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Pleasure: Aristotle's Response to Plato

Aristotle discusses pleasure in the context of lively debate both about its nature and about its value, of which we have evidence in his own writings and those of others, above all of Plato.¹ For him the question of value predominates. His treatment of the topic belongs to the ethical treatises, not to his discussion of the soul and its faculties, and while both principal discussions include accounts of the nature of pleasure those accounts are subordinated to his evaluative interests; his primary concern is to give pleasure its proper place in his account of the best form of human life, and it is because that concern requires a proper understanding of what pleasure is that the account of its nature engages his attention.

Aristotle's survey of current views on the value of pleasure reveals a wide range of conflicting opinions, from Eudoxus' identification of pleasure with the good at one extreme to, at the other, the denial that any pleasure is good, either in itself or incidentally. This diversity does not lend itself to the eirenic project mentioned in *EE* I. 6 of showing that every opinion possesses some truth. While some apparent conflicts can be reconciled some theses have simply to be rejected, the best that can be done for them being an explanation of how people have come to hold them (*EN* 1154a21–b20). Aristotle himself is firmly committed from the outset to the view that pleasure is an inseparable attribute of the best life. The *EE* begins from the unargued claims (a) that the good is eudaimonia and (b) that eudaimonia is the finest, best, and pleasantest of all things (1214a1–8). In *EN* thesis (a) is first declared to be established by universal consent (1095a17–20) and later established by an argument to the effect that eudaimonia alone fulfils the formal criteria of the good, viz. those of being sought for its own

¹ For discussion see Gosling and Taylor [1982] (hereafter referred to as G&T).

sake alone and of being self-sufficient (1097a15–b21). A further argument leads to the substantive account of human good as 'activity of the soul in accordance with excellence', i.e. the excellent realization of specifically human capacities (1097b22–1098a20). This is confirmed by a number of arguments to the effect that that kind of activity possesses some agreed marks of the good life; one such mark is that the life of excellent activity is intrinsically pleasant (1099a7–28), leading to the position which is the starting point of *EE*, that the good life is finest, best, and pleasantest (1099a23–31). The thesis that the life of excellent activity is intrinsically pleasant seems partly to rest on the basic intuition that a wholly satisfactory life must be pleasant (otherwise it would lack a feature which counts significantly towards its being worthwhile), but is also supported by a thesis which is less obviously part of common evaluative consciousness, viz. that 'the person who does not enjoy fine actions is not good' (1099a17–18). Though Aristotle does say that no one would call a person just unless that person enjoyed acting justly (a18–19), it is not obvious that that is an unbiased report of actual contemporary Greek usage, independent of his own substantive view, derived from his account of the psychology of virtue and the process of habituation necessary to inculcate virtue, that it would not be *correct* to call anyone virtuous who did not enjoy acting virtuously.

Given this prior commitment to the intrinsic pleasantness of the good life, Aristotle's discussion of pleasure has two main functions. First he has to rebut arguments which purport to establish that pleasure cannot contribute to the good life, either because pleasure is bad, or because it is not good. This defensive strategy will lead him to give an account of pleasure insofar as he seeks to show that those who expel pleasure from the good life do so because they have mistaken views of what pleasure is. Further, his own account of pleasure should provide further positive arguments in support of the thesis that pleasure is at least inseparable from the good life.

The contents of the discussions of pleasure in *EN* bear out these suggestions. As is well known, the work contains two treatments of the topic, VII. 11–14 and X. 1–5, with a certain degree of overlap in subject matter, but no cross-references, either explicit or implicit, in either direction. They are clearly two independent discussions which owe their position in the text of *EN* to the hand of an editor, possibly Aristotle himself but more plausibly a later redactor, and since *EN* VII is one of

the books common to both versions of the *Ethics*, it is generally assumed that its discussion of pleasure belongs originally to *EE*, and further that that discussion is earlier than the one in *EN X*. (I shall return to the question of the temporal relation of the two discussions at the end of this paper.) The discussion of book VII is very largely devoted to the examination, leading to the rebuttal, of arguments hostile to pleasure, to which is appended a brief statement of Aristotle's positive view. In book X, by contrast, the positive view is set out much more elaborately, while the anti-hedonist arguments appear as arguments against a thesis which is absent from VII, namely Eudoxus' thesis that pleasure is the good. Most of these arguments are rebutted, but Eudoxus' thesis is not explicitly endorsed, and the ensuing discussion *appears* to point rather to pleasure's being an inseparable aspect (or perhaps accompaniment) of the good than to its being the good itself.

I shall not attempt to deal with all the issues raised in these complex passages, confining myself instead to a single central issue. Both passages contain criticism of a certain view of the nature of pleasure, seen as foundational to many of the arguments hostile to pleasure which Aristotle is attempting to rebut. This is the view of pleasure as a perceived process of replenishment of a natural lack, and thereby a return from a state of deficiency, where something necessary to the proper functioning of the organism is lacking, to a state of equilibrium and thus of normal function. The terminology in which this view is stated is not always so specific as that which I have just used. At 1152b12–14 the first argument for the position that no pleasure is good is stated as follows: 'every pleasure is a perceived coming into being (*genesis*) of a natural state, but no coming into being is of the same kind as its completion, e.g. no process of building is the same kind of thing as a house'. While 'perceived coming into being of a natural state' is less specific than 'replenishment of a natural lack', the discussion of 1152b25–1153a7 strongly suggests that replenishments of lacks are at least paradigm cases of the pleasures described by the theory; the examples mentioned include cases in which nature is 'replenished' (1153a2–6), which are contrasted with cases like pleasure in thinking, where there is neither distress nor desire, 'because one's nature is not deficient' (1152b36–1153a2). (The *genesis* terminology and its application to cases of physiological deficiency recall Plato, *Phil.* 53c–54e, where the view of certain clever people that pleasure is always a process of coming

to be, never a state of being, is applied to the pleasures of eating and drinking to reduce to absurdity the claim that the good life is the one devoted to those pleasures.) Similarly in book X we have at 1173a29–b20 a series of arguments against the theory that pleasure is a process of change (*kinēsis*) and a coming into being, arguments which have some overlap with those from book VII just mentioned. Here too the only kind of process mentioned is that of replenishment, the theory is said (b13–15) to be based on consideration of the pleasure and distress associated with food and drink (*trophē*), and the concluding argument is that the pleasures of thought etc. which involve no distress cannot be processes of coming to be 'since there has been no lack of which there could come to be replenishment' (b15–20). The evidence therefore suggests that the account of pleasure as the perceived coming into being of a natural state is not an alternative theory to that of pleasure as the perceived replenishment of a natural lack, but merely a less specific designation of that very theory.

