



Aristotelian Pleasures

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VIII*—ARISTOTELIAN PLEASURES

By G. E. L. Owen

Aristotle's discussions of pleasure have figured largely in recent philosophical writing on the topic. Ryle, I think, showed English philosophers a way in; Kenny, Urmson and many others have carried the explorations forward. But there has been an air of piecemeal raiding about the enterprise rather than of connected exploration, for Aristotle seems to have no consistent account of pleasure to offer. I do not mean that the *Rhetoric* (1369b33-35, 1371a25-26, 33-34) and *Magna Moralia* (1205b7-8) repeat the Academic view of pleasure as a process of restoration which Aristotle rebuts in the *Eudemian* and *Nicomachean Ethics*. For present purposes that can be set down to philosophical progress, to the character of rhetoric, to the suspect parentage of the *Magna Moralia*; what you will. I have in mind the more baffling inconsistency that seems to lie at the heart of the discussions of pleasure on which philosophers have chiefly drawn, the studies that now appear in the seventh and tenth books of the *Nicomachean Ethics*. It has exercised critics from the Greek commentators on. It led Miss Anscombe to say that the difficulty of the concept of pleasure, "astonishingly, reduced Aristotle to babble, since for good reasons he both wanted pleasure to be identical with and to be different from the activity that it is pleasure in" (*Intention*, 76). My first interest is to propose a different approach to this puzzle. My second is to discuss some arguments whose form will, I hope, be made clearer by such an approach. I shall end by confessing some residual puzzles, but their interest will be more historical than philosophical.

Where exact references to other writers seem useful I shall give the author's name and the page; the works cited are listed in a bibliography at the end.

The mismatch of A and B

In a study of pleasure which is common to our texts of the

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Eudemian and *Nicomachean Ethics* Aristotle says that pleasures are *energeiai* (*EN* vii-*EE* iv 1153a9-15); in a second study which is found only in the *Nicomachean* he says that pleasures complete or perfect *energeiai*, but must not be identified with them (1174b14-75b1, 1175b32-35). I shall follow Festugière and distinguish the two studies, *EN* vii 11-14 and x 1-5, as “*A*” and “*B*” respectively. For “*energeia*” I shall use, pending later discussion, the conventional translation “activity”. What *A* says, and *B* appears to deny, is that pleasures are just the unhindered activities of our natural faculties. In both contexts the activities are such basic ingredients of a man’s life as the exercises of his intelligence.¹ By identifying pleasures with such activities *A* can argue that the best life for man may simply be some pleasure or class of pleasures (1153b7-13). By distinguishing them *B* can leave it an open question whether we choose the life for the sake of the pleasure or *vice versa* (1175a18-21).

Traditionally the question has been whether the two accounts are too divergent to be compatible. I hope to show that they are too divergent to be incompatible. They are neither competing nor co-operating answers to one question, but answers to two quite different questions.

Since the ancient commentators the tendency has been to play the discrepancy down in the hope of finding Aristotle a unified thesis.² Commonly it is excused as the difference between an early draft and a finished version, *A* being the hastier and more polemical, *B* showing signs of refinement at leisure (*e.g.*, Festugière, xxiv; Gauthier-Jolif, 783; Dirlmeier, 567, 580-81). Stewart (221-22 n. 1) dismissed it as “of trifling and merely scholastic significance”. Hardie (304) conflates *A* and *B* in speaking of *B* as propounding “the view held by Aristotle, that it (*sc.* pleasure) is an activity (*energeia*) or the completion of an

¹ In *A* 1153a1 (retaining the *energeia* or *energeiai* of the mss. with Festugière and Gauthier-Jolif against Bywater, who was probably mistaken to say that Aspasius did not have this reading (*in EN* 145.16-17, 20-21).) In *B* 1174b21.

² Gauthier-Jolif misrepresent the Greek commentators here (780). Pseudo-Alexander (*Apor.* 143.9-46.12) does not hold that *A* commits Aristotle to equating pleasure with enjoyed activities. If a good life consists in the latter, still if pleasure is *unhindered* activity the real source of happy living will be the virtue that ensures the unhinderedness. Nor does Aspasius (*in EN* 150.31-52.2) hold this view. He says that, if *A* is indeed by Aristotle, the argument is dialectical, *ad homines* (151.21, 26). So Dirlmeier (567).

