, and that is why the two things are separable from each other' (tr. Waterfield).

itself. Point (v) is secured by (iii). Other natural restorative functions of the animal can likewise be understood as analogous to craft.³⁸

We can now explain why restorative processes are pleasant only incidentally. Restorative processes are pleasant because of the activity of the residual natural state: pleasure is in the agent-activity, not in the patient's undergoing a change. Although the agent's restoring and the patient's being restored necessarily co-occur, it is not arbitrary to locate pleasure in the agent-activity and to maintain that the patient's undergoing a change is pleasant only incidentally (cf. T2.2 and T3). The distinction between the agent's and the patient's relation to the activity is a distinction stemming from Aristotle's account of causation in the *Physics* and is not merely invoked to solve a problem about pleasure. There is, then, a question as to where to locate pleasure: on the side of the agent, or on the side of the patient. Since some pleasures have clearly to do with using one's capacities (e.g. contemplation, T2.5), and since Aristotle assumes that all pleasures have the same definition, he will naturally locate pleasure in the agent's activity, not on the side of the patient. So, since the occurrence of a restorative process is not part of the definition of 'pleasure', a restorative process will be incidentally pleasant when it occurs in conjunction with a pleasure.³⁹ This gives

³⁸ An interesting consequence of Aristotle's account of change is that when an agent acts on itself, there must be different parts in the agent: one responsible for the agent-activity and one that undergoes the change. See esp. *Phys.* VIII.5.257b7-14 with Coope 2004:207 n.12. So, in cases of self-healing there must be a healthy agent-part in the animal and an ill part undergoing the change. As Aristotle's God is by nature simple, God will not experience restorative pleasures. This, indeed, is what Aristotle points out at *EN* VII.14.1154b24-28.

³⁹ Cf. *Top.* 1.5.102b4-7. Owen's explanation is very similar to the one given here, as he points out that statements which hold true only *kata sumbebêkos* are 'formally misleading, suggesting a mistaken analysis or explanation of the fact that they convey...' (1971-2:144).

us the material for a more comprehensive characterisation of the alternative interpretation:

[ALTERNATIVE] i) there is no exclusive contrast between coming to be and activity in *EN* VII.11-14; ii) pleasure (properly speaking) is a certain agent-activity; iii) some pleasures are comings to be; iv) the patient's being restored is only incidentally pleasant.

3.4.4 The value of restorative pleasures reconsidered

Locating pleasure in the agent-activity has an important corollary: pleasure can be good and an end even if it is a restorative process. Aristotle's argument against Plato gains some momentum here. For most of Aristotle's analysis of restorative pleasures seems to be quite compatible with Plato's main thesis, namely that pleasure is not good in itself. Whether pleasure is in the patient's undergoing a change or the agent's activity does not seem to matter: as long as it is for the sake of a goal, it will not be good in itself. This line of thought, however, is too crude. For Aristotle can show that it does matter where we locate the pleasure.

In text T2.1 Aristotle reminds us that not only states can be good, but also their activation. Aristotle grants Plato that being restored is indeed good only insofar as it brings about a good state. What Plato misses is that in ordinary cases of restoration, the restorative process is good, because it must stem from a good and (at least partly) healthy state. This comes out particularly well by thinking again about Case 1: the doctor changes the patient from being ill to being healthy, a change from a bad condition to a good one. From the perspective of the patient, this activity is good only insofar as it leads to something that is better, namely health. Shifting the perspective to

the agent allows us to see that the activity is also good in itself. The doctor's healing is a goal-directed activity, taking place for the sake of health, but it is also an exercise of knowledge. Since Plato and Aristotle agree that knowledge is something good, putting one's knowledge to use will also be something good.⁴⁰ The important point is that it does not matter whether using this knowledge is a goal-directed activity or not: what is good about using knowledge is not that it results in something, but that something good is already active. Plato implicitly acknowledges this scheme for many kinds of

⁴⁰ One might dispute that for Aristotle knowledge is a good state, in particular because Aristotle seems to acknowledge a) that there are bad kinds of knowledge (1153b8-9) and that b) knowledge can also be used to bring about bad things, for example the doctor is also a "good" poisoner. First, Aristotle is not committed to holding a) at all: the claim that there are bad kinds of knowledge could be *ad hominem*: the Platonists claim that knowledge is the highest good, while they acknowledge that some *epistêmai* are bad - that's why it does not follow that pleasure is not the highest good, even if there are bad pleasures (Burnet 1900:336 on 1153b7-9; Gauthier and Jolif 1970:808 agree). Note that in the only two other places in the Aristotelian Corpus which speak of 'bad knowledge' (*phaulê epistêmê* *Top.* II.4.111a21-22 and *MM* II.7.1205a31), the author does not endorse seriously the idea that such a thing as bad knowledge exists.

To b): At *EN* VI.1129a13-16 Aristotle writes that 'in fact there is a difference between types of expert knowledge (*epistêmai*) and capacities (*dunamēis*) on the one hand, and dispositions (*hexeis*) on the other: with a capacity or expertise, the same one seems to relate to both members of a pair of contraries, whereas a disposition, in so far as it is one of a pair of contraries, does not relate to contraries in this way.' The idea is that a person with medical knowledge can heal and poison someone, whereas health only leads to health. However, this is true only when knowledge (*epistêmê*) is understood as a mere *dunamis*. It is clear, however, that a doctor qua doctor will not poison somebody who has a good chance of being healed, at least this is what Aristotle has in mind when he says medicine (*iatrikê*) does not produce disease in its own right (*kath'hauta*), it does so only not in its own right (*kata sumbebêkos*), 'for it is absolutely alien to medicine to produce disease' (*Top.* VI. 5.143a4-5). Moreover, when Aristotle compares craft with nature, he cannot have in mind craft as being able to produce contraries, for nature does not do that either.

Finally, that Aristotle thinks that knowledge (without further qualification) is good can be seen from the beginning of the *EN*: 'Every sort of expert knowledge (*technê*) ... seems to seek some good' (*I.I.*1094a1-2). Aristotle uses the example of craft to show something about the structure of goods - which would be impossible if craft or knowledge was always conceived of as ambivalent, producing good and bad. Although Aristotle emphasises in many places the instrumental value of crafts (e.g. *II.*4.1105a17-28), it is clear from *Met.* I.1 that not only the product is valuable, but also the knowledge or craft itself. For it is honourable and a sign of wisdom to know the causes - as does a good craftsman (981a24-b6). As a good doctor will know the causes of the disease and how to counteract them, his knowledge will be worthwhile, even if on a particular occasion he should fail to heal.

knowledge.⁴¹ In the *Philebus*, shipbuilding is mentioned as an example for a coming to be (54b3), i.e. as something which is for the sake of something else. However, at 56b-c building is mentioned as a branch of knowledge which is better (because more precise) than e.g. medicine, agriculture, navigation, and strategy (56b) - all of which are clearly for the sake of some goal. But this does not prevent Plato from taking all of these to be good in themselves, evidence for which is that they all appear in the final ranking of goods (66b8-c with 64c5-9). This, at least, shows that being goal-directed does not prevent an activity from being good and an end.

Since Plato acknowledges that e.g. medicine is good even though it is goal-directed, it is hard for him to deny that these results carry over to Case 3: instead of the doctor's knowledge, it is now the person's residual health that is active. The analogy between nature and craft can help to show that the state underlying the activity must be good: if the activity of the residual natural state is like the activity of a craftsman, then the state underlying this activity should be analogous to the craftsman's knowledge. This state is responsible for imposing the form of health onto the body. There is no question about the value of the craftsman's activity: insofar as it is the exercise of a positive state (knowledge) it is good. Likewise the activity of the natural state responsible for the cure should be good in itself because it is the activity of a good state: health.

The Platonists might try to cast doubt on Aristotle's argument because it relies heavily on the analogy between craft and nature. For

⁴¹ That Plato thinks of knowledge as *hexis* can be seen at *Phlb.* 11d4 and 62a7. That Plato speaks of 'employing straightedge and compass, as well as mason's rule, a line, and an ingenious gadget called a carpenter's square' (56b9-c2, tr. Frede) suggests that he is not merely thinking of possessing some skill as something good, but also of putting it to use.

there seems to be an important disanalogy between the doctor's and nature's healing: in Cases 1 and 2 the doctor has the form of health because of his medical knowledge. It would be stretching the craft analogy too far if Aristotle were to postulate that natural states, just like craftsmen, know things, have skills etc and can impose forms on a given matter by making use of the skill.⁴² So, although it is agreed that knowledge is something good, the Platonist may refuse to acknowledge that this shows anything about cases of recovering from illness. However, it is not crucial to Aristotle's argument that that *knowledge* is at work in restorative processes. Rather, the emphasis on the activity of the remaining healthy part makes clear that health is not merely the final cause, as Plato suggests, but that health is also the efficient cause of the cure. This is important because restricting health to the final cause means that the process of restoration leads to some good state and is good only insofar as this final state is good. If, on the other hand, health is not entirely absent, and is even the efficient cause of healing the ill parts of the body, then there is some non-derivative goodness in the process of restoring - namely insofar as it is the activity of a good state (in the same way as the exercise of the doctor's skill is non-derivatively good).

To generalise, the main source of the difference between Plato's and Aristotle's account of pleasure, on my view, is that they assign a different role to nature. Both assign value to the natural state. For Plato, however, the natural state is not tied to activity: it is a static psychic equilibrium which serves as final cause of restorative

⁴² That nature should not be "psychologised" is widely recognised by scholars. That it is unnecessary to ascribe intentional states to nature is argued, differently, by J. Cooper 1982, and S. Broadie 1987. See *Phys.* II.8.199b26-33 for Aristotle's claim that craft does not have intentional states either.

processes. For Aristotle, nature and activity do not exclude one another: the natural state is not merely something to be aimed at (the final cause), but also the efficient cause of restorative processes. So, the activity will be good in itself in virtue of being the activity of a natural state in addition to being good insofar as it aims at a valuable goal. Plato's official theory of pleasure in the *Philebus* can only account for this latter kind of value, as it does not recognise that the natural state is already at work in restorative pleasures. Aristotle, then, is able to show that the anti-hedonists who claim that no pleasure is good are mistaken.⁴³

3.4.5 Conclusion

EN VII.11-14 seems to maintain that only complete activities are pleasant in their own right and that eating and drinking and other processes cannot be pleasures in their own right. Since this is extremely implausible, it would seem as if Aristotle's account of restorative pleasures is inferior to Plato's. Neither of the two philosophers would thus be in a position to give a plausible account of pleasure which encompasses such diverse pleasures as eating and thinking. However, I have shown that Aristotle can very well explain that restorative activities are pleasant in their own right, as long as we locate pleasure in the agent's relation to the activities, not in the patient's: pleasure comes about because a state is being activated, not because it is being restored. This focus on the activity of a good state also allows Aristotle to make out pleasure as something good, even if it is directed at a further end - contrary to the standard interpretation. So, Aristotle can refute Plato's thesis that pleasure is not good in itself because it is a coming to be by giving a

⁴³ Aristotle even has the resources to argue that all genuine pleasures are good, where genuine pleasures are the activities of a natural state, as captured by DEF. However, he does not do so explicitly in EN VII.11-14.

more careful analysis of pleasure with a focus on activity. Plato's paradigmatic pleasures will, thus, still be pleasures, but they will no longer be central.

3.5 Hedonism in *EN* VII.11-14?

We saw that Aristotle puts forward powerful arguments against those who claim that no pleasure is good because pleasure is only a process of coming to be. But what about those who claim that pleasure cannot be the highest good? Since their argument, too, relies on their conception of pleasure as coming to be (X.1.1152b22-23), Aristotle can show that their argument is not cogent because it relies on a mistaken conception of pleasure. In this section I will explore whether Aristotle's conception of pleasure and defence of pleasure make him a hedonist. His position becomes clear by considering the two forms of hedonism, psychological hedonism and normative hedonism.

3.5.1 *Normative hedonism*

Normative hedonism is the thesis that

[H1] Pleasure is the good.

The question whether Aristotle maintains H1 arises in the context of his rebuttal of the thesis that pleasure cannot be the highest good because it is a coming to be. Since Aristotle has shown that the analysis of pleasure as coming to be is mistaken, and that we should rather understand pleasure in terms of DEF, he can refute their argument as follows:

τᾷ ἄριστόν τ' οὐδὲν κωλύει ἡδονήν τινα εἶναι ... ἴσως δὲ καὶ ἀναγκαῖον,
 [1] εἴπερ ἐκάστης ἕξεώς εἰσιν ἐνέργειαι ἀνεμπόδιστοι, [2] εἴθ' ἡ πασῶν
 ἐνεργειᾶ ἐστὶν εὐδαιμονία εἴτε ἡ τινὸς αὐτῶν, [3] ἂν ἡ ἀνεμπόδιστος,
 αἰρετωτάτην εἶναι· [4] τοῦτο δ' ἐστὶν ἡδονή. [5] ὥστε εἴη ἂν τις ἡδονὴ
 τὸ ἄριστον, τῶν πολλῶν ἡδονῶν φαύλων οὐσῶν, εἰ ἔτυχεν, ἀπλῶς.
 (VII.13.1153b7-14)

I quote the Greek text because two translations are possible, depending on one's interpretation. However one understands the exact connection between 1, 2, and 3, the desired result is clear: some unimpeded activity is most choice-worthy, and given that it is *most* choice-worthy, it will be the highest good.⁴⁴ Now, since Aristotle has defined pleasure as unimpeded activity of a natural state in VII. 12.1153a14-15 (cf. DEF, §3.3.1), there would seem to be a link between pleasure and happiness, as maintained in 4, given that happiness is the unimpeded activity of one or several natural states (cf. 2). The exact relation between pleasure and happiness (or the good) remains unclear, however, because the Greek text at VII.12.1153a14-15 is indeterminate, it says that τὴν ἡδονὴν ... λεκτέον ἐνέργειαν τῆς κατὰ φύσιν ἕξεως which could be either translated as 'we should say that...

- a) ... pleasure is *an* activity of the natural disposition, or
- b) ... pleasure is *the* activity of a natural disposition.

The Greek does not settle the question because nothing corresponds to the definite or indefinite article.⁴⁵ Depending on whether a) or b) is

⁴⁴ For three different accounts of the the relation between 1-3, see S. Broadie 2002:403, T. Irwin 1999:271, and C. Rapp 2009:215-18.

⁴⁵ Irwin 1999:270 makes this observation. I thank V. Harte for bringing this issue to my attention by letting me read her MS (b).

adopted as reference in 4, we get two different interpretations. Before we can discuss whether Aristotle holds H1, we need to settle for one of them. I shall begin with reading a), according to which Aristotle does not hold H1.

Text 4, reading a), [T4-A]: EN VII.13.1153b9-14

[1] And if there are unimpeded activities of each state, [2] whether the activity of all of them or of one in particular constitutes happiness when unimpeded, [3] that one must presumably be the most worthy of choice. [4] But pleasure is an unimpeded activity, [5] so the chief good might be some kind of pleasure, even if it so happens that most pleasures are bad without qualification. (tr. Crisp)

On this reading, the argument would be that i) an unimpeded activity of a natural state is the highest good, ii) pleasure is an unimpeded activity of a natural state, hence iii) it is possible that the highest good is a kind of pleasure.⁴⁶ Support for this reading may be that Aristotle still seems to be engaged in carrying out the program announced at the beginning of VII.12, namely to show that the anti-hedonist arguments do not support the anti-hedonist positions. This is how Aristotle introduces the argument: ‘nothing prevents pleasure from being the good...’ (VII.13.1153b7-8, quoted in Greek above).