The theory is familiar from well-known passages of Plato, notably *Gorg.* 494–7, *Rep.* 585d–e, and *Phil.* 31–2. The paradigm cases are those of pleasures in the satisfaction of bodily-based appetites, especially those for food, drink, and sex. The *Gorgias* passage illustrates the simplest stage of the theory. Bodily appetite is either identified with or seen as arising from bodily deficiency, which is experienced as unpleasant. This unpleasant consciousness (*lupē*) prompts the agent to make good the deficiency, and the process of filling up the deficiency (*anaplērōsis*) is experienced as pleasant. There are a number of unclarities even at this stage. First, it is unclear whether distress and pleasure are literally identified with physical deficiency and physical replenishment respectively, or are thought of as effects of those physical conditions. It is implied, though not explicitly stated, that pleasure and distress involve awareness, but it is not clear whether that is awareness of physical deprivation and replenishment, or awareness of pleasure and distress themselves. If the former, is the thought that (a) pleasure and distress are the awareness of those physical conditions, or (b) that those conditions, given that the agent is aware of them, are pleasure and distress?² A further set of problems arises from the assimilation of sexual desire to the model

² If b is the case, then awareness of physical deprivation and of replenishment is awareness of (respectively) distress and of pleasure.

of hunger and thirst. In the latter two cases bodily desire can plausibly be seen as a response to physiological deficiency, dehydration, lack of protein, carbohydrate, etc., and physiological deficiency can be identified as such by its reference to bodily functioning; without appropriate solid and liquid nourishment bodily function is impaired, and pleasure is (or is a response to) the process of restoring proper functioning. But sexual desire cannot plausibly be seen as a response to a physiological deficiency which impairs bodily functioning; either it is simply a response to a lack of sexual pleasure, in which case the physiological model loses its explanatory force, or else it is a response to a lack of sexual activity, which is itself conceived of either as a precondition of proper bodily functioning, or (perhaps more plausibly) as part of that functioning.³

The application of the theory to sexual pleasure can thus be seen as an extension (in one way or another) from the cases where it has the clearest application. Given one kind of extension, desire is seen in both kinds of case as a response to a deficiency, and pleasure as bound up with the making good of that deficiency, though it is only in the primary cases that the deficient items can be identified as constituents of the organism, whose mutual adjustment is a precondition of correct functioning. Given the other kind, desire is a response to deficiency in some cases and excess in others, and pleasure is a response to the restoration of equilibrium in both. A further extension is exhibited by the application to mental pleasures in *Rep.* IX; as hunger and thirst are states of bodily deprivation, and bodily pleasures are the making good of those lacks, so ignorance or lack of understanding can be seen as states of mental deprivation, and the making good of those lacks in learning as mental pleasures. Here too the question arises of what it is that is lacking; is it a precondition of proper mental functioning, which would assimilate the mental case to those of hunger and thirst, or is it that functioning itself, which would rather assimilate it to the sexual case? If the acquisition of knowledge or understanding is thought of as a prerequisite of the exercise of those faculties, then the model of hunger and thirst is appropriate. But if the soul is seen as lacking understanding of

³ A more plausible theory of sexual pleasure would result if the specific notion of deficiency were replaced by the more general notion of imbalance. Sexual desire could then be seen, not implausibly, as a response to an excess of some physiological component (in modern terms a hormonal imbalance, e.g. an excessive level of testosterone), and pleasure a response to the restoration of the balance via the discharge of the excess in the process of copulation. In this case too we have an extension of the original model, though in a different direction from that suggested in the preceding paragraph.

some subject matter, then making good that lack would appear to consist in coming to have that understanding, which is not a process identifiable as completed prior to the exercise of understanding. One might think of the dissatisfaction of someone trying to make sense of a complex pattern, say a visual or musical pattern; that dissatisfaction is alleviated when and only when one has come to see the pattern, and one has come to see it when and only when one has seen it. So having come to see it is not a prerequisite of seeing it.

There are, then, some unexpected complexities in the replenishment model of pleasure, not only in its extension to mental pleasures, but also in its application to those very cases of bodily-based appetites which originally suggest it. But even setting these complexities aside, the model has a general feature which makes it particularly problematic for someone who, like Aristotle, seeks to assure the place of pleasure in the good life. For according to the model pleasure is seen as something essentially remedial, as bound up with (to use a deliberately vague expression) the process of getting rid of an imperfect and undesirable state. It seems at best an alleviation of the troubles of the human condition; consequently it is hard to see how pleasure thus conceived could have any role in the ideally good life, much less be a necessary feature of it. Hence it is not surprising to find Aristotle in *EN VII* citing arguments which rely on this model in support of the theses that no pleasure is good (1152b12–15) and that pleasure is not the good (1152b22–3).

A possible response to this objection would be to accept that the constant fluctuation of deficiency/desire and replenishment/pleasure is a necessary feature of human life. The ideally good life, envisaged as free from deficiency and its associated distress, is not a possible human life, though perhaps it might be possible for some other creature, such as a god (provided that the god is conceived non-anthropomorphically). Yet traditionally the life of the gods was regarded as blessed (*makarios*) in the highest degree, and the blessed life as supremely pleasant (*EN* 1152b5–7). If the replenishment model is accepted, either those traditional beliefs would have to be abandoned, or the model would have to be construed as a model of human pleasure only, and divine pleasure conceived as something altogether different. On either account the defence of pleasure which the model allows is comparatively weak; pleasure is not something to be hoped for or aspired to for its own sake, but is at best something to be welcomed as an amelioration of our

imperfect condition.⁴ And even that welcome, it would seem, should be qualified; for if pleasure is essentially remedial, arising when a deficiency is remedied, would we not do better to avoid those deficiencies in the first place than to seek to remedy them? As Socrates argues against Callicles, it would surely be the height of irrationality to seek to have an itch in order to have the pleasure of scratching it (*Gorg.* 494c–d), yet on the replenishment model that ought to be a paradigm of a pleasure. Even if one distinguishes necessary pleasures, i.e. those arising from deficiencies whose satisfaction is necessary for human life, from unnecessary, the tendency of the model will be to favour asceticism. For the strategy recommended by the model will be to remedy only those deficiencies which cannot be avoided, and any deficiency whose satisfaction is not necessary for survival can, it seems, be avoided by eliminating the desire which generates the deficiency. Thus to someone subject to sexual desire lack of sexual activity is perceived as a deficiency; but if one ceases to want sex one no longer feels the lack of it.