activity". Sometimes the suggestion that *A* is rougher because more polemical is exaggerated into the claim that *A* is merely negative: Ross wrote (228) that "where there is contradiction, the preference must be given to Book *X*, for here Aristotle not only criticizes the views of others but states his own position positively". But in both accounts a positive view is produced (Aristotle claims to be saying what pleasure is at 1154b33, 1174a13, and does so at 1152b33-53a17, 1173a29-b20, 1174a13-75a3). And in both it is reached by rebutting others. So another reason for assimilating them suggests itself: the positive account of pleasure in *A* and *B* must be essentially the same, since it is Aristotle's reply to the same mistaken view of pleasure. What he rejects in both contexts is the thesis that pleasure is a *genesis* or *kinēsis*, a process towards some state in which it terminates, as convalescence is a process to health.³ On the strength of this Stewart (223) proposed a single Aristotelian "formula", that pleasure "is inseparable from *energeia*, enhances *energeia*, is *energeia*", and found the "true significance" of this concoction in the fact that "it asserts the opposite of 'Pleasure is *genesis* or *anaplērōsis*'". ("Anaplērōsis" or "filling-up" is the less general but more vivid expression for a restorative process that Aristotle occasionally borrows from the opposition.)

This argument will not do. One reply is too obvious to spend time on. If a philosopher twice rebuts a given thesis and offers a substitute, that is not the least guarantee that he offers the same alternative on both occasions. The range of alternative options may be wide and his own view of it may be wider. But this reply does not find the root of the trouble. The root of it is the assumption that, when Aristotle argues that pleasure is not a *genesis* or *kinēsis*, he must have the same target in his sights on both occasions.

³ The possible objection that the polemic in *A* concentrates on *genesis* (e.g., 1152b13, 23) and that in *B* on *kinēsis* (1174a19-b9) would not show a substantial division between them. *Genesis* and *kinēsis* are coupled at 1152b28, 1173a29-30 (though the subsequent argument distinguishes them, 1173a31-b4, 1173b4-7), 1174b10 and 12-13, just as they are coupled in the specimen argument about pleasure at *An. Pr.* 48b30-32. Building is an example of *genesis* in *A* (1152b13-14) and of *kinēsis* in *B* (1174a19-29). Lieberg (104 n. 1) thought the difference showed that after *A* Aristotle had reached some distinctions recorded in *Phys.* v 1, but he too thought the same form of thesis was under attack in both contexts.

"*Hēdonē*", like its English counterpart "pleasure", has at least two distinct though related uses. We can say "Gaming is one of my pleasures" or, alternatively, "Gaming gives me pleasure" or "I get pleasure from (take pleasure in) gaming". In the first use the pleasure is identified with the enjoyed activity, in the second the two are distinct and their relationship is problematic. Philosophers have sometimes concentrated on one of these uses to the near-exclusion of the other. Aristotle puts almost exclusive emphasis on the first in *A* and on the second in *B*. Thus what he takes himself to be rejecting in *A* is a thesis about what is *enjoyed* or *enjoyable* (in English, *a* pleasure): he wants to deny that what we enjoy is ever, in some last analysis, a process such as convalescing or relieving our hunger. But what he takes himself to be rejecting in *B* is a mistake about the character of *enjoying* or *taking pleasure*: he denies that the Greek equivalents of these verbs have the logic of process-verbs such as *building* something or *walking* somewhere. Neither rejection implies the other. Each determines the form of the positive thesis it introduces.

The distinction I have invoked is put by Mr. Kenny (128) in this way: "We get pleasure out of pleasures, and derive enjoyment from enjoyments". But I doubt that the logic of his two plurals is the same. Given that I enjoy smoking and play-going, I can certainly say that among my pleasures is the pleasure of smoking and among my enjoyments the enjoyment of play-going. But the first "of" seems identificatory ("the pleasure which consists in smoking", as in "the honour of being your Mayor"), while the second marks a verb-object relation (as in "the murder of Smith"). Pleasures are enjoyed activities (or feelings, *etc.*); enjoyments are enjoyings. Now the Greek plural "*hēdonai*" can be rendered either by "pleasures" or by "enjoyments". *A* will normally require the first sense, *B* (*e.g.*, 1176a22-29) the second.