The proponent of reading b), however, will point out that Aristotle is obviously moving beyond that program, for he does not only say that nothing prevents pleasure from being the good, but he begins his argument by conjecturing that ‘perhaps it is even necessary’ that pleasure is the good (VII.13.1153b9, again, see the Greek quoted above). On this reading, Aristotle would hold that every activity of a

⁴⁶ Irwin 1999:271 adopts this interpretation.

natural state is a pleasure because pleasure is defined as the activity of a natural state. If this is the premise imported in 4, the argument would be that i) an unimpeded activity of a natural state is the highest good, ii) every unimpeded activity of a natural state is pleasure, hence iii) the highest good is a kind of pleasure. This reading is adopted in Rowe's translation

Text 4, reading b, [T4-B]: VII.13.1153b9-14

[1] Given that there are unimpeded activities of each disposition, [2] then whether happiness is the activity of all of them or of one of them, [3] it is perhaps even a necessary conclusion that this activity, provided it is unimpeded, be most desirable; [4] but this is pleasure.[5] In that case, the chief good will be a kind of pleasure, even if most pleasures turn out to be bad, even without qualification. (tr. Rowe)

We should adopt reading b), because Aristotle, right after the passage discussed, goes on to explaining that 'it is because of this that everyone thinks that the happy life is a pleasant one' (1153b14-15). 'This' apparently refers back to the argument and its conclusion. However, Aristotle is entitled to this explanation only if reading b) is correct, for the conclusion according to T4-A is merely that 'the chief good might be some kind of pleasure', but this is too weak to explain why pleasure should be linked to happiness. Since reading b) establishes that 'the chief good will be a kind of pleasure', Aristotle must have argued for this conclusion if he is to explain the *endoxon*

that the happy life is pleasant: only on reading b) but not on reading a) can Aristotle move from the argument to the explanation.⁴⁷

If reading b) correctly conveys what Aristotle has in mind, why does he write ‘perhaps it is necessary...’ and state his conclusion in the optative rather than the indicative? Why does he not commit himself firmly to the conclusion which he is about to establish? Aristotle is simply too good a philosopher to overplay his hand: the crucial premise that pleasure is the unimpeded activity of a natural state would need further support. It is introduced only against the backdrop of Plato’s conception of pleasure, and Aristotle’s point is merely that DEF reflects the nature of pleasure better than Plato’s account (evidence is the *mallon* at VII.12.1153a14).⁴⁸ This does not mean that Aristotle does not believe what he says, it only means that not all the details of Aristotle’s position are presented.⁴⁹

Let us now turn to H1. It seems as if Aristotle is committed to holding H1 on reading b), since he affirms that some kind of pleasure is the highest good (*tis hêdonê [esti] to ariston*, VII.13.1153b12) - in which case he would turn out to be a normative hedonist. This

⁴⁷ Note that this entails that the highest good, i.e. virtuous activity, is the activity of a natural state. Although Aristotle often contrast virtue with nature in the *Ethics*, this does not speak against my interpretation (cf. *EN* VI.13.1144b1-12 and *EE* III. 7.1234a24-34). For a thing’s ‘nature’ can either mean (1) a thing’s ‘original constitution or tendency apart from human intervention’ or (2) ‘indicate its function and the final cause or end to which it tends’ (Irwin 1999:339; he also provides references supporting each use). The second meaning underlies e.g. the function argument where Aristotle concludes from facts about human nature what our function is and hence where our good lies. So, it is quite in line with Aristotle’s understanding of nature that the realisation of a thing’s nature (in sense (2)) is the highest good for that thing - which explains why the highest good should be a natural activity and hence a pleasure. See Annas 1993:142-158 for a detailed discussion of the two notions of nature in the *Ethics* and *Politics*.

⁴⁸ I agree with C. Rapp 2009:217 on this point as well as on the general dialectic status of Aristotle’s argument.

⁴⁹ Here, as elsewhere, *isôs* does not express real doubt but asserts ‘cum modestia quadam’ (Bonitz 1870:347b32-43 with examples).

appears to be too strange to be true.⁵⁰ So, why is Aristotle not a hedonist? The answer is that Aristotle affirms a much weaker thesis than the common run-off-the-mill hedonist. Hedonists commonly understand H1 as

[H2] Pleasure is identical with the good, i.e. that ‘good’ and ‘pleasant’ refer to the same thing (*Phlb.* 60a9-b1, cf. §1.2.1).

Aristotle does not hold any of these claims. He does not hold H2 because he only maintains that one *kind* of pleasure (*tis hêdonê*) is happiness, thereby indicating that pleasure in general and happiness are different things. This becomes clearer by considering an expanded version of Aristotle’s argument. Suppose that Aristotle had clearly stated that happiness, the highest good, is the activity of an unimpeded virtuous state (*hexis*), whereas pleasure is the activity of a natural state. It would have taken an extra premise to argue that the highest good is pleasure (for example, ‘virtuous states are natural states; they are second nature’) which would have made it clear that the essences of pleasure and happiness are different. However, Aristotle does not present the argument in this way; he saves the extra premise, omitting to point out that happiness is the exercise of certain good dispositions, and rather speaks of ‘dispositions’ (*hexeis*) without further narrowing down which ones he has in mind. So, one might think that pleasure is the same as happiness. However, Aristotle forestalls this identification by pointing out that it is only one kind of pleasure (*tis hêdonê*) that is happiness.⁵¹ So, there is no

⁵⁰ See C. Rapp 2009:218-19 for a good survey of reactions against the ‘shocking thesis’ that Aristotle holds that pleasure is the good.

⁵¹ C. Rapp 2009:219-20 argues that (a kind of) pleasure and happiness are identified ‘in a mere coincidental or extensional sense’ which means that pleasure and happiness coincide in the same thing, unimpeded activity.

reason to assume that Aristotle is a normative hedonist, even though he affirms that a kind of pleasure is the good.

3.5.2 *Psychological hedonism*

Does Aristotle endorse psychological hedonism? Psychological hedonism is the thesis that

[H3] Pleasure is that at which everybody aims.

Aristotle seems to endorse H3 in Text 5:

Text 5 [T5]: EN VII.13.1153b25-32

[1] And that all animals, and indeed human beings, pursue (diôkein) pleasure indicates that it is in a way (pôs) the chief good... [2] But since neither the best nature nor the best disposition (hexis) either is or is thought to be the same for all, [3] neither do all pursue the same pleasure, though all do pursue pleasure. [4] But perhaps they also pursue, not the one they suppose, or the one they would say they were pursuing, but the same one; [5] for everything contains by nature something godlike.

In 1, Aristotle apparently endorses H3. However, since he uses this evidence to support not rational hedonism, but only a qualified version of it, namely that pleasure is *in a way* the chief good (T5.1), but not identical with it, it seems reasonable that Aristotle should affirm H3 likewise only in a qualified form. The focus on nature and states (or dispositions) in 2 recalls the definition of pleasure as activity of a natural state. If we lay down this definition of pleasure, then we can explain, it seems, why different animals pursue different pleasures: given that their natures are different, they will naturally engage in what is in their nature, and since the activity of a natural

state is pleasure, the pleasures will be as different as the activities. So, what we see when we see all animals pursuing pleasure is that they pursue what is in their nature - since it is here that their good lies (the good for an animal is in its function, cf. I.7.1097b25-28).

That animals pursue their good, which, in virtue of being an activity of a natural state, is also a pleasure, seems to be ensured by the divine element in them (cf. 5). It does not matter what they think or would say they pursue (T5.4), apparently what matters is that they belong to a given species, and as such they pursue *nolens volens* the good of that species and with it a specific kind of pleasure. The role of the divine element comes out best, perhaps, from the parallel discussion in *EN* X.2.1173a4-5: 'and perhaps even in inferior creatures there is some element of goodness that transcends what they are in themselves, and has as its object their own proper good.'⁵² Thus, Aristotle assigns priority to the good of the kind of animal and, given his conception of pleasure (in DEF), this good will also be a pleasure.

Aristotle is, then, not a hedonist in either sense; all he claims is that the highest good, happiness, will also be a pleasure, but that the essences of happiness and pleasure are different.

⁵² See C. Rapp 2009:225-29 for a good discussion of different interpretations of Text 5. My interpretation is similar to his interpretation B.

Chapter 4: The value of pleasure in Aristotle's *EN* X.1-5

4.1 Introduction

In Chapter 1 we saw that Plato tries to argue that pleasure is not a good because, on his view, pleasure is a coming to be. In Chapter 2, I argued that Plato should have a more nuanced view of pleasure, as some pleasures would seem to be goods despite their being restorative processes. In Chapter 3 we saw that Aristotle, in *EN* VII. 11-14, rejects Plato's official view that pleasure is a process; instead, he argues that it is an activity. But since he focuses on the activity of a natural state, pleasure would seem to be good. The connection between pleasure and goodness is reinforced by Aristotle's argument that the good, consisting in a certain activity (or several), will also be a pleasure.

The close connection between pleasure and goodness is, to some extent, questioned in the discussion of pleasure in *EN* X.1-5 which offers a more nuanced view of the value of pleasure, maintaining that pleasures are so different that some are bad and some are good, while no pleasure is the highest good. Aristotle gains these points through a discussion of the reputable opinions on pleasure (in X.1-3), the *endoxa*. The results of this discussion are backed up by Aristotle's own understanding of pleasure (in X.4-5). Aristotle does not give a reductive analysis of pleasure, stating necessary and jointly sufficient conditions.¹ Rather, what Aristotle needs (and does in X.4) is to set pleasure in relation to activity and perfection/completeness, thus paving the way for the discussion of the life of the best and most

¹ That Aristotle gives such an analysis is often presupposed by interpreters, for example by Bostock 2000 and Taylor 2003. For due criticism of this approach, see S. Broadie 2003:25 n. 4. P. Hadreas 2004 and M. Pakaluk 2005:309 see correctly that Aristotle is more interested in what pleasure does, or how it functions, rather than what pleasure is.

perfect activity in *EN* X.6-8.² Relating pleasure to activity and perfection also enables him to justify the claims about the value of pleasure (in X.5).

The main goal of this chapter is to give an interpretation of Aristotle's conception of pleasure in *EN* X.4-5, because this allows us to understand why pleasure follows upon activity, why pleasure is valuable (when it is) and why Aristotle is not a hedonist. I will begin by discussing Aristotle's interaction with the *endoxa*. I will then move on to the more theoretical question about how pleasure functions in order to show that it supports Aristotle's position on the value of pleasure, as stated at the end of the endoxic enquiry. I will finally argue that Aristotle's position has some affinity with Eudoxus' hedonism, but is by no means a hedonist position.

4.2 The value of pleasure in *EN* X.1-3: *endoxa*

In this section I will argue that Aristotle arrives at his own view of the value of pleasure by carefully discussing the *endoxa*, most prominently the position of the hedonist Eudoxus. In order to do so, I will first state Aristotle's position and then discuss the relevant arguments in some detail. I will close with an important disambiguation of 'pleasure'.

4.2.1 Aristotle's *preface*

Aristotle introduces the discussion of pleasure in *EN* X.1 by pointing out that

² In *EN* VII, by contrast the discussion of pleasure comes after the discussion of *akrasia* where pleasure seems to play a rather negative role. This is why Aristotle has reason to show that not all pleasure is bad, and, in fact, that some pleasures are really good. I agree, thus, with S. Broadie 1991:313-4 and J. Warren 2009:251-2 who argue that the place of each essay on pleasure partly determines their different aims. See, however Gauthier 1970:781-3 for criticism of the view that the account of pleasure in *EN* VII continues the line of thought of the discussion of *akrasia*.

- i) 'pleasure, more than anything, seems an ineradicable part of humanity',
- ii) 'taking pleasure in the things one should, and hating the things one should, are most important in relation to excellence of character',
- iii) 'it is pleasant things that people choose and painful ones they avoid' which is why
- iv) pleasure and pain 'constitute a powerful influence in regard of excellence and the happy life' (X.1.1172a19-26).

Aristotle emphasises here not that pleasure is good or valuable, but points to the relation between pleasure and choice (and pain and avoidance). This relation holds true on two levels, first on the level of individual actions, for people choose pleasant things. Second, since repeated choices reveal something about an agent's character, what is pleasant to an agent will also be relevant for excellence of character: what sort of things one enjoys show what sort of person one is. Since excellence of character is crucial for happiness, what sort of things one enjoys is closely connected to one's happiness.³

Closer attention to i)-iv) primes the reader for the position that Aristotle will set out to defend. If taking pleasure in the things one should enjoy is a sign of excellence of character, then, presumably, taking pleasure in the things one should not enjoy is a sign for baseness of character. Now, since everybody chooses pleasant things, it would seem as if different people with different moral character

³ Although the preamble in *EN* VII.11 makes claims similar to i) to iv), I have not discussed them because I agree with D. Frede's verdict that in *EN* VII.11-14 'Aristotle focuses almost exclusively on the objections raised by certain philosophers to pleasure as a good or as the ultimate good.' (2009:183-4).

will find different things pleasant. Base people will find base things pleasant; good people will find good things pleasant. This shows that there is a very close relationship between character and that which is pleasant to people with such a character. But from here it is only a very small step to attribute 'good' and 'bad' to the pleasures themselves. This does not follow, of course, without further argument (which Aristotle will provide in due course), but it is hard not to count those pleasures that base people have in base activities among the bad things. These "base" pleasures do not get their bad name from their association with base people: whether base people are crazy about these pleasures or not shows nothing (their judgement is not a reliable indicator). Rather, it is more significant (at least for Aristotle) that a good person would never want any of these pleasures, because it indicates that there is nothing about these pleasures that is worth having. Since, however, a good person would want to have the pleasures associated with decent activities, pleasures would seem to differ in value. So, already from the preface we can understand that Aristotle rejects both hedonism (pleasure is identical with the good and all pleasure is good) and anti-hedonism (no pleasure is good, cf. X.1.1172a27-28) because there are good and bad pleasures.

4.2.2 Endoxa: Aristotle's position

Aristotle's position is a middle-ground between hedonism and anti-hedonism. He arrives at it through reviewing arguments of other thinkers for and against hedonism. The conclusion of this enquiry (X. 2-3) is as follows:

It seems clear, then, both that pleasure is not the good, and that not all pleasure is desirable; also that some pleasures are desirable (hairetai) in

themselves, differing from others either in kind or in terms of their sources.
(X.3.1174a8-11)

In this passage, Aristotle seems to endorse four claims [C]:⁴

[C1] Pleasure is not the good;

[C2] Not all pleasure is desirable (or, as I will sometimes say, choice-worthy);

[C3] Some pleasures are desirable in themselves;

[C4] Pleasures differ from each other either in kind or in terms of their sources.

The main arguments discussed by Aristotle are Eudoxus'; I will focus on three of his arguments to reach the conclusion that pleasure is the good (and Aristotle's responses) in the remainder of this section.⁵

4.2.3 The argument from universal pursuit

The first, and perhaps most important, argument for the conclusion that pleasure is the good is summed up as follows:

Eudoxus thought pleasure the good because of seeing all animals aim at it, both rational and non-rational, and because what is choiceworthy (haireton) in all cases is what is fitting (epieikes) and what is particularly choiceworthy is most powerful. The fact that they all are attracted to the same object suggests that this is best for all things. For each finds what is

⁴ Whether he really subscribes to all of C1-4 is a disputed question. For example, Gosling and Taylor 1982:256-57 argue that Aristotle does not endorse all of C1-4. My answer, that he does endorse all of these points, will be justified gradually in the course of this chapter.

⁵ For an excellent treatment of Aristotle's philosophical interaction with both Eudoxus and Speusippus, see J. Warren 2009.

good for it, as it also does food, but that at which all things aim is the good.
(EN X.2.1172b9-15, tr. Warren 2009:252).

The general drift of this argument is that all rational and non-rational animals seek (and generally find) what is good for them. So, there would seem to be many different things which are good - just as different animals are attracted to different foods. However, given that all animals aim at pleasure, pleasure would, in each case, be what is good. Yet, if all animals aim at the same thing, pleasure, it would be the good.

There are various problems with this argument, two of which I will mention only to set them aside. First, it is unclear how Eudoxus seeks to secure the descriptive claim that all animals seek pleasure. For how could one observe that all animals aim at pleasure?⁶ Second, he does not show that all animals *only* pursue pleasure. Unless he does so, however, he cannot conclude that pleasure is the (monistic) good.⁷ Third, and most importantly, it is unclear how Eudoxus can move from a descriptive claim (all animals seek pleasure) to a normative one (pleasure is the good).

The inference from the descriptive to the normative is supposed to be supported by a supplementary argument, namely 'what is choiceworthy (*haireton*) in all cases is what is fitting (*epieikes*)'.⁸ This supporting clause may bridge the gap from descriptive to normative

⁶ See S. Broadie 1991:347-8 for this worry.

⁷ This point is correctly observed by J. Warren 2009:253.

⁸ J. Warren 2009:258 brings this out very clearly. My discussion is indebted to his. He points out that '[a]lthough Aristotle often uses this adjective [sc. *epeikes*] more or less as a synonym for 'good', this more archaic sense [sc. 'fitting'] (see LSJ s.c. I) seems most plausible here.' Perhaps another place in the *EN* at which Aristotle uses *epieikes* in the sense of 'fitting' is at IV.1.1120b32.

in that it highlights the connection between what is choice-worthy and what is fitting. For what is fitting for an animal points to the nature of a given animal: what is fitting for it is determined by its nature. This bridges the gap insofar as 'nature', for Aristotle, is not a normatively neutral, merely descriptive term. On the contrary, if one finds out what is in the nature of a given species of animal, one knows what counts as good for this kind of animal, or, in other words, one knows what is choice-worthy for the animal. So, via nature we can link the two notions of fit and choice-worthiness.

The focus on nature brings out yet another point, namely that we can see animals pursuing pleasure. For animals by and large do pursue what is fitting for them by engaging, appropriately, in their characteristic activities.⁹ However, they probably do not pursue it under this description (if under any). It is more plausible to assume that they pursue what is pleasant to them, and that they aim at pleasure. So, if whichever characteristic activity a given animal engages in is pleasant (eating, mating, building a home) it might even be fair to say that pleasure is the good for the animal, given that everything that is good for the animal is also pleasant to the animal.