The replenishment model is not, then, well adapted to assure the place of pleasure in the good life. It also has some independent defects. First, as Plato had pointed out (*Rep.* 584b, *Phil.* 51b–52b), many kinds of pleasures are not preceded by episodes of desire. So I can enjoy e.g. the smell of a rose, or a beautiful view, or memories of childhood holidays, without previously having desired to have, or felt, any lack of those experiences. The scent is wafted through the open window, the view is disclosed at the crest of the hill, the pleasant memories simply occur to me, all without any antecedent longings. Here the phenomenology gives no support to the replenishment theory. Of course that does not refute the theory, since not all deficiencies make themselves apparent in desire; I may suffer from vitamin C deficiency without any desire to take vitamin C (or indeed without any awareness of the deficiency). But if the replenishment theory is not supported by the phenomenology in these cases, the onus must be on the proponent of the theory to show why the cases are best described in terms of the theory. In the vitamin C example physiological theory enables us to identify the deficiency independently of phenomenology; proper bodily functioning requires a certain level of vitamin C, and failure to maintain that level reveals itself in various symptoms, which may have nothing to do with

⁴ Cf. Glaucon's account of justice in *Rep.* II.

desire for substances containing vitamin C. But in the cases of pleasure cited above nothing analogous allows us to identify any unfelt lack; why should we suppose that my delight in the scent of the rose is prompted by the making good of a deficiency of which I was unaware, however that deficiency is to be identified (on the problem of identification see below)? One might perhaps adopt that theory as the best explanation, or, at the extreme, in default of any other possible explanation; both strategies require examination of possible alternatives, and a more careful examination of the replenishment model itself.

Earlier we saw that the most plausible application of that model to sexual pleasure was the following; the model postulates that sexual activity is necessary to a worthwhile life, and consequently explains the experience of the lack of it as unpleasant, and the experience of the making good of that lack as pleasant.⁵ In this case the notion of lack or deficiency is derivative from that of worthwhile activity, indeed the lack is precisely the lack of a worthwhile activity. Now while we should not expect any single answer to the question 'What makes an activity worthwhile?', it seems undeniable that one feature which makes at least some activities (to some extent) worthwhile is that those activities are enjoyable, and equally undeniable that sex is worthwhile at least partly because it is enjoyable. It follows that we do not give a complete account of sexual pleasure by describing it as the making good (or as arising from the making good) of a lack of sexual activity. For the perception of the absence of sex as a lack presupposes that sex is seen as worthwhile, and it is seen as worthwhile at least partly insofar as it is seen as enjoyable. So even in such a central case as that of sexual pleasure, the deficiency/replenishment model presupposes a prior account of what it is that makes sex enjoyable. This is so even in the case of a sort of pleasure which is typically preceded by an episode of felt desire. The necessity of such an account is even more clearly apparent in the kinds of case considered above, where there is no preceding desire. And given such an account, the positing of an unfelt lack appears quite otiose. For

⁵ Here the postulation is that of the theorist who is seeking to explain why humans and other animals find sex pleasant. The subject, whether human or non-human, which experiences pleasure need not (and in the non-human case presumably does not) itself endorse or even entertain that postulation. Instead the theory has to include the further postulation of a natural *nisis* towards a life satisfactory or worthwhile for creatures of that kind, such that the lack of conditions necessary for that life is experienced as unpleasant.

what is that supposed lack a lack of? Either it is just a lack of pleasure, in which case the 'theory' reduces to the tautology that pleasure is the making good of a lack of pleasure, or else it is a lack of whatever it is that makes e.g. smelling the rose pleasant (alternatively, a lack of whatever that pleasure consists in). But in that case the explanatory work is being done by that account, whatever it is, not by the posited lack. Aristotle's own response to the deficiency/replenishment model can be seen as making this point.

That model now appears to have got things the wrong way round. It seeks to give a general account of pleasure via the notion of making good a deficiency, but in most cases the deficiency can be specified only as a deficiency of pleasure, or as a deficiency of whatever features it is in virtue of which things are pleasant. In a few cases indeed, but only a few, the deficiency can be specified independently of pleasure, e.g. hunger and thirst, to which we might add what might be classified as addictive pleasures, e.g. the pleasures of nicotine, alcohol, and other drugs. In the case of the first two effective bodily functioning demands an appropriate level of nutrition; in the addictive cases an acquired habit leads to a situation in which a given level of the drug is demanded. In either type of case deficiency is experienced as a craving, and the making good of the deficiency is experienced as the pleasure of satisfying the craving. It is important to distinguish the peculiar nature of addictive pleasures from non-addictive pleasures in the same kind of object; the pleasure of satisfying a craving for alcohol is distinct from the simple enjoyment of alcoholic drinks, as is made clear by the fact that either kind of pleasure may be experienced without the other. Addictions, and consequently addictive pleasures, are pathological, a manifestation of the malfunctioning of the organism. In fact there appear to be comparatively few non-pathological pleasures which the deficiency/replenishment model actually fits; in addition to the pleasures of satisfying hunger and thirst the pleasure of getting warm when one has been cold is the one which springs most readily to mind.

This suggests that the theorist who wishes to defend the status of pleasure as a necessary constituent of the good life has two options. Such a theorist, we assume, will not seek to defend pathological pleasures. They have no role in the good life, and the explanation of the way in which they are pleasant, and why they are, will presumably reveal them to be a special case, perhaps counted as pleasures because of some

resemblances to the normal or standard case. For the standard case itself one alternative open to the theorist is that of recognizing two irreducibly different kinds of pleasure, one of which fits the deficiency/replenishment model, and has comparatively few members, the other, which does not fit that model, containing all the rest. The other alternative is that of devising a single account which applies to all. Aristotle chooses the second alternative.

On this account the factor common to all pleasures is the exercise of natural capacities in appropriate conditions. The basic idea is that pleasures are appropriate to the different species of animals; every species has capacities for activities which constitute its specific life, and when those capacities are exercised (i.e. when the corresponding activities are undertaken) in the appropriate conditions their exercise is pleasant to the individual member of the species (*EN* 1176a3–8). So since it is constitutive of the life of some kinds of dogs to chase hares, when the conditions for chasing are appropriate (e.g. both dog and hare are healthy, the ground is not too rough, the scent is good) then the dog will enjoy chasing the hare.⁶ Human life is constituted by the capacities shared with animals, growth, reproduction, nutrition, perception, and locomotion (the first three also shared with vegetables), with the addition of the specifically human capacity for thought; hence some human pleasures, notably those in food, drink, and sex, are kinds of pleasures which animals also enjoy, while intellectual pleasures are specific to humans. Pleasures are common only at the generic level; thus animals of every kind enjoy food and sex, but each kind of animal enjoys its specific kind(s) of food, while rejecting the kinds which other species enjoy, and each kind enjoys sex only with members of its own species. Again, non-human animals enjoy the exercise of perceptual capacities only instrumentally (e.g. the lion enjoys the scent of the deer as a sign of its approaching meal (*EN* 1118a16–23)), whereas humans enjoy them intrinsically; i.e. aesthetic enjoyment is a specifically human kind of pleasure.

