

## Processes as pleasures in *EN* vii 11-14: a new approach

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### §1 Introduction

Philosophers and scholars interested in Aristotle's thoughts about pleasure usually leave aside *EN* vii 11-14 and focus on *EN* x 1-5, because 'where there is contradiction, the preference must be given to Book X, for here Aristotle not only criticises the views of others but states his own position positively.'<sup>1</sup> Commentators tend to think that the essay in book 10 is philosophically more advanced than that in 7. This lack of philosophical sophistication is thought to manifest itself in two ways: (a) Aristotle's reasons to abandon the Platonic theory of pleasure are not convincing (Aristotle is thought to fare much better in this endeavour in *EN* x), and (b) considered in itself Aristotle's account of pleasure in book 7 is extremely implausible. It works well for such activities as contemplating and seeing, but it marks out the most commonplace pleasures, such as eating, drinking, and other seemingly pleasurable processes as pleasant only incidentally (*κατὰ συμβεβηκός*), but not in their own right.

I provide the important first step for a reappraisal of Aristotle's thinking about pleasure by giving a new interpretation of *EN* vii 11-14. My interpretation offers Aristotle both a better response to Plato and a philosophically more plausible position than current interpretations. In §§ 3-4 I discuss Aristotle's central claim that pleasures is an activity (*ἐνέργεια*). According to the standard interpretation of *EN* vii 12, Aristotle thereby limits pleasure to complete activities, ruling out that processes (*κινήσεις* or *γενέσεις*) such as eating-when-hungry or slaking one's thirst can be pleasures in their own right. The standard interpretation thereby gives Aristotle a dialectically weak response to Plato as well as a philosophically weak theory (§5).

To appreciate the force of Aristotle's argument, it is important to realise that Aristotle is interested not in a full theory of pleasure (Plato's or his own), but only in that aspect which is responsible for the value of pleasure (§6). Thus a good interpretation will seek to distinguish between two notions of pleasure: (i) something that is pleasant, and (ii) the enjoyment of engaging with what is pleasant. The value of pleasure stems from (i), not from (ii).<sup>2</sup> This way of understanding Aristotle's project enables us to see that his response to Plato is much more subtle and successful than is currently assumed, and that Aristotle is "his own man" also in book 7. By reconsidering the text which is supposed to support the standard interpretation, I argue that it rather supports an alternative interpretation according to which Aristotle contrasts states and their use, rather than processes and complete activities. This alternative interpretation allows that some activities are incomplete and nonetheless pleasant (§7).<sup>3</sup> Drawing on the

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<sup>1</sup> Ross 1923, 228. In preferring *EN* x over *EN* vii, scholars follow Festugière 1936. Cf. Bostock 1988, 251.

<sup>2</sup> While many interpreters acknowledge the distinction between (i) and (ii), its importance for the interpretation of *vii* alone has not been fully appreciated.

<sup>3</sup> Ricken 1995, 214-16 and Burnyeat 2008, 266-67 also observe that some pleasures are incomplete activities. Since both of them have other interests in their papers, they argue for a non-standard interpretation only in passing. Gosling and Taylor 1982, 301-314

analogy between nature and craft, as well as Aristotle's account of causation, the new interpretation can give a plausible account of incidental pleasures: pleasure is in the agent's activity; not in the patient's undergoing a change (§§8-9). The pay-off of the new interpretation is that Aristotle not only has a good and dialectically appropriate response to Plato, but also that he has resources for arguing that all pleasures are good (§10).

## §2 Method and Overview

The main topic of vii 11-14 is the connection between happiness and pleasure (1152b1-8). For Aristotle, there is a deep connection between happiness and pleasure, a connection stressed in many places in the *EN*.<sup>4</sup> Since this connection is threatened by the arguments of those who claim that no pleasure is good or that pleasure cannot be the chief good (vii 11 1152b8-12), Aristotle sets out to show that the arguments do not reach their conclusion (1152b25-26). HIS discussion is, thus, highly dialectical.

What is less clear is what those arguments are, because Aristotle only summarises them without giving us their origin or much further elucidation (1152b12-23).<sup>5</sup> No doubt, he could rely on his readers' familiarity with the arguments, or else supply explanation on demand. Likewise, the reasons for rejecting the anti-hedonistic arguments are less explicit than we might have wished. Concentrating just on the text as we have it, will not be enough for a full understanding of the text.

This becomes evident by considering the most powerful anti-hedonist argument: if pleasure is a process of coming to be, then it is not of the same kind (συγγενής) as goals (1152b12-15). Given that goods are goals, pleasure would not seem to be good (or the good).<sup>6</sup> Since the only illustration given ('no process of housebuilding belongs to the same kind as a house', 1152b14-15) does not explain the view, we ought to turn to the origin of this argument, Plato's *Philebus*, to understand what position exactly Aristotle sets out to refute and why we should take it seriously.<sup>7</sup>

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argue, correctly and helpfully, that some pleasures are processes in book 10. While van Riel 2000, 64 n. 83 sees correctly that the distinction between complete and incomplete activities is not at issue in *EN* vii 11-14, his position has affinity with the standard view, as he maintains that the distinction in question is between activities at rest (such as contemplating) and activities in movement (such as housebuilding), and that pleasure in movement is only pleasurable per accidens (2000, 65).

<sup>4</sup> E.g. i 8.1099a7-31.

<sup>5</sup> For a good overview and interesting thoughts about the provenance of the various arguments, see Frede 2009, 189-92.

<sup>6</sup> The opponents seem to proffer the same argument (pleasure is a genesis) to support two different conclusions: (i) pleasure is not good and (ii) pleasure is not the good. Aristotle does not comment on this, and perhaps it merely reflects the fact that the *Philebus* (the most likely source of the argument) is not clear about this.

<sup>7</sup> It is very plausible that Aristotle takes the argument from Plato's *Philebus*, where Plato argues that since pleasure as a process of restoration (33c-34a; 51b), and in general as γένεσις (53c5), it cannot be good in itself (53c-55c). See §6 for discussion.

Aristotle's response is three-fold. His first argument (1152b25-33) relies on the distinction between good-for and good without qualification. This distinction enables him to attack the Platonic view because it shows that it is mistaken to think that pleasure is not good at all: if pleasure is the restoration of a good state, then pleasure ought to be good for this person. However, this does nothing, however, to dislodge the view that pleasure is not good in its own right.<sup>8</sup> Perhaps the stronger point is that Aristotle can try to discredit restorative pleasures as pleasures not without qualification, as he writes that 'others [sc. processes] are not even pleasures, but only appear so, i.e. those that are accompanied by pain and are for the sake of healing, such as the ones sick people undergo.' (1152b31-33).<sup>9</sup>

Since neither Plato nor Aristotle want to deny that the "pleasures" of becoming healthy are pleasures in some sense – even if they are not the best pleasures – Aristotle's point is probably that the distinction between 'X without qualification' and 'X for a person in such and such a state, under these circumstances at this and that time' (1152b27; b30) is to be applied to pleasure, thus suggesting a way of running goodness and pleasantness together. His point then is that the process of convalescence will be a pleasure, but not without qualification, as one has to specify the special conditions under which these processes are pleasures. Yet since these conditions equally qualify the claim that this process is good, namely good for this person, the argument leaves intact Plato's main claim, that pleasure is not good in its own right.<sup>10</sup> Admittedly, Aristotle suggests that there might be pleasures without qualification which might be good without qualification - but he does not make the point here. As this response is somewhat inconclusive, I mention it only to set it aside.