Aristotle is sympathetic to the idea that what is fitting for a given subject is pleasant, and what is fitting is determined by the subject's nature. We will see that this is really at the heart of Aristotle's "theory" of pleasure, that what is pleasant depends on an agent's nature - even if human pleasures are more complicated than animal

⁹ That characteristic activities are not pleasant as such (or not always) is pointed out by S. Broadie: 'Animals' pleasures, however intense, are seldom ill-timed or inordinate, because their nature generally ensures that the conditions under which a hedonic interest is beneficial are just the conditions under which it is aroused.' (1991:354-5).

pleasures and the account has to be broadened.¹⁰ At any rate, what we can gather from Aristotle's take on Eudoxus' argument is that pleasure is choice-worthy, at least those pleasures that come together with activities that are in an animal's nature.

4.2.4 The argument from opposites

Eudoxus puts forth another argument, the argument from opposites, in support of the same conclusion, namely that pleasure is the good because it is universally pursued.

[1] since pain is in itself, for all creatures, something to be avoided, so that the contrary must similarly be desirable for all; [2] and what is most desirable for all is what we do not choose because of something else, or for the sake of something else - but that pleasure is by general agreement a thing of this sort, since nobody asks a person 'What are you enjoying yourself for?', which implies that pleasure is desirable in itself. (EN X.2.1172b18-23)

Again, this argument is problematic, in particular its first part, because Eudoxus seems to presuppose that there is only one contrary of a bad state, namely the relevant good state. But this is too simple, as Speusippus points out: it is not only the case that both good and bad can be opposed to a neutral state, but, worse for Eudoxus, often 'bad is opposed to bad, too, and both to what is neither' (1173a7-8).¹¹

¹⁰ J. Warren 2009:259 perceptively observes that there is an important connection between Aristotle's characterisation of pleasure in *EN* X.4 in terms of sense and sense-object and his understanding of Eudoxus' argument: 'just as there is a natural relationship between an organ of sense and its best or most appropriate object, so too it is right similarly to see the experience of pleasure as related to an organism desiring or being attracted to the most naturally appropriate objects of choice.'

¹¹ Both Rowe (2002) and Warren (2009:278) take 'both' (*amphô(i)*, a8) to mean 'both bad and good' (Rowe) or 'both [bad and good]'. I think that 'both' should mean both bad states because Aristotle continues by arguing that pleasure is neither bad nor neutral. The counterpart discussion of Speusippus' argument at *EN* VII.13.1153b1-7 does not bring clarification.

Hence, Eudoxus' argument does not show that pleasure is the good.¹² Aristotle agrees in principle with the logic of Speusippus' argument, but hastens to add that in this case it does not work. For if Speusippus' argument was correct then either both pleasure and pain would have to be avoided given that they are both bad (a10), or if pleasure was neutral, it would have to be neither sought nor avoided (a11). However, both options offered by Speusippus are wrong, for 'as things are people patently avoid pain as something bad and choose pleasure as something good.' (a11-12). We can see here, again, that Aristotle has considerable sympathy for Eudoxus' position, without, however, giving the impression that he simply follows in the hedonist's footsteps.

The second part of the argument can help to give more support to the claim that we can see that people choose pleasure as something good, which is crucial for the argument from universal pursuit and Aristotle's defence against Speusippus. We can just ask people what they are enjoying themselves for, and if they cannot give an answer, then, apparently, they are treating pleasure as if it were desirable in itself.¹³ We can thus verify the reliability of the method of observation: if people's reports confirm the observation that they are seeking pleasure, then the descriptive claim that people (and animals) seek pleasure can be justified by means of observation. If

¹² Note that Speusippus' argument is about the question whether pleasure is the good, whereas Eudoxus' argument seeks to show that pleasure is choice-worthy or desirable in itself. It should perhaps be said that Aristotle shares with Eudoxus the assumption that X is good if and only if X is choice-worthy - and to the same degree (see Heinaman 2002:104-5 n.8 with references to Aristotle). So Speusippus' argument hits the target insofar as Eudoxus' claim is that pleasure is most desirable - and hence the best good, i.e. the good.

¹³ Whether Speusippus would say (if asked) that he chooses pleasure for nothing further is a question which I cannot address here. I commend to the reader J. Warren's careful study (2009) in which he emphasises the dialectical character of Speusippus' argument - which makes it very difficult to say with confidence to which theoretical and practical attitudes he is committed.

observing behaviour is a valid means to ascertain what people are pursuing, one will probably observe even those who put forward the argument from opposites in the first place choosing pleasure - in which case their actions would refute their logic.¹⁴

4.2.5 The argument from addition

Both the argument from universal pursuit and the argument from opposites indicate that pleasure is something good and desirable in itself, thereby giving ample support to the claim that pleasure is good in itself (cf. C3). Eudoxus takes both arguments to support that pleasure is the good. Now, we saw that Aristotle is not opposed to Eudoxus' arguments - but what is Aristotle's stance on the value of pleasure? Aristotle's position becomes clearer in the context of an argument which we have encountered already in Chapter 1 (§1.3.3): it is Aristotle's version of the choice of lives argument as presented in the *Philebus*. Here are Eudoxus' argument from addition and Aristotle's and Plato's responses:

[1] Again, he argued that when added to any good whatever, e.g. just actions, or moderate behaviour, pleasure makes it more desirable, and that the good is increased by itself. [2] This argument, then, at any rate, appears to show it to be a good, no more so than any other; [3] for every good is more desirable when combined with another than it is in isolation. [4] Why it is by this sort of argument that Plato in fact tries to do away with the view that pleasure is the good; [5] for he says that the pleasant life is more desirable in combination with than apart from wisdom, and if the result of the combination is better, [6] then the pleasure is not the good, [7] since there is nothing which when added to the good makes it more desirable [hairetôteron]. [8] And clearly nothing else will be the good, either, if it

¹⁴ For this observation see S. Broadie 1991:326. Cf. J. Warren 2009:278-9.

becomes more desirable when combined with something else good in itself
(X.2.1172b23-34)

Eudoxus' argument from addition is that pleasure is the good because it makes other good things, such as performing a just act or being moderate, better and what makes other goods better in any case is the good (cf. 1). Aristotle points out that his argument fails because he does not show that pleasure has this role exclusively (cf. 2). For it seems as if any good combined with any other good will be better than the good in isolation (cf. 3).¹⁵ So, it is a mark of being *a* good to improve other goods, but it does not show that pleasure is the good (cf. 2). I will leave aside the question whether Aristotle infers from this argument that pleasure is a good, to focus on the question whether Aristotle shows that pleasure is not *the* good, in addition to showing that Eudoxus' argument for hedonism fails.

The assessment depends crucially on section 7 of the text quoted: if Aristotle were to accept 7, he could show that pleasure is not the good (cf. 6), for the good cannot be improved and, yet, pleasure (or the life of pleasure) can be improved by wisdom, as Plato has shown (cf. 5). Does he, or does he not, accept 7? And how could Aristotle endorse 7 while at the same time holding 3, i.e. that every good (including the good) is improvable by adding another good? I cannot hope to answer these questions here since it would require a large-scale investigation into the question whether Aristotle accepts that

¹⁵ Note that this response may not deal with the core of Eudoxus' position. For Eudoxus seems to hold that justice or moderation are good in virtue of being pleasures, and so all other goods. So, whatever is the good, adding any of these goods to it would make the good better by adding more of itself. The argument, thus, would not show that there is some other good which is not reducible to pleasure. Hence, pleasure could be the good.

happiness can be improved.¹⁶ Instead, I shall express merely my doubt that Aristotle should base his argument on a highly contentious point without even marking it out as such. What the argument does clearly show is that *if* one accepts 7, then pleasure is not the good. Since Plato makes a good case for 7 and Eudoxus, apparently, has nothing to oppose to Plato, his argument does not reach the desired hedonist conclusion that pleasure is the good; it only shows that pleasure is *a* good - if that.¹⁷

4.2.6 The argument from inappropriateness

While Aristotle's version of the choice of lives argument does not obviously show that hedonism is false, we can see that Aristotle rejects hedonism for different reasons. If pleasure were the good, then everything is good and choice-worthy only insofar as it is a pleasure, and hence other things would not be choice-worthy independently from pleasure. However, Aristotle points out that there are, in fact, goods other than pleasure which we would choose independently of pleasure, such as seeing, remembering, knowing and possessing the excellences (X.4.1174a5-6). We can see here a connection to the argument from universal pursuit: Eudoxus says that we (and all other animals) choose what is fitting to us because it is pleasant. Aristotle now points out that, at least in the human case, seeing, remembering, knowing and possessing the excellences are goods which are part of our well-functioning, independently of being pleasurable. This makes clear that Aristotle assigns priority to those "natural" activities over pleasure: what is in our nature is just good for us; it is not so in virtue of being pleasurable. He might even

¹⁶ For a full discussion of this question, see Heinaman 2002 who argues vehemently that Aristotle does not accept 7 because he thinks that happiness can be improved. For opposing position, see e.g. Gauthier and Jolif 1970:821 (and Heinaman 2002:102 n.5 and n. 6).

¹⁷ In §4.4.1 I will argue that pleasure is a special good.

argue that what *should* be pleasant to us is just what is in our nature, i.e. what contributes to our well-functioning. If things were always as they should be, then Aristotle's position would practically be indistinguishable from Eudoxus'. However, in a less than perfect world people take pleasure in things they should not enjoy, or fail to enjoy what they should enjoy. To mark this difference between taking pleasure as one should and taking it inappropriately, one can introduce 'good' and 'bad'. To say that there are good and bad pleasures will take Aristotle a further step away from Eudoxus' claim that pleasure is the good, because Eudoxus' hedonism cannot distinguish between good and bad pleasure, i.e. pleasures which we should have and those that we should not have.

Aristotle gives examples of inappropriate pleasures:

no one would choose to live the whole of life with the thoughts of a small child, enjoying the utmost pleasures of small children; or to delight in something of the most shameful sort, even without the prospect of ever having to suffer pain for it. (X.4.1174a1-4)

These examples show that there are at least some pleasures which are not desirable (cf. C2), at least not without qualification. This undermines the hedonist thesis that pleasure is the good, because the good is always desirable.

4.2.7 How to differentiate between pleasures

As we saw, Aristotle on the one hand sympathises with the view that, normally, pleasure is good, whereas on the other hand, he clearly sees that this norm has frequent exceptions. The only way to accommodate both points about pleasure is by differentiating

between pleasures. On closer inspection, we can find reasons for taking this position even in the argument from universal pursuit. For Eudoxus clearly sees that different animals pursue different activities. Yet, since all these activities are pleasant to these animals, he concludes that pleasure is the good, assuming that there is a feature of all these pleasures that unifies them.¹⁸ Now, the problem is that pleasure on this abstract level is surely not the object of pursuit for animals.¹⁹ Rather, they go for the pleasure of eating at one time, and for the pleasure of running, swimming or mating at another. On this level, however, pleasures are opposed to each other as is clear from the animal's behaviour: the pleasure of eating cannot be replaced with any other pleasure; all the fitting pleasures have their own *raison d'être* in the animal's life which is why one should not conflate them, as Eudoxus apparently does.²⁰

How, then, are we to differentiate between pleasures? Aristotle sketches several answers to this question by focusing on the morally most relevant distinction between good and bad pleasures, or choice-worthy pleasures and those worthy of reproach:

- a) Bad pleasures are not pleasures, at least not without qualification (1173b21-25): just as we cannot automatically infer from 'x tastes sweet to subject S' that x is sweet, we cannot infer from 'x is pleasant to S' that x is pleasant. The reason is that if S is not as he should be, then S's judgements do not carry conviction - except for

¹⁸ The example in the *Philebus* 12e-13a was that of colour: black and white are opposed to each other, but are nevertheless the same insofar as they are colours. Pleasures might thus be opposed to each other while nevertheless being the same insofar as they are pleasures.

¹⁹ I take this point from S. Broadie 2002:430.

²⁰ I agree with S. Broadie's analysis (2002:430-31) in her commentary on 1172b9-1173a19 which brings out well that each of Eudoxus' arguments is flawed because he fails to distinguish between distinct (kinds of) pleasure.

others who are in the same bad state as S is. So, Aristotle suggests that there are norms governing the use of the predicate 'sweet', and Aristotle would hold that the norm is the healthy and fully developed person: only when x tastes sweet to this sort of person we can truly say, without qualification, that x is sweet. Analogously, Aristotle suggests here that there is a moral equivalent of the healthy person which likewise functions as the norm for pleasure. Since pleasures that bring reproach will not be pleasant to that sort of person, we can say that these are not really pleasures, just as we can say that something that tastes sweet to an ill person is not really sweet.

- b) Pleasures really are worthy of choice, but their choice-worthiness is conditional upon the source of the pleasure (1173b25-28): if the source is bad, the pleasure is not choice-worthy, as the bad source somehow takes away the choice-worthiness of the good in question. The relevant good is only good and choice-worthy if it is not from a bad source. This is a general point holding of such diverse goods as money and health: i) having money is reproachable if the money was acquired by non-respectable activities, or ii) when health is gained or maintained by reproachable activities, such as eating e.g. human flesh, they will not be choice-worthy. Since this does not show that money or health are bad things, there is a way to explain the existence of pleasures that are not choice-worthy while leaving intact the claim that pleasure, as such, is good. We have, thus, found a way of differentiating between pleasures just enough to capture that different pleasures have different value, but not so much as to say that pleasures differ in kind. For no one would say that there are different kinds of money or health just because they differ in their

sources.

- c) Pleasures do differ in kind (1173b28-31): different kinds of sources give rise to different kinds of pleasure. Aristotle's explanation is not very helpful, since he simply asserts that 'pleasures deriving from fine things are distinct from those deriving from shameful ones.' (b28-29). Nor does the further elaboration help that 'one cannot come to feel the pleasure of the just person without being just, nor that of the musical expert without being musical' (b29-30). However, the idea is probably that there must be different kinds of pleasure because not everyone can have any pleasure: if the musical expert can have a pleasure which I just cannot have, even though I can enjoy other things, then pleasures would seem to be different in kind.

At this point of the enquiry, Aristotle, still discussing the *endoxa*, does not commit to any of these options. Although he leaves out option a) when stating the conclusion of his discussion of the *endoxa* (cf. C4), he is clearly drawn to this option at the end of his discussion of pleasure, at 1175b10-29. The lion's share of the argumentative work, then, is on differentiating between pleasures, or kinds of pleasures, for even option a) must differentiate between pleasures if one is to distinguish between real and less real pleasures.

4.2.8 Two senses of pleasure

The task of differentiating between pleasures is complicated by the fact that there are two distinct, though related, senses of 'pleasure', which come out clearly in A. Kenny's bon mot 'We get pleasure out of pleasures, and derive enjoyment from enjoyments' (1963:89). The point, here, is that we call favourite activities, such as eating, sex, and

going to the theatre ‘pleasures’, but it is also correct to say that these activities produce pleasure, or that one derives or gets pleasure from them, which suggests that pleasure is something different from the activity. How the word ‘pleasure’ is used in English tells us, of course, nothing about Aristotle. There is, however, good reason to suppose that Aristotle acknowledges both senses of pleasure in Book X of the *EN*. At X.3.1173a17-28 Aristotle rebuts Plato’s argument that pleasure is not good in itself because it admits of more and less and is thus indeterminate, whereas what is good is determinate.²¹ The counter-argument relies on a disambiguation of what ‘pleasure’ means:

[1] Now if they reach this judgement (sc. that pleasure is indeterminate) by considering being pleased (hêdesthai), the same will hold of justice and the other excellences ... people can be just to a greater degree, or courageous, and they can also perform just acts or behave moderately to greater or lesser degree. [2] But if the judgement in question refers to the pleasures (hêdonai), they are perhaps failing to give an explanation; that is, if some are unmixed while others are mixed. (X.3.1173a17-23)

Aristotle goes on to compare pleasure in the second sense to health, as health is differently realised in different people, and to different degrees - yet health is clearly good. So, the basic point is that no matter how we conceive of pleasure, either as being pleased, i.e. the taking of pleasure, or as pleasures, i.e. what the pleasure is taken in,

²¹ In reporting the argument, Aristotle writes *to men agathon...* (1173a15-16) which often is translated as ‘the good’. However, that the phrase here means ‘what is good in itself’ is clear from a) the origin of this argument (at *Philebus* 25e-26b health is mentioned as example for something that is determinate), and b) the examples Aristotle adduces in his refutation: justice, courage and the other virtues, as well as health are good in themselves, but not the good.

pleasure will admit of degrees.²² This does not mean, however, that pleasure is not good, for respectable goods such as justice (being just) and health (being healthy) similarly admit of degrees.