This analysis has the advantage of applying as well to cases which fit the deficiency/replenishment account as to those which do not. Taking our previous cases as examples of the latter, the exercise of the sensory capacities (smell and sight) and of memory are constitutive of specifically

⁶ It is not clear whether this analysis would commit Aristotle to agreeing with the hunting lobby that hares etc. enjoy being hunted; if not, it must presumably be because fear inhibits the pleasure which the prey would otherwise feel in exercising its specific capacity for flight.

human life, and will therefore be in appropriate circumstances pleasant. (On the problems of identifying appropriate circumstances see below.) The principal problem in the application of the deficiency/replenishment analysis to intellectual pleasures was that that analysis applied straightforwardly to the pleasure of acquiring knowledge or understanding, but not so straightforwardly to the pleasure of exercising those capacities. That problem now disappears, since both kinds of intellectual activity are characteristically human. Turning to the cases of the pleasures of satisfying hunger and thirst, the crucial point is that those drives belong to a natural pattern of animal activity, which, since humans are a species of animals, is *ipso facto* part of the natural pattern of human activity. Unlike addictions, hunger and thirst are not pathological conditions; on the contrary, they are essential elements in the proper functioning of the animal's capacities to seek and acquire nourishment. There is something wrong with an animal which is not hungry when it is short of food or not thirsty when dehydrated (if the cat refuses to eat or drink for days on end you take it to the vet), and also with an animal which wants food when it is not hungry or drink when it is not thirsty. Satisfying one's hunger and slaking one's thirst are perfectly genuine cases of pleasure; the crucial point for Aristotle is that they count as such insofar as they fall under the general classification of the appropriate exercise of natural capacities.

The point that on the Aristotelian analysis the pleasures of satisfying hunger and thirst are genuine pleasures is worth emphasizing, since it brings out a divergence between Aristotle and Plato. At *Rep.* 583c–585a Socrates argues that the great majority of bodily 'pleasures', viz. those which involve the replenishment of some deficiency, are not in fact pleasures at all; they are rather processes of escape from distress, which people mistake for genuine pleasures through lack of experience of the latter. Again at *Phil.* 44a–b a similar view is attributed to 'people who are said to be very expert about nature', and is given qualified approval by Socrates. Plato appears to accept this argument as showing that genuine pleasure must be free of any element of distress, since later in the *Philebus* (51e–52a) Socrates admits the pleasures of learning among genuine pleasures subject to the proviso that 'they do not involve any actual hunger for learning, and that there is no distress from the start through hunger for knowledge.'⁷ The claim that

⁷ Trans. Gosling [1975].

most bodily 'pleasures' are not in fact instances of pleasure, since in those cases the process of getting rid of the distress arising from bodily deficiency is mistaken for genuine pleasure, appears to embody a confusion. Even if it is granted (i) that the state of bodily deficiency (e.g. hunger) is unpleasant and (ii) that the state of having got rid of that deficiency (e.g. having satisfied one's hunger) is neither pleasant nor unpleasant, it does not follow that the process of transition from the state of deficiency to the state of repletion is not really pleasant.⁸ Aristotle's analysis allows him to escape this error; the process of transition from deficiency to repletion is the process in which the nutritional capacity is appropriately exercised, and is therefore standardly pleasant. Equally, the analysis points away from the mistaken belief that states of repletion (as distinct from processes of replenishment) are neutral between pleasure and pain. For those states are as much part of the pattern of the exercise of natural capacities as are the processes which give rise to them, and are therefore, like the latter, naturally experienced as pleasant.

The attractions of this analysis, given Aristotle's project of vindicating the claims of pleasure to a place in the best life, are obvious. Since the best human life consists in the excellent exercise of specifically human, i.e. rational capacities, it follows immediately from the analysis that that life must be, not merely pleasant, but intrinsically pleasant, i.e. pleasant just in virtue of being the kind of life that it is; 'their life (i.e. the life of those who exercise rational capacities excellently) has no need of pleasure as a sort of adornment, but it has pleasure in itself' (*EN* 1099a15–16). At the same time the wide diversity of human capacities and activities, answering to a corresponding diversity of human interests, gives a ready explanation of the diversity of kinds of pleasure, and of the observation that what is pleasant to one person may be unpleasant or neutral to another. Capacities are developed to different degrees in different individuals; so someone with a gift for mathematics will naturally enjoy doing mathematics, whereas for someone whose mathematical capacity is undeveloped the activity will be burdensome.

⁸ In fact both (i) and (ii) are highly questionable. Not all cases of bodily deficiency are unpleasant, first because in some cases the person who has the deficiency is not aware of it, and secondly because even when one is conscious of the deficiency, moderate degrees of hunger and thirst, particularly when one expects to satisfy them within a fairly short time, need not be experienced as unpleasant. And states of having satisfied desires grounded in bodily deficiencies, such as being replete having been hungry, or being warm having been cold, are paradigms of pleasant states.

Though appealing, the analysis faces some major problems. Perhaps the most pressing is this. Pleasure is or arises from the exercise of natural capacities in good or appropriate conditions, but it is problematic whether it is possible to identify appropriate conditions without including among them the condition that the activity is pleasant to the agent. If so, the analysis is viciously circular. Some of Aristotle's formulations do indeed expose him to this criticism. Thus he asserts that "To each person that kind of thing is pleasant which he is called "a lover of", e.g. a horse to the horse-lover, and a spectacle to the lover of spectacles' (*EN* 1099a8–10). Of course it is a truism that people enjoy the kind of things they are keen on, but it is a truism because it is at least a necessary condition for being keen on something that one should enjoy the activities appropriate to that thing. And if being keen on a certain activity is one of the conditions necessary for undertaking that activity in good or appropriate conditions, and thereby for taking pleasure in that activity, then it follows that pleasure itself is one of the necessary conditions for pleasure.

Aristotle might reply that it is possible to identify good or appropriate conditions independently of pleasure, by appeal to the notion of the natural functioning of the species. Thus if a certain species is naturally adapted to eat a certain kind of food, he might claim that a healthy individual of that species will enjoy nutritious samples of that food, provided that there are no interfering factors such as cold, fear, or contamination of the food; this view is suggested, though not explicitly spelled out, at *EN* 1176a3–9. But that claim is open to counter-examples; a diet might be perfectly nutritious but unpalatable, perhaps because the ingredients are lacking in flavour, or because it palls through lack of variety. Aristotle might attempt to deal with these counter-examples by appeal to his principle that, in cases of pleasure (as generally in cases of perceptual appearances) the criterion of truth is how things seem to the *spoudaios*, the person in good condition (*EN* 1099a21–4, 1113a29–33, 1166a12–13, 1173b22–5, 1176a16–19). So, just as we count honey as really sweet because it tastes sweet to the healthy person, even though it may taste bitter to someone who is ill, we judge the pleasantness of the nutritious diet by how it tastes to the person whose appetite itself is healthy, not pampered or jaded. But this move makes it clear that the analysis can be protected against the possibility of counter-examples only at the price of circularity. For if you do not count as having a healthy appetite unless you enjoy healthy food, then the claim that healthy food is

really pleasant because it tastes so to the person with a healthy appetite is self-guaranteeing, because vacuous.