The second and third argument belong together: Aristotle begins by giving reason for doubting that pleasure should be confined to restorative processes (1152b33-1153a8). If so, we should amend Plato's definition of pleasure (1153a8-15). Doing so allows Aristotle to show that there need be nothing better than pleasure – contrary to Plato's anti-hedonistic argument. Aristotle does not provide us with a commentary of how his argument works. In providing such a commentary, I will have to make reference to works other than the *EN*. This is necessary because the position that Aristotle opposes is based on a view about the metaphysics of pleasure. To trace Aristotle's arguments against it, it is helpful to illustrate his thought by drawing on the *Physics*, *De Anima*, and the *Metaphysics*.

### **§3 The Standard Interpretation: Aristotle's position**

What are Aristotle's arguments against the view that pleasure is a process of coming to be? And what is pleasure if it is not a process of coming to be? Most commentators suppose '... the central claim of [vii 11-14 is] that only self-contained activities and not

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<sup>8</sup> Plato notes that pleasure can be instrumentally good at *Phlb.* 32d4-6.

<sup>9</sup> Unless stated otherwise, all translations of the *EN* are, sometimes in modified versions, taken from Broadie and Rowe 2002. The text follows Bywater 1894.

<sup>10</sup> αἱ δ' in 1152b31 would plausibly pick up ἐναι de in b30, in which case Aristotle would point out that those processes which are not good without qualification are likewise not (οὐδ') pleasures without qualification, thus strengthening the connection between pleasantness and goodness. Cf. Gauthier and Jolif 1958, 792.

end-directed processes are enjoyable.<sup>11</sup> Further, it is argued that Aristotle ‘... rejects the identification of pleasure with genesis and replaces it with his own account of pleasure as an “unimpeded activity of a natural disposition”. Generation and activity are thereby treated as mutually exclusive.’<sup>12</sup>

In these quotations, we can find two assumptions:

1) Aristotle draws an exclusive contrast in *EN* vii between activity (ἐνέργεια) and coming to be (γένεσις), in the spirit of the contrast between activity and movement (κίνησις) in *Meta.* ix 6.1048b18-34 where Aristotle seems to draw an exclusive contrast between activity (ἐνέργεια) and process (κίνησις). Processes of coming to be do not have their end within themselves, whereas activities do.

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

These two assumptions are made by almost all interpreters: ‘In both treatments [sc. vii 11-14 and x 1-5] Aristotle associates pleasure with activities, and contrasts activities with processes.’ Although ‘it is *not* obvious, from the *Ethics* itself, that Aristotle means to claim that no process is also an activity [...] the point is generally accepted by interpreters.’<sup>13</sup> If only complete activities can be pleasures, but never processes of coming to be, then Aristotle seems committed to relegating pleasures that are apparently processes to the incidental.<sup>14</sup> We have thus identified the Standard Interpretation of *EN* vii 11-14:

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

Interpreters find STANDARD expressed in the third argument against the genesis view:

vii 12.1153a7-15

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

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<sup>11</sup> Owen 1971, 340.

<sup>12</sup> Frede 2009, 196.

<sup>13</sup> Bostock 2000, 149. Apart from Owen 1971, Frede 2009, and Bostock 2000, others who take 1) and 2) for granted are Gauthier and Jolif 1958, 795; Penner 1970, 440-41, esp. n. 40; Broadie in Broadie and Rowe 2002, 401-2; Weinman 2007, 113-14; Rudebusch 2009, 406; and Wolfsdorf 2013, 113 and 127-30. Many of these interpreters follow Owen 1971 in taking pleasure in *vii* to be that in which the pleasure is taken, rather than the enjoyment.

<sup>14</sup> The notion of ‘incidental pleasures’ is controversial and will be discussed in §§4, 5, and 8. Preliminarily, we can say that processes are incidental pleasures because they are not pleasures insofar as they are processes, but because of a relation to something else that is more properly a pleasure.

This text cannot be translated into English without interpretation.<sup>15</sup> Irwin's translation, as we shall see, lends support to the Standard Interpretation outlined above:

*[1] Further, it is not necessary for something else to be better than pleasure, as the end, some say, is better than the becoming. [2] For pleasures are not becomings, nor do they all even involve a becoming. [3] They are activities, and an end [in themselves], [4] and arise when we exercise [a capacity], not when we are coming to be [in some state]. [5] And not all pleasures have something else as their end, but only those in people who are being led toward the completion of their nature. [6] That is why it is a mistake to call pleasure a perceived becoming. [7] It should instead be called the activity of the natural state, and should be called not perceived, but unimpeded.*<sup>16</sup>

In this passage, Aristotle turns against Plato's claim that pleasure cannot be the chief good because pleasure is a coming to be. This, Aristotle would point out on the Standard Interpretation, is mistaken because it is a mistake to think that pleasure is a becoming: no pleasure is a coming to be (2).<sup>17</sup> Instead, pleasures are activities (4) that comprise their own goal (3), i.e. complete activities. So, given that pleasure is not a process of coming to be, but always an activity, Aristotle can reject the Platonic view and propose, tentatively, a definition of his own in 6-7:

[DEF] Pleasure is the unimpeded activity of a natural disposition.<sup>18</sup>

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

#### **§4 The Standard Interpretation: incidental pleasures**

Standard Interpreters need to explain why Aristotle in 5 says that there are pleasant activities that have their goal outside themselves, as this conflicts with STANDARD. The trick is to make these pleasures out as 'incidental pleasures'.<sup>19</sup> For leading up to T1, Aristotle argues that restorative processes are only incidentally pleasant:

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<sup>15</sup> Especially controversial are 2, 5, and 7. I shall present the standard way of reading the text in this section, and will offer an alternative reading in §7, after having shown difficulties for the Standard Interpretation.

<sup>16</sup> Irwin 1985, 115.

<sup>17</sup> So taken by Aspasius (Heylbut 1889, 147.16-19), Stewart 1892, 235, Burnet 1900, 333, Dirlmeier 1960, 160, Gauthier and Jolif 1958, 795, Frede 2009, 196, and probably Owen 1971, 338-39.

<sup>18</sup> The replacement of 'perceived' with 'unimpeded' is not supported by previous argument. Presumably, this new point looks forward to vii 13.1153b16-19. (I will say more about this in §7.)

<sup>19</sup> That the pleasures which have an external goal must be incidental pleasures is implicitly held by all proponents of the Standard Interpretation (cf. Bostock 1988, 267). Broadie makes this assumption explicit in her commentary (Broadie and Rowe 2002, 401-2). Standard Interpreters seem committed to denying that virtuous actions have

vii 12.1152b33-1153a2

*[1] Further, given that what is good is part activity, part disposition, [2] it is incidentally that the processes of restoring one to the natural state are pleasant; [3] the activity in the case of appetites belongs to one's residual natural disposition, [4] since there are also pleasures unaccompanied by pain and appetite, [5] like the activities of reflection, [6] where there is no depletion of the natural state.<sup>20</sup>*

Aristotle seems to maintain that pleasure belongs only incidentally to the process of restoration, but belongs, properly speaking, to the activity of the healthy part.<sup>21</sup> This is because there are other pleasures, such as those of reflection, which have nothing to do with the restoration of a lack (4-6).<sup>22</sup> Since Aristotle assumes that all pleasures fall under the same definition, and the paradigmatic pleasure is a complete activity, all pleasures that are different from contemplation in that they are not complete activities must be accounted for in some other way – and Aristotle chooses to call them ‘incidental’.<sup>23</sup>

Whatever the motivation, once processes are relegated to the incidental, Aristotle sticks with it, as a later passage shows: he says that some pleasures are restorative of a state that is lacking and that they occur in the process of restoring the state to completion which is why they are incidentally good:<sup>24</sup>

vii 14.1154b17-19

*What I call incidentally pleasant are the remedial sort; for what makes a thing seem pleasant in this case is that one happens to be cured, with the part that remains healthy being active.<sup>25</sup>*

According to Standard Interpreters, Aristotle suggests that the process of being restored seems or is thought to be (δοκεῖ) pleasant (but is not pleasant properly speaking), whereas the activity of the healthy part *is* pleasant (even if it does not seem so). As, however, being restored and the activity of the healthy part co-occur in cases of curing,

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external goals, as such actions are pleasant in their own right (i 8. 1099a14-6). Aristotle seems in two minds about this issue (vi 5.1140b7 vs x 7.1178b16-18).