Aristotle, then, can mean either the pleasure taken or what the pleasure is taken in when he speaks of 'pleasure'. That pleasures differ in kind when conceived of as what the pleasure is taken in is not controversial: sex is different in kind from going to the theatre. However, to argue that pleasures differ in kind in the sense of the pleasure taken is much harder, as an analogy with sweetness may indicate: of course, candy is different from dried fruit, but it is not clear that the experience of sweetness in the agent is therefore also different. It is, likewise, not implausible to maintain that pleasure in the sense of the pleasure taken does not differ in kind, even if the sources of the pleasure are different in kind.²³ Aristotle, however, sets out to argue this more difficult (and more interesting) thesis, for when he sketches option b), he speaks of the pleasures stemming from certain activities (*hêdonai ... apo toutôn*, 1173b26) which suggests that the pleasure is not the activity, but rather the pleasure taken in the activity. Similarly, when he sketches option c) he says that one cannot enjoy (*hêsthênai*, 1173b29) the pleasures of the just person without being just, thus pointing again at the pleasure taken.

4.2.9 Upshot

In this section we saw that, by discussing Eudoxus' argument for hedonism, Aristotle arrives at the conclusion that pleasure, when it is

²² Aristotle is rightly cautious about the sense in which Plato speaks of pleasure, for although the *Philebus* does not explicitly distinguish these senses, Plato clearly says that e.g. eating when hungry and drinking when thirsty are pleasures (31e-32b, cf. §1.4), and that pleasure has a content. These two different perspectives might well be captured by the distinction made in the text.

²³ Cf. *Philebus* 12c-13a.

taken as it should be taken, is good. However, since pleasure is often also inappropriately taken, there will also be bad pleasures, which rules out that pleasure is the good. Aristotle's position, together with a proposal of how to differentiate between pleasures, is summed up in the claims with which we began:

[C1] Pleasure is not the good;

[C2] Not all pleasure is desirable (or, as I will sometimes say, choice-worthy);

[C3] Some pleasures are desirable in themselves;

[C4] Pleasures differ from each other either in kind or in terms of their sources.

4.3 Pleasure as supervenient end

In this section I will give an interpretation of Aristotle's central claim that pleasure perfects activity. It is central not only because Aristotle bases his differentiation of pleasures into kinds on it, but also because it is crucial for understanding the value of pleasure. Unfortunately, Aristotle's only positive characterisation of how pleasure perfects an activity is unclear, as it is given in the form of an ambiguous simile. Having set aside the simile as a heuristic tool, I shall give a new interpretation of the relationship between pleasure, the activity and the agent. Usually, interpreters focus exclusively on the activity when they try to explain why pleasure supervenes. I shall argue that we need to take the agent and the agent's attitudes into account as well. This will help us to understand better the complex value of pleasure, as I shall argue in the next section.

4.3.1 Activity, perfection and pleasure

Aristotle's main point in X.4 is that pleasure and the enjoyed activity are linked through the notion of completion or perfection:

all the kinds of sensory experience give rise to pleasure, and so too do thought and reflection; but the most complete/perfect (teleiotatê) is the most pleasant, and most complete/perfect is that whose subject is in good condition, in relation to the most worth while of the objects in the domain of the sense; and pleasure is what completes/perfects (teleioi) the activity. (X.4.1174b20-23, Rowe's tr. slightly altered).

Aristotle makes two points in this passage about the relation between pleasure and activity, both linking the activity and pleasure via perfection or completion, namely that i) the most complete/perfect is the most pleasant, and that ii) pleasure is what completes/perfects the activity. The meaning of the adjective *teleios* and its cognate verb *teleioô* could here be rendered either as 'complete', or as 'perfect'. Translating *teleios* as 'complete' would highlight completeness in form, whereas rendering it as 'perfect' would emphasise perfection in quality.²⁴ An example might help: walking from A to B is complete in form once the walker has walked from A to B. However, this says nothing about the quality of the activity. The walker might be lame, or the surface too rugged; under both

²⁴ In *Met.* 5.16 Aristotle distinguishes between *teleios* as a) 'that outside which not even one portion is to be found, as for instance the complete time of each thing is that outside which there is no time to be found which is part of that time' (*Met.* 5.16.1021b12-14, tr. Kirwan), and as b) that which in respect of excellence and goodness cannot be surpassed relative to its genus, as for instance a doctor is complete and a flautist is complete when they are without deficiency in respect of the form of their own proper excellence... And excellence is a kind of completion, for each thing is complete and every substance is complete when in respect of the form of its own proper excellence no portion of its natural magnitude is deficient.' (*Met.* 5.16.1021b14-23, tr. Kirwan) *Teleios* in sense a) could be translated as 'complete', whereas sense b) (*pace* Kirwan) calls for another translation, namely 'perfect'.

circumstances, the activity of walking will not be qualitatively perfect.

The sense in which the activity must be complete or perfect is that the activity must be qualitatively perfect rather than complete in form, because a) every act of seeing is complete in form and would thus be pleasant, and b) Aristotle specifies the conditions under which seeing is best, not when it is formally complete. This way of understanding the passage is also easier to reconcile with the implied degrees of perfection: the most perfect activity is the most pleasant one (X.4.1174b19-20) - which suggests that less perfect activities will be less pleasant. A perfect activity is thus an activity that is qualitatively outstanding, it is good of its kind. If, on the other hand, perfection was understood as formal completion, it is difficult to see how there could be degrees: whenever sense-perception takes place it is complete in form; whether the sense and the sense-object are good of their kind does not seem to make a difference to that (but only to qualitative perfection).²⁵

So, in what way does pleasure perfect a perfect activity? Aristotle tells us in what way it does *not* complete or perfect it:

²⁵ F. Gonzalez 1991:151-7 argues that Aristotle, consistently, uses only one sense of 'complete' in *EN* X.1-5, namely formal completeness (though at p. 152 he slips into speaking about a 'variation in quality' of pleasures). He tries to account for degrees of completion by a) linking the degrees of purity of different sense modalities with the degrees of completion, and further assume that b) purer sense-perception will be more pleasant, then e.g. seeing will be more pleasant than tasting (because it is purer). The problem for this interpretation is that, besides being rather speculative (as admitted by Gonzalez p. 156), it seems committed to holding that touching leather is as pleasant as touching a cactus - both would have the same degree of purity and hence pleasantness in virtue of being touch. Two senses of *teleios* are postulated by Bostock 1988:257-59 and 2000:155 (the latter with discussion of Gonzalez), as well as in Hadreas 2004:159-65. Bostock 1988:259-60 argues (unsuccessfully, I think) that only formally complete things can be perfect, which would mean that pleasure has to be something formally complete.

pleasure does not perfect (teleioi) [the activity] in the same way that the sense-object and the sense do, when they are good of their kind, any more than health and a doctor are causes in the same way of being healthy. (X. 4.1174b23-26)

It is not clear what Aristotle has in mind here. For when he says that pleasure does not perfect the activity in the same way as the sense-object and the sense do, he might mean that there are different senses in which pleasure perfects an activity. However, this is not the only possibility, and Aristotle is surely not committed to it, for it is possible that a good sense and sense-object perfect the activity via pleasure: they might bring about both pleasure and the activity, but pleasure, in turn, perfects the activity.²⁶ Since pleasure perfects the activity directly, whereas the sense and sense-object do so only indirectly, they would complete pleasure in different ways. At any rate, it is clear that Aristotle's main point is to dispel the following line of thought:

if two things perfect an activity, then they must perfect it in the same way; hence pleasure must perfect seeing in the same way as sense and sense-object. But this means that we only have to understand how sense and sense-object perfect activity - and then we know how pleasure perfects an activity.

Aristotle points out that this sequence of thought is mistaken because one can use the same term to indicate different ways in which something operates: both health and a doctor are causes of health, but they cause health in different ways. Likewise, the sense-object

²⁶ M. Pakaluk 2005:311-12 seems to be committed to this view. I discuss his interpretation in more detail below at §4.5.1.

and sense, as well as pleasure, may perfect the activity, but they can do so in different ways: either by causing (in a wide sense) different kinds of perfection or by causing the same perfection in different ways. What Aristotle does not suggest in this analogy is that the ways in which the activity can be perfected parallel the ways in which doctor and health cause health (i.e. as efficient and formal cause).²⁷ He does not do so because it would impede his task of explaining how activity and pleasure are related: Aristotle's point would be that pleasure is not the efficient cause of the perfection, but stands in the same relation to the perfection of the activity as (the form of) health to the health of an individual. Without further explanation, however, this does not help to explain how pleasure perfects the activity, but would invite a detour into explaining i) the different ways in which something can be a cause, ii) how health is the cause of health, and iii) why pleasure is like health.

So far, then, the relation between activity (in fact, the activity of perception), its perfection and pleasure can be characterised as follows:

[REL-1] i) The activity of seeing is most perfect when the sensory apparatus is in the best condition and the sense-object is best; ii) The most perfect activity is most pleasant;

²⁷ Quite frequently interpreters take the way in which sense and sense-object perfect the activity to be that of effecting it (e.g. Stewart 1892:427 and Gauthier and Jolif 1970:841). But if this means merely that sense and sense-object bring the activity to formal completion (as Stewart claims), we have ruled out this interpretation, since not formal completion is not at issue here, but qualitative perfection. This is a problem for all those who want to find a strict analogy between the pairs pleasure and activity on the one hand and health and doctor on the other, for health is the formal cause of being healthy. Gauthier suggests health as a final cause (1970:839-41), but this suggestion is effectively refuted by Gosling and Taylor 1982:244-47. Further, since Aristotle holds that pleasure is 'a sort of supervenient end' (see text below), one may doubt that it fits into the standard fourfold classification of causes at all (see van Riel 2000:56 for this point).

[REL-2] Pleasure perfects the activity in a different way than sense-object and sensory apparatus perfect the activity.

4.3.2 *The simile*

Aristotle tries to clarify REL-2 by saying, more directly, how pleasure perfects activity. Unfortunately, the only positive characterisation is given in the form of a simile:

Pleasure perfects (teleioi) the activity not in the way the disposition present in the subject perfects it, but as a sort of supervenient (epiginomenon) end (telos), like the bloom of manhood (hōra) on those in their prime (akmaiois). (X.4.1174b31-33)

This passage admits of two different interpretations, depending on how we understand the two crucial words *akmaios* and *hōra*. First, *akmaios* is often taken to be connected with youth.²⁸ The Greek, however, suggests that someone who is *akmaios* is not so much in his

²⁸ For example, Ross translates ‘As the bloom of youth [supervenes] on those in the flower of their age’; similarly Irwin 1999:159; Anscombe’s paraphrase as ‘the bloom on the cheek of youth’ (1985:3) is even more explicit. Cf. Burnet 1900:453 ad loc and Hardie 1968:363.

youth, but rather in his full bloom, or prime of his life.²⁹ This way, Aristotle's point fits better into the context: Aristotle links pleasure to perfection, as the most perfect activity is the most pleasant. Yet, comparing pleasure to something that supervenes on young people would connect pleasure with immaturity and incompleteness, thus undermining the link between pleasure and perfection. So, we can expect that Aristotle will have in mind those in their prime, as this fits much better his purposes of linking pleasure to perfection and completeness.

The meaning of the second key word, *hōra*, is more difficult to determine. The basic meaning of this word is 'time', and, closely related, 'season', 'year', or 'hour'. The two relevant meanings of *hōra* in this context are: either i) *hōra* has to do with physical appearance, and could even be translated as 'beauty'; or ii) it has to do with timing and can be translated as 'springtime of life', 'height of youth', or 'time of maturity' - depending on the context. These two different translations suggest two opposing interpretations.

²⁹ LSJ s.v. *akmaios*. The English word 'acme' is a transliteration from the Greek *akmê* and captures well what the Greek means: 'the point or period at which something is at its best or most highly developed' or 'the period of full growth'. OED, s.v. 'acme', accessed 26 Feb 2010, and LSJ, s.v. *akmê*. See also Hadreas 1997, van Riel 2000:57 and Bostock 2000:156. Hadreas 1997:371 contends that 'at NE 1118b11, Aristotle in quoting Homer does mention he who is ὁ νέος καὶ ἀκμάζων, "young and in his prime".' which he apparently takes to imply that the *akmazôn* is young. So, one could argue that the related *akmaios* also means 'youth'. But this is a mistake. First, *akmazôn* does not occur in the Homeric line (Il. 24, 130), it is something that Aristotle adds. Second, the *kai* does not further explain the *neos*, but adds something different. Aristotle's point in that passage is that everyone has an appetite for food and sex. It would ruin the point if this was restricted to young people only (hence the *kai akmazôn* is not exegetical of *neos*): clearly Aristotle's point is that both the young and those in their prime desire food and sex. So, this passage seems to corroborate that *akmaios*, which is indeed related to *akmazôn*, should mean something different from youth. At *Rhet.* I.5.1361b11, Aristotle says explicitly that the *akmazôn* is between young and old, and in *Rhet.* II.14.1390b9-11 that the body is in its prime (*akmazei*) from thirty to thirty-five; the mind at about forty-nine.

1. *Hôra* as beauty. Since *akmê* and *hôra* in this sense mean different things, beauty would seem to be something different from, and additional to, being in one's prime. The analogy is that beauty is a supervenient end on being in your prime which means that, although being in your prime is a necessary condition for beauty, it is not sufficient: being beautiful is not entailed by being in your prime.³⁰ Yet, since beauty is clearly something desirable, it will be an end that will, when it comes on top of being in one's prime, make it better. So, the emphasis is on the supervenient end as something additional that comes on top of some other thing which is already perfect (being in your prime brings to completion your physical development). This would mean that pleasure, too, is something different from the perfection of the activity caused by the sense and sense-object. Pleasure would thus, at least logically, be separable from a perfect activity (even if this is impossible in practice). So, when pleasure comes on top of the perfect activity it would make it better, adding another feature of desirability. In this sense pleasure would be an additional end.

2. *Hôra* as related to time. *Hôra* picks out the prime time of a given period of time, and we should in this context settle for 'time of maturity'. This makes *akmê* and *hôra* out as synonyms, referring to the same thing. So, there is just one perfection which can be referred to by different words: to say that you are in your prime is to say that you are in the time of your maturity. Transferred to pleasure, the simile would support the following account: to say that an activity is pleasant just is to say that it is perfect, for pleasure just is another word for the perfection of the activity. Note

³⁰ At IV.3.1123b7-8 Aristotle may suggest that besides being pretty (*asteios*) and well-proportioned, as well as having a certain size are all necessary for being beautiful.

that this account is silent about what causes (in our sense of the word) the activity to be perfect (this role can be taken up by the sense and the sense-object). It is only clear that whatever the causes are, they cause a perfection - and this is a pleasure. So, pleasure in a perfect activity is not anything extra in the sense that it is something over and above the activity, but rather 'it is the *further fact* that the activity is perfect.'³¹

The two interpretations give a very different account of how pleasure completes the activity: if *hôra* means beauty, pleasure will be something distinct from, and additional to, the activity, something that, at least logically, may not set in even if the activity is perfect, whereas if *hôra* means time of maturity, pleasure will just be what makes the activity perfect. Hence, every complete or perfect activity will, on logical grounds, be pleasant. Since both translations are possible, so are both interpretations. The problem is that it is impossible to determine *a priori* the meaning of the crucial word *hôra* and hence the meaning of the passage. This can be established only by taking into account the broader context of the simile. However, that is to say that one has to make up one's mind about how pleasure completes an activity before one translates the key words and interprets the simile.³² So, at best, the passage can serve as a benchmark for an interpretation of *EN* X.4. It does not help us to understand REL-2, rather it replaces it with an equally puzzling claim:

³¹ Bostock 2000:157. Most interpreters settle for interpretation 1, with the exception of Gosling 1973-4, Gosling and Taylor 1982:212-13, and Bostock 2000:156-8 who opt for interpretation 2. Note that Taylor retreats from the view proposed in Gosling and Taylor in his 2003:263 n.16.

³² If so, the simile fails as explanatory tool. I suspect that this is why Anscombe accused Aristotle of 'sheer babbling' (1958:3).

[REL-2*] Pleasure completes the activity as sort of a supervenient end.

4.3.3 *Pleasure and dependence*

In the remainder of this section, I will try to elucidate REL-2*. I will begin to explain how pleasure supervenes with a preliminary point: the word that is translated by ‘supervenient’ (*epigignesthai*) does not mean quite the same as in modern philosophical terminology.³³ Rather, it has either a temporal meaning (‘coming into being after’; LSJ s.v. I), or it concerns seconding events (‘come as fulfilment’, ‘second’, ‘befall’, or ‘coming on top of’ or ‘coming in addition to’; LSJ s.v. II). In both cases, however, there is something to be presupposed on which the thing can supervene. That is, the supervening event or thing is dependent for its existence on the subvening event or thing. It is this idea of ontological dependence which, I think, is part of the point that Aristotle is trying to make in saying that pleasure is some sort of a *supervenient* end. The context not only confirms this, it also indicates on what the pleasure supervenes: the simile is sandwiched between two passages which both emphasise that pleasure is dependent on the presence of a good sense and a good sense-object which are responsible for the activity’s being good of its kind:

[A]

it is clear too that pleasure arises most when the sense is at its best and is active in relation to an object of which the same is true; and when both sense-object and what is doing the sensing are like this, there will always be

³³ McLaughlin’s and Bennet’s entry in the SEP (accessed on 21 May 2011) begins with this general definition: ‘A set of properties A supervenes upon another set B just in case no two things can differ with respect to A-properties without also differing with respect to their B-properties.’

pleasure, at any rate so long as there is something to produce [the sense-perception] and something to receive it' (X.4.1174b28-31).