The variety of human tastes and interests reinforces this difficulty. Aristotle counts pleasure in the exercise of the senses as a paradigm of human pleasure. Since for him sense-perception is the realization of a sensory capacity by its appropriate object, sensory pleasure requires that both the capacity and the object should be in good condition. On the side of the capacity the requirement is that the sensory apparatus should be functioning well, while on the side of the object the requirement is variously expressed: 'every kind of perception is exercised on a perceptual object, and the perfect exercise is that of perception in good condition exercised on the finest (*kalliston*) of the objects falling under the perception' (*EN* 1174b14–16); 'in the case of each kind of perception the best exercise is that of the one in best condition exercised on the best (*kratiston*) of the objects falling under it' (b18–19); ... 'there is pleasure of every kind of perception, and also of thought and speculation, and the pleasantest is the most perfect, and the most perfect is the pleasure of the faculty in good condition exercised on the best (*spoudaiotaton*) of the objects falling under it' (b20–3). The problem is to understand what Aristotle means by the quoted adjectives, 'finest' and 'best'. The requirement that the sensory apparatus be working to perfection seems naturally matched by the requirement that the object be such as to stimulate perfect exercise, e.g. that perfect sight be stimulated by maximally visible objects (in terms of Aristotle's theory, colours). But that condition is manifestly insufficient to guarantee that the perception is pleasant; as Anthony Kenny memorably points out, 'the most sensitive nose in the world put in front of the most powerfully smelling manure in the world will not necessarily find the experience pleasant.'⁹ Nor need the absence of pleasure be attributed, as Kenny's example might perhaps suggest, to the sense's being overpowered by the object, as the eyes can be dazzled by too bright light; an object might be maximally visible or smellable, i.e. most clearly detected by the sense over the widest range of conditions, without the perception's being pleasant. But if the finest and best objects are not the maximally perceptible objects, what are they? It is tempting to suggest that they are the most beautiful objects, but 'beautiful', unlike the Greek *kalon*, has natural application only to the

⁹ Kenny [1963], 149.

objects of sight and hearing. It is hard to know how to understand 'beautiful smell', 'beautiful taste', and 'beautiful tactile sensation', unless 'beautiful' is understood as 'delightful', in which case the object's being fine and good is not independent of its being pleasant. Aristotle's thesis is clearly intended to apply to all the sense modalities; so the object's being *kalon* or *spoudaion* is its being fine-looking, fine-tasting, etc.; and the difficulty that those attributes are not applicable independently of the percipient's pleasure in the appearance becomes general. Clearly, it will be hopeless to appeal to the judgement of the *spoudaios* to determine which sensory object is *spoudaion*. For the analysis of sensory pleasure requires that both faculty and object should be in good condition; but if the object's being in good condition just is its seeming pleasant to the person whose faculties are in good condition then its being in good condition is identical with its being pleasant, and so cannot be part of the analysis or explanatory account of its being pleasant. Further, either the good condition of the sense-faculty includes its judging the right things pleasant, or it does not. If the former, the account is doubly vacuous, since one can neither identify good objects without appeal to a faculty in good condition, nor vice versa. But if the latter, then the account breaks down. For it is clearly possible that two people with perfect hearing, as measured by auditory testing, might disagree on which sounds are pleasant and which unpleasant, one adoring the bagpipes and detesting church bells, the other hating the former and loving the latter.

Such diversity can be accommodated within a general account of pleasure as (arising from) the exercise, in good conditions, of the activities characteristic of the species only by the acknowledgement that it is characteristic of humans, unlike members of other species, to have different interests and preferences from one another, with the consequence 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. 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. Thus a keen sailor obliged to live far from suitable water is likely to find life frustrating. But in that case the deficiency presupposes the preference, and is identified in terms of it; one lacks what one needs (viz. accessible water) in order to satisfy one's preference (viz. for sailing), and in consequence of that lack one's life is lacking something (viz. sailing) required to make it satisfactory. It is not the case, as the

deficiency/replenishment account maintains, that the preference is either the deficiency itself, or the awareness of the deficiency. The moral is that neither the notions of deficiency and replenishment nor those of activities proper to members of a species offer a reductive account of pleasure. Any account of pleasure must make room for notions of wanting, preference, interest, etc., but those notions do not offer the prospect of reduction, since pleasure itself figures in any account of them. (Being keen on sailing involves enjoying sailing, being pleased at the prospect of a sailing trip etc., subject to all the usual qualifications.)

At *EN* 1153a12–15 Aristotle sums up his rejection of the deficiency/replenishment account of pleasure in these words: 'Therefore it is not correct to say that pleasure is a perceived process of coming into being; rather one should say that it is the actualization of the natural state, and instead of "perceived" one should say "unimpeded".' I take the requirement that the actualization should be 'unimpeded' to sum up the absence of obstacles, both internal and external, to the exercise of the capacity in appropriate conditions. That exercise could be 'impeded' by the inappropriate condition of the object, e.g. unpalatable food, or by the inappropriate condition of the subject, e.g. anxiety, loss of appetite, or both. Understanding 'unimpeded' in this broad sense, I take Aristotle to be offering as an improvement on the replenishment account the account of pleasure as the unimpeded actualization of a natural capacity. Thus understood his account raises two interrelated questions. First, is it an account of what we enjoy, or take pleasure in, or is it an account of what enjoyment is? That is to say, is Aristotle saying that what we enjoy is always the unimpeded exercise of a natural capacity, or that enjoyment (= pleasure) is the unimpeded exercise of a natural capacity? Secondly, what unimpeded exercise is he talking about? Taking the enjoyment of food as an example, is he talking about the unimpeded exercise of the capacity to take in nourishment (the nutritive capacity) or of the unimpeded exercise of the capacity to be aware of taking in nourishment, a perceptual capacity, perhaps to be identified with the sense of taste or of touch (see below)?

In advance of answers to these questions we have four possible interpretations of Aristotle's account:

1. What we enjoy when we enjoy food is unimpededly taking in nourishment;

2. Enjoying food is unimpededly taking in nourishment;
3. What we enjoy when we enjoy food is unimpededly perceiving our taking in nourishment;
4. Enjoying food is unimpededly perceiving our taking in nourishment.