<sup>20</sup> ἔτι ἐπεὶ τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ τὸ μὲν ἐνέργεια τὸ δ' ἕξις, κατὰ συμβεβηκὸς αἱ καθιστᾶσαι εἰς τὴν φυσικὴν ἕξιν ἡδεῖαι εἰσιν· ἔστι δ' ἡ ἐνέργεια ἐν ταῖς ἐπιθυμίαις τῆς ὑπολοίπου ἕξεως καὶ φύσεως, ἐπεὶ καὶ ἄνευ λύπης καὶ ἐπιθυμίας εἰσὶν ἡδοναί, οἷον αἱ τοῦ θεωρεῖν [ἐνέργεια], τῆς φύσεως οὐκ ἐνδεοῦς οὔσης.

<sup>21</sup> I am here sketching how Standard Interpreters tend to understand κατὰ συμβεβηκὸς. Bonitz 1870, s. v. συμβαίνειν makes clear that the meaning of the phrase is dependent on the context. I will return to the meaning of κατὰ συμβεβηκὸς in §8.

<sup>22</sup> Cf. Frede 2009, 195.

<sup>23</sup> Since Aristotle nowhere in *EN* vii 11-14 says that ‘pleasure’ is used equivocally, nor that there is a central and a derivative use (cf. Rapp 2009, 229), DEF is surely meant to capture all kinds of pleasure.

<sup>24</sup> I agree with the reasons given by Bostock 1988, 267-8 that Aristotle subsumes all restorative processes under the heading of ‘remedial processes’. So, even such processes as slaking one’s thirst is thought to be a remedy.

<sup>25</sup> λέγω δὲ κατὰ συμβεβηκὸς ἡδέα τὰ ἰατρεύοντα· ὅτι γὰρ συμβαίνει ἰατρεύεσθαι τοῦ ὑπομένουτος ὑγιοῦς πράττοντός τι, διὰ τοῦτο ἡδὺ δοκεῖ εἶναι·

'is pleasant' can be incidentally predicated of the restorative process. According to the Standard Interpretation, this activity is a pleasure in its own right and must therefore fall under DEF. Since on the Standard Interpretation all pleasures falling under DEF are complete activities, the relevant pleasant activity of the healthy part, like contemplation, must have its goal within itself and is thus an end.

## §5 Difficulties with the Standard Interpretation

On the Standard Interpretation, the dialectic is as follows: Plato argues that pleasure is not the good because (i) pleasure is a process, (ii) processes are not ends, and (iii) the good is an end. Now Aristotle rebuts the argument by denying premise (i): pleasure, properly speaking, is never a process. Rather, pleasure is an activity (in the sense of 'complete activity'), and complete activities are ends in themselves. Hence pleasure and the good are of the same kind (*sungenês*) – which shows that Plato's argument fails.

This way of understanding Aristotle's argument is problematic for three reasons. First, if this were Aristotle's argument, it would give him a weak response to Plato: Aristotle's argument would rely heavily on the assumption that contemplation is a complete activity and that it is a pleasure. Since Aristotle's only evidence for this claim is that it is 'without pain and desire' (1152b36), this argument would not convince Plato: (a) this does not show that contemplation is a pleasure (a divine life of reflection is said to be free of pleasure at *Phlb.* 33b); and (b) even if contemplation is agreed to be a pleasure, Plato might accommodate it in his restoration model because the agent need not be painfully aware of the lack (*Phlb.* 50e-53b; esp. 52a-c; cf. *Rep.* 585b-e).

Second, Aristotle would simply deny that those pleasures central to Plato's characterisation of the restoration model are pleasures in their own right. This is problematic not only because Aristotle would not offer an argument, but also because Plato has a point in making vitally important pleasures such as satisfying one's hunger and slaking one's thirst central to the case of hedonism. Precisely because children and animals lack the capacity for reasoning, they are normally steered by pleasure and pain to what is good for them, and these pleasures are surely not incidental.<sup>26</sup> Moreover, in his defence of bodily pleasures at vii 14.1154a8-21 Aristotle argues that they are bad when pursued to excess, but that they are good if pursued up to the right point: 'for everyone enjoys the pleasures of the table, wine, and sex in some way or other, but not everyone enjoys them as one should.' (1154a17-18).<sup>27</sup> Nothing here indicates that these pleasures are pleasures only incidentally. Standard Interpreters, then, can either say that Aristotle does not give a coherent account, or try to explain away the problematic pleasures by arguing that these apparent process-pleasures (drinking etc.) are not processes after all.<sup>28</sup> Most Standard Interpreters go for the latter option.

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<sup>26</sup> Assuming that animals' (and children's) pleasures are not different from mature human pleasures.

<sup>27</sup> The way one should enjoy these goods as the good person does. This means, here, presumably that one should pursue them to the extent that they satisfy needs of healthy human beings, as the contrast with somewhat abnormal cases in 1154b2-15 shows.

<sup>28</sup> An avenue which I do not pursue in detail is this: one could say that sating, drinking etc. 'as one should' in fact are temperate activities that are enjoyed as such. Therefore

Third, the main options suggested by Standard Interpreters to make out pleasures as complete activities, while relegating processes to the incidental are philosophically problematic, especially when the focus is on the causal connection between the process (the incidental pleasure) and the complete activity (the real pleasure): either pleasure as complete activity is caused by a process or the complete activity which is the pleasure causes the process. In each case, the complete activity is the pleasure, whereas the process is not a pleasure in its own right, but only incidentally by being causally related to the activity. However, it can be shown that these interpretations do not succeed: the way in which they connect activity and process makes out either both items as activities, or both as processes.<sup>29</sup> It is, thus, highly doubtful whether Aristotle could account for process-pleasures *at all* if he were to confine pleasure to complete activities: there is currently no satisfactory interpretation of the relationship between a complete activity (pleasure) and the restorative process (incidental pleasure) that would make sense of the claim that the pleasure is incidental to the activity which is really pleasant.

To sum up the reasons against the Standard Interpretation: Aristotle would be begging the question against Plato by assuming either that contemplation is a pleasure, or that the restoration model of pleasure could not account for contemplation; there is textual evidence that Aristotle does not take such pleasures as eating and drinking to be incidental; and there are philosophical problems with confining pleasure to complete activities.

## §6 Aristotle's project reconsidered

I propose an alternative interpretation of *EN* vii 12 which does not suffer from these defects. The first step is to reconsider Aristotle's project. The need for doing so becomes clear from a criticism, namely, that Aristotle's definition of pleasure as the unimpeded activity of a natural state is false: 'the actualization of sense-perception is often not pleasant but neutral, despite the fact that there is neither an impediment, nor anything unnatural about it.' The complaint is that if Aristotle's definition (DEF) were true, then perception should be 'experienced as pleasant', but it is not.<sup>30</sup> This would be an objection to DEF, if Aristotle's aim were to give a full-fledged theory of pleasure in *EN* vii. But this is not his project.