The passage continues with the simile and another passage (both quoted in full):

Pleasure perfects (teleioi) the activity not in the way the disposition present in the subject perfects it, but as a sort of supervenient (epiginomenon) end (telos), like the bloom of manhood (hōra) on those in their prime (akmaiois). (1174b31-33)

[B]

For so long, then (oun), as the object of thought or sense-perception is as it should be, and so is what discriminates or reflects, there will be pleasure in the activity; for when receptor and producer are similar, and in the same relation to each other, the same result naturally occurs (1174a33-1175a3).

Both A and B make a point about the dependence of pleasure: both specify the conditions under which pleasure will occur and state clearly that pleasure cannot exist unless these conditions are met. Assuming that the simile is not ill-placed, we can expect that it deliberately trades on the point about time: only as long as somebody is in his prime can the bloom of manhood supervene (on either interpretation 1 or 2). If the same is true of pleasure, then pleasure will be for its duration (and hence existence) dependent on the subvening event or thing.³⁴ We will see that this has implications

³⁴ Commentators sometimes complain about the disposition of Aristotle's text, especially lines 26-31 (part of which is here in A) seem to be in the way (so Irwin 1999:306). Gauthier and Jolif even transpose lines 26-31 to between the simile and text B. They seem to have missed, or so I think, that Aristotle is interested in showing that pleasure is dependent on the subvening events or things.

for the value of pleasure, namely that it, too, is dependent on something other than just the pleasure.³⁵

4.3.4 Pleasure and the underlying state

What is it that pleasure supervenes on? Almost all interpreters speak of pleasure supervening on the activity, and in particular on a perfect activity. Although Aristotle often merely says that pleasure completes the activity (1174b23), focus on the activity only leaves out the fundamental point, emphasised both in A and B, that the activity is the activity of a certain underlying state (*hexis enhuparchousa*) which is activated by a certain thing or event. In both A and B, however, we can see that Aristotle stresses that pleasure supervenes only if certain conditions obtain - and here he mentions the state of the subject and the object, not the activity ensuing from their interaction.

Aristotle is mainly concerned with pointing out that a sense in a good condition (*eu echontos*, 1174b22), together with a good object will be *most* pleasant, highlighting in A that 'pleasure arises most when the sense is at its best and is active in relation to an object of which the same is true' (1174b29-31), and in B that 'for so long, then, as the object of thought or sense-perception is as it should be, and so is what discriminates or reflects, there will be pleasure in the activity.' (1174b33-1175a1). He thereby gives the impression that pleasure can be had only when the state and what activates it are best. However, he also maintains that people in a bad state can have

³⁵ In the account which I am about to give, I concentrate on 'pleasure supervenes on X' in the sense as 'pleasure is dependent on X' and 'pleasure follows on X'. It is not implausible to assume that 'pleasure supervenes on X' suggests that the pleasure is experienced along with experiencing X - which would indicate that the emphasis on the underlying state is perhaps ill-placed, as we do not experience the state (we may not even be aware of it) as distinct from its activity. However, other uses of *epiginesthai* in Aristotle do not suggest that the thing or event on which another supervenes is experienced together with the supervening one. See Bonitz 1870:270a18-38.

pleasure, for example an ill person may enjoy the taste of the medicine, even if (and because) his sense of taste is affected by the illness. So, given that the activation of bad states can yield pleasure also, the perfection of state, object and activity alone cannot explain why pleasure should supervene. The key explanation - which is not specific to perception and hence carries over to other cases - is given in B: 'when receptor and producer are *similar* (*homoîôn gar ontôn*), and in the same relation to each other, the same result (sc. that there is pleasure in the activity) naturally occurs' (1175a1-3). So the reason why the most pleasure is had in the best activity is not merely because the underlying state and the relevant object are *best*, but also, crucially, because they are similar.

This explanation allows Aristotle to maintain, sensibly, that even people in a bad state (*kakôs diakeimenoî*, X.3.1173b22) can have pleasure. However, since the objects which are enjoyable to them are likewise bad, it is important to Aristotle to point out that what people of that disposition enjoy is not enjoyable for everybody (1173b22-25). He does not merely mean that one should not enjoy these things, but rather that these things are not pleasant to people of a good disposition. This is because, I suggest, the object and the state are not similar: a good state cannot be activated by a bad object in such a way that pleasure would supervene. So, we should understand the notion of similarity in terms of fit: for pleasure to occur, there must be a fit between the underlying state and the object which activates the state.³⁶

³⁶ J. Warren 2009:259 usefully relates Aristotle's take on the argument from universal pursuit to the present passage. In both cases Aristotle would emphasise that when the subject is in a good condition, there is pleasure: 'just as there is a natural relationship between an organ of sense and its best or most appropriate object, so too it is right similarly to see the experience of pleasure as related to an organism desiring or being attracted to the most naturally appropriate objects of choice.'

4.3.5 *Pleasure and fit*

We can come to understand the role of the notion of ‘fit’ better by perusing the only other place in the *EN* in which the word translated by ‘supervenes’ is used. It occurs in the context of *EN* II.3 where Aristotle discusses the relation between virtue and pleasure and pain:

The pleasure or pain that supervenes (epiginomenên) on what people do (tois ergois) should be treated as a sign of their dispositions (hexeis), for someone who holds back from bodily pleasure and does so cheerfully is a moderate person, while someone who is upset at doing so is self-indulgent. (II.3.1104b3-7)

This passage is particularly helpful for two reasons. First, it makes clear that the pleasure supervening on an activity is not the same as the perfection of the activity (as interpretation 2, §4.3.2, maintains). Aristotle here understands pleasure (*hêdonê*, 1104b4) not as activity (or perfect activity) but rather as the pleasure taken in that activity (*chairein*, b6) - and the pleasure taken in an activity is surely something additional to it, even to a perfect activity. Since the same expression (*epiginesthai*) is used here and in the simile, it seems safe to assume that the the sense of pleasure is the same in both cases. This understanding of pleasure gives us also a nice explanation of the dependence of pleasure: one cannot take pleasure without presupposing something in which the pleasure is taken.³⁷

³⁷ This is not to say that pleasure as the perfection of an activity cannot account for the ontological dependence of pleasure: it can. For without something of which pleasure is the perfection, pleasure as perfection would not be able to exist.

Second, the passage confirms that at the root of the pleasure taken is not just the activity, but the fit between the underlying state and the object. For in Aristotle's example, agents A1 and A2 *do* the same, they refrain from a bodily pleasure, but their underlying states are not the same. Since A1 takes pleasure in forgoing the bodily pleasure, whereas A2 is upset, this strongly suggests that A1 and A2 have different underlying states. Given that pleasure sets in only when there is a fit between the underlying state and the object that activates it, A1 apparently acts from a state for which the occasion of forgoing a bodily pleasure is fitting, whereas A2 has no state for which this occasion is fitting. Since the relevant states here are states of character, we can call A1 'moderate' and A2 'self-indulgent'.

Taking these two points together, we can say that pleasure as the pleasure taken supervenes on the activity of a given underlying state only if this state is activated by a fitting object, which is why the pleasure taken can be an indicator of the agent's states.

4.3.6 Pleasure, love, and states

In the passage quoted, the states of which pleasure is a sign are states of character. This is understandable given the context of that passage: it is part of the general discussion of virtue, and virtuous states are parts of one's character. In the context of the discussion of pleasure he shows an equal interest in character, as the preface to the discussion shows: 'taking pleasure in the things one should, and hating the things one should, are most important in relation to excellence of character' (X.1.1172a21-23). However, not all pleasures can be explained by recourse to character, as the word translated as 'character', *êthos*, signifies acquired *moral* dispositions. Since one can take pleasure also without the activation of one's moral disposition

(for examples in perceiving), the notion of 'character' is too narrow to explain all pleasures. So, we need the wider notion of 'disposition' or 'state' (*hexis*) that can account for pleasures stemming from moral and from non-moral states.

I shall argue that the relevant feature of the state is love: it belongs to a good *hexis* to love certain things, and when one's *hexis* is activated by a beloved object, the agent will take pleasure in virtue of the activity. Why should one think that love plays a role at all? Love is mentioned some ten lines after the simile in a passage in which Aristotle tries to answer the question why everybody desires pleasure. The answer is that i) everybody desires living (X.4.1175a11); ii) living is an activity (a12); and iii) each is active most in relation to the things and by using those things [sc. faculties or states] which he loves (*agapan*) most (a13). As there is no need to support i) and ii), Aristotle cites only some examples to illustrate iii):

the musical person, e.g. [is active with] hearing in relation to melodies, the lover of understanding (philomathês) with thought in relation to the objects of reflection, and so on in the case of every other type too; and pleasure completes the activities, and so the life, that they desire. (X.4.1175a13-16)

Aristotle here makes clear that he is *not* concerned with chance pleasures supervening on random activities. Rather, he focuses on pleasures customarily taken, pleasures that stand in the centre of one's life. Here, he mentions the pleasures of the musical person and the lover of understanding, later (X.5.1175a31-35) he adds the student of geometry, the lover of music, the lover of building and so on. What they all have in common is that they are extremely committed

to their characteristic activity, so much so that one can call them 'lover' of their activity.

The connection between being a lover of X and taking pleasure in X is brought out in an earlier passage:

to each person that thing is pleasant in relation to which he is called 'lover of' that sort of thing, as for example a horse is to the horse-lover, a spectacle to the theatre-lover and in the same way what is just is also pleasant to the lover of justice, and generally the things in accordance with excellence to the lover of excellence. (I.8.1099a8-11)

In this passage, Aristotle provides us with an account of what it is for something to be pleasant to an agent A. Earlier we saw that x is pleasant to A only if there is a fit between A's disposition and x which activates the disposition. Now, he adds that A must also be a lover of x.³⁸ I do not think that these two explanations compete with each other; rather, they complement each other, in particular because Aristotle's argument that everybody desires pleasure (X. 4.1175a10-16) crucially relies on both: the lover of understanding has states which are fittingly activated by objects of reflection which implies that pleasure will, normally, supervene, i.e. normally the agent will enjoy doing what he loves doing. So, given that pleasures are customarily taken in perfect activities which the agent loves, pleasure supervenes not only on activity, but also on the love for this activity. Since being a lover of X is part of the activated state,

³⁸ Cf. III.9.1117b28-31.

pleasure would supervene not only on activity, but also on the agent's state.³⁹

4.3.7 Pleasure, love, and nature

I shall begin to spell out the thesis that taking pleasure depends on the agent's love by attending to the most difficult case: perception. In texts A and B Aristotle says nothing about love, so why should the pleasure taken in perception have anything to do with love? Aristotle, I think, does not mention love explicitly here because he can simply take for granted that everybody loves to perceive, as is evident from the famous beginning of the *Metaphysics*:

All men by nature (phusei) desire to know. An indication of this is the love (agapêsis) for our senses; for even apart from their usefulness they are loved for themselves; and above all others the sense of sight. For not only with a view to action, but even when we are not going to do anything, we prefer sight to almost everything else. The reason is that this, most of all the senses, makes us know and brings to light many differences between things. (Met. I.1.980a22-27, tr. Ross)

What Aristotle tries to establish here is that all men by nature desire to know, rather than desiring knowledge merely insofar as it is beneficial. As indication that we in fact do value knowledge for its own sake, Aristotle offers the observation that we have this attitude by nature towards our senses. This observation is relevant because

³⁹ The explanation answers the question whether Aristotle can provide a reductive account of pleasure: he cannot, at least not if, as I claim, one of the central notion is that of being a lover of X. For it seems impossible to specify that you are a lover of X independently from your taking, usually, pleasure in doing X. C. Taylor 2003:252 (cf. 255) formulates it as a problem that there is no non-circular way of defining pleasure. I agree with S. Broadie 2003:25-26 that this is not a problem because it is not Aristotle's project.

perception ‘makes us know things’, thus providing an example for our love of knowledge as such.

For the purposes of explaining pleasure, we can take from the argument that Aristotle takes it for granted that we love using our senses by nature. The only support he gives for this claim is that we do not love using our sense for expected consequences, but simply in themselves. So, since it is ruled out that we love our senses only because they are beneficial, we apparently have not *learned* to love our senses for their consequences: we just do. And that is what Aristotle would capture by saying that we love using them *by nature*.⁴⁰

Now, since almost everybody has this attitude (as the beginning of the *Metaphysics* testifies), Aristotle does not need to specify that the agent loves perceiving: he can take it for granted.⁴¹ This makes perception the ideal example for explaining pleasure (cf. Texts A and

⁴⁰ I should like to point out an important consequence of loving one’s senses by nature. This love ensures that everybody, to some extent has some share in the human good. It is in our nature to have the senses, and since having them is in our nature, it is natural for us to use them, too: it is part of our well-functioning to use the senses. But Aristotle is of course eager to point out, in the *Ethics*, that this does not exhaust our life: we can do more than the other animals, and that is using one’s intellectual capacities (I.7.1097b33-1098a5). But, again, not everybody has the proper conception of what is good for him. However, since everybody loves, by nature, to use their senses, they are aiming at knowledge (as is clear from the beginning of the *Metaphysics*). Now, even though aiming at this sort of knowledge is not identical with the ‘practical sort of life of what possesses reason’ (1098a4) and human excellence in general, it still is some function of the best capacity. So, there is something, namely the natural love of using our senses, that makes it true to say that everybody pursues what is really good for them, i.e. the human good, even if a conception of the good is missing. If my interpretation is correct, we can explain why Aristotle maintains that ‘perhaps even in inferior creatures there is some element of natural goodness that transcends what they are in themselves, and has as its object their own proper good.’ (X.2.1173a406). This natural element is the love that creatures have by nature for using faculties which constitute their good.

⁴¹ For some, Aristotle points, seeing and hearing does not seem to pleasant, so that they need to induce thirst and such like to experience pleasure in quenching it (*EN* VII.14.1154b2-9).

B): everybody loves perception for its own sake, and given that some conditions are satisfied (there is something to see, the eyes are in good condition etc.) everybody will take pleasure in perception.

4.3.8 Pleasure, love, virtue, and knowledge

Love is also at the root of the two most important sets of activities: virtuous activity and contemplation. In both cases love explains why the agent takes pleasure in the activity. Aristotle emphasises that ‘excellence of character has to do with pleasures and pain’ (II.3.1104b8-9). This is not only because pleasure and pain may interfere with virtuous action, but rather because it belongs to excellence to ‘delight in and be distressed by the things one should’ (II.3.1104b12). This is possible only through proper education (ib.).⁴²

Aristotle observes, as a general point about learners, that knowing what to do is not good enough for excellence: this knowledge needs to be integrated into their nature (*sumphuênai*, VII.3.1147b22) by habituation which, of course, takes time. It is not even enough that the agent habitually acts in the way in which a virtuous agent acts, e.g. by copying his teacher, or even because the agent *knows* that this is the right thing to do: virtuous action, for Aristotle, must stem ‘from a firm and unchanging disposition (*hexis*)’ (II.3.1105a32-33). These states from which virtuous action springs ‘resemble nature’ (VII.10.1152a30-33), so much so that we could say that they are second nature.⁴³ This means not only that, like natural states, one can lose them only in terrible circumstances, but also that the agent has a

⁴² I will not here give a full account of moral education in Aristotle. Rather, I will highlight only that pleasure plays a crucial role. Excellent accounts of moral education have been given by M. Burnyeat 1980 (my discussion is indebted to his account), and S. Broadie 1991:103-110. For the difference between Broadie’s and Burnyeat’s account see esp. p. 122, n.46, and p. 121, n.37.

⁴³ This is the lesson Aristotle takes from Evenus whom he cites in this context: what we practise can become, at last, our nature (VII.10.1152a30-33).

certain attitude towards his second nature. We all love by nature to use our senses, a fact which seems to be confirmed by our choosing to use the senses for their own sake, not merely as a means for something else. Now, this is exactly the attitude which the virtuous person must have once his education is over: he must have learned to appreciate doing what is fine for the sake of the fine - even if nothing further accrues from it (e.g. IV.2.1123a25). So, on the way to becoming virtuous, the learner must become a lover of doing what is fine (I.8.1099a13-15) - which shows itself in his caring for what is noble for its own sake, rather than merely for its consequences or for other reasons.⁴⁴ So, it is part of any given virtue to love what is fine in this domain (e.g. justice, cf. I.8.1099a8-11). What this means for Aristotle is clear: it means that the virtuous person, a lover of the fine, will usually take pleasure in doing fine actions because it is part of the state activated in virtuous action to love the fine.