The consistency of A

At the end of *A* (1154b32-33) Aristotle claims to have said what pleasure is. He evidently refers to his thesis (let us call it "*T*", for brevity) that pleasure is *anēmpodistos energeia tēs kata phusin hexeōs* or, as Ross and others translate it, "unimpeded activity of the natural state" (1153a14-15). "*Hexis*" or "state" is Aristotle's

word for any settled condition or propensity of the agent that is exhibited in characteristic performances, and "*energeia*" or "activity" is his word for the performances that exhibit it; or, more narrowly, when *energeia* is contrasted with *kinēsis* or *genesis* as it is here, it is his word for those performances which are not end-directed processes like convalescence but self-contained activities like the exercise of a healthy body. Aristotle wants to connect pleasure with the second, not the first. But what is the connexion? To sharpen the question, what does he mean here by "the natural state"? Joachim described *A* as concerned with "pleasure—the *feeling pleased*". Is Aristotle speaking of some natural pleasure-faculty issuing, perhaps, in pleasure-feelings?

Emphatically he is not. He means that a pleasure is the unimpeded activity of *any* natural state. Any such exercise of our natural faculties or propensities *is* (and not: is accompanied by) pleasure. Let me try to clinch this as briefly as possible, before turning to some more interesting issues that arise. Consider first how the thesis *T* is put to work, then how it is reached.

(1) It is put to work in 1153b9-13. "Given that there are unimpeded activities belonging to every state, it arguably follows that the activity either of all the states or of one of them—depending on which of these alternatives constitutes happiness—must, provided it is unimpeded, be the activity worthiest of choice. *And this is (or, is a) pleasure.* Consequently, even if most pleasures turned out to be unqualifiedly bad, the highest good would still be *some* pleasure." One phrase deserves explanation. Aristotle is answering the thesis that the best life cannot be a pursuit of pleasure. He is presupposing an analysis of the good life which appears earlier in the *Nicomachean Ethics*: either happiness is made up of all the best activities or it is just one, the very best of these (1099a29-31), that which exhibits the "best and completest excellence" (1098a16-18). This last option is what he means to leave open in speaking of "the activity of all the states or of one of them"; he is looking forward to his thesis that happiness consists in the exercise of one superhuman faculty, pure intelligence (1177a12-78a8). But on either alternative he takes one plain conclusion to follow from *T*. It is that such activities, when they proceed

unhindered,⁴ are pleasures, not that they give rise to pleasure. Otherwise he could not, as he does, envisage the good life as consisting in some pleasure or pleasures, or rebuff the opposition by allowing the good and rational man to aim at *some* pleasures even if not at all.

(2) There is the same use of "pleasure" in the arguments leading to *T*. Aristotle lists three views about pleasure (1152b8-12) of which he wants to dismiss two. One of these is that no pleasure is good either intrinsically or even derivatively, the other is that even if all pleasures were good the greatest good could not be a pleasure. The two seem to him to share one principal argument: that pleasure is always a *genesis* or end-directed process and never the end-state of such a process (1152b22-23)—or, more specifically, that all pleasures are perceptible processes towards some natural or normal condition (1152b13-14). As Aristotle's reply shows, his opponents would have approved the obituarist who wrote "Dining was among his pleasures; he valued the repleteness that resulted". The pleasure, they held, was never "in the same class" (1152b14) as its desirable outcome. Depending on the intransigence of the opponent this had been taken to show either that the pleasure had no value at all (*cf.* *Philebus* 54c9-d12) or that it had the lesser value.

The point comes out sharply in the example Aristotle chooses to discuss, that of convalescence. We notice that we are getting better, and enjoy this (it is a *perceptible* process to a natural state); but what we want and value is ordinary health, which we scarcely notice but would not trade for any convalescence, however enjoyable. It is into this argument that Joachim introduced his identification of pleasure with "feeling pleased". But Aristotle is quite clear what the opposition intend: for them the pleasure is the convalescing. For him, as his reply will show, it is the activity of a healthy body. These are the only alternatives in the case that he considers.

⁴ Elsewhere Aristotle says something of hindrances to activity. (a) Misfortune may block our activities (1100b22-30) but so may too much good fortune (1153b17-25), too many friends (1170b26-29); note the asceticism of 1178b3-7. (b) The pleasure of one activity will interfere with another: people who enjoy flute-playing cannot attend to arguments while a flute is being played (1175b1-22, *cf.* 1153a20-23; more on this later).