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they are complete activities (presumably because activities in accordance with virtue have to be complete). Now, this cannot be Aristotle's solution because it would still leave children and animals with incidental pleasures only, as for Aristotle acting in accordance with virtue requires a developed intellect. I thank an anonymous referee for putting this objection to me.

<sup>29</sup> See Rudebusch 2009 and Penner 1970. Bostock 1988, 2000 also offers a variant of this interpretation, but since he imports his contentious main thesis that pleasure is the perception of processes or activities from *EN* x, and since there is no hint in *EN* vii that this is Aristotle's view, I shall leave it aside. (See Bostock 1988, 270-71 for an unconvincing attempt to explain why Aristotle does not state his view.) I will discuss Rudebusch 2009 and Penner 1970, as well as Owen 1971 in the appendix.

<sup>30</sup> Both quotations from Frede 2009, 203.



Aristotle's project becomes clear by considering that pleasure is a coming to be, as found in the *Philebus*. We ought to look at the *Philebus* in particular because in this dialogue, Plato comes close to saying what is rejected in DEF, that pleasure is a perceived process of coming to be. For although pleasure is at first identified with such restorative processes of a natural state as warming up or cooling down (*Phlb.* 31e-32b), Plato highlights this identification will not do. He modifies the account because small changes occur unnoticed (43b3).<sup>31</sup> Since we are aware of (or perceive, αἰσθάνεται, 43b2) only great changes, instead of saying that 'changes upwards and downwards produce (ἀπεργάζονται) pleasure and pain' (43b8-9), one should say that 'great changes effect (ποιοῦσιν) pleasure and pain in us, while moderate or small ones produce neither of these two.' (c4-6, my trans.). We can see here that Plato recognises that pleasure requires awareness or perception, since both the problem and the solution presuppose that awareness is essential to pleasure. The causal language, moreover, indicates that there is a cause or source of pleasure, and that Plato thinks that the source is what was earlier in the dialogue (31-32) defined as pleasure, a process of restoration. Plato, thus, maintains that the perceived process of restoration is the source of pleasure.

Aristotle sets out to refute the view that pleasure is a perceived process of coming to be of a natural state (1152b13). This is exactly what Plato would take to be the source of pleasure, not the experience of pleasure, nor the complex consisting of experience and source. Two questions arise: Why does Aristotle call 'pleasure' what Plato identifies as the source of pleasure? And why does Aristotle focus on 'pleasure' in this sense, rather than engaging with the more fully fleshed-out theory of pleasure that Plato offers in the *Philebus*? The answer is the same for both: Aristotle undertakes to follow Plato.

Although Plato moves far beyond the simple restoration model of pleasure, he nevertheless returns to it when considering the value of pleasure: 'pleasure is always a process of coming to be' (53c4-5). This identification of pleasure with a process of coming to be forms the basis of the argument that pleasure is not good: because pleasure is a process, it cannot be good (53c-55c). While it is controversial what exactly Plato's aims and assumptions are in this argument, it is clear how Aristotle understands it:<sup>32</sup> when Plato says 'pleasure' at *Phlb.* 53c4-5 he speaks about the source of pleasure, for this is what the 'perceived process of coming to be' is (1152b13-15). Aristotle does not need to bend language for that: the Greek word ἡδονή can either signify the source of one's enjoyment, or one's experience, or both.<sup>33</sup>

Plato's argumentative purposes are served by focusing on pleasure as the source because it is this aspect of the complex (source and enjoyment) which is responsible for

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<sup>31</sup> The changes in the theory are made explicitly to the thesis proposed earlier, namely that pleasure is the restoration of one's own nature (42d5-7 with 43b7-9).

<sup>32</sup> For opposed takes on the argument contrast Taylor 1956, 80, Hackforth 1945, 106, and Gosling and Taylor 1982, 153-4, with Evans 2008 and Carpenter 2011.

<sup>33</sup> That 'pleasure' could refer to both a complex experience and to the source of this experience is close to Owen's classic formulation of the point that 'pleasure' in Greek 'has at least two distinct though related uses, "Gaming is one of my pleasures", or, alternatively, "Gaming gives me pleasure"... In the first use the pleasure is identified with the enjoyed activity, in the second they are distinct...' (Owen 1971, 336). Cf. Kenny 1963, 89.

the value. Plato does not object to enjoyment per se; what is objectionable is that in order to enjoy oneself, one might pursue things that are not good - which would be ludicrous (54e1-2). Processes are the source of one's enjoyment and processes are not in the same class as what is good (54c9-11). This way of taking the argument makes good the claim that both Plato and Aristotle are concerned with the source of pleasures, when they speak of 'pleasure' in the context of this argument.

These considerations strongly suggest that by replacing Plato's conception of pleasure with DEF, Aristotle speaks about that which determines the value of pleasure – and this is the source of pleasure, not the experience (or the complex consisting of both).<sup>34</sup> If this is Aristotle's project, then the fact that natural unimpeded activities are not always experienced as pleasant does not count against DEF. Aristotle is concerned in *EN* vii 12-13 with finding the proper sources of pleasure, not with the connection between the source and enjoyment – that is the topic of *EN* x 4-5.

### §7 Aristotle's position reconsidered

Having reconsidered Aristotle's project, we can now turn to reconsidering his position (VII.12.1153a7-15, this section) and the arguments for it (§§8-9). Let us start with the interpretation of VII.12.1153a7-15. Instead of the Standard Interpretation, I propose an interpretation that has more textual and philosophical support. I give again the Greek and an alternative translation that does not support the Standard Interpretation. I shall then explain and justify this way of reading the passage.

VII.12.1153a7-15

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

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

<sup>34</sup> Interpreters usually do not frame the dispute between Plato and Aristotle in these terms. Exceptions are Irwin 1985, 269, and, in a way, Owen 1971. One might try to resist my interpretation by highlighting that Aristotle seems to distinguish between source and experience in the previous argument: ὡς γὰρ πρὸς ἄλληλα διέστηκεν, οὕτω καὶ αἱ ἡδοναὶ αἱ ἀπὸ τούτων (1153a6-7). Thus, ἡδοναὶ would be the experience, not the source. However, since τὰ ἡδέα are things (sharp and bitter ones and their opposites, a4-5), not processes or activities, they should not be the source of pleasure on any count. Perhaps, then, αἱ ἡδοναὶ αἱ ἀπὸ τούτων are the activities or processes stemming from interacting with the ἡδέα. At x 3.1173a15-20, Aristotle marks the distinction as one between ἡδονή (source of pleasure) and ἡδεσθαι (experience of pleasure).

*perceived process of coming to be; [7] rather one should say that it is the activity of a natural disposition, and replace 'perceived' with 'unimpeded'.<sup>35</sup> (tr. Rowe with modifications)*

It is clear from Aristotle's introductory sentence (1), that for the purposes of his argument he does not *have* to argue that no pleasure (understood as the source) is a process. In order to show that 'it is not necessary that there be something else better than pleasure' it is sufficient to show that not all pleasures are simply processes of coming to be. Does he commit himself to more than he needs to?