This explains why 'the pleasure or pain that supervenes (*epiginomenên*) on what people do (*tois ergois*) should be treated as a sign of their dispositions' (II.3.1104b3-5). If a person does not usually take pleasure in doing what is fine, this person would not seem to be a lover of what is fine. Yet if he is not a lover of the fine, he will not have the right attitude towards the fine: he will not do the fine for the

⁴⁴ It may seem as if the learner must first become a lover of the fine before he can acquire the relevant excellent state, for at X.9.1179b29-31 Aristotle contends that 'before he acquires excellence, then, a person must in a way already possess a character akin to it, loving (*stergein*) what is noble and hating what is shameful'. But this is not quite so, for he could be a lover of the fine but still be akratic sometimes, hence lacking the virtue. Shame, remember, is bound up with one's sense of the fine, but is not a virtue because the virtuous agent has no reason to feel shame (see 1128b10-34). At any rate, for my argument I can leave out the exact developmental stages; all I need is that the virtuous person must be a lover of the fine - and that is clear enough.

right reasons: he does not care about the fine itself, he rather cares about the consequences of doing or not doing what is fine.⁴⁵

Not only moral virtue is pleasant, however. Aristotle points out that the philosopher finds incredible pleasure in doing philosophy (X.7.1177a25). Again, the explanation for this is found in the agent's love - here even contained in the name: only a lover of wisdom is a philosopher. If the relevant states are exercised by suitable material, the agent will engage in a fitting activity which he loves - and therefore he will, usually, take pleasure in it.

A similar account holds true of the other activities mentioned, playing the flute, building and so on, even though being e.g. a flautist is not, really, anybody's second nature.⁴⁶ The difference to virtue is that one does not necessarily *have to* enjoy the activities presently considered. This is because it is part of being a good person to love the fine, and part of being a good philosopher to love *sophia*, but it is not part of being able to play the flute to love flute music.⁴⁷ This is why Aristotle, in order to explain why these activities are pleasant, adds that in addition to having certain skills, one can also be a lover of geometry, a lover of music, a lover of building or

⁴⁵ The difference between the virtuous and the wannabe virtuous is described, twice, at X.9.1179a31. I agree with Burnyeat's interpretation that what is lacking in the non-virtuous is not the *that* (i.e. knowledge of what is fine), but rather a conception of the fine as worthwhile in themselves (1980:81). This is, ultimately, why the non-virtuous person does not take pleasure in the fine. I hope to pursue the topic on another occasion.

⁴⁶ There can be good reasons not to play the flute (or to exercise any craft), in particular moral considerations trump non-moral ones. This is not so for virtue: the virtuous action as response to a given situation cannot be trumped by non-moral considerations, and thus non-moral considerations are irrelevant. Thus, the response as virtuous person is unconditional, whereas the one as a builder is conditional upon its being compatible with moral considerations. This is why only the former are second nature.

⁴⁷ One could argue that in order to be a real flautist one has to love flute music, or that a real doctor *has* to love health.

whatever (X.5.1175a33-35), in which case the agent will take pleasure because he engages in a beloved activity.

4.3.9 Conclusion

The upshot is that one takes pleasure customarily in activities because one loves them either because this love is innate - as in the case of perception, or because it is acquired - as in the cases of virtuous activity, mathematics, building or whatever. So, pleasure supervenes not only on the activity, but also on the agent's love.

With this explanation for why pleasure supervenes on activities established, we can briefly compare Aristotle's to Plato's account. We saw that Plato officially claims that all pleasure is a restorative process, and that it is good only insofar as it pertains to a good state. So, for Plato pleasure is bound up with deficiency; it essentially requires being deprived of a good state. This is why Plato needs to postulate an unperceived lack to account for pleasures that do not obviously rely on a lack. Aristotle, on the other hand, emphasises in his account of pleasure the underlying state which is active when pleasure is taken. The relevant *hexis* is not only responsible for the activity, but it also encompasses love of the relevant objects. One might be tempted, then, to conclude that Plato's postulated lack (perceived or unperceived) is replaced with love. So, it would seem as if on any occasion when an agent enjoys something, one would have to postulate that the agent loves doing that sort of thing - even if he does not know it.⁴⁸

⁴⁸ Taylor suggests a similar role for interests or preferences instead of love, contending that 'the description of good conditions for the exercise of the activity must include the condition that that exercise satisfies the agent's preferences, interests, etc.' He points out that 'That is not to revert to the deficiency/replenishment account of pleasure, since a preference or an interest is not a deficiency. Preferences etc. can indeed give rise to deficiencies.' (2008:254)

Perhaps this is true, but Aristotle is not committed to this view: unlike Plato, Aristotle does not try to give a reductive analysis of why perceiving or walking is pleasant. Nor is he interested in any pleasure: he is interested in pleasures which customarily taken and habitual for the agent - and for these it is plausible that the agent should love the relevant activities. That Aristotle should focus on pleasure customarily taken is understandable because Aristotle is concerned with ethically relevant pleasures and pain (as is evident from the introduction to the essay, X.1.1172a19-26), and chance-pleasures show little, if anything, about character. This is why Aristotle does not discuss them at all in *EN* X.4-5; he concentrates on such cases as perception and activities which stand at the centre of people's lives, such as doing mathematics for the lover of geometry or thinking for the lover of understanding.

4.4 The value of pleasure in *EN* X.4-5

In this section I will return to the question about the value of pleasure. We saw that Aristotle arrives at the following position through the *endoxa*:

[C1] Pleasure is not the good;

[C2] Not all pleasure is desirable (or, as I will sometimes say, choice-worthy);

[C3] Some pleasures are desirable in themselves;

[C4] Pleasures differ from each other either in kind or in terms of their sources.

In this section I will first show how pleasure differs in kind, and then argue that those pleasures which are good are good not solely in

virtue of features of the activity, but also, importantly, because of the agent's character.

4.4.1 Pleasure as special good

We saw that pleasure is at least logically distinguishable from a perfect activity, even if, in real life, perfect activity and pleasure usually go together.⁴⁹ It is possible, then, to have the good that is the perfect activity, and, in addition, to the good that is pleasure taken in the activity.⁵⁰ And, it seems, Aristotle does in fact hold that pleasure is a good additional to the good activity.⁵¹ This, at least, is what Aristotle seems to take from Eudoxus' argument from addition (cf. §4.2.5): if pleasure is added to another good, the compound is better than the good alone, which, for Aristotle, shows that pleasure is *a* good (X.2.1172b23-34) and, as such, it might be added to an activity.

This interpretation is not false, but it is incomplete, for it leaves out that pleasure is a special good. For Eudoxus, the argument from addition shows that pleasure is the good, which entails that pleasure is always good. His argument, however, relies on the premiss that pleasure added to *a good* always makes it better. So, what the argument shows at best is not even that pleasure is a good, but that it is a good on condition that it is added to another good - which on my interpretation means that pleasure is good only on condition that it is

⁴⁹ A craftsman may have all the skill, all the best material, and yet he does not enjoy doing what he does unless he loves his craft. It is less clear whether in the case of virtue, there is no conceptual relation. For the virtuous person is virtuous only if he loves the fine for its own sake, and hence doing the fine would have to be pleasant, for the conceptual relation between 'being a lover of X' and 'finding X pleasant'. Yet, of course, in real life, virtuous action is not always pleasant: e.g. the courageous person will not enjoy fighting when he is still on the battlefield.

⁵⁰ This point is observed by Gauthier and Jolif 1970:839.

⁵¹ In this vein T. Irwin distinguishes between two final causes: a) perceiving is an end in itself inherent in the activity; b) pleasure in perceiving is an extra good. The latter is supervenient in contrast to the inherent goal in the activity (1999:306).

taken in something good.⁵² So, taking pleasure in what one does is not always good, and hence pleasure, when added to the activity, does not always make it better.⁵³ This shows that pleasure is not a self-standing good which can be added to any given activity to make it better, for pleasure has no value considered as such.⁵⁴

The questions which I will try to answer is why pleasure is valuable when it is, and how is it that pleasures differs in kinds. I will begin with the second question.

4.4.2 Pleasures differ in kind I

Aristotle sketches two ways of distinguishing between pleasures: they differ either in virtue of their source, or in virtue of their kind. Aristotle opts for differentiating them in terms of kind (1175a20-23), and tells us that this is a direct consequence of the view that pleasure perfects the activity; this is why pleasure differs in kind (X.5.1175a21-22). He contends that pleasures belonging to different kinds of activities are different in kind (1175b25-28).⁵⁵ He seeks to prove this by arguing that pleasure is specific to a certain activity,

⁵² For Aristotle would, of course, hold that pleasure if added to doing something bad makes things worse. The proper response to doing something bad is shame, a kind of pain, cf. IV.9.1128b10-12; b15-21.

⁵³ It is hard to tell how Aristotle would think about other goods when they are added to something bad. For example, is it better or worse to run away from battle when one is in excellent health?

⁵⁴ Cf. Bostock 2000:147.

⁵⁵ If this claim is the conclusion of an argument (found at 1175a22-25), then this argument is fallacious: The argument is that (1) Pleasure completes/perfects activity; (2) if x and y are different in kind, then what completes/perfects them is different in kind; (3) pleasure completes/perfects things that are different in kind; hence, (4) pleasures differ in kind. This argument is fallacious because it equivocates the senses of *teleioun*: the examples for (2) (a tree, a picture, a house, a statue) indicate that Aristotle has in mind formal completion (so Burnet 1900:455). But pleasure does not complete activity in this sense: the activity is already complete. So, perhaps this is not meant as an argument, but rather as a warm-up exercise which makes the reader susceptible to the idea that things differing in kind are completed/perfected by things that also differ in kind. This way of looking at it would explain the fact that Aristotle then goes on to *argue* for (4).

and he does so by focusing on a function of pleasure not yet discussed, namely to enhance the activity on which it supervenes - thus making it qualitatively more perfect.⁵⁶ He offers two arguments both turning on pleasure, understood as 'an activity's own pleasure' (*oikeia hêdonê*, e.g. 1175b31).

The first one is that pleasures differ in kind 'will be apparent from the closeness with which each of the pleasures is bound up with the activity which it perfects. For the activity's own pleasure contributes to increasing the activity' (1175a29-31). In general, those who are active with pleasure in an activity will be more discriminating and exact (1175a31-32). For example, those who take pleasure in geometry (1175a32-33) will become geometers, likewise the lover of music and the lover of building and in other cases: they all get better at their own task because they take pleasure in it (1175a35). Aristotle's point, then, is that taking pleasure in an activity increases the activity.

This argument may seem to fall short of establishing the conclusion that pleasure differs in kind. For it is not true that anything which makes an agent better at an activity has to be specific to this activity. In fact, the rival account of distinguishing between pleasures (in terms of their sources) can almost equally well account for the phenomenon Aristotle describes. If pleasure was like money (which differs not in kind, but in terms of its source), it would still be the case that having it in addition to the activity will make it better. It is not an uncommon phenomenon that workers tend to be more

⁵⁶ Note that this is not to be taken as a way in which pleasure perfects the activity, or at least not one in which Aristotle is interested. (This is how M. Pakaluk 2005:311-12 understands pleasure as supervenient end.)

discriminating and exact when they get paid more.⁵⁷ So, if pleasure were like this, it would still have the same function of enhancing the activity.

However, distinguishing pleasures in terms of their sources does not take into account the way in which they perfect the activity. Unlike money, one cannot simply add pleasure to the activity.⁵⁸ Pleasure comes in addition to the activity only when the underlying state is properly activated and the agent loves this kind of activity. This would seem to make pleasure specific to certain kinds of activities, namely those which the agent loves; to other activities pleasure cannot be added. It is not so clear, however, whether Aristotle's argument is strong enough to establish the conclusion that pleasure is specific to certain activities. For even if I can get pleasure exclusively only from certain activities, this does not show that pleasure is specific to these activities. In particular, since the notion of pleasure at issue is that of pleasure taken, it is easy to think that the pleasure taken is some kind of a feeling which is generically the same for all activities.⁵⁹ Pleasure would thus be caused specifically by certain kinds of activities, but it would not differ in kind.

⁵⁷ The basic point will be that if I don't get paid what I think I am worth, I will not be in the job with all that I am worth. If, on the other hand, I think that my work is being appreciated, and this is reflected in the money I get, then I will be more discriminating in my job.

⁵⁸ This, in fact, points to a difference between pleasure and other goods: unlike other goods, pleasure in the sense of the pleasure taken cannot be chosen: one cannot choose on the spot to enjoy a given activity. Rather, enjoying an activity requires that the agent loves the activity, and this, often takes a long while. One can thus choose to enjoy a kind of activity, but one has to be prepared to undergo a process of education.

⁵⁹ For this worry (and a different answer from the one I am about to give), see S. Broadie 1991:338-9. Cf. Stewart 1892:434. Irwin 1999:307 speaks of 'the feeling of pleasure that is taken in a valued activity.'

4.4.3 Pleasures differ in kind II

Aristotle tries to deflect this problem by offering a second argument: that pleasures are different in kind 'will still be more evident from the way activities are impeded by the pleasures from other ones.' (X.5.1175b1-3). When someone is engaged simultaneously in two activities, the one that is more pleasant will push the other one out of the way so that, if it is a very pleasant activity, the other activity will stop (X.5.1175b6-10). This indicates that the pleasures I get from the different activities must be different, for if they were the same, the pleasure of the one activity could not push the other activity out of the way. If pleasure had the function of strengthening activity in general without being specific to a certain activity, the pleasure I get from one activity might well enhance another activity. But, according

to Aristotle, this is not the case.⁶⁰ Therefore, pleasure must be specific to a given activity. Yet, if a certain pleasure is specific to a certain activity, then it is fair to say that pleasures differ in kind. For to define that pleasure which stems from doing activity x, one has to refer to activity x, and this will not be referred to in any other definition of any other pleasure. This is how Aristotle supports the view that pleasures differ in kind (cf. C4).

4.4.4 Value and activity

We can now turn to the difference in value of kinds of pleasure, thus supporting C2 and C3. Aristotle sums up his position as follows:

⁶⁰ If Aristotle bases his argument on observation, it would seem that his argument can easily be overturned. For it is not true that taking pleasure in one activity always kills another activity. For example, one can observe that builders often listen to music while they are working. The music seems to be something that is pleasant to them. But if listening to music is a pleasure, it will enhance the activity of listening to the music and will push the activity of building out of the way. So, if the activity of building is not destroyed by the pleasure of listening to music, why does not this show that Aristotle's account of the function of pleasure is mistaken? A closer look at what Aristotle says will bring out why he is not mistaken. Aristotle's first example (after which the others are modeled) is that of the lover of flute music: if he is engaged in a conversation, he will stop paying attention to the conversation when he hears flute music (X.5.1175b3-6). Of course, when Aristotle speaks of the 'lover of flute music' he means that it is someone who will not only take pleasure in flute music when he hears it, but he will take a lot of pleasure in it. The aspect of strength or intensity is important because it can also explain why the builders do not stop building when they are listening to music. We stop one activity on account of the pleasure of another only if the other activity is much more pleasant (X.5.1175b8-10), which explains why we will not be inclined to do anything else when we are engaged in something that is intensely pleasant (X.5.1175b10-11). The builders we see may not derive intense pleasure from building: if they did, we would observe that they forget about changing the music-tape or restarting the CD. So, since they presumably do not get intense pleasure out of building, they look for pleasure elsewhere (just like those eating titbits in the theatre when the performance is not great, X.5.1175b11-13). They turn to music. However, the pleasure they derive from music is not strong enough to do away with the activity of building. This might be because they are not crazy about music (they just like it), or, perhaps more plausibly, they do not derive intense pleasure from music because music is not "original" in the sense that they are listening to recordings. If their favourite band were to play next to the building site, they might well be too distracted to continue building.

But since activities differ in goodness and worthlessness, and some are desirable while others are to be avoided, and other neither, so it is with pleasures too, since for each activity there is its own pleasure. So the pleasure belonging to a worthwhile activity is good, while that related to a worthless one is bad. (X.5.1175b24-27)

Aristotle here correlates the value of the activity with the value of the pleasure taken in the activity: a good and valuable activity will yield a good and valuable pleasure, whereas a bad and worthless activity will yield a bad and worthless pleasure. Just what Aristotle's argument is (if there is one) is not clear: for it does not follow automatically that the value (good or bad) simply follows the activity upon which it supervenes, even if pleasure is specific to the activity.⁶¹ Interpreters tend to offer as an explanation for why pleasure should mirror the value of the activity on which it supervenes the view that pleasure *derives* its value from the activity.⁶²

Support for and elucidation of this view might be found in the following text (which continues the one quoted above):

appetites, too, are praiseworthy when they are for fine things, and worthy of censure when they are for shameful things. But the pleasures that are in activities belong to them more closely than the desires for them. For the

⁶¹ Bostock 2000:147 makes this observation.