At first, without directly challenging the assumption that pleasures consist in processes towards some desirable state, he tries a Platonic reply. Some such processes at least are not the pleasures they seem to be, namely those that involve discomfort for the sake of a cure—those that occur in the sick, for example. He is reminding his hearers of *Republic* 583b-86c, *Philebus* 51a. But then he turns to reject the assumption. He keeps another part of the opposition's case: in their view the valuable part of our lives is always some state or activity (1152b33), never the process leading to such a state or activity. Very well, even in convalescence there is a pleasure which is valuable by their standards, for the real pleasure is, as he will shortly put it (1153a14), "an activity of the natural state"; not the trudge back to health but the exercise of actual health. But where is this healthy activity to be found in convalescence? "The activity shown in the desires", he explains, "is the activity of the state which still survives in us, our natural constitution" (or perhaps "The activity is found in the desires of the state. . ."; 1152b35-36, cf. 1154b18-20). He is claiming, I take it, that any actual pleasure associated with convalescence consists in the proper functioning of the healthy residue of the patient; without this the sick man would not want to get better.

That this is his point becomes clear in his summing-up (1153a7-12). Our pleasures are not to be contrasted as end-directed processes with their desirable ends. Pleasures are not such processes, they do not even all come hand in hand with such processes (those which occur in convalescence do; theorizing is one that does not). They are all activities constituting an end in themselves; in them we are not becoming so-and-so (healthy, say) but using the faculties we have. The only pleasures that have some further justification beyond themselves are those found in men who are being "brought to the perfecting of their nature"; thus (as I gloss it) the functioning of the healthy parts in convalescence has a further point, that of promoting total health, but their comparable functioning in a wholly healthy man has no such further point. And Aristotle ends by rejecting the thesis that pleasure is a perceptible *genesis* and replacing it with *T*. The sense of "pleasure" that was required to explain Aristotle's application of *T* is the sense needed to explain the steps by which it is introduced. In these contexts Aristotle's

question "What is pleasure?" means "What is the character of a pleasure, what ingredients of a life are enjoyable in themselves?" The nature of enjoying does not come into question in *A*. If we are asked what is admirable about politics or detestable about beagling, we do not stop to ponder what admiring or detesting is before embracing the question.

Other evidence for the dominant use of "pleasure" in *A* could be adduced. Is there evidence for a different use, in which the pleasure is a concomitant or consequence of some enjoyed activity? Not in 1153a6-7, where the "pleasant things" contrasted with the "pleasures" are not the enjoyed activities but their objects. But in 1153a20-23 there seems to be a sketch of the contrast we are after. Yet the point—that the enjoyment of an activity stimulates it and inhibits others—is made with nothing like the detail and perspicuousness of the comparable argument in *B*, 1175a29-b24. The conclusion remains that the central arguments of *A*, those which import and then apply *T*, are controlled by that first sense of "pleasure"; and it is quite otherwise in *B*.

Corollaries

But the argument of *A* is too curious to put aside without more comment, particularly since *B* has had the lion's share of other discussions. How, to begin with, does Aristotle assure himself that he can identify the convalescent's pleasure with the activity of his healthy parts? His immediate argument (1152b36-53a2) is that there are pleasures which do *not* involve wants and discomforts and which *are* the proper functioning of a natural faculty, such as the activities of theorizing or rational contemplation. So he is looking for some common feature in all pleasures, some necessary and sufficient condition for anything to be enjoyable; and he uses something like a method of concomitant variations to isolate it. And his critics have long complained that this search for the unit is a delusion. Working at a cross-word puzzle is surely an end-directed process, yet why should this not be more enjoyable than rationally contemplating the solution?

One more move is open to him. He has grasped, and never forgets, the essential point that pleasures are "ends", that to enjoy *X*-ing is a reason for *X*-ing or for taking steps to bring

X-ing about. True, this suggests that the *X-ing* I enjoy is always something I can choose to do (this seems to be Aristotle's view in *B*) or else can try to bring about (the healthy functioning in *A*). But I can enjoy receiving unexpected letters; in that case my enjoyment is a reason for others to send me letters. I can enjoy the knowledge that my horse has won; and if you think I shall enjoy that knowledge, that is a reason for imparting it to me, for making or letting me know. But I cannot make myself know that something is the case, as I can make myself go gardening or become a licensed plumber. And there are more teasing questions: can I claim without paradox to enjoy *believing* that my horse won? (Perhaps the oddity is that this could only be a reason for the ministrations of flatterers.) But these refinements do not touch Aristotle's clarity on the main issue, that a pleasure is or can be satisfying in itself. So if I find working at cross-word puzzles more enjoyable than contemplating their solutions, that is surely because for me the puzzling has the form of a self-contained activity like juggling, not that of an end-directed operation like recovering one's stamina or building a house. At any moment that I say I am working at such a puzzle I can say I have worked at it (*cf. Met.* 1048b18-35), and that use of the perfect would not be open to me if I described myself as solving the puzzle.