We must, of course, allow for the possibility that the account is undifferentiated between some (or conceivably all) of these alternatives. Thus if Aristotle does not distinguish between an account of what is enjoyed and an account of what enjoyment is, then 1 and 2 would collapse into one another, as would 3 and 4. That would apparently present a straight choice between an undifferentiated account of the pleasure of food as the unimpeded exercise of the nutritive capacity and an undifferentiated account of it as the unimpeded exercise of a perceptual capacity. But if the former presupposes awareness of the exercise of the nutritive capacity as a necessary condition of pleasure (i.e. enjoying food/what we enjoy when we enjoy food is unimpededly taking in nourishment, provided that one is aware of doing so) the gap between the two rival accounts is narrowed.¹⁰ Another possibility is that Aristotle does distinguish between an account of what is enjoyed and an account of what enjoyment is, and offers both. Thus 1 and 4 above are not only consistent with one another, but together offer a reasonably plausible comprehensive account of enjoyment and its objects; generalized it would claim that what we enjoy is the unimpeded exercise of natural capacities, and that enjoyment is the awareness of that exercise.

There is a well-known difficulty confronting the attribution of theses 1 and 2 to Aristotle. This is that absorbing nourishment is a process (*kinēsis*) which goes from a beginning to an end through a series of stages, takes time to complete, is not complete till it is over, can be interrupted and takes place quickly or slowly. But in *EN X. 3–4* Aristotle argues that none of those marks of processes is true of pleasure, which is something whole and complete, like sight; the point is that pleasure, like sight, is complete as soon as it has occurred, unlike processes such as building which approach completion in a series of stages and achieve it only when the process is over. Hence at least by the time of writing *EN X* Aristotle appears firmly committed to the thesis that no pleasure is a *kinēsis*, and hence to rejecting theses 1 and 2. As regards book VII, though the arguments for that conclusion are lacking, Aristotle appears to accept the conclusion itself; for

¹⁰ Cf n. 2 above.

he asserts (1153a9–12) that pleasures are not processes of coming to be (nor do all involve any such process) but activities and an end-state (sc. the state in which a process of coming to be is completed), and that they occur not when something is coming to be but when something (sc. a capacity) is utilized. A few lines later (a15–17) he says that the reason that people think that pleasure is a coming to be is that they think an activity is a coming to be, whereas they are different. So here, as in book X, it appears that no pleasure is a *kinēsis*.

This result in turn faces an equally well-known difficulty on the other side, viz. that at various places Aristotle speaks either explicitly or implicitly of processes such as building, writing, and calculating, which are plainly *kinēseis* by the criteria of *EN* X. 3–4, as things which are enjoyed (1173a15, b30; 1174a6; 1175a12–17, a34–5, b18). A possible way out of this difficulty relies on the distinction between theses 1 and 2 above. In these cases what is enjoyed is the process carried out in the appropriate conditions; so the devotee of building enjoys unimpeded building. What is denied in both discussions of pleasure is not that claim about what is enjoyed, but the corresponding claim about what enjoyment is, in this case the claim that enjoying building just is building unimpededly. Given that denial, and the positive claim that pleasure is not (a) *kinēsis* or *genesis* but (an) *energeia*, the enjoyment of building would have to be some *energeia* supervening on the building itself, perhaps perception or awareness of the building, as suggested in thesis 4.

An obvious objection to that way out of the difficulty is that Aristotle nowhere explicitly distinguishes the two questions ‘What is enjoyment?’ and ‘What kinds of things do people enjoy?’ *A fortiori*, he never points out that the insistence that pleasure is never a *kinēsis*, but always an *energeia*, applies to the first question only, and that in at least some cases one correctly answers the second question by citing some *kinēseis* such as building or assimilating nourishment. Throughout he presents the discussion as if there were a single question ‘What is pleasure?’, to which ‘Pleasure is (a) perceived *genesis/kinēsis*’ and ‘Pleasure is (an) unimpeded *energeia*’ are conflicting answers. The distinction of question 1 from question 2 (as of 3 from 4) is not, then, grounded directly in the text; it emerges from a process of sympathetic interpretation, as a distinction which offers Aristotle a way out of a difficulty. Hence if that difficulty can be resolved by an interpretation which remains closer to the text, by avoiding the appeal to that distinction, that interpretation is to be preferred.

In G&T we propose an alternative solution, which has at least the advantage of not requiring the distinction of questions 1 and 2. There is a single undifferentiated question, 'What is pleasure?', to which the unitary answer is 'Pleasure is the unimpeded exercise of capacity'. Thus the pleasure of thinking is the unimpeded exercise of the capacity to think, and of building the unimpeded exercise of the capacity to build. Some capacities, such as the capacity to see, are exercised in acts which are themselves *energeiai* by the criteria of *EN* X. 4 (and also by the grammatical criteria of *Meta.* Θ 6). Others, such as the capacity to build, are exercised in acts which are *kinēseis* by those criteria, since every act of building proceeds by stages, is not complete till it is over etc. But every stage in the process of building is also an exercise of building capacity (i.e. an *energeia*), and it is under the latter description that it is enjoyed. Hence the answer to 'What is enjoyed in building?' is 'The unimpeded exercise of building capacity', and the answer to 'What is enjoying building?' is 'Enjoying building is exercising building capacity unimpededly'.

David Bostock dismisses this suggestion, saying that 'it is completely obvious that this is not Aristotle's view of the matter'.¹¹ Aristotle, he maintains, makes it quite clear both in the *Nicomachean Ethics* and in the *Metaphysics* that walking and building simply are processes (= *kinēseis*) 'no matter what one's motive might be for undertaking' them. (The question of motive is obviously irrelevant; an act of walking is an exercise of the capacity to walk irrespective of one's motive for walking.) Bostock apparently takes the fact that these simply are processes as sufficient to establish that it cannot be the case that they are enjoyed *qua* exercises of their respective capacities. But he gives no argument for this conclusion, nor is it clear how it is supposed to follow. It would, of course, follow if 'simply are processes' implies 'are processes and nothing else, hence not exercises of capacities'; but it is abundantly clear from Aristotle's general account of capacities and their exercise that that is simply false. Walking, building etc., and in general things that people do, are all exercises of capacities. We still require an argument to establish that it cannot be Aristotle's view that it is *qua* exercises of capacities, not *qua* processes, that they are enjoyed.¹²

¹¹ Bostock [1988]. The quotations are from 262–3. See also Bostock [2000], 160–5.