The answer depends on how we read 2, as Aristotle offers a reason (γὰρ) for denying that there must be something better than pleasure. Standard Interpreters think that Aristotle sets out to show that each individual (non-incidental) pleasure is good in its own right, because they translate 'for pleasures are not becomings, nor do they all even involve a becoming' or similar.<sup>36</sup> While the grammar of the clause at first glance invites us to read it in this way, there is an alternative reading which does not restrict the scope of the quantifier (πᾶσαι) in 1153a10 to the second conjunct only: 'not all pleasures are comings to be, or are accompanied by a coming to be'.<sup>37</sup> On this reading Aristotle tries to show that there does not necessarily have to be something better than pleasure by highlighting that the process-theory does not apply to all pleasures - which seems adequate for the task at hand.

Standard Interpreters find support for confining pleasure to complete activities in 3: if pleasures are complete activities, then they are 'activities, and an end'. While the translation of 3 is undisputed, it is disputable whether it supports the Standard Interpretation. An activity may be an end without being complete: it may be an end insofar as it is the use of a state, where this use can be a complete or an incomplete activity. This is the crux of the alternative interpretation - to be expanded and defended in the next two sections.<sup>38</sup> The present task is to show that the text suggests the

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<sup>35</sup> Rowe translates 1153a14-15 as 'it is *an* activity of a natural disposition, and replace "perceived" with "unimpeded"' (my emphasis). Nothing in the Greek corresponds to 'an' (cf. Irwin 1985, 270). Nothing in my argument hangs on this. I opt for 'the' instead of 'an' because it seems to work better with vii 13.1153a7-14, a passage that makes reference to 7.

<sup>36</sup> The translation is taken from Irwin 1985, 115.

<sup>37</sup> Gauthier and Jolif 1958, 795 claim that the Greek cannot mean this. They do not give any reasons for his statement. Note that the grammar does *not* clearly favour the Standard rendering: a) since οὐ πασῶν in 5 seems to correspond to οὐ ... πᾶσαι in 2, 'pleasure' should not shift from non-incidental to incidental, but be about pleasure as source in both cases; b) Aristotle writes εἶσιν in 2 (which could easily be omitted) because it works together with μετὰ, and both concern all pleasures, as Aristotle may put πᾶσαι at the end for effect. An over-translation brings out the point of the structure (οὐ ... εἶσιν οὐδὲ ... πᾶσαι): 'they *are* not comings to be, nor even [are they] accompanied by a coming to be - all of them'. I thank Christopher Rowe for help with a) and b).

<sup>38</sup> Standard Interpreters cannot appropriate this alternative way of reading the text by claiming that the activation of the state is a complete activity: (a) for the contrast between a state and the activity stemming from that state, the distinction between complete and incomplete activities is irrelevant (as e.g. *Meta.* ix 8.1050a4-b3 shows);

possibility of this interpretation. That the use of a state has to do with pleasure is clear from 4, where it is contrasted with the coming to be of a state: 'nor do they [sc. pleasures] occur because a coming to be is in train but because capacities are being put to use'.

The alternative interpretation does not have to postulate, unlike the Standard Interpretation, that Aristotle shifts in 5 to talking about incidental pleasures. Rather, it can take at face value that 'not all pleasures have something else as end, but only those involved in the bringing to completion of one's nature.'<sup>39</sup> This way of reading the text makes much better sense of the sequence of thought: Aristotle first says that calling pleasure γένεσις does not fit all pleasures; what does fit all is to call them an activity and an end because they stem from the activations of states, but are not necessarily linked to the coming to be of the state. This account works for those activities that do not have an external goal, as well as for those that have one (5). Thus, if Aristotle uses 'activity' and 'use' in the wide sense (including incomplete activities), the points made lead up neatly to DEF (7). If, on the other hand, we understand him to speak about 'activity' and 'use' in the narrow sense, thus speaking in 5 about incidental pleasures, he shift the focus giving any sign.

Having established that the text does not require the Standard Interpretation, I turn now to arguing that the alternative interpretation is preferable to the standard interpretation. Let us begin with the dialectic of the passage. On the Standard Interpretation, Aristotle, in 5, has to admit that his DEF cannot properly account for pleasures that Plato at least takes to be central. Dialectically, this is a weak move, especially since it relies exclusively on the claim that contemplation is a pleasure and a complete activity - which Plato has no reason to accept (cf. §5). Thus, Aristotle simply denies that Plato's prime pleasures are pleasures in their own right: Plato mistakenly takes incidental pleasures to be the central cases of pleasure.

Aristotle's argument is dialectically much stronger if he speaks about 'activity' and 'use' in their wide sense. It grants Plato that there are pleasures which are restorative processes (those mentioned in 5), and that pleasure is closely related to a state. But since not all pleasures stem from the coming to be of a state, they do not exhaust the sources of pleasure. If so, the definition of pleasure as a perceived process of coming to be of a natural state cannot be correct (6) and should be replaced with a definition that captures both Plato's paradigmatic pleasures, as well as those pleasures that do not fall under the restoration picture. Thus, Aristotle does not object that Plato's analysis of pleasure cannot capture any pleasure; it objects that it does not have sufficient depth to capture all pleasures. According to the alternative interpretation, then, Aristotle is engaged in the familiar eirenic project of finding what is true in an endoxic view, and to show why it is true by supplanting it with a proper theory.

The philosophical benefits of the alternative interpretation are obvious: if processes can be pleasures in their own right (in the sense of 'source of pleasure'), then vitally

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and (b) ἐνέργεια here, i.e. in 3 and 7, surely does not *mean* 'complete activity'. For more on (b), see Burnyeat 2008.

<sup>39</sup> This is not to deny that the pleasure itself is an end, it only highlights that also goal-directed activities can be the source of pleasure. I shall explain in detail how pleasures can be ends while, at the same time, they are also directed at some other goal in §10.

important pleasures such as eating when hungry, and obvious process-pleasures such as building and learning come out as pleasures in their own right. We do not need to find a complete activity that, really, is the source of the pleasure.

To sum up: the alternative interpretation (i) is possible: the text does not require the standard interpretation; (ii) it allows for an easier flow of the thought (reading 5 at face value); (iii) it gives Aristotle dialectically a much stronger position than the Standard Interpretation; and (iv) the alternative interpretation gives Aristotle a much more powerful account of pleasure: it makes out biologically important pleasures such as eating when hungry, and obvious process-pleasures such as building, learning as pleasures in their own right.

### **§8 Incidental pleasures explained**

There are two obstacles to be removed before we can whole-heartedly endorse the alternative interpretation: i) Aristotle's argument seems to turn on the postulation of pleasures which do not fall under the restoration model - is this not also dialectically weak? ii) If restorative processes are pleasures in their own right - why do we need incidental pleasures? I will deal with the second obstacle in this section and then turn to the first in §10.

To see how Aristotle understands incidental pleasures on the alternative interpretation, it is useful to focus on healing: healing restores the person's health, changing him from a deficient condition to a good one. I start with a simple cases, and then add two more complex cases.

Case 1: A doctor cures an ill person.

Let us assume that it is entirely through the agency of the doctor that health is being restored; the patient is merely passive. Case 1 highlights two points. First, since the doctor imposes the form of health in the patient by the use of knowledge, the doctor must know what health is - this is what it is to have the form of health as a doctor.<sup>40</sup> Second, it helps us to locate the source of pleasure because Case 1 makes clear that doctor and patient are differently related to the activity of restoring health. While it is true that the doctor is the source of change whereas the patient is subject of change, we need a more fine-grained account, focussing on the activity of healing. It is useful to distinguish between 'change belonging to X' and 'change in X', because although there is a change that belongs to the doctor as the originator of healing, it is crucial for Aristotle that this does not entail that there is also a change *in* the doctor.<sup>41</sup> To this effect,

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<sup>40</sup> See *Phys.* iii 2.202a9-12 for this model of agency. In *Meta.* xii 3.1070a28-30 medical art is said to be the form of health.