But there is a larger curiosity in Aristotle's argument. He seems to claim that we can misidentify the object of our enjoyment, and misidentify it systematically. When we say we enjoy convalescence we are always wrong about what we really enjoy. To find out what we are really enjoying we must resort to a curious induction—as though an enjoyment turned up and it had to be settled on some generalization from other cases what it was an enjoyment of. But Aristotle cannot mean this absurdity. In *B* the complaint would be easily settled, for there Aristotle maintains, in Mr. Urmson's admirable summary (324), that "different activities are differently enjoyable. Just as perception and thought are different species of activity, so the pleasures of perception are different in species from the pleasures of thought. Every activity has its own 'proper' (*oikeia*) pleasure; one could not chance to get the pleasure of, say, reading poetry from stamp collecting." But that is *B*, not *A*. *A* is not concerned (save perhaps in 1153a20-23) with the relation between the

enjoying and what is enjoyed. And *B* is not concerned with the misidentifying of the activity enjoyed.

Now in *A* Aristotle prefaces his own account of pleasure with the comment that the processes⁵ which restore us to a natural state are only *incidentally*, *kata sumbebēkos*, pleasant (1152b34-35). Commonly he explains this expression by saying that an *A* is incidentally *B* when its being so is an exception (we should prefer to say, when under that description it is an exception): *As* are not always or necessarily, or even usually, *Bs* (*cf. Top.* I 5; *Met.* V 30 and VI 2 with Kirwan's commentary). But he cannot be concerned here to point out that convalescence is not always or usually a pleasure; his thesis is plainly much stronger than that. There is a more basic suggestion that seems often to underlie his accounts of *to kata sumbebēkos*. Statements which hold good only "incidentally" are formally misleading, suggesting a mistaken analysis or explanation of the fact they convey, and calling for rewriting or expansion into some unmisleading canonical form. This I suppose is the sense of Waitz's note (i 443) that "*kata sumbebēkos* dicitur quod non nisi cum abusu quodam vocabuli dicitur", and it is the point of Aristotle's dictum that an *A* which is *B* is only incidentally so when it is not the *nature* of *As* to be *B* or it is not *qua A* that this one is *B* (*e.g.*, 1026b37-27a8, 1025a28-29). "A baker made this statue" is an example. Aristotle holds that the fact is better displayed by saying that what made the statue was a sculptor who happened to be (but for this purpose need not have been) a baker. Similarly with "convalescence is a pleasure": the pleasure is the operation of the healthy parts which happens to occur in a process of convalescence but might have occurred apart from any such process.

Now this seems to give Aristotle a reply to the objection. The convalescent was wrong, we may say, not about the activity he was enjoying, but about the description under which it was enjoyable to him. For the functioning of the healthy residue does in this case happen to be also a process of convalescence. The baker who makes the statue *is* a baker; only it is not as a

⁵ Understanding "*kinēseis kai geneseis*" at 1152b34 with Grant, Stewart, Ross, Dirlmeier, Gauthier. Rackham and Festugière understand "*hēdonai*". Gauthier agrees with Ramsauer that this comes to the same thing, but the first reading is the more perspicuous.

baker that he can be clarifyingly treated as responsible for the statue. And thus, it seems, the mistake that Aristotle claims to detect can be assimilated to one that has recently exercised philosophers, in which a subject, while enjoying *X*, rejects or overlooks the appropriate description of the *X* he is enjoying: the familiar schoolboy at the dormitory feast, who thinks he is enjoying eating cold bacon when he is really enjoying breaking the rules.

But this reply should give us qualms. For one thing, it is an anachronism. Aristotle does not speak unambiguously of identifying even a substance under different descriptions, let alone those intractable items, events. He does indeed speak of a thing as being "one in number but two in *logos*", as the same midpoint of a line can be called both the endpoint of one line and the beginning of another (*Phys.* 262a19-21, 263b12-14). But when he uses the same idiom to express the identity of a body with its matter (*GC* 320b14) we should cavil at the glib translation "one thing under different descriptions"; the identity in question is too problematic. And it is worth recalling that Aristotle is prone to think of "the sculptor is incidentally a baker" as importing two things which somehow combine into a unity (*Met.* 1015b16-36, cf. 1017b33 and Kirwan's notes). As for the identity of a performance under different descriptions, that notion remains as debatable as recent replies to Professor Davidson have shown it. So perhaps we must be content to eschew these aids, and say that Plato had after all argued that we can be mistaken about our real pleasures, and that Aristotle in *A* is still within that tradition. In *B* he is his own man, and there is no further hint that we may systematically misidentify what we enjoy.