¹² One might seek to defend Bostock by arguing that Aristotle holds that, while one indeed exercises the capacity to build by building, the building and the exercise of the capacity to build are two distinct (though presumably spatio-temporally concurrent) entities, in modern terminology distinct events, not,

Bostock's dismissal of this view is therefore too swift. Stronger reasons for scepticism are provided by considerations similar to those applied above to the distinction between theses 1 and 2, viz. that the thesis that processes are enjoyed not *qua* processes but *qua* exercises of capacity is also extraneous to the texts, and is simply imported to resolve a difficulty. After all, the use of the 'qua' terminology (in its Greek original *hēi*) is a standard piece of Aristotelian technicality. If what he means is that the process of building e.g. a house is enjoyed not *qua* building a house but *qua* the exercise of the capacity of building, why should he not say precisely that? As above, sympathetic interpretation should be subordinated to fidelity to the text. Bostock's own solution of the difficulty can justly claim superiority in that respect, since it is closely based on the text. His claim is that Aristotle thinks that there are just two kinds of specifically human pleasure, viz. pleasure in thought and pleasure in the exercise of the senses. These are *energeiai* by the various criteria of the *Nicomachean Ethics* and of *Meta. Θ*, and are listed among the examples of *energeiai* in the latter (1048b23–4, 33–4). What are loosely described as pleasures in or of activities such as eating or building are in fact pleasures in or of the associated thoughts and perceptions. The following quotation expresses the central point:

We do, of course, speak of enjoying eating and drinking, just as we also speak of enjoying building, or writing, or hosts of other things which Aristotle will say are processes. But in all cases, as I interpret him, his view is that the place where the pleasure is to be found is in the associated thoughts and perceptions. Thus the builder may enjoy seeing his wall go up so straightly and so cleanly, as he may also enjoy the feel of the trowel in his hand, and the bodily sensations produced by the effortless exercise of his muscles. He may also enjoy first anticipating and then contemplating the completed building. In these thoughts and perceptions there may be pleasure, but *not* in the actual process of building. And Aristotle's fundamental thought here is that pleasure takes place in the mind, but one can hardly say this of building, any more than of eating and drinking. (271)

In support of this claim Bostock points to the fact that the account of pleasure in *EN X. 4*, which is said to make clear what sort of thing it is (1174a13–14), is in fact an account of the pleasures of perception and thought (1174b14–26, b33–1175a1). As he points out, in that chapter

as I have assumed, one entity with two non-equivalent descriptions. I know of no evidence justifying the attribution to Aristotle of such a theory, but cannot pursue the question here.

Aristotle ties pleasure closely to life (1175a10–21); it is significant that the examples of the activities which constitute life are thought and hearing (sc. hearing music), since this section thereby illustrates Aristotle's claim at 1170a16–19 (repeated more emphatically at a33–b1) that human life consists primarily in perception and thought. One might add the fact that the discussion in X. 5 of the different kinds of human pleasures is introduced by the remark that the pleasures of thought are different from those of perception, and the different kinds of pleasure (sc. of thought, of perception, or perhaps of both¹³) from one another (1175a26–8), which suggests that no other kinds of pleasure need to be considered.

Another passage which supports Bostock's analysis is the account of *sōphrosunē* at EN III. 10. The virtue is a proper disposition towards the pleasures of food, drink, and sex. Its sphere is delimited via a classification of pleasures first into 'psychic' (exemplified by the pleasures of ambition, learning, and telling and listening to stories) and bodily, and then via a division of the latter. The principle of classification of bodily pleasures is according to the various senses. The pleasures appropriate to *sōphrosunē* are distinguished from those of sight (the examples cited are pleasures in colours, shapes, and drawing), hearing (pleasure in music and acting) and smell, allowing them to be identified as pleasures of touch and taste; Aristotle actually says 'these (sc. pleasures) are touch and taste' (1118a26). In the case of intemperate people taste is of little or no importance, the pleasures not only of sex but also of food and drink being ascribed to the sense of touch. Taste is important for the discrimination of flavours, but the intemperate are not at all interested in flavour, but merely in the tactile sensation of swallowing; hence the greedy man who wished that his gullet were longer than a crane's 'since he enjoyed the touch' (1118a26–b1). It is possible that in this passage Aristotle characterizes not merely intemperate enjoyment, but all enjoyment of food, drink, and sex as pleasure in bodily sensations, specifically sexual sensations and the sensation of swallowing. He thinks that these are particularly discreditable forms of enjoyment because

¹³ All the manuscripts agree in reading 'the pleasures of thought differ in kind from those of perception'. Following these words they vary between 'and themselves from one another', 'and these from one another' and 'and these themselves from one another'. On the first reading pleasures of thought are referred to, on the second and third pleasures of perception. The best sense would be 'and pleasures of either kind from one another', which may be what Aristotle meant, but which is not confirmed by any manuscript.

they are common to humans and other animals (1118b2–3); this point, which applies to every case, not merely to that of the intemperate, may suggest that the account of these pleasures as pleasures in bodily sensations is also general. Whatever is the truth on that particular point, the main interest of the chapter as a whole for our present discussion is in its confirmation of the thesis that Aristotle regards the fundamental classification of human pleasures as that of pleasure in or of thought on the one hand and in or of the exercise of the senses on the other.

The application of this analysis to the four possible accounts of the enjoyment of food listed above yields the result that Aristotle definitely rejects 1 and 2, and accepts either 3 or 4, or an undifferentiated thesis covering both. In the particular case of food, the tactile sensation account suggested in III. 10 favours thesis 3; Aristotle looks to be saying that what we enjoy is having certain tactile sensations, the having of which is itself an exercise of the sense of touch. Yet it does not follow that what we enjoy is not eating, but just a sort of perception. Rather, what is enjoyable about eating, on this (bizarre) view, is the sensation of swallowing; to put it another way, the way we enjoy eating, according to Aristotle, is by enjoying the sensation of swallowing.¹⁴

If we generalize this result to the problematic cases of enjoyment of activities like building, we arrive at a reductive account, not of enjoyment itself, but of its object; enjoyment of building is just enjoyment of perception of and thought about building, as sketched in the quotation from Bostock given above. But Bostock takes the upshot to be that pleasure is in these thoughts and perceptions, not in the actual process of building, on the ground that Aristotle thinks that pleasure takes place in the mind, whereas building does not. But he produces no evidence that Aristotle thinks that pleasure is 'in the mind' in a sense which is inconsistent with one's literally enjoying building. Of course pleasure is not in the body, as Aristotle points out (1173b9–11), but then neither is building in the body. Building is something which an embodied agent does, and sensory pleasure is also an attribute of an embodied agent. Rather than accept Bostock's contention that pleasure is in the builder's thoughts and sensations and not in the process of building itself, we should say that the pleasure which is in the builder's thoughts and sensations is the builder's pleasure in the process

¹⁴ For fuller discussion see ch. 7 of this volume.

of building itself. After all, what else could pleasure in the actual process of building be, than the pleasure that is in the builder's thoughts and perceptions?