<sup>41</sup> Aristotle makes this distinction in *Phys.* iii 3.202b5-8. Coope 2004, 205 captures this distinction as distinction between 'change of' vs 'change in', whereas Marmodoro 2007, 210-11 speaks of it as distinction between 'change belonging to' vs 'change occurring in'. To be absolutely correct, this claim needs to be qualified in two ways: (1) given Aristotle's account of causation, there is also a change in the agent when the agent's acting involves touch, see *Phys.* iii 2.202a3-7. This, however, is an additional process of change and can be left aside for present purposes. (2) There *is* a difference in the doctor: at one point he does not use his medical knowledge, at another he does. But Aristotle

Aristotle argues in *Phys.* iii 3 that agency can take place in a suitable medium distinct from the source of the change, so that to explain that the activity of healing belongs to the doctor we need only one change, the change occurring in the patient. Thus, there is only one activity, the process of restoring health, but the doctor is related to this activity as agent, whereas the ill person is related to it as patient. I shall refer to the agent's relation to this activity as 'agent-activity'.<sup>42</sup> So, with this terminology, we can now give a more precise account of the source of the restorative process: the source of the restorative process is the agent-activity, and that is the doctor's healing.

Case 2: A doctor is ill and cures himself.

The identity of doctor and patient makes no difference to what holds true in the Case 1: it is still the doctor's healing that is the source of the change. Agent and patient just happen to be the same person, and can be separated, logically, by the qua-locution. So, in this case, when the person heals himself, he is active qua doctor. Note that it is only qua patient that the person is in a deficient state, but not qua doctor: being curable essentially relies on privation of a certain state; being able to cure does not rely on privation.

Case 3: A person becomes healthy without a doctor.

The model of healing in this case also underlies Cases 1 and 2, when they are not simplified. For usually the doctor's job is to stimulate the patient's organism to heal itself (e.g. by inducing a fever). If there is no doctor - what is the source of the change in the patient? The only thing that could fill the bill is the agent-activity of the residual natural state, mentioned vii 12.1152b33-1153a2 and 14.1154b17-19.<sup>43</sup>

That a *natural* state is active in healing is significant insofar as for Aristotle craft and nature are analogous in that they tend to be goal-directed. Restoring health is clearly a goal-directed activity which a craftsman (a doctor) can carry out. The same goal can be achieved by the activity of nature. In *Phys.* ii 1, Aristotle uses the analogy to craft to explain how nature can be the source of change of a thing.<sup>44</sup> Since a craftsman is clearly the source of the change in the subject of change (as in Cases 1 and 2 above), nature is likened to a craftsman because it is the source of the change too. When nature is the source of change, however, agent and patient not merely happen to be in the same subject (as in Case 2), but are necessarily to be found in the same subject because of what the subject is.

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has reservations about calling this 'change', cf. *DA* ii 4.416b2-4 and ii 5.417b5-9. See also *EN* x 4.1174b12.

<sup>42</sup> In describing causation as different relations to one activity, I remain neutral between the interpretation of causation as one event with two descriptions (Waterlow 1982, 180-82) and as 'one-in-two entity' (Marmorato 2007, 228).

<sup>43</sup> Frede 2009, 195 thinks that it is problematic to assign the process of restoration and the activity of the healthy part to different parts because there would be no connection between them (2009:195). On my interpretation, there is a causal connection in the sense that the healthy part is the source of the change of the unhealthy one to being healthy.

<sup>44</sup> See especially *Phys.* ii 1.192b20-27.

In general, it is in an animal's nature to sustain itself (which includes carrying out curative processes). Aristotle likens this function of self-sustenance to a craftsman at *DA* II.4.416a34-b3 where he points out that the animal is nourished by food, but that the food does not cause a change in the animal; rather the animal changes the food - just like a carpenter is not changed by the wood, but the wood is changed by the carpenter. Other natural restorative functions of the animal can likewise be understood as analogous to craft.<sup>45</sup>

With this framework, we can explain why processes are incidental pleasures. 'Pleasure', I argued, is to be understood as the source of pleasure. In order to locate the source of pleasure, one needs to analyse process more thoroughly than Plato does: the source of the process of coming to be would be the real source of pleasure. On Aristotle's view of causation, a process has two aspects, the patient's undergoing a change and the agent's acting. In Case 1 the agent-activity is the source of the process, a result that carries over to more complex cases, such as 2 and 3. The patient's activity, on the other hand, the process of being restored is incidentally pleasant, since it is not the source of the process, but only necessarily co-occurs.<sup>46</sup>

But this raises a question: if the agent's activity and the patient's undergoing a change necessarily co-occur in the patient, why would the latter be incidental to the process? The worry is that Aristotle often explains 'incidental' by contrasting it with what holds true necessarily or for the most part (e.g. *Meta.* v 30.1025a14-16). The worry can be dispelled and the question answered by highlighting again Aristotle's task: he is interested in pinpointing the source of the process which is the change, and this is an explanatory task. This allows us to discount necessary co-occurrence as sufficient for being non-incidental.<sup>47</sup>

So the notion of 'incidental' such that 'A is incidentally F' that Aristotle uses in the discussion of pleasure is that it is scientifically misleading to point to F in an explanation:<sup>48</sup> even though for restorative pleasures there must be something which is undergoing the change, it is misleading to point to the patient's undergoing the change if one is to explain why the change takes place. For this we have to point to the agent: the

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<sup>45</sup> Since there must be different parts in the agent, one responsible for the agent-activity, one that undergoes the change, it is clear why Aristotle should say that god, being by nature simple, will not experience restorative pleasures (*EN* vii 14.1154b24-28).

<sup>46</sup> Note that this does not mean that the doctor enjoys healing while the patient does not. It only means that if the doctor or the patient enjoy the process of restoring health, then it is the doctor's activity that is, at root, responsible for their enjoyment. Is it a problem that the process always takes place in the patient? I do not think so, for as long as both agent and patient are related to the process in such a way that they can be aware of it in the right way, either or both of them can enjoy it: the doctor is related to the activity by doing it, the patient by undergoing it. I thank an anonymous referee for pressing me to clarify this point.

<sup>47</sup> That necessary co-occurrence is compatible with being *κατὰ συμβεβηκός* is clear from *Phys.* viii 6.259b16-20: although the soul is necessarily moved when it causes locomotion, it is only moved *κατὰ συμβεβηκός*: its being moved does not explain why the body moves.

<sup>48</sup> Owen 1971, 340-41 detects the same use of 'incidental' in *EN* vii 12, but puts it to use in accordance with the Standard Interpretation.

agent's activity is the source of the change and, hence, can be called 'pleasure' (since 'pleasure' is understood as 'source of pleasure'), while the patient's undergoing the change is a pleasure only incidentally.

### **§9 The alternative interpretation**

Now, with Aristotle's project reconsidered, the main text re-interpreted, and incidental pleasures explained, it is time to bring together the different strands into one account, summing up the points made running up DEF:

[ALTERNATIVE] (i) there is no exclusive contrast between a process of coming to be and activity in *EN* vii 11-14; (ii) pleasure is understood as the source of pleasure, not as the pleasant experience; (iii) pleasure is an unimpeded agent-activity of a natural state; (iv) some pleasures are comings to be; (v) the patient's being restored is a pleasure only incidentally.