The verb takes the stage

In *B*, as I have said, it is quite otherwise. Given any faculty of perception or intellect, Aristotle says, the exercise of that faculty will be best, and so most complete and pleasant, when the faculty is at its best and exercised on the finest kind of object. But the exercise of the faculty is not itself the pleasure; the pleasure comes to complete or perfect the activity (1174b14-23). Aristotle tells us something of what this means. The pleasure, he says, augments the activity, in that people who engage in the

activity with pleasure are more exact and discriminating (1175a30-b1); the stronger it is the more it prevents them from attending to other activities (1175b1-13), and the longer and better the activity goes on (1175b14-16). But its contribution to the completeness or perfection of the activity is not the same as that of the well-conditioned faculty or the fine object. It is more like the health the doctor produces than like such pre-existing contributory factors as the doctor (1174b23-26, taking “*kai ho iatros*” to follow and be governed by “*homoiōs*”) or the health already in the patient (31-32). In brief it is an end in itself, something that gives the action a point different from that of exercising a good faculty on a good object. Enjoyment inevitably marks such exercises (1174b29-31) but it is still not, as we may put it, merely entailed by satisfying the conditions (1174a6-8). To say that Smith is using his excellent eyesight on some comely object is not to say, or say what entails, that he enjoys doing this, any more than to say that he is physically at his prime is to call him beautiful, though the beauty inevitably follows (1174b32-33). Yet the beauty and the enjoyment are not merely contingent benefits that might have been got otherwise. The beauty is that of a man in his prime, the pleasure can only be identified by reference to the activity it promotes.

Plainly Aristotle is refusing to identify the pleasure with the enjoyed activity. A little later he says so flatly. Unlike desires, pleasures are so bound up with the activities they complete that there is disagreement on whether the pleasure is simply identical with the activity. But it doesn't look as though the pleasure *is* just thinking or perceiving; *for that would be absurd* (1175b32-35).

There is the difference between *A* and *B*. How to explain it? Well, perhaps it occurred to Aristotle that the activities of the natural states which served as *A*'s paradigms of pleasure need not be enjoyable at all. Smith is exercising his wits on an argument; but his wits are blunt, he is tired, the argument is tangled. So *B* is spelling out the further conditions that are requisite for pleasure—sharp wits, impeccable object. But this does not explain the difference. For one thing, such conditions might be covered by *A*'s requirement that the activity proceed unhindered. For another, *B* does not conclude that when such conditions are satisfied the activity *is* a pleasure, only that pleasure inevitably ensues. And for a third, *B* seems curiously

unaware of the central claim of *A* that only self-contained activities and not end-directed processes are enjoyable. I shall take up the argument in 1173b9-15 later; meanwhile notice the kinds of activity that are promoted by their proper enjoyments in 1175a34-35. One is house-building, a paradigm of an end-directed process in both *A* and *B*. It is even odd that the senses, which provide a model of enjoyable activity in *B*, are so readily dismissed in *A*, in deference to convention, as neutral or a source of discomfort (1154b4-9).

Let us leave the attempt to build a bridge from *A* to *B* and consider a declaration of independence. I suggested that in asking what pleasure is, and concluding that it is not a process, *B* is engaged in a quite different sort of inquiry from *A*. It is concerned to say, not what is enjoyable, but what enjoying is. It is interested in the logic of the verb or verbs we translate by “enjoying” and “being pleased”, and in the associated nouns just insofar as these go proxy for the verbs.

Notice first the quite different emphasis that *A* and *B* put on verbs connoting pleasure. Aristotle’s standard noun for “pleasure” is “*hēdonē*” (elsewhere, but not in *A* or *B*, he also uses “*apolausis*” and “*terpsis*”). The verbs he associates with it are *chairein*, *hēdesthai*, *areskein*, *terpein*, *agapān*. The difference is not just that in *B* the use of the verbs increases noticeably in proportion to that of the noun proper (from 8:47 in *A* to 23:83 in *B*). Nor is it only that the range of such verbs deployed in *B* is very much widened, though this deserves comment in view of Mr. Urmson’s generalization that “the verb *hēdesthai* is far less common in the *NE* than *chairein*” (333). The fact is that in *A* only *chairein* occurs (8 times), whereas in *B* it is easily overtaken by *hēdesthai* (12 to *chairein* 7) as well as being joined by *terpein* (2), *agapān* (1) and *areskesthai* (1). This in itself is some evidence of the perfunctory treatment of the notion of enjoying in *A*, by contrast with the new sensitivity to it in *B*. But the most significant difference is that at various cardinal points in *B*, but never in *A*, the argument turns directly on an appeal to the behaviour of the verb. It will be worth reviewing the cases.