But now we are confronted by the crucial ambiguity of the expression 'pleasure in the builder's thoughts and perceptions'. This may be construed as 'enjoyment of the builder's thoughts and perceptions'. On that construal, the notion of enjoyment remains primitive, and the account of pleasure consists in the reductive account of its object; enjoyment of building just is enjoyment of the builder's thoughts and perceptions. But the expression can also be understood as 'enjoyment consisting in the builder's thoughts and perceptions'. On this construal, unlike the other, we are given an account of what enjoyment itself is, viz. certain kinds of thought and perception. For the builder to enjoy building is for him to see the wall going up straight and cleanly, to feel his muscles moving effortlessly, to think of all this as something worth doing etc. We may recall how Aristotle moves in *EN* III. 10 from speaking of enjoying the objects of sight and hearing (*chairontes tois dia tēs opseōs, tois peri tēn akoēn*) to the statement that the pleasures with which *sōphrosunē* is concerned are touch and taste. That might of course be understood as the claim that they are the pleasures of touch and taste, but equally it can be understood literally as the claim that those enjoyments are exercises of those senses. And we should also recall that the discussion of X. 4, which is to make it clearer what pleasure is, starts by explaining that seeing, unlike processes, is complete at every moment of its existence, and goes on to show that pleasure shares that characteristic. It is certainly possible, and perhaps even natural, to take this as making a point, not about the objects of pleasure, but about pleasure itself, namely that in a crucial point it is like seeing.

The texts which favour Bostock's account, then, at least leave it open that Aristotle is attempting to provide an account of pleasure as consisting in thought and perception, or that his theory is undifferentiated between that and an account of what is enjoyed as thought and perception.¹⁵ This issue affects the crucial question of how Aristotle's account is supposed to apply to the virtuous agent's pleasure in his or her virtuous activity, which is crucial, as we have seen, to virtue and the good life. Does Aristotle think that what the virtuous agent enjoys is being aware, in thought and/or

¹⁵ Bostock himself explicitly leaves these questions open at the conclusion of his paper (272).

perception, of acting virtuously, or that his or her enjoyment of virtuous action just is his or her awareness, in thought and/or perception, of acting virtuously, or is his view undifferentiated between the two?

The nearest I can come to answering this question is to offer the following tentative suggestion. Notoriously, the discussion of book VII appears to identify pleasure with unimpeded activity, whereas that of book X avoids that identification, preferring to describe pleasure as something which perfects activity in a special way 'as a sort of supervening perfection, like the charm of those in their prime' (1174b32–3). My suggestion is that this change may reflect an increased awareness on Aristotle's part of the distinction between an account of what is enjoyed and an account of what enjoyment is. The 'unimpeded activity' formula straddles the two, whereas if Aristotle had come to a clearer conception of pleasure in an activity as a sort of awareness of that activity, he would be reluctant to identify it with the activity itself, while yet seeking for a way of characterizing the inseparability of the awareness from the activity. An additional attraction of the idea of pleasure as awareness, divided into thought and perception, is that it is applicable to all pleasures, including cases where the object of pleasure is nothing but thought or perception itself. For Aristotle, thought and perception are self-intimating; we are aware of thought by or in thinking, and of perception by or in perceiving (*De an.* 425b12–25, *EN* 1170a29–33), while in the case of other activities thought and perception are the means by which we are aware of doing them.¹⁶ I suggest, then, that the virtuous agent is aware in thought of what the content of his or her good *prohairesis* is, and in perception that the description of the action fits

¹⁶ According to G&T the distinction between Books VII and X is terminological only. Both share the same substantive view of pleasure as the unimpeded, i.e. perfect, actualization of capacity, but whereas that view is expressed in VII as 'pleasure is unimpeded activity' the thought in X is that pleasure is the perfection in virtue of which the unimpeded activity is perfect, or in other words the formal cause of its perfect actualization (249). That suggestion now seems to me less plausible. If Aristotle's point is one which requires to be expressed by means of his own terminology of kinds of cause, and specifically via the notion of a formal cause, it is mysterious why he does not employ that terminology. The 'charm of those in their prime' appears to be a simile intended to elucidate a relation (between pleasure and the activities enjoyed) which eludes literal exposition in standard terminology.

In rendering Aristotle's *tois akmaiois hē hōra* as 'the charm of those in their prime' I revert to the traditional understanding of this expression as referring to the visible aspect of the perfection of those in the prime of life, normally translated 'the bloom on the cheek of youth'. G&T, pointing out that that sense of *hōra* is secondary to its primary sense of 'season', which is then extended to that of the right season, the springtime of life, render, in conformity with their interpretation of pleasure as the formal cause of perfect activity, 'the springtime of youth for those in their prime' (212). As the Greek phrase may bear either sense, the rendering must be determined by one's overall interpretation of the context.

the content of that *prohairesis*,¹⁷ and that those thoughts and perceptions are inseparable from the agent's enjoyment of virtuous activity. But whether they are that enjoyment, or its object, or undifferentiated between the two I am unable to determine.

This suggestion has an obvious affinity with G. E. L. Owen's celebrated thesis,¹⁸ but is not a mere restatement of it. Owen sees the discussions of books VII and X as simply directed to different questions, the former to the question of what is really enjoyed or enjoyable, the latter to the question of what enjoyment is. Moreover, the methods of the two discussions are different; the former proceeds by looking for some feature common to everything which is enjoyed, the latter by reviewing the logical characteristics of pleasure-verbs. On the alleged difference of method, I adhere to the criticism of Owen's view in G&T.¹⁹ On the content of the two discussions I agree with Owen in detecting a shift, but identify the shift differently. For Owen the two discussions are directed to quite different questions, and it is then puzzling why those questions are expressed in the same words 'What is pleasure?' I see the two discussions as stages in the articulation of a single enquiry. In each case Aristotle is addressing the question 'What is pleasure?', because the answer to that question is a precondition of the correct evaluation of pleasure. But Aristotle's question is itself ambiguous between 'What do we enjoy?' and 'What is enjoyment?', and my suggestion is that the discussion of book X shows some indication, absent from book VII, that Aristotle had moved towards separating those questions. If that is correct, it favours the prevalent (though not universal) view that the discussion in book VII is the earlier.²⁰

¹⁷ For instance, the agent is aware in thought that his/her *prohairesis* is to eat a portion of chicken *qua* healthy food, and via perception that this food on the plate is a portion of chicken (*EN* 1147a3–7, b9–17). The agent's knowledge of what he or she is doing thus combines direct awareness of his or her intentions with perceptual knowledge of whether and how that intention is realized.

¹⁸ Owen [1971–2].

¹⁹ See ch. 11.3.

²⁰ For further discussion see Broadie [2003].