I shall briefly elucidate and explain the points. The first is simply that when Aristotle speaks of 'activity' (or 'use') in *EN* vii 12, he does not speak of complete activities. I have argued that the text does not mandate such a reading, but rather supports the alternative reading, that 'activity' is to be understood in the wide sense, ranging over both complete and incomplete activities.

The second point is that when Aristotle says 'pleasure' he picks out only one aspect of pleasure, namely the source of the pleasant experience. Aristotle does so because Plato, in his anti-hedonistic argument, uses 'pleasure' in the same sense. Moreover, he follows Plato in assuming that the value of pleasure stems from the source, and since value is Aristotle's main concern, he should focus on this notion of pleasure.

Third, when Aristotle says that pleasure is an activity, he means to say that the source of the complex experience is an agent-activity, i.e. the occurrence of the experience has to be explained by reference to this agent-activity. I have argued that this is what Aristotle means because if we understand pleasure as the source of the experience, we must trace the starting point of whatever it is that, in the end, causes the pleasurable experience. In cases of restorative processes, this is not the patient's undergoing the process of being healed, but rather it is the process of healing or restoring the good state. In non-restorative cases, the relevant activity itself is the source of pleasure: there is no need to trace back further the cause for this activity. Since the distinction between agent-activity and the patient's undergoing a change is designed to pick out the active element in the single activity that is the healing of the patient, and since complete activities such as contemplating are also, and paradigmatically, active, the label 'agent-activity' applies to both sorts of activities. By locating the source of pleasure in the agent-activity, Aristotle can thus offer in DEF a unified account of pleasure.

The fourth point simply follows from the other two: if there is no exclusive contrast between processes and activities, i.e. if some activities are processes, and pleasure is defined as an activity, then some pleasures will be processes. Textual evidence for this can be found in 1153a11-12 where Aristotle says that those pleasures 'involved in the bringing to completion of one's nature' have a goal outside of themselves. This is a welcome result because quenching one's thirst is a proper source of pleasure, and there



is no need to posit some hidden complete activities co-occurring with the processes whose relation to the activity is deeply problematic.<sup>49</sup>

The fourth point explains what Aristotle means by calling restorative processes 'incidentally pleasant'. Having distinguished between the agent's and the patient's relation to the activity of healing, I have argued that the patient's undergoing the change is not the source of the process of healing. Since Aristotle is interested in pleasure understood as the source of pleasure, he would regard the source of healing as the source of pleasure, not the patient's undergoing the change. Therefore, the patient's being healed is only incidentally pleasant.

### **§10 The merits of Aristotle's argument and the value of pleasure**

Let us now reconsider the dialectical strength of Aristotle's argument vis-à-vis Plato's genesis argument. At first it might seem that on the alternative interpretation Aristotle's argument is too weak to make a point against Plato: if processes and activities are not mutually exclusive, then it is possible that all activities that are pleasures are processes. But in this case Aristotle has not shown that nothing better than pleasure is needed: according to Plato, processes are not of the same kind (συγγενής) as goals (vii 12.1152b12-15).

This way of framing the problem immediately shows that it will not do to cite contemplation as a pleasure to settle the point. In *EN* vii 12 Aristotle does not give any reason for taking contemplation to be an activity that is not directed at something that is better. So, his argument should not rely entirely on this contentious claim.<sup>50</sup>

The strength of Aristotle's argument lies in his analysis of pleasure. Importantly, Plato has no reason balk at Aristotle's improved analysis of pleasure as source, but has, rather, reason to accept it: a process of coming to be does not simply occur, but there must be a cause for it, a producer. As it is through the agency of the producer that the product comes into being, and given that the producer effects the existence of the product through the process of coming to be, the producer is also responsible for the process of coming to be.<sup>51</sup> If pleasure is a restorative process, there must be something that causes this process, and this would seem to be the proper source of pleasure. Since it is the producer's doing something that is the cause of the process, Plato seems driven to accept that agency of some sort must be the cause of restorative processes: in the *Philebus* Plato characterises the cause of things that come to be as a 'doing thing' (26e6-7; 27a5; 27b1).<sup>52</sup> It is dialectically a strong point that this account is compatible with the

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<sup>49</sup> See appendix.

<sup>50</sup> I do not deny that Aristotle in fact claims that there are pleasures which do not have a goal beyond themselves - he says so at 1153a11-12. What I do deny is that Aristotle's argument relies on this claim.

<sup>51</sup> At *Phlb.* 26e the interlocutors agree that everything that comes to be necessarily comes to be through a cause. This cause is the producer (26e7). Plato expresses a similar claim in the *Tim.* 57e3-5. Cf. *Gorg.* 476b3-5 and *Euthyphr.* 10c1-4.

<sup>52</sup> One might object that Plato has no reason to accept Aristotle's notion of activity. This is true, but it does not harm Aristotle's (or my) argument. What Aristotle needs here is

restoration model, as Plato might claim that all the doings initiating a pleasant process are processes themselves.

How, then, do the two philosophers reach so different results regarding the value of pleasure? The answer becomes clear by looking again at the pleasure of healing. Let us consider again Case 1: the doctor changes the patient from being ill to being healthy, a change from a bad condition to a good one. From the perspective of the patient, this activity is good only insofar as it leads to something better, namely health. Shifting the perspective to the agent allows us to see that the activity is also good in its own right. Although the doctor's healing is a goal directed activity, taking place for the sake of health, it is also an exercise of knowledge, and using knowledge is good. The important point is that it does not matter whether using this knowledge is a goal-directed activity or not: what is good about using knowledge is not that it results in something, but that something good is already active.

Plato implicitly acknowledges this schema for many kinds of knowledge. In the *Philebus*, shipbuilding is mentioned as an example for something that has its end outside itself (54b3). However, at 56b-c building is mentioned as a branch of knowledge, along with medicine, agriculture, navigation, and strategy (56b) - all of which are clearly for the sake of some goal. But their goal-directedness does not prevent Plato from taking crafts to be good in their own right, evidence for which is that they are in the final ranking of goods (66b8-c with 64c5-9).<sup>53</sup>

If this line of thought is right, then Plato's argument that pleasure is not good does not hold water: if the process that is the source of pleasure is the exercise of one's craft-knowledge, then the pleasure would seem to be good in its own right - whether or not it is directed at some further goal. So, pointing to the exercise of one's craft-knowledge would be sufficient to clinch the argument against Plato, as it would show that the use of knowledge is a source of pleasure, a process, and good.

The argument actually given by Aristotle at vii 12.1153a7-15 is more precarious, as focuses on nature, rather than craft. For Aristotle, the results from Cases 1 and 2 carry over to Case 3 because of the nature-craft analogy: if the activity of the residual natural state is like the activity of a craftsman, then the state underlying this activity should be analogous to the craftsman's knowledge. This state is responsible for imposing the form of health onto the body. There is no question about the value of the craftsman's activity: insofar as it is the exercise of a good and positive state (knowledge) it is good. Likewise the activity of the natural state responsible for the cure should be good in its own right because it is the activity of a good state: health.

Plato might balk at the dissimilarity between the doctor's and nature's healing: the doctor has the form of health because of his medical knowledge; nature has no

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that at the root of a change is a doing of some sort. He spells this out as the *use* of a state (vii 12.1153a11).