1. 1173a15-22. Some hold that pleasure cannot be good, since pleasure is a matter of degree and goodness is not. But (objects Aristotle) if they base this conclusion on *being pleased*, the same difference of degree can be found in *being just* or *brave*, *acting*

justly or *temperately* (the last expressions being single verbs in the Greek); so the supposed contrast with goodness is not there. Translators commonly render the pleasure-verb here in terms of “feelings of pleasure”, “Lustempfindung”, but Aristotle says nothing of feelings; he is recognizing and finding parallels for one feature of the logic of pleasure-verbs, namely that we can say “He is more pleased than I am”, “I enjoy it less than I used to”. Only the form of the argument matters for us, though there will be one implication to notice later.

Subsequently he turns to the more important business of collecting features of the logic of pleasure-verbs which show that pleasure is not a *kinēsis*, a process from some state to another.

2. 1173a31-b4. Pleasure cannot be a process like walking (some distance) or growing (to some size), for these can be done quickly or slowly but one can't be pleased or enjoy something either quickly or slowly. One can of course *get* to be pleased as one can get angry quickly; but one can't be so. This mark of process-verbs, that they collect adverbs of relative speed, is of the first importance for Aristotle, as Mr. Penner has pointed out (411-14). It is a corollary of his constant claim that any process must be such as to cover some distance in some time—the distance being either spatial, between two places, or an analogous stretch between different qualities, sizes, *etc.* This is why he subsequently says (1174b5) that “the whither and whence make the form” of the process; the criteria of its identity must include the limits of the distance it covers. Now (to pursue the point) it is true that an enjoyment may have to be specified by some object of enjoyment—say the First Rasoumovsky—which itself has a beginning and end and intermediate stages. The quartet may accordingly be played quickly or slowly. But if it is played quickly it does not follow that I enjoy it (or hear it) quickly. If it is left half-played then, in the sense of “pleasure” appropriate to *A*, I have an unfinished pleasure; but, in the sense appropriate to *B*, I have not half-enjoyed something. (There is another sense, suggested by the argument under (1) above, in which I may only half-enjoy what I hear.)

3. 1173b7-13. This passage may suggest that after all *B* does

share *A*'s interpretation of the theory that pleasure is a *kinēsis*, for what Aristotle rejects here, as he does in 1153a2-4, is the claim that pleasure is "a replenishment of nature". But notice the radically different treatment of the thesis. In *A* he argued that not the process of replenishment but the resultant activity of the natural state was the pleasure, *i.e.*, the proper functioning of the "established nature". This evidently allows the pleasure to be identified with the behaviour of the healthy body. But in *B* he argues that enjoyment-verbs cannot have "my body" as subject. It is the body that is replenished, so if "...is replenished" is treated as equivalent to or as a specification of "...is pleased", the subject-gap in the second should also be fillable by "my body"; but we jib at this (*ou dokei de*). Rather, one (a person, *tis*) can be pleased when his body is being replenished. So once more, *A* asks what is enjoyed or enjoyable, and is accordingly ready to argue: a bodily function. But *B* asks what enjoying is, and by considering the logical requirements on subjects for enjoyment-verbs replies: not a bodily function.

4. 1174b7-9. A process (Aristotle's examples have included building a temple, going for a walk) always takes time, but being pleased can be whole in an instant. Of course Aristotle does not mean that I can be pleased but pleased for no time; his point is rather that if I am enjoying doing something which takes time to complete, the construction appropriate to the subordinate verb does not transfer to the verb of enjoyment.

5. 1174a13-b7. I shall not dwell on this text, possibly the most-discussed in *B*. Aristotle compares pleasure with seeing and contrasts it with processes such as temple-building, traversing a distance and other motions represented by verbal nouns. All these latter have stages and at any intermediate stage are still unfinished; one can't find a process complete of its kind at any arbitrary time in its progress. None of this holds good of enjoying or seeing (though, to be sure, it can hold good of what is enjoyed).