⁶² For example R. Kraut comments on the passage just quoted in his SEP article that 'Aristotle's statement implies that in order to determine whether (for example) the pleasure of virtuous activity is more desirable than that of eating, we are not to attend to the pleasures themselves but to the activities with which we are pleased. A pleasure's goodness derives from the goodness of its associated activity.' Similarly, Bostock holds that pleasure has no ethical value of its own, for its value is simply dependent on that of the associated activity' (2000:147). S. Broadie in her commentary ad 1175b24 ff., too, maintains that 'a pleasure derives its worth from that of the activity' (2002:437). Cf. Gauthier and Jolif 1970:845-46. Perhaps T. Irwin 1999:343 endorses the same point when he explains that 'pleasure is good if and only if, and because, it is consequent on a good a good activity'.

latter are divided off from the activity both by the time that intervenes and by their nature as desires, whereas the former are close together with them and are so indistinguishable that there is room for dispute whether activity isn't the same thing as pleasure (X.5.1175b28-33)

Comparing pleasure to desire is helpful because desire, like pleasure, has no value as such. Leading the focus away from pleasure to desire is a dialectically adroit move, because nobody claims that desire is the good, or that all desire is good, or that all desire is bad.⁶³ This is, of course, different with pleasure: people do say that all pleasure is good or that all pleasure is bad. So, by showing that pleasure is in relevant respects like desire he can show that pleasure qua pleasure is neither good nor bad. In what respect is pleasure like desire?

For the example to be relevant, it must be that pleasure has value in the same way as desire does. By comparing pleasure to desire, Aristotle points to another attitude which is dependent for its value on something else. But what is the nature of this dependence? On one interpretation, the value of a desire depends solely on what the desire is for: the desire is praise-worthy and good when it is for something fine; worthy of censure and bad if it is for something shameful. Given that the value of the desire is not merely instrumental, one could think that the value of what the desire is for simply transmits to the desire. Since the object is incorporated in the desire, it imbues the desire with its value, and is thus the sole source of the value of the attitude.⁶⁴ This point transmits to pleasure not

⁶³ Reasonably close to the thesis that all desire is bad comes Epictetus' *Encheiridion* 2 and 48 - but that is some three centuries after Aristotle. Calicles in the *Gorgias* does exhort desire, but his emphasis is on *fulfilling* as many desires as possible, not merely on having desires (494a-c).

⁶⁴ Making the value of desire instrumental would ruin the analogy to pleasure: pleasure is surely not merely instrumentally valuable.

because habitually taking pleasure in X tends to give rise to the desire for X, for Aristotle's point is not that the value of pleasure is reducible to that of the relevant desire. Rather, it transmits because desire belongs very closely to an activity (it helps to bring it about), but pleasure is even more closely related to activity, almost to the point of indistinguishability. So, since desire is so close to the activity that it derives its value solely from the desired activity, then this should be true of pleasure as well. We can thus explain, on this interpretation, why pleasure mirrors the value of the activity: what the pleasure is taken in, the activity, would be the source of the value of pleasure. So, we can sum up the proposal in its generalised form as follows:

[ACTIVITY-SOURCE] (i) Activities differ in value; (ii) attitudes such as pleasure and desire are directed at activities; (iii) such attitudes derive their value solely from what they are about, their objects; therefore (iv) attitudes differ in value.⁶⁵

4.4.5 Value and character

The problem with ACTIVITY-SOURCE is that it makes out pleasure as deriving its value solely from what the pleasure is about, the activity. This, I think, is too narrow a focus on activity. For on my interpretation, pleasure is dependent for its existence not only on activity, but also on the agent's disposition. This is why also the value depends importantly on the agent's disposition.

Support for ACTIVITY-SOURCE was found in the comparison to desire: desire derives its value from its object - and so does pleasure.

⁶⁵ It is difficult to determine whether the scholars mentioned in n. 62 would subscribe to ACTIVITY-SOURCE because they do not expand on their views in detail.

However, it is not mandatory to understand the value of desire in this way. The clue for the alternative interpretation again comes from Aristotle's preface in which Aristotle treats pleasure and pain as if they work analogously. In particular the point that 'taking pleasure in the things one should, and hating the things one should, are most important in relation to excellence of character' (X.1.1172a21-23) suggests that it is important to take into account also attitudes of finding something painful, not only attitudes of finding something pleasant.

The problem with ACTIVITY-SOURCE is that it is at best incomplete, for it gives out the wrong results - at least if it is supposed to capture not only positive attitudes such as desire and pleasure, but also negative ones such as shame, guilt and hate. According to (iii) of ACTIVITY-SOURCE, these attitudes derive their value from what they are about. So, shame and guilt are bad when they are about bad things, and good when they are about good things. Yet, this is getting things just the wrong way round. For being pained about something good seems to be a sign of corruption, for, clearly, one should be pained about bad things. Learning to respond correctly to a given situation is, in fact, crucial in moral education because 'it is part of virtue to take pleasure in and being pained by the things one should' (II.3.1104b12-13, cf. IX.9.1170a8-10). If being pained is part of virtue, then, being pained by the things by which one should be pained cannot simply be something bad, but must in some respect also be something good. Yet ACTIVITY-SOURCE, at present, is unable to account for this, since it will always give out being pained by the things one should as something bad. So, either we can give up the assumption that the value of positive and negative attitudes is

explained in the same way, or we can give up the claim that these attitudes derive their value solely from their object.

I think that there is something which can explain why in the case of pleasure the value of the pleasure matches that of the activity, whereas in the case of pain, the values are opposites. The remedy is to take into account the agent's character, especially, given that pleasure supervenes not only on the activity but also on the agent's love, which is part of the agent's dispositions. In cases that are relevant for a successful life, the exercise of excellences, these dispositions are states of character. It is crucial to moral education to respond properly to a given situation. Having a character which issues correct responses is part of what it is to be virtuous, and, in this function, it is good. Insofar, then, as pleasure and pain are fitting responses to a given situation, they are good, and they are good partly in virtue of being a function of a good character (or: in virtue of belonging to the activation of a good state).

In this way, we can give a more nuanced account of the value of pleasure and pain: the pleasure taken is an additional good (in virtue of being a function of a good character) to the good activity in which it is taken, given that one should take pleasure in this activity. On the other hand, if one responds correctly by being pained about a bad thing, then although the pain taken is good insofar as it is a function of a good character, it is still not desirable as such, given that it is conditional upon being in a bad situation.⁶⁶ So, instead of ACTIVITY-

⁶⁶ I hope to be able to refine this account so as to take into account cases such as feeling pity for a fictional character. It is enough, I think, to provide here a bold sketch of the position since my aim is to give an idea of how Aristotle conceives of the value of pleasure and pain.

SOURCE, I propose CHARACTER-SOURCE in order to account for the value of pleasure.

[CHARACTER-SOURCE]: (i) attitudes such as pleasure, desire, shame, and guilt are responses of one's moral character; (ii) a good moral character will respond with an appropriate attitude to a given situation; (iii) a bad moral character will respond with an inappropriate attitude to a given situation; (iv) an attitude is good in virtue of being appropriate, and bad in virtue of being inappropriate.

4.5 Hedonism in *EN* X.5?

We saw so far that Aristotle confirms more or less explicitly the results of the endoxic part of the enquiry, at least C2-4: he can explain why pleasures are different in kind, and he can explain why some, but not all, pleasures are desirable in themselves. Let us turn now to the claim that pleasure is the good. Although Aristotle does not explicitly address this question in *EN* X4-5, his position is fairly clear: Aristotle is not a hedonist, and yet he holds that the highest good is a pleasure.⁶⁷ His position becomes clear by considering again the two forms of hedonism, psychological hedonism and normative hedonism.

4.5.1 *Psychological hedonism*

Psychological hedonism is the thesis that

[H1] Pleasure is that at which everybody aims.

⁶⁷ Most interpreters agree that Aristotle is not a hedonist in *EN* X.1-5. A notable exception are Gosling and Taylor 1982:255-64 who argue that Aristotle sets out in *EN* X.1-5 to defend Eudoxus against Plato and Speusippus.

Aristotle does not hold this view because not everybody aims at pleasure: for example, the lovers of virtue aim at virtue, not at pleasure. However, one can argue that this is not, in fact, a counterexample by considering again in which sense pleasure is a *telos*. One could argue that, since pleasure perfects virtuous activity and is a supervenient end, even the virtuous agent aims at pleasure. An argument for this claim can be found in M. Pakaluk who argues that pleasure as supervenient end (*telos*) is what people aim at. His interpretation turns on the function of pleasure to strengthen the activity, as it has an effect on the activity's qualitative perfection, or acuity:

The acuity of an activity is correlated with its degree of pleasure. But the pleasure is a distinct goal, which accompanies the activity (1174b33). Thus the pleasure has a function such that, in seeking it, we engage in the activity with greater acuity. The pleasure functions as a distinct goal not unlike beauty in relation to bodily fitness: we typically reach the peak of fitness through aiming to reach the peak of beauty (b33). (Pakaluk 2005:311-12)

Pakaluk's take on the simile brings out how he understands pleasure to work: by aiming at pleasure rather than at the activity (cf. ii below), you will engage in the activity with greater acuity because of the correlation between pleasure and acuity (cf. i below). Pleasure can have this effect only if aiming at pleasure gives you more pleasure (or else there would be no greater acuity, cf. i). We can sum up the view as follows

[GOAL]: i) The acuity of the activity is correlated with its degree of pleasure. ii) Pleasure is a goal distinct from the activity: you can aim

at it independently from aiming at the activity. iii) Aiming at pleasure gives you more pleasure.

I think that this view is neither plausible, nor a good interpretation of Aristotle. That the view is problematic comes out by considering, again, Sidgwick. I will begin by quoting again a part of the hedonistic paradox and repeating the key lessons to be learned (cf. §2.6.5):

it may certainly be said that we cannot attain [enjoyments], at least in their highest degree, so long as we keep our main conscious aim concentrated upon them. It is not only that the exercise of our faculties is insufficiently stimulated by the mere desire of the pleasure attending it, and requires the presence of other more objective, 'extra-regarding', impulses, in order to be fully developed: we may go further and say that these other impulses must be temporarily predominant and absorbing, if the exercise and its attendant gratification are to attain their full scope... (Sidgwick 1907:48-9)

The two relevant lessons of this passage are

[A] Aiming at pleasure will not give you maximum pleasures. You have to concentrate on the activities in order to get the most pleasure.

This is paradoxical given a hedonist definition of the good: it is paradoxical that you should not be able to maximise pleasure by aiming at pleasure. However, A is only an instance of a more general paradox:

[B] The good cannot be attained (or maximised) by aiming at it.

GOAL is flawed in two respects. First, according to iii), Aristotle is committed to claiming that aiming at pleasure gives you more pleasure which conflicts with Sidgwick's insight A. Second, GOAL commits Aristotle to the paradoxical view B.

Aristotle makes it clear that central to the good is a certain activity, and that pleasure is not identical with this activity (cf. X.5.1175b34-35). Now, if one can reach the good (the best activity performed in the best way) only through aiming at pleasure, it would seem as if the good cannot be maximised (making the best activity as good as possible) by aiming at it: according to ii) one has to aim at a goal distinct from the activity.

I think that a better interpretation of Aristotle will have him endorse A and reject B. First, it is important to see that the correlation between pleasure and activity is two-ways: a qualitatively more perfect activity will be more pleasant (cf. X.4.1174b19-23) and a more pleasant one will be qualitatively more perfect (X.5.1175a30-36). Having this in mind helps to see that Aristotle endorses A. We saw that Aristotle accords primacy to the agent's attitude of loving certain things or activities: he will do the things which he loves. If he engages in the beloved activities, he will also enjoy them. The enjoyment, in turn, strengthens the activity so that the agent will engage in the activity in the best possible way.⁶⁸ In this way, he will

⁶⁸ How can pleasure strengthen the activity given that the pleasure depends on the underlying state and its being activated by a fitting object? Aristotle says that the agent pays more attention to what he is doing when he takes pleasure in an activity (X.5.1175a30-36). Since this does not make a difference in the underlying state, it must make a difference in whatever activates the state, or how it activates it. Since the object has an effect on the state only via cognition (either through the senses or through thinking), it is plausible to think that a change in the agent's concentration or attention will make a difference for the qualitative perfection of the activity: the object will more readily be in contact with the underlying state if the agent is not distracted by anything. Taking pleasure just makes the agent more focused and less distracted.

also get the most pleasure out of the activity. Since pleasure is consequential upon performing the activity as best as possible, the agent will get a maximum of pleasure by engrossing himself fully in the activity, not thinking about any pleasure or pain, and in particular not aiming at pleasure.⁶⁹ Next, since the agent will aim at what he loves, the lover of virtue (virtuous activity) or of theoretical activity (or both) will achieve the good by aiming at it. This shows that Aristotle is not committed to the paradoxical view B and that he is not a psychological hedonist. For at least virtuous agents aim at what they love, not at the pleasure ensuing from the beloved activities.

4.5.2 Normative hedonism

Normative hedonism is the thesis that

[H2] Pleasure is the good.

This is usually understood by hedonists as the thesis that

[H3] Pleasure is identical with the good, i.e. that 'good' and 'pleasant' refer to the same thing (*Phlb.* 60a9-b1, cf. §1.2.1)

or, more moderately, that

[H4] Pleasure is that what makes everything else good.

Evidence that Aristotle holds neither H2, nor H3 is that he is committed to the existence of bad pleasures. If bad pleasures exist,

⁶⁹ Cf. S. Broadie 2002:436 in her commentary on 1174b31-33.

then x's being a pleasure neither makes x good, nor signifies that x is good.

Again, one might object to this simple answer by arguing that it relies on taking bad pleasures to be real pleasures. For Aristotle has indicated that one possibility of getting rid of the problem (for the hedonist) of bad pleasures is to argue that they are not real pleasures (X.3. 1173b21-25). This suggestion seems to be taken up again in X.5.1176a10-22 when he says about pleasures

they diverge to no small degree at least in the case of human beings, since the same things delight some while giving pain to others, and are painful and objects of loathing for the one group while being pleasant and things to love for the other. This happens with sweet things too; the same things don't seem sweet to the person with a fever and to the one in good health, nor warm to those who are frail and those who are physically fit. This happens with other things too in the same way. However, in all such cases it is thought to be what appears so to the good person that is so. And if this is the right thing to say, as it seems to be, and it is excellence and the good person, insofar as he is such, that is the measure of each sort of thing, then so too with pleasures: the ones that appear to him will be pleasures, and the things he delights in will be pleasant. (X.5.1176a10-22)

It might seem as if Aristotle in this passage sets up a criterion for which pleasures count as real: just as there is a fact about what is really sweet, so there is a fact about what is really pleasant. In both cases it is the healthy and well-developed person who is the criterion. So, since bad pleasures are not real pleasures, Aristotle might well hold that 'good' and 'pleasant' are co-extensional.⁷⁰

⁷⁰ As claimed by Bostock 2000:147-48.

Although Aristotle does see a close affinity between 'pleasure' and 'good', Aristotle does not try to discount bad pleasures as unreal pleasures in this passage. This would seem to be impossible, at least for the sense of pleasure with which we are concerned: pleasure as the pleasure taken. Aristotle cannot establish that pleasure in this sense is false (nor can anyone else): if something seems pleasant to me, then it is pleasant to me. It is wholly implausible to argue that people in a bad state have to be mistaken about their psychological state when they think they enjoy themselves.

What Aristotle does in this passage is rather to say that we cannot always infer from 'x is pleasant to A' that x is pleasant *without qualification*. The same is true of sweetness: if y tastes sweet to A then we can infer that y is sweet without qualification only if y is a healthy person. If A's perceptual capacities are for some reason corrupted, we can only conclude that y will taste sweet to people of that same corrupt disposition. This highlights an important difference to the implausible claim that bad pleasures are not real pleasures. When 'x is pleasant' is said without qualification, this is not merely a report about the psychological condition of the subject. It also makes the normative claim that being in this condition in relation to x is an appropriate response to x. So, what is false when one says of a bad activity that it is pleasant, is not the psychological part (corrupt people do enjoy it), but the normative part that this is something that one should enjoy.⁷¹

What we can conclude from this passage is that the best life will always be a pleasant life; it will contain pleasures without

⁷¹ See S. Broadie 1991:356-363 for a similar view with fuller discussion.

qualification. For pleasures taken by the good man will be characteristically human pleasures (X.5.1176a27-28) because he has developed in the way a human being should develop: he fulfils his function (cf. I.7.1097b25-1098a20). So, whatever activity is the highest good, the good person will engage in it and respond, fittingly, by enjoying these activities. What Aristotle does maintain is the same as in *EN* VII (discussed in §3.5.1), namely that

[H5] The highest good is a pleasure.