<sup>53</sup> Most interpreters hold that the final ranking in the *Philebus* is a ranking of things that contribute to the value of the best life in their own right (see e.g. Frede 1993, 79 and Gosling 1975, 224). For dissenting views see Cooper 1977, 160-62 and Evans 2008.

knowledge.<sup>54</sup> However, this does not hinder Aristotle from transmitting his main point about causation. The emphasis on the activity of the remaining healthy part makes clear that health is not merely the final cause, as Plato suggests, but that health is also the efficient cause of the cure. This is important because restricting health to the final cause means that the process of restoration leads to some good state and is good only insofar as this final state is good. If, on the other hand, health is not entirely absent, and is even the efficient cause of healing the ill parts of the body, then there is some non-derivative goodness in the process of restoring - namely insofar as it is the activity of a good state (in the same way as the exercise of the doctor's skill is non-derivatively good). Thus, Aristotle's argument does not rely on the paradigm of contemplation: he can argue that there need not be anything better than pleasure while leaving open whether all pleasures are incomplete activities.

## §11 Conclusion

I have done two things: I have argued that we should reject the Standard Interpretation of *EN* vii 12, according to which pleasure is found only in complete activities. Having reconsidered Aristotle's project, I have argued that the alternative interpretation proposed should be adopted instead: it fits better with Aristotle's project of replacing Plato's definition of pleasure, it fits better with the text, and it is philosophically preferable, insofar as it commits Aristotle neither to denying that eating etc are pleasures in their right, nor to begging the question against Plato, as he can show that even processes are pleasures in their own right and good in their own right.<sup>55</sup>

This interpretation is fairly straightforward once it is understood that Aristotle is concerned with the sources of pleasure in *EN* vii 11-14. While it is not implausible that enjoyment should be complete, as Aristotle argues in *EN* x 3-4, it is very implausible that the source of our enjoyment should be restricted to complete activities. The only reason why interpreters foist this implausible view on Aristotle is that he seems to say precisely that no pleasure is a coming to be or a process. However, on the interpretation I have proposed, Aristotle says no such thing: the context makes clear that Aristotle allows that some pleasures are incomplete activities - he merely says that not all are incomplete. I have argued that in his argument against Plato, Aristotle does not even crucially rely on this weaker claim, as all he intends to show is that there need be nothing better than pleasure. He can do so by tying the goodness of pleasure to the goodness of the state whose activity is the source of pleasure.

## §12 Appendix: no incidental pleasures for Standard Interpreters

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<sup>54</sup> That nature should not be "psychologised" is widely recognised by scholars. That it is unnecessary to ascribe intentional states to nature is argued, differently, by Cooper 1982 and Broadie 1987.

<sup>55</sup> I thank Ralf Bader, Sarah Broadie, Inés De Asis, Verity Harte, MM McCabe, and James Warren for their help with the paper. I also thank Ron Polansky for very helpful suggestions, and especially one of the readers for *Ancient Philosophy* for acute and helpful comments. Much of the research was undertaken with the financial aid of an AHRC scholarship.

I return now to the claim made towards the end of §5, that the Standard Interpretation is unable to explain the relationship between the complete activity that is the pleasure and the restorative process which is a pleasure incidentally. Since we have already seen that there is no need to conjure up a complete activity that is the pleasure, I shall only briefly deal with two versions of the Standard Interpretation. They share the assumption that pleasure can be found only in complete activities, which is why one of them postulates that some co-occurring complete activity is pleasant, whereas the other maintains that the agent mistakenly has to take himself as engaging in a complete activity.

I will begin with the 'two entity view' [TEV]. According to this view, when an agent engages in an incomplete activity, there are really two action-like activities, a complete activity, and an incomplete one. These two activities occur at the same time, but they are not the same; there is a real difference between them.<sup>56</sup> Pleasure is confined to only one of the two entities, namely the complete activity.

TEV is rooted in a distinction between potentials and powers: bricks and mortar have the potential to change into a house, whereas the builder has the power to build. When the potential of the brick and mortar are actualised, i.e. when the house is built, they are no longer a pile of bricks and a tub of mortar, but they are arranged in a special way so as to constitute the house. The builder's power to build remains in him even while and after building the house. The controversial but crucial claim is that these examples show an important difference between actualising potentials and acts of powers: the actualisation of a potential is an incomplete activity (there is a change in the material), whereas that of the power is a complete one (there is no change in the agent). Pleasure, according to this interpretation, is found in the act of power, not in the actualisation of the potential.<sup>57</sup>

The problem with the TEV becomes apparent from a further commitment, namely that the builder's power to build causes the bricks and the mortar to constitute the house. While it is correct that there is no change in the agent, this does not imply that the act of power is complete. In fact, when the agent causes an incomplete activity, the act of power will *also* be an incomplete activity because the causal relation between the agent's act of power and the patient's actualisation of a potential consists in just one activity: 'the activity of that which has the power of causing motion is not other than the activity of the movable; for *it must be the fulfilment of both*' (*Phys.* iii 3.202a14-16, my emphasis). So, the two potentialities, being capable of causing change and being capable of being changed, are actualised in one activity: this *is* the change.

There is, then, only one action-like entity, being both the activity of what is capable of causing change and the activity of what is changeable. Thus, it is no use for Standard Interpreters to postulate powers as the locus of pleasure: if the activation of the power is to be e.g. the pleasure in building, then the pleasure will be in an incomplete activity, as the activation will be an incomplete activity.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> Rudebusch 2009, 409 contends that there is a real distinction between the two acts, 'although the coincidence [of the two acts in the same body or mind] hides it from ordinary observation.' Cf. Penner 1970, 439-440.

<sup>57</sup> The interpretation and examples are taken from Rudebusch 2009, 407-9.

<sup>58</sup> E.g. *Phys.* iii 1.201b7-15.

On the ‘two descriptions view’ [TDV] the ontological restriction of TEV becomes a psychological restriction: an incomplete activity can be a pleasure only if described as a complete activity.<sup>59</sup> Supporters of this view take the fact that filling in the clues of a crossword puzzle is pleasant to indicate that the agent conceives of his activity as ‘working on the puzzle’ which is a complete activity, rather than as the incomplete ‘completing the puzzle’.<sup>60</sup> The latter is a pleasure only incidentally. This observation is then generalised.

The problem with TDV is how the descriptions are related to the relevant activity. Either (a) there are norms of correctness governing the description of the activity, or (b) there are not. Option (b) is implausible because at vii 14.1154b17-19 Aristotle highlights a difference between what is thought or seems to be pleasant (δοκεῖ) and what is pleasant properly speaking. Option (b) cannot make this distinction, as the key to pleasure is not that the description of the activity is correct, but that it is described as complete. So, if the agent enjoys being restored under the description of a complete activity, there is no room for claiming that there is yet something else that is the proper source of pleasure: according to (b), what I take to be the source of pleasure *is* the source of pleasure: Aristotle’s distinction would be impossible.

Option (a) allows us to capture the distinction. In this case, however, some but not other activities are correctly described as complete activities. The implausible consequence of this option is that the agent is able to enjoy incomplete activities, such as eating and drinking, only when he is mistaken about the description under which he enjoys them. So, instead of explaining the pleasure in restorative processes, this interpretation merely replaces one question (How can we enjoy incomplete activities?) with another one (How is it that we are systematically mistaken about pleasure in restorative processes?).

The upshot of this appendix is that the two main versions of the Standard Interpretation cannot explain Aristotle’s incidental pleasures. This, in turn, corroborates my case for reconsidering what Aristotle says, and for adopting an interpretation according to which pleasure can be a process.

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<sup>59</sup> This view finds classic expression in Owen 1971 who maintains that the ‘central claim of [vii 11-14 is] that only self-contained activities and not end-directed processes are enjoyable.’ (1971, 340). A version of this is discussed by Gosling and Taylor 1982, 313-14.

<sup>60</sup> Owen 1971, 340.

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