That Aristotle is concerned here still with the logic of enjoyment-verbs is, I think, clear. Conventionally he is represented as noticing that, if I say "I am enjoying the First Rasoumovsky", it would be bizarre to reply "I am sorry you have not yet

enjoyed it", while the same form of reply to "I am making myself a winter coat" would be wholly in order. But he does not expressly import these familiar and debatable connexions between present- and perfect-tense utterances into this passage (and indeed the verb "*hēdesthai*" has no known perfect tense).

What he insists on is the unfinishedness of processes if we consider them stage by stage. They are complete, if at all, only in the whole time they take (1174a27-29—but the "if at all", "*eiper*", may mean only "doubtless"). So it is natural to think that he is calling attention to the possibility that the building of a temple, unlike enjoyment, may be interrupted or remain unachieved. Now this could not be his point if some remarks of Vendler, which have been quoted as throwing light on Aristotle's analysis, give a correct account of the matter. Vendler wrote: "If I say of a person that he is running a mile or of someone else that he is drawing a circle, then I do claim that the first one will keep running until he has covered the mile and that the second will keep drawing until he has drawn the circle. If they do not complete their activities, my statement will turn out to be false" (*Phil. Rev.* 1957). But suppose you interrupt me when I am drawing a circle and the circle is never finished; it cannot follow that I was not drawing a circle. For if what I was drawing was not a circle but the circle-fragment left on my paper, you did not interrupt my drawing. If Aristotle's view were Vendler's, he could not accept the possibility of any process such as the building of a house or walking to London remaining finally incomplete. But there seems to be no ground for fathering this unsatisfactory view upon Aristotle.

(Indeed, I suspect that in *Metaphysics Z* 7-9 Aristotle runs into paradox concerning the role of "a statue" in "I am making a statue" partly because the truth of that statement does not require an actual statue to emerge. But that is another matter.)

You may indeed feel qualms at the suggestion that the world contains unfinished processes—as though there could be journeys from Oxford to London that ended at Reading. But that would mistake the point. If my journey to London remains incomplete I shall not be entitled subsequently to say that I *did go* or *have gone* to London on that occasion, only that I was going there; but that leaves the truth of my present claim "I am going to London" untouched. When Aristotle uses a present tense to

describe a process he standardly has in mind the imperfective sense represented by the continuous form in English; that is why he is unwilling to use that tense to say that something comes to have a certain character at some instant, and prefers to say that from that first instant it *has* come to have the character (*Phys.* 263b21-64a6). Nor, as his example of an object changing colour shows (*ibid.*), are such uses of the tense confined to contexts where the idea of intention need figure in the analysis.

So the point holds firm. There is no reason to deny that Aristotle is interested in the possibility of interrupting some process without falsifying the natural description of what is interrupted. And “enjoying” can never stand for such a process.

Conclusions

There the case may rest. When Aristotle rejects the thesis that pleasure is a process in *A*, he is offering to tell us what our real pleasures are, what is really enjoyed or enjoyable. When he rejects a thesis in the same form of words in *B*, he is offering to tell us what the nature of enjoying is by reviewing the logical characteristics of pleasure-verbs. In *B* he moves naturally to the question what the enjoying contributes to the enjoyed activity, and apart from one peripheral hint there is no sign of that question in *A*.

No doubt the arguments of *B* suggest one explanation of the shift. What persuades him to decide there that it is “absurd” to say the pleasure is the thinking or perceiving? He has noticed, we may guess, that many epithets of the thinking do not transfer to the pleasure, however much that pleasure may be the pleasure of that thinking. Circular or syllogistic thinking cannot without joking be called a circular or syllogistic pleasure. And the point comes out more sharply when processes are allowed to be enjoyable, as they are in *B*. If I enjoy building or dining quickly I do not quickly enjoy building or dining. So the question becomes: what can be said about enjoying *X*-ing that cannot be said about *X*-ing, and the converse? Verbs and their adverbs, and then their other logical features, take the centre of the inquiry; and for the philosophically suspect enterprise of *A* are substituted the admirable studies of *B*.

But the residual problem remains intractable. It is not enough to say that Aristotle shifts his interest, so that what he

says in *A* is broadly compatible with what he says in *B*. The rub is that he uses the same expressions to identify the theories he rejects in *A* and *B*, and these are theories of quite different types. In both contexts he claims to be explaining *what pleasure is*. That remarkable and, I think, unremarked ambiguity I can only commend to your curiosity. But it is not clear that we need expect a philosophical explanation for it; and what had to be removed was a block to the philosophical assessment of Aristotle's arguments.

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