What Aristotle does not do in this passage is to tell us what one should enjoy. If one wants to know which activities are appropriate for human beings, i.e. which activities one should love - one has to look elsewhere. Aristotle gives a fairly comprehensive account in *EN* II-IV for the virtues of character, and for the virtues of intellect, see *EN* VI. It is no surprise that Aristotle does not in the account of pleasure say what one should enjoy, or what is the best activity that one should enjoy - this is a topic which is taken up in *EN* X.6-8, right after the discussion of pleasure.

Epilogue

In this dissertation I have examined the accounts of pleasure in the *Philebus* and the *Nicomachean Ethics*. Instead of finding one account of pleasure in each work, we have found that each work contains two. The surprise is perhaps not that each philosopher offers two different ways of accounting for pleasure and its value, but that neither makes it explicit that pleasure can have value in more than one way and that, consequently, one has to offer more than just one account of pleasure in order to capture the value.

I have argued that the *Philebus* contains an official theory of pleasure, i.e. that every pleasure is a restorative process, and a more subtle way of thinking about pleasure, namely to account for the value of pleasure in terms of its content. The two approaches do not clash as theories since it is plausible that the restorative process has content, given that it is a psychic process. The clash between these two arises because a) according to the subtle theory some pleasures can be good in themselves, and b) according to the official theory pleasure can at best be derivatively good. Together with the assumption that c) pleasure can have value in only one way, a) and b) seem irreconcilable.

Aristotle, unlike Plato, was not the final editor of his text. He did not intend the two essays to be included in the same work (each essay

appears to be the only one in the work)¹ - hence there is no need to try to reconcile a possible inconsistency in Aristotle's view. Nevertheless, the existence of the essays in one work is too curious to set aside without comment. I shall briefly explain the problem and sketch a solution.

From the interpretations given in Chapters 3 and 4, it would seem as if Aristotle's position suffers from a problem inverse to Plato's: the essays agree on the value of pleasure, but seem to be hardly compatible on a theoretical level. Regarding the value of pleasure, Aristotle's position is between hedonism and anti-hedonism in both essays: he denies a) that no pleasure is good, b) that pleasure is identical with the good, and c) that pleasure makes good what is good. He affirms in both essays that the highest good is a pleasure. Despite this harmony regarding the value of pleasure, there seems to be a clash at the theoretical level. For Aristotle defines pleasure in Book VII as the unimpeded activity of a natural disposition (1153a12-15), whereas in Book X he maintains that pleasure completes an activity as a supervenient end (1174b31-33). In Book VII Aristotle identifies pleasure with the activity of a natural state, whereas in Book X, he takes pains to show that pleasure is not identical with the activity. There is a further difference in the fact that

¹ This is clear from the opening lines of VII.11 and X.1 respectively. See Festugière 1936 for the classic expression of the view that the two essays come from different origins. Most scholars now agree that the *EN* VII essay was part of a lecture series that would become the *Eudemian Ethics*, whereas the Book X essay appears to belong to the material of the *Nicomachean Ethics* (cf. Kenny 1978, *pace* Webb 1977). Note that treating the same topic twice in one work does not necessarily raise questions about the origin of the different treatments. For Aristotle shows that he is perfectly capable of cross-referencing his own work, as is clear from the only other topic that is treated twice in the *EN*, voluntary action (in III.1-5 and in the V. 7.1135a8-8.1136a9, a book common to both the *EE* and the *EN*): the smaller essay (V. 7.1135a8-8.1136a9) makes explicit reference to the fuller treatment (*EN* III.1-5 and *EE* II.9 respectively).

Aristotle links pleasure in Book VII to nature (it is the activity of a natural state), whereas there is no sign of this in Book X.

Since the question whether Aristotle's essays are compatible is not, as such, relevant for the question about the value of pleasure, I shall here only briefly outline my position, without extended discussion of solutions proposed by other scholars. G. E. L. Owen has famously proposed that the accounts of pleasure in *EN* VII and X 'are too divergent to be incompatible. They are neither competing nor cooperating answers to one question, but answers to two quite different questions' (1971-1:136). What is right about Owen's suggestion is that the focus of the two essays is different and that we can understand the difference best by recalling the ambiguity in the Greek word for pleasure, *hêdonê* (as introduced in §4.2.8). As in English, 'pleasure' can be either what the pleasure is taken in, the source of pleasure, or it can be the taking of pleasure, i.e. the enjoying of something.

Unlike Owen, I think that both senses of pleasure are to be found in both essays on pleasure. It makes no sense to speak of pleasure in the sense of what the pleasure is taken in, unless one presupposes that these pleasures are in fact enjoyed (at least sometimes). So, in order to speak sensibly of certain things as pleasures, we need the conceptual link to enjoying them, i.e. taking pleasure in them. Likewise, it makes no sense to speak about enjoying without presupposing that there is something to be enjoyed: for Aristotle, pleasure is necessarily taken in something, and hence cannot occur without some activity which provides the object of pleasure (either

by being it or by being about it).² Despite the fact, however, that pleasure comes in a “package” (presupposing the two senses of pleasure), and despite the fact that Aristotle moves within an intellectual environment in which the distinction between the two senses of pleasure has never been firmly drawn,³ Aristotle can focus on either sense of pleasure, depending on what sort of question is at issue.

The focus of *EN* VII.11-14 is on pleasure in the sense of what the pleasure is taken in, whereas the focus of *EN* X is on the taking of pleasure. In VII, the thesis which he eventually replaces by his own definition of pleasure is that pleasure is a perceived process of coming to be (1153a13). Since Aristotle proposes his own definition of pleasure only by replacing parts of Plato’s, we can reasonably expect that Aristotle should propose something that is not radically different from Plato’s conception of pleasure. Since Plato (on Aristotle’s interpretation) gives a definition of what, when perceived, is a pleasure, we can assume that Aristotle, too, proposes a definition of pleasure as that which, when perceived, is a pleasure, i.e. as that in which the pleasure is taken.

² It is a real question whether Aristotle thinks that pleasure is taken in the activity, or in an object with which one is in (intellectual) contact through the activity. Bostock 2000:163 maintains that ‘*what* we enjoy is always either a thought or a perception’ which means that the activity itself is what is enjoyed. (He leaves this open in his earlier discussion, 1988:272.) There is, however, good reason to attribute to Aristotle a less restricted view, since he, for example, says that the objects of sight and hearing are pleasant (1174b27-9). Probably, Aristotle does not see the need to come down on either side of the fence; sometimes he writes as if the activity is what is enjoyed (e.g. 1174b33-1175a1), sometimes as if it is the activity’s object. This might be due to the facts that a) the relevant activities necessarily require an object, and b) the objects, in order to be actually (rather than potentially) objects, require the activity.

³ See S. Broadie 2003:21-22.

In Book X, Aristotle does not give a definition of pleasure. Rather, his interest is in the function of pleasure, as his remarkable use of the present active of *teleioô* indicates.⁴ Aristotle's main thesis is that pleasure completes or perfects the activity. I have argued in Chapter 4 that we should understand pleasure here as the pleasure taken, not only because this makes the best sense of pleasure as something supervenient on (or superadded to) the activity, but also because this is what 'pleasure' means in the only other passage in which pleasure is said to supervene on an activity (II.3.1104b3-7). It makes sense, moreover, for Aristotle to focus on pleasure in this sense if he is interested in what pleasure does. For pleasure in the sense of the pleasure taken *does* nothing: it is enjoyed, but it has no further effects. However, the agent's taking pleasure in the activity makes all the difference: it does not only indicate the agent's commitment to or love of the activity, it also makes the activity stronger (1175a30-b1, discussed at §§4.4.2-3). So, even if Aristotle does not say explicitly that he is most concerned with pleasure in only one of the two possible senses in *EN* X.4-5, we can gather from the discussion that he is dealing with pleasure as the taking of pleasure.

Owen correctly points out that Aristotle has different projects in *EN* VII and X. However, instead of saying that the essays 'are too divergent to be incompatible' (1971-2:136), we should say that they provide cooperative accounts of pleasure, since neither sense of pleasure can be fully understood without the other.⁵ Although both essays are important for understanding pleasure, the discussion in

⁴ Aristotle uses it seven times in the present active; he does so only in this work. For statistics of the use of this and other forms of *teleioô*, see Hadreas 2004 who argues persuasively that Aristotle is concerned with the function of pleasure in *EN* X.1-5. Cf. Pakaluk 2005:309 who also notices that Aristotle gives a '*functional* definition of pleasure.'

⁵ Pakaluk 2005:292 is very clear on this. Cf. Taylor 2003:264 for a similar suggestion.

EN X is richer in that it makes claims about both senses of pleasure, whereas the one in EN VII has nothing to say about the taking of pleasure. Consider EN X.4:

But since every sense is active in relation to the sense-object, and completely active when the sense is in good condition and its object is the finest in the domain of that sense ... this being so, well, in the case of each of the senses the activity that is best is the one whose subject is in the best condition in relation to the object that is most worth while in the domain of that sense. But this activity will be most perfect/complete and most pleasant. For all the kinds of sensory experience give rise to pleasure (kata pasan gar aisthêsin estin hêdonê) and so too do thought and reflection; but the most complete/perfect (teleiotatê) is the most pleasant, and most complete/perfect is that whose subject is in good condition, in relation to the most worth while of the objects in the domain of the sense; and pleasure is what completes/perfects (teleioi) the activity. (X.4.1174b14-23, Rowe's tr. slightly altered).

Aristotle speaks in the underlined parts of the texts of pleasure in the sense of what the pleasure is taken in. For he specifies the conditions under which an activity is perfect in order to point out that this is the most pleasant activity: the conditions which make an activity most perfect are the same as those that make it most pleasant. The thought is that when pleasure perfects the activity, i.e. when one takes pleasure in the activity, then those activities which are most perfect are the most pleasant ones: they are the greatest pleasure in the sense that they are the greatest source of pleasure.⁶ Since Aristotle continues the discussion by emphasising that pleasure perfects the activity in a different way than the sense and sense-object do, and

⁶ I thank V. Harte for sharing her MS(b):forthcoming with me which helped me greatly to become clear about this point. My discussion is indebted to hers.

since sense and sense-object alone are responsible for the activity's being most perfect and most pleasant, Aristotle must have in mind two different senses of 'pleasure'.

What needs to be addressed to assess whether there is a clash between *EN* VII and *EN* X is the question whether their accounts of pleasure as what the pleasure is taken in agree. Aristotle defines pleasure in *EN* VII as the unimpeded activity of a natural state, whereas in *EN* X pleasure is the perfect activity of a sense-organ and a sense-object, or of one's thinking capacity and an object of thought. The difference between these two is, I think, a difference in terminology and in focus.

The terminological point is that Aristotle speaks in VII of 'unimpeded' activities, whereas in X he speaks of 'perfect' activities. In Book VII, as in Book X, Aristotle is interested in linking pleasure to happiness. Since happiness is the best activity, it must be a perfect activity, and if pleasure is linked to happiness, it is through the notion of perfection. This comes out not only in *EN* X, but also in *EN* VII. Aristotle argues that pleasure, being something unimpeded, explains why people think that happiness which is something perfect, is bound up with pleasure. This argument requires that perfection entails unimpededness, a claim made explicitly in 1153b14-17. If it is Aristotle's goal to show that pleasure and happiness hang together through the notion of perfection, then why does Aristotle not say so directly? The answer is simple: if Aristotle had proposed to replace Plato's 'perceived' with 'perfect', this would have suggested very strongly that only complete activities can be pleasures, as Aristotle would have said that pleasure is a *teleia energeia*. But since this is not what he thinks, as I have argued in

Chapter 3, it is better to say that pleasure is an unimpeded activity, and then to show that unimpededness and perfection go together.

Let us now turn to the difference in focus. Aristotle deals in VII in detail with Plato's thesis that pleasure is not good or not the good. Support for Plato's thesis comes from his account of pleasure as coming to be - and this has as its paradigmatic cases eating when hungry and drinking when thirsty. Although, in a way, Aristotle is not interested in these pleasures (he thinks that they are not relevant for human happiness, X.13.1102a32-b12, cf. *EE* II.1.1219b37-41), he cannot simply discard these pleasures as not real pleasure - this would be a very weak response to Plato's theory. Since Aristotle is not willing to opt for a hybrid account of pleasure such as taking on board Plato's for restorative pleasure and supplementing it with his account of pleasure as activity for the pleasures of thought and perception - he has to tailor an account of pleasure which fits both the pleasures of eating and the pleasures of thinking. He does so by defining pleasure as the activity of a natural state.

The account of pleasure in *EN* X.4-5 prepares for the discussion of the best life in *EN* X.6-8. There, Aristotle is interested in the best *human* life. Since we are alive in the primary sense in actively thinking and perceiving (*kuriôs*, IX.9.1170a18-19), it is understandable that Aristotle should focus on the pleasures of thought and perception, leaving the pleasures of nutrition and convalescence aside.

This discussion shows that Aristotle, as does Plato, maintains that the pleasures of the best life are tied to the activities of thought and perception. I shall close by highlighting what I take to be one of Aristotle's improvements over Plato's theory. I suggested at the end

of Chapter 2 that Plato's subtle theory contains the seeds of Aristotle's. Aristotle, I think, improves on Plato's conception of pleasure as following upon the exercise of knowledge. The difference is that for Aristotle, but not Plato, these activities *are* pleasures. Plato, but not Aristotle, is careful to separate knowledge and pleasure. Pleasure and knowledge are not only pitched against each other as mutually exclusive competitors for the highest good (11a-14b), but they are also discussed separately (pleasure from 31b-55c; knowledge from 55c-59d). The reasons for separating pleasure from knowledge is that the best life should not have deficiency built into it. In this vein, Plato envisages the possibility of a life of knowledge (or rather reason) without pleasure (33b-c), which would be impossible if knowledge *was*, in some way, pleasure.⁷ For pleasure is the restoration of a deficiency. Not only is the life of the Gods without deficiency, but also the conception of the most divine way of life, the life of knowledge, should not have built in the notion of deficiency. If knowledge *was* in some way a pleasure and pleasure was essentially the removal of a deficiency, then even the best life will have built in some deficiency. This is an undesirable conclusion, and it explains why Plato tries to keep knowledge and pleasure separate.

Aristotle can avoid this undesirable conclusion because his conception of pleasure is not based on deficiency, but on the activation of certain states. He can, thus, introduce pleasure into the best life by claiming that some activities can be pleasures and the exercise of knowledge at the same time without, thereby, introducing deficiency into the best life. However, Aristotle seems to think that

⁷ As a consequence, Plato's Gods live a life without pleasure. This, at least, is the picture following from the official theory of pleasure where pleasure is conceived of merely as a process of restoration. Since pleasure can occur only as the restoration of a lack, Gods will not have pleasure.

Plato is correct about one point, namely that pleasure and the use of one's knowledge should go hand in hand. We are able to discern that he builds on the *Philebus* in the following passage:

It is those who are active and take pleasure in it that are more discriminating and precise in relation to a given subject, e.g. those who delight in geometry are the ones that become expert in geometry, and are always more able to see things, and similarly the lover of music, or of building, or whatever it may be - each gets better at his own task through taking pleasure in it; and the pleasures contribute to the increase; but what contributes to increasing something belongs to it as its own, and where things are different in kind, what belongs to each is different in kind. But this will be still more evident from the way activities are impeded by the pleasures from different ones. Lovers of pipe music are incapable of paying attention to a discussion if they happen to hear someone playing the pipes, because they take more pleasure in the pipe-playing than in their present activity. (X.5.1175a30-1175b5)

It is striking that all the examples used by Aristotle have a counterpart in the *Philebus*: geometry (56e8), music (56a3), building (56b8), pipe-playing (56a5), and perhaps even 'paying attention to a discussion' (*tois logois prosechein*) corresponds to the activity of dialectic (*dialegesthai*, 57e6-7). The difference is, however, that the *Philebus* classifies all of these activities exclusively as exercises of knowledge, not as pleasures.⁸ Aristotle does not want to deny that these activities are exercises of knowledge, since he is perfectly happy to speak about building as knowledge, or at least as a craft 'accompanied by rational prescription' (VI.4.1140a6-10). Rather, the

⁸ I am indebted to Verity Harte for pointing out to me the parallels between the *Philebus* and the EN. I have been helped further by her MS(b):forthcoming.

point is that besides being knowledge, these activities are *also* pleasures, in the sense of what the pleasure is taken in. So, Aristotle's replacement of the restoration model with the "activity model" allows him to focus on knowledge-based activities as ingredients of the best life. Since these activities are also pleasures, Aristotle can take on board Plato's insight that the best life is a life combining pleasure and knowledge.

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