

Plato on Pleasures Mixed with Pains: An Asymmetrical Account

Scholarly opinion regarding the relation between the various treatments of pleasure within the Platonic corpus tends to focus on the ways in which the *Philebus* advances beyond Plato's earlier views, this dialogue's own problems notwithstanding. This assessment is, to a large extent, justified: the *Philebus* does, in many ways, advance well beyond what precedes it. It is the most detailed and sophisticated account of pleasure that Plato puts forward. The observations that even bodily desire belongs to the soul, and that pleasure may have truth-value as a propositional attitude, for instance, clearly reflect a greater degree of sophistication about desire and pleasure. But the undeniable progress seems to have obscured the lines of continuity between the relevant dialogues, and the debt of the later works to the earlier ones has not been sufficiently appreciated.¹

This paper was written, in large part, during a semester I spent at the University of St Andrews as a visiting scholar. I am thankful to Eastern Mediterranean University for granting me a research leave, to the European Union Scholarship Programme for funding the semester, and to the University of St Andrews, School of Classics, for their hospitality. Various versions of this paper were presented at King's College, London, the University of St Andrews, and the B Club at the University of Cambridge. I am thankful, for their valuable comments, to the audiences at these gatherings, in particular Gábor Betegh, Sarah Broadie, Nicholas Denyer, Stephen Halliwell, Fiona Leigh, Alex Long, David Sedley, Matthew Shelton, Robert Wardy, and James Warren. I am especially grateful to Joachim Aufderheide and Anthony Price for a helpful

discussion and generous written comments on the paper. The paper also benefited from comments by two anonymous referees. Finally, I am indebted to the editor, Victor Caston, whose insightful comments and suggestions were very helpful in revising the paper and preparing the final version.

¹ The high regard in which the *Philebus* is held is generally coupled with a dismissive treatment of Plato's views in his earlier works, especially in the much-maligned *Republic* 9. The received view takes the *Philebus* to offer a vastly superior account of pleasure than *Republic* 9 because the earlier work was inferior not merely relatively, but inferior *simpliciter*, as it were. See, for instance, N. R. Murphy, *The Interpretation of Plato's Republic* (Oxford, 1951); R. C. Cross and A. D. Woozley, *Plato's Republic: A Philosophical Commentary* (London, 1964); J. C. B. Gosling and C. C. W. Taylor, *The Greeks on Pleasure [Greeks]* (Oxford, 1982); D. Frede, 'Rumpelstiltskin's Pleasures: True and False Pleasures in Plato's *Philebus*' ['Rumpelstiltskin'], *Phronesis*, 30 (1985), 151-80; D. Frede, 'Disintegration and Restoration: Pleasure and Pain in Plato's *Philebus*', in R. Kraut (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Plato* (Cambridge, 1992), 425-63 at 455; M. McPherran, 'Love and Medicine in Plato's *Symposium* and *Philebus*', in J. Dillon and L. Brisson (eds.), *Plato's Philebus, Selected Papers from the Eighth Symposium Platonicum* (Sankt Augustin, 2010), 204-8, at 208; and J. Whiting, 'Fools' Pleasures in Plato's *Philebus*' ['Fools'], in M. Lee (ed.), *Strategies of Argument: Essays in Ancient Ethics, Epistemology, and Logic* (Oxford, 2014), 21-59. I have argued in detail elsewhere that this assessment of the account of pleasure in *Republic* 9 is based on an uncharitable reading of the text that fails to appreciate Plato's account, and I will not revisit the matter here. See M. M. Erginel,

What I wish to focus on in this paper is the extent to which Plato's views concerning pleasure and pain remain consistent throughout the relevant dialogues, in ways that have not been adequately brought to light in the literature. It has been acknowledged that versions of what has been called the 'replenishment' or 'restoration' model of pleasure can be found in the *Gorgias*, *Republic*, *Timaeus*, and *Philebus*. Yet the full extent of the continuity between these versions of the model has gone unrecognized, in particular with respect to the psychological account of pain, and therefore of impure pleasure – pleasure that is mixed with pain. I aim to show that Plato's last extended treatment of pleasure in the *Philebus* preserves, in more sophisticated form, the core psychological account that was operational in the *Gorgias*, the *Republic* and the *Timaeus*, which arguably mark different stages in the maturation

'Plato on a Mistake about Pleasure', *The Southern Journal of Philosophy*, 44 (2006), 447-68; 'Inconsistency and Ambiguity in *Republic IX*' ['Inconsistency'], *The Classical Quarterly*, 61 (2011), 493-520; and 'Plato on the Psychology of Pleasure and Pain' ['Psychology'], *Phoenix*, 65 (2011), 288-314, where I offer a detailed assessment of the account of pleasure in *Republic 9*. Recent work on the account of pleasure in *Republic 9*, such as D. C. Russell, *Plato on Pleasure and the Good Life* (Oxford, 2005); J. Warren, 'Plato on the Pleasures and Pains of Knowing' ['Pleasures'], *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy*, 39 (2010), 1-32; and J. Warren, 'Socrates and the Patients: *Republic IX*, 583c-585a' ['Patients'], *Phronesis*, 56 (2011), 113-37, has been more charitable.

of the same model.² More specifically, I shall argue that, contrary to the scholarly consensus, all four dialogues agree that a necessary condition for pain is a state of imbalance or disharmony rather than a *process* of destruction or deterioration. Given that the restoration model takes pleasure to be possible *only* during a process of restoration, it follows that the model's account of pleasure and pain are strikingly asymmetrical. Crucially for Platonic moral psychology, it also follows that impure pleasures can be mixed with pain not only *sequentially* but also *simultaneously*. This consequence is of great significance for a range of views Plato defends, most importantly the thesis that pure pleasures are always more pleasant than impure pleasures. I hope to establish that the reading defended here is not only better supported by the textual evidence but also more charitable, attributing to Plato a more sophisticated and compelling set of views about pleasure, pain, and desire.

1. Whence cometh pain?

The *Republic* and *Philebus* stand out among the four works, since in these two dialogues Plato offers an account of pleasure and pain, as well as a discussion of the role of pleasure in a good life (the latter dialogue doing so in a significantly more

² Here I assume a conventional dating of the dialogues, listing these works in chronological order as: *Gorgias*, *Republic*, *Timaeus*, *Philebus*, though it would not pose a threat to my interpretation even if the debated position of the *Timaeus* were different.

detailed way).³ The *Gorgias* and the *Timaeus*, on the other hand, have a more narrowly circumscribed interest in pleasure and pain, Plato's purposes being served without a full-fledged account.⁴ In both the *Republic* and the *Philebus* Plato draws a distinction between impure and pure (καθαρά) pleasures – pleasures that are mixed with pain and not mixed with pain, respectively. The distinction is important for Platonic moral psychology since it is important for Plato, in both works, to establish that pure pleasures are superior to impure pleasures *qua* pleasures, *because* they are pure.

In the *Republic*, this discussion occurs in the context of Plato's third proof of the central thesis that the just man is happier than the unjust: in what he regards as the 'greatest and most decisive' (9, 583b6-7) argument for this thesis, Plato offers two distinct criteria for the evaluation of pleasure, the first on the basis of purity and the second on truth. According to both criteria, Plato argues, the pleasures of the philosopher – who has earlier in the *Republic* turned out to be identical to the just

³ I follow the convention of translating *lupē* as 'pain', though 'pain' arguably has a narrower meaning in English than what the Greeks meant by *lupē*. Thus J. C. B. Gosling (trans. and comm.), *Plato, Philebus [Philebus]* (Oxford, 1975) prefers to translate the word as 'distress'.

⁴ In the *Gorgias*, Plato's interest in pleasure and pain appears limited to the goal of refuting the hedonism of Callicles, who has a rather impoverished view of the variety of pleasures that may be pursued. In the *Timaeus*, on the other hand, the treatment of pleasure and pain concerns only the pleasures and pains of the body (64a).

person – are the most pleasant.⁵ The criterion of purity yields this result by showing that only the philosopher’s pleasures are pure, all others being impure, i.e., mixed with pain. For the purposes of this paper I leave aside the criterion of truth, except to note that it ranks pleasures with respect to their truth, or reality, on the basis of the ‘degrees of reality’ theory, a component of the theory of Forms put forward in the central books of the *Republic*.⁶

Given the absence of the Forms in the *Philebus* – whether or not because they have been abandoned – it is unsurprising that this approach to evaluating pleasure does not figure in it, although the *Philebus* introduces other ways of speaking of the *truth* of pleasures, most interestingly by treating pleasures as propositional attitudes bearing truth-value.⁷ This has been fertile ground for scholarship, though again, I leave it aside

⁵ Frede, ‘Rumpelstiltskin’, has argued that the two criteria yield inconsistent results, the criterion of truth is considerably more exclusive than the criterion of purity, the former resulting in a much smaller class of superior pleasures than the latter. I argue in Erginel, ‘Inconsistency’, that this criticism is unfounded.

⁶ For a discussion of this theory, see G. Vlastos, ‘Degrees of Reality in Plato’, in R. Bambrough (ed.), *New Essays in Plato and Aristotle* (New York, 1965), 1-19 (repr. in G. Vlastos, *Platonic Studies* (Princeton, 1981), 58-75); and G. Santas, ‘The Form of the Good in Plato’s *Republic*’, *Philosophical Inquiry*, 2 (1980), 374–403 (repr. in J. Anton and A. Preus (eds.), *Essays in Ancient Greek Philosophy*, vol. ii (Albany, 1983), 232–63).

⁷ It should be noted that, as in *Republic* 9’s criterion of truth (my reading of which is in Erginel, ‘Inconsistency’), in the *Philebus* (51b-53c) too Plato takes the pleasantness of

to focus on the *purity* of pleasure, and the way in which it may be mixed with pain.⁸ Having introduced and discussed the pleasures that are mixed with pains (45a-50d), Plato raises the possibility of pleasures that are not so mixed – pure pleasures – at 51b-52d. Here he compares the two kinds of pleasure, and declares the pure pleasures to be superior in that only they belong to the class of things possessing measure or limit (τῶν ἐμμέτρων, 52d1). The crucial upshot of this is as follows:

καὶ σύμπασα ἡδονὴ σμικρὰ μεγάλης καὶ ὀλίγη πολλῆς, καθαρὰ λύπης, ἡδίων
καὶ ἀληθεστέρα καὶ καλλίων γίγνοιτ' ἄν.⁹ (53b10-c2)

a pleasure to depend on the nature of its object. In the latter case, however, there is no apparent reference to the theory of Forms.

⁸ D. Frede (trans. and comm.), *Plato, Philebus [Philebus]* (Indianapolis, 1993), xlvi, and T. Irwin, *Plato's Ethics* (Oxford, 1995), 329, take impure pleasure to be a species of false pleasure, though this characterization has been disputed, for instance by Whiting ('Fools'). Other recent discussions of the truth and falsity of pleasure in the *Philebus* include V. Harte, 'The *Philebus* on Pleasure: The Good, the Bad and the False', *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, 104 (2004), 111-28; and M. Evans, 'Plato on the Possibility of Hedonic Mistakes', *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy*, 35 (2008), 89-124.

⁹ I have used the current OCT's of Plato's dialogues for the Greek text (Duke et al. for vol. I, Slings for the *Republic*, and Burnet for the rest), with the exception of the *Gorgias*, for which I use E. R. Dodds, *Plato, Gorgias. A Revised Text with Introduction and Commentary [Gorgias]* (Oxford, 1959). Translations of the *Philebus*

any pleasure that is unmixed with pain, however small in size or number, would be pleasanter, truer, and more beautiful than impure pleasure that is great in size or number.

The ranking of the goods at the end of the *Philebus* (66a-67b), moreover, makes room only for pure pleasures, excluding all others from the list.¹⁰

In both the *Republic* and the *Philebus*, therefore, Plato makes bold claims of great significance for the dialogue's primary concerns, about the superior pleasantness of pure pleasures compared to pleasures that are mixed with pain. It would seem rather important for the interpretation and assessment of these claims, then, to investigate the nature of pain, and the precise manner in which it comes to be mixed with some pleasures. Yet scholars have shown surprisingly little interest in pain in these works,

are based on Frede, *Philebus*, with modifications. All other translations are mine unless otherwise noted.

¹⁰ Plato identifies pure pleasures as having the fifth rank, mentioning a sixth position but leaving it unspecified what would occupy the position. It has been argued that Plato had in mind the impure but necessary pleasures, but refrained from identifying them because they are not good. See Frede, *Philebus*, 76 n. 2; R. Hackforth, *Plato's Examination of Pleasure, A Translation of the Philebus, with Introduction and Commentary [Examination]* (Cambridge, 1945), 128; and P. M. Lang, 'The Ranking of the Goods at *Philebus* 66a-67b', *Phronesis*, 55 (2010), 153-69 at 153. See also E. A. Austin, 'Fools and Malicious Pleasure in Plato's *Philebus*', *History of Philosophy Quarterly*, 29 (2012), 125-39, who argues that the impure pleasure of 'philosophically refuting fools and the self-blind' in particular belongs in the best life.

and most of what has been written follows a line of interpretation that, I believe, misrepresents Plato's thought.¹¹ This misrepresentation, moreover, is uncharitable to Plato, as it saddles Plato with an implausible view of pain and renders his claims on the subject much less appealing. We would do well, then, to heed Plato's own instruction that 'we cannot adequately examine pleasure separately from pain' (*Phileb.*, 31b5-6).

The received view of Plato's thought on pain has been endorsed most prominently in Frede's influential work on the *Philebus*. On her interpretation of the *Philebus*, pleasure and pain are 'identified with' the *processes* of restoration and destruction or disintegration, respectively, of the natural and harmonious condition of a living organism.¹² The key passage on which this identification rests is 31a8-32b4, especially 32a9-b4:

¹¹ Even in such a comprehensive work as Gosling and Taylor, *Greeks*, and despite their extended discussion of pleasures that are mixed with pain, no account of pain itself can be found. M. Evans, 'Plato and the Meaning of Pain' ['Pain'], *Apeiron*, 40 (2007), 71-93, offers a detailed examination of pain in the *Philebus*, though he focuses on a different aspect of pain than what I discuss here. D. Wolfsdorf, *Pleasure in Ancient Greek Philosophy [Pleasure]* (Cambridge, 2013) devotes significantly more space to pain than is typical, though I disagree with his reading, as I explain below.

¹² Frede, *Philebus*, xlii-xliv. She writes that the dialogue offers a 'general definition of pleasure and pain as restoration and destruction, respectively' (xliv). Likewise, we find in D. Frede, *Platon, Philebos, Übersetzung und Kommentar [Philebos]* (Göttingen, 1997), 229 n. 13: 'The summary at 32b brings this uncertainty [about pleasure and pain] to an end. It explains the processes of destruction and restoration themselves as

τὸ ἐκ τῆς ἀπειρου καὶ πέρατος κατὰ φύσιν ἔμψυχον γεγονὸς εἶδος, ὅπερ ἔλεγον ἐν τῷ πρόσθεν, ὅταν μὲν τοῦτο φθείρηται, τὴν μὲν φθορὰν λύπην εἶναι, τὴν δ' εἰς τὴν αὐτῶν οὐσίαν ὁδόν, ταύτην δὲ αἶ ἄλλιν τὴν ἀναχώρησιν πάντων ἡδονήν.

Whenever the natural combination of the unlimited and the limit that forms a live organism, as I explained before, is destroyed, this destruction is (a) pain, while the return towards its own nature, this general restoration, is (a) pleasure.¹³

Frede takes this passage to mean that pleasure and pain are opposed processes, moving towards, and away from, the harmonious condition, respectively.¹⁴ She notes that a number of qualifications are introduced later in the dialogue, namely that these processes must be perceived for there to be pleasure and pain (a point to which I will return shortly) and that memory and desire play an important role in these processes. Pleasure and pain are therefore not identical to, and cannot be defined as, simply the processes of restoration and destruction. Frede leaves it unclear whether she ultimately endorses a qualified definition or identity statement, yet a crucial feature remains

pleasure and pain' (*Die Zusammenfassung von 32b macht dieser Unsicherheit jedoch ein Ende. Sie erklärt die Prozesse von Auflösung und Wiederherstellung selbst zu Lust und Unlust.*)

¹³ A crucial difference from Frede's translation here is my addition of indefinite articles in parentheses, which captures the possibility of reading the Greek as merely making a claim about one kind of pain (and pleasure). I will address the significance of this possibility in section 7.

¹⁴ Plato refers to the condition in which the natural combination of the limit (πέρας) and the unlimited (ἄπειρον) occurs as a 'harmony' (ἁρμονία) at 31c11 and 31d4.

constant in her interpretation, concerning the necessary conditions for pleasure and pain: the processes of restoration and destruction are necessary conditions for pleasure and pain, respectively. On this *symmetrical* analysis of pleasure and pain, pleasure occurs *only* during the process of restoration while pain occurs *only* during the process of destruction.

The pleasure component of this view is undoubtedly of great interest, but it is the pain component that is the concern of the present paper. This view of pain may be called the ‘process’ view of pain, since on this view pain occurs only during a particular process, that of the destruction of the natural state.¹⁵ Frede’s interpretation of pain in the *Philebus* as a process has not been challenged in the recent literature as far as I am aware, and it has been endorsed by those who have addressed the issue. Thus Evans, Arenson, Fletcher, Harte, Whiting, and Price take it as evident that pain should be understood in accordance with the process view.¹⁶ Against this view I would like to

¹⁵ In what follows, ‘the process view’ refers to the process view *of pain*, though the symmetrical analysis discussed above takes pleasure to be a process too, and could be taken to involve a process view *of pleasure*. This view of pain may also be characterized as ‘unidirectional’ (as I do in my ‘Psychology’) since on this view pain occurs only during one of the two opposed processes, moving in only one direction. On the symmetrical analysis, *both* pleasure and pain are unidirectional in this sense, each occurring only during one of the two opposed processes.

¹⁶ Evans, ‘Pain’, considers alternative ways to formulate Plato’s theory of pain in the *Philebus*, all of which require the animal in pain to be undergoing a ‘destructive process’ with respect to the animal’s body or soul, however the other conditions are to

be specified. Thus he begins with the thesis that ‘for any animal A and any destructive process D, if A is undergoing D, then A is undergoing pain’, and all following formulations involve as a necessary condition the existence of *some* destructive process. K. E. Arenson, ‘Natural and Neutral States in Plato’s *Philebus*’ [‘Natural’], *Apeiron*, 44 (2011), 191-209 at 196, similarly, takes restorations and destructions or depletions to be ‘processes that are required in order to experience pleasure and pain’. In the light of the perception requirement, she argues that it is not merely restorations and destructions ‘that constitute pleasure and pain, respectively, but *perceived* changes – *perceived* restorations and destructions’ (197). E. Fletcher, ‘Plato on Pure Pleasure and the Best Life’, *Phronesis*, 59 (2014), 113-42 at 115-17, argues that at 32a-b, Socrates associates pleasure and pain with ‘specific changes in the condition of a living organism, processes of restoration in the case of pleasure, and processes of destruction in the case of pain’. Likewise, V. Harte, ‘Desire, Memory, and the Authority of Soul: Plato, *Philebus* 35c-d’ [‘Desire’], *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy*, 46 (2014), 33-72 at 37, claims that Socrates identifies pleasure and pain ‘as consisting in processes in which an animal’s natural harmonious condition undergoes destruction (pain) or restoration (pleasure)’. On Whiting’s (‘Fools’, 26) reading, bodily pleasures and pains ‘involve departures from and returns to harmonious conditions that are natural to the organisms subject to these pleasures and pains’. A. W. Price, ‘Varieties of Pleasure in Plato and Aristotle’ [‘Varieties’], *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy*, 52 (2017), 177-208 at 178 also maintains that in the *Philebus*, ‘two opposite movements or processes’ give rise to pleasure and pain: ‘a restoration of the harmony’ of living creatures, and ‘a disruption of the harmony’, respectively. Wolfsdorf seems to belong

put forward what we may call the ‘state’ view of pain, according to which the necessary condition for pain is not a process of destruction but rather a state of disharmony, the absence of the natural and harmonious state. On this alternative interpretation, pain may occur during *both* of the processes of destruction and restoration since the state of imbalance or lack of harmony obtains in both cases. Given the traditional view of pleasure as occurring exclusively during processes of restoration, the state view of pain construes pleasure and pain *asymmetrically*: it pairs the process of restoration not with the process of destruction, but rather with a state of disharmony.¹⁷ I aim to show, in what follows, that the scholarly consensus around the

in this camp as well, insofar as his reading takes any instance of impure pleasure, by itself, to be mixed with pain only sequentially and not simultaneously, simultaneous mixture being possible only when a destructive process is accompanied by a distinct source of pleasure, such as the pain of hunger and the pleasure of anticipating a meal coexisting (*Pleasure*, 55, 79, 85). (I will have more to say on the two kinds of mixture shortly.) It should be noted that many of the scholars who endorse the process view of pain do not appear to have much at stake regarding this issue. Their interpretations, I believe, could be brought in line with the alternative view I defend without great difficulty and would benefit from doing so.

¹⁷ In line with the reasoning in n. 15 above, this view may be characterized as ‘bidirectional’ (as in my ‘Psychology’). This characterization, however, seems to suggest that pain occurs only during one of the two opposed processes, and may not occur in a stable state of imbalance. There is some evidence in the *Philebus* that Plato took the human body to be always experiencing either deterioration or restoration with

process view of pain is untenable, and that it is rather the state view of pain that we find in the *Philebus* as well as in the earlier works tackling the subject, namely the *Gorgias*, the *Republic*, and the *Timaeus*.

To clarify the contrast between the process and state views of pain, we may consider what they entail with respect to one of Plato's favourite examples in this context, thirst. On the process view, the pain of thirst may exist only while we are 'emptying', getting increasingly thirsty, given that the relevant process of destruction is a necessary condition for any pain. In other words, it is not possible to experience the pain of thirst while we are drinking and thereby restoring our body's harmonious state, during which process pleasure alone may exist. The state view, on the other hand, allows the pain of thirst both while getting increasingly dehydrated and while we rehydrate. It follows from this that pain does not have to suddenly cease when we begin to rehydrate.

It should be obvious that these two views about pain also yield very different results about the nature of mixed pleasures: on the process view, pleasure and pain cannot be experienced simultaneously with respect to the same condition, given that

respect to each condition (e.g., always undergoing either the process of dehydrating or rehydrating): he points out that this follows from the doctrine of some wise men (οἱ σοφοί, 43a2) that everything is always in flux, presumably alluding to Heracliteanism. Plato shows how his account could easily accommodate the doctrine of flux, but he does not commit himself to the doctrine, nor does his account presuppose it. (Cf. my 'Psychology', 290 n. 8.)

the former can only be experienced during the process of restoration, while the latter can only be experienced during the process of deterioration. The process view allows, of course, the simultaneous mixture of pleasures and pains that arise independently, due to the processes of restoration and destruction occurring with respect to distinct conditions or natural states.¹⁸ It does not allow, however, the simultaneous mixture of a pleasure and the corresponding pain, resulting from the processes of restoration and destruction with respect to the same natural state, given that one cannot undergo both processes with respect to the same natural state at the same time.¹⁹ Consequently,

¹⁸ It is, of course, consistent with the process view to enjoy the pleasure of quenching one's thirst while suffering from a headache.

¹⁹ The impossibility in question would follow from the principle of opposites in *Rep.* 4, 436b-e: it states that the same thing cannot do or undergo opposite things at the same time. Since the processes of restoration and destruction are opposite movements, they cannot take place in the same thing simultaneously. One might wonder whether this is inconsistent with the myth at *Gorgias* 493a-c, where we find the metaphors of sieves and leaky jars for the souls and soul-parts, respectively, containing insatiable desires. Here the same container might seem to undergo the opposite movements of filling and emptying simultaneously. But in fact a leaky container cannot be simultaneously filling and emptying: even though we may pour into the container while it leaks, the net outcome will be either positive (filling), negative (emptying), or neutral (remaining at the same level of fullness), depending on the relative magnitudes of what flows in and out. In the relevant texts, the restoration model associates pleasure and pain with the restoration and destruction of *natural states*, presumably as the net outcome of all

mixed pleasures can be mixed only in the sense of pain preceding and following the corresponding pleasure, that is, as sequential mixtures.²⁰ On the state view, on the other hand, the pleasure and the corresponding pain can coexist during the process of restoration. Mixed pleasures, therefore, may consist of pleasures that are not only *sequentially* but also *simultaneously* mixed with the corresponding pain.²¹ The significance of this difference will become clearer below.²²

restorative and destructive factors, not with each of these factors individually. Otherwise Plato would be claiming, implausibly, that someone whose body temperature is rising due to fever may experience pleasure just because she took some inadequate medication that resulted only in a slightly lower rate at which her temperature is rising.

²⁰ When we satisfy our naturally recurring desires, such as those for food, drink, and sex, it seems that the sequential mixture of pleasure and pain is such that every pleasure is both preceded and followed by pain at some point (though perhaps not immediately). But this is clearly not the case with all mixed pleasures: one can have non-recurring and one-way sequential mixtures when, for instance, one enjoys being cooled after suffering from extreme heat, since one may thereafter successfully avoid the heat.

²¹ In what follows, the ‘simultaneous’ vs. ‘sequential’ mixtures of pleasure and pain refer to the manner in which corresponding pairs of pleasure and pain are mixed.

²² The claim that pain can be experienced also during the process of restoration refers, of course, to processes of restoration that follow painful processes of destruction. If the restoration model applies to pure pleasures as well, as most scholars believe, then there

2. Fundamentals of the restoration model

Any attempt to understand Plato's account of pleasure and pain in terms of restoration and destruction needs to address two basic issues: the extent to which this model occurs in Plato's dialogues, and the further condition that the restoration or destruction in question be perceived.²³

(i) *The restoration model in the Platonic corpus*

The account of pleasure and pain in terms of restoration and destruction, respectively, is found not only in the *Philebus*, but also in the other works mentioned above – *Gorgias*, *Republic*, and *Timaeus* – at varying degrees of sophistication. 'The restoration model', as we may call it, appears in the *Timaeus* in virtually identical form to what the *Philebus* offers:

τὸ μὲν παρὰ φύσιν καὶ βίαιον γιγνόμενον ἄθρόον παρ' ἡμῖν πάθος ἀλγεινόν, τὸ δ' εἰς φύσιν ἀπιὸν πάλιν ἄθρόον ἡδύ. (*Timaeus* 64c8-d2)

An unnatural affection that occurs within us violently and suddenly is painful, while a sudden return to the natural state, is pleasant.²⁴

would be no pain during such a process of restoration. Perceived restorations that occur during painless lacks ('ἐνδείας...ἀλύπους', *Phileb.* 51b5-6), therefore, would not involve any pain, but rather pure pleasure.

²³ As I discuss in section 7 below, both 'destruction' and the Greek word it translates, *phthora*, can refer to either a process or a state.

²⁴ I use 'affection' for πάθος rather than 'disturbance' as in D. J. Zeyl (trans. and intro.), *Plato, Timaeus [Timaeus]* (Indianapolis, 2000), since both πάθος and παθήματα are used neutrally in these passages, without the negative connotations of

Leaving aside for the moment the question whether pain should be understood in terms of the process or state view, it seems clear from this and surrounding passages that pain occurs in the absence of the natural state (ἀλλοτριούμενα μὲν λύπας, 64e6-65a1), while pleasure occurs during the restoration of, or the return to (καθιστάμενα δὲ εἰς τὸ αὐτὸ πάλιν ἡδονάς, 65a1), the natural state.²⁵ This framework for explaining the nature of pleasure and pain is in complete agreement with the model we find at 31a8-32b4 and elsewhere in the *Philebus*. In the *Gorgias* and the *Republic*, on the other hand, we find what may be considered relatively rudimentary versions of the model, in terms of ‘filling’ (πλήρωσις) rather than restoration. In the *Gorgias*, the model appears briefly, in the context of Socrates’ argument against Callicles’ hedonism. In the course of this argument (to which I return below), Socrates obtains Callicles’ consent regarding two theses that capture the filling model: (a) the filling (πλήρωσις) of a lack, such as drinking when thirsty, is pleasure (496e1-4), and (b) every lack (ἔνδεια) and appetite is painful (496d3-4). In *Republic* 9, similarly, we find that (a) being filled (πληροῦσθαι) with what is proper to our nature is pleasant (585d11), while (b) hunger, thirst, and the

‘disturbance’. Zeyl also translates ἀθρόον as ‘intense’, whereas ‘sudden’ would be a better translation, since it reflects the temporal sense that Plato makes clearer in a similar *Philebus* passage, which I discuss in the next subsection.

²⁵ The model is discussed here in terms of bodily pleasure and pain, which is the only kind of pleasure and pain that Plato is concerned with in those passages.

like are a kind of emptiness or emptying (κένωσις)²⁶ related to the body's state (585a8-b1). Every pleasure, Plato argues in the *Republic*, results from a filling (πλήρωσις, 585b9), which involves an empty vessel that is being filled (τὸ πληρούμενον), while pain results from the loss of the fullness of this vessel.²⁷

While we may plausibly take Plato to operate with the same restoration model throughout, the *Timaeus* and the *Philebus* offer a more advanced version of that model than what we find in the *Gorgias* and the *Republic*. To be sure, Plato treats pleasure as a πλήρωσις in the *Timaeus* (e.g., 65a3-4) and the *Philebus* (e.g., 31e8, 42c9-d3) as well. Yet it is important that this is not the only concept at his disposal, since the 'filling' model is not equally appropriate for all cases, and construing pleasure and pain in terms of the restoration and destruction of a natural state makes better sense of many cases, such as the pain caused by extreme heat and the pleasure of being cooled. It is evident that, in such cases, describing the pain and the pleasure in terms of a lack and a filling, respectively, is rather metaphorical and not sufficiently explanatory:

²⁶ I will address the question whether we should read *kenōsis* as 'emptiness' or 'emptying' in section 5 below. At this point I describe the model neutrally between the process and state readings.

²⁷ Plato's discussion of the truth and reality of pleasures throughout 585a-e leaves no doubt that the filling model is meant to explain not only bodily pleasure: all pleasure is to be understood as a filling process, of the body or the soul, with what is proper to our nature. In Erginel, 'Inconsistency', I address and reject Gosling and Taylor's view that the *Republic* contains a 'fatal ambiguity' about whether pleasure is a process or a state (*Greeks*, 122-6). Cf. Warren, 'Patients', 123 n. 15.

being too hot is not helpfully described as a lack, and likewise for describing cooling down as a filling. It should be clear that what has been said here is compatible with both the process and state views of pain.

We may see in the above passages the basis for the standard view that ‘although Plato’s theory of pleasure clearly evolved over time, his overall understanding of pleasure as replenishment remained unchanged’.²⁸ Thus the standard view has been that the restoration model is meant to account for all pleasure, in all the works where it occurs. Yet a number of scholars have denied that Plato takes a single model to be applicable to all kinds of pleasure.²⁹ In this paper, however, I refrain from

²⁸ G. Van Riel, *Pleasure and the Good Life: Plato, Aristotle and the Neoplatonists* [*Good Life*] (Leiden, 2000), 7. Likewise, A. E. Taylor, *A Commentary on Plato’s Timaeus* [*Timaeus*] (Oxford, 1928), 448, comments regarding the *Timaeus* passages on pleasure that ‘the drift of the whole theory is exactly that of the discussions of pleasure in the *Philebus* and *Republic ix*’.

²⁹ See, especially, A. E. Taylor (trans. and intro.), *Plato: Philebus and Epinomis* [*Philebus*] (London, 1956), 56-7; Gosling and Taylor, *Greeks*; G. R. Carone, ‘Hedonism and the Pleasureless Life in Plato’s *Philebus*’ [‘Hedonism’], *Phronesis*, 45 (2000), 257-83; G. R. Carone, *Plato’s Cosmology and its Ethical Dimensions* (Cambridge, 2005) at 104-9; E. Fletcher, ‘The Divine Method and the Disunity of Pleasure in the *Philebus*’, *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, 55 (2017), 179-208; and Price, ‘Varieties’. For a response to Gosling and Taylor’s view regarding the *Philebus*, see, for instance, T. M. Tuozzo, ‘The General Account of Pleasure in Plato’s

tackling this thorny issue, since I am interested in the psychology of pleasure and pain *as understood in Plato's restoration model*: if indeed he believes that some pleasures fall outside the scope of the restoration model, these also fall outside the scope of the present paper.

I am, moreover, concerned primarily with the restoration model's construal of pain and pleasure that is mixed with pain, whereas the purported cases of non-restorative pleasure are typically pure pleasures. Critics of the standard view also point out, however, that Plato does not, in the *Philebus*, apply the restoration model to non-bodily pleasures and pains, adding that it does not seem 'appropriate' to do so.³⁰ While it is true that Plato's treatment of the impure pleasures and pains belonging to the soul at 47d-50d does not *explicitly* apply the restoration model, it is far from obvious that we are not expected to extend the model to cover the psychic cases. Explaining such cases as the pain of malice and the pleasure of malicious laughter in terms of the destruction and restoration of a *natural psychic state* would not be a stretch for Plato, given that he would classify a malicious, i.e., non-virtuous, person as being in a sub-optimal psychic state. In fact, the text of the *Philebus* strongly favours extending the restoration model to psychic pains and impure pleasures, given: (a) the seamless transition at 47d5 from the treatment of impure bodily pleasures as restorative to the impure pleasures of the soul, without any indication of leaving behind the restoration model; (b) the explicit reference at 47d8-9 to the earlier remark about the existence of

Philebus', *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, 34 (1996), 495-513; and Evans, 'Pain', 83-4.

³⁰ Gosling and Taylor, *Greeks*, 136.

completely psychic impure pleasures, which occurs in a context where the restoration model was clearly being employed (46b8-c1); (c) the treatment of *all* impure pleasures – including the psychic ones – as a family or tribe (συγγενεῖς, 46b5), to be offered a common explanation; (d) the complete absence of an alternative account or model for impure psychic pleasures. Whether or not some, or all, pure pleasures are non-restorative, therefore, it seems fair to conclude that the nature of the competition – impure pleasure, both bodily and psychic – depends on how pain is understood by the restoration model.³¹

(ii) *The perception condition*

What I have said so far does not represent a complete description of pain according to the process and state views, for the same reason that pleasure is not simply the process of restoring the harmonious condition. This is because Plato imposes a further condition on both pleasure and pain, that the phenomenon in question be perceived by the soul. It is a well-known feature of the *Philebus* that Plato introduces the perception condition at 43b-d, where we are told that it is not any ‘downward and upward’ –

³¹ Given Plato’s silence on the matter, it is difficult to imagine what kind of restoration might be at play in some impure psychic pleasures. Price, ‘Varieties’, 178-83, highlights this difficulty particularly in the case of anticipatory pleasures, concluding that ‘pleasures of replenishment’ are not the only variety in the *Philebus*. While I agree that the *Philebus* leaves it unclear how the restoration model might be applied to certain pleasures, I believe the above considerations suggest that Plato meant the model to be applied beyond the bodily pleasures through which the model was introduced.

destructive and restorative – change that causes pain and pleasure, respectively, but rather such changes that are also sufficiently large or strong (μεγάλοι).³² The reason for this is that, of the many changes they undergo, living organisms perceive (αἰσθάνεται) only those that are sufficiently large or strong, while the moderate and small or weak ones (μέτριά τε καὶ μικρά) escape our notice. Plato’s example of an unperceived change sheds light on his taxonomy: we do not perceive growing (αὐξανόμενοι, 43b2), presumably because it happens too gradually, indicating that the magnitude in question concerns both the size of the change and the time it takes. It follows that even if everything is always in flux – as the wise men mentioned at 43a claim – we will experience neither pleasure nor pain (thus being in a neutral state) when the change occurring is too small and/or too slow to be perceived.³³

It is worth noting that the perception condition for pleasure and pain was also in place in the *Timaeus*. When Plato sets out to explain the causes of bodily pleasure and pain, he explains how perception of changes in the appropriate body parts take place, as follows:

³² This builds on Plato’s treatment of how the soul perceives some affections (παθήματα) of the body as they ‘pass through both body and soul’ while others are ‘extinguished within the body before reaching the soul, leaving it unaffected’ (33d2-6).

³³ For a helpful discussion of the perception condition, see Evans, ‘Pain’. The perception condition introduces the possibility of a contrast between the natural state, which may be ‘inaccessible’ (Van Riel, *Good Life*, 26) or ‘unachievable’ (Arenson, ‘Natural’, 192) for human beings, and the neutral state, which occurs whenever the soul does not perceive any change.

τὸ μὲν γὰρ κατὰ φύσιν εὐκίνητον, ὅταν καὶ βραχὺ πάθος εἰς αὐτὸ ἐμπίπτῃ,
διαδίδωσιν κύκλῳ μόρια ἕτερα ἑτέροις ταῦτὸν ἀπεργαζόμενα, μέχρι περ ἂν ἐπὶ τὸ
φρόνιμον ἐλθόντα ἐξαγγείλῃ τοῦ ποιήσαντος τὴν δύναμιν. (64b3-6)

When what is easily moved by nature is contacted by even a small affection, the affection is passed on in a chain reaction, one part affecting another in the same way as it was affected, until it reaches the center of consciousness and proclaims the property that produced the reaction.

In line with the *Philebus* account, moreover, we are told that changes that are intense and sudden are perceived whereas those that are ‘mild and gradual’ (ἡρέμα καὶ κατὰ σμικρόν) are not (64d3–4). Less widely recognized, however, is that an embryonic version of the perception condition can be found in *Republic* 9. In the context of explaining the difference between pleasure and the cessation of pain, Plato argues that both pleasure and pain are, as they arise in the soul, a kind of motion, whereas the intermediate state between them is a calm state (ἡσυχία) where no such motion exists (583e9-584a2). Even a bodily pleasure or pain, Plato suggests, involves a psychic motion, which we may reasonably understand as referring to perception, though the dense account in Book 9 has no room for the details.³⁴

At this point we may state the difference between the process and state views with greater clarity, as alternative views of the conditions under which pain can occur.

³⁴ C. Bobonich, *Plato's Utopia Recast: His Later Ethics and Politics* (Oxford, 2002), 351-4, seems to overlook this in arguing that the account of pleasure in *Republic* 9 is unsophisticated and that the perception condition does not come into play until the *Timaeus* and the *Philebus*.

Given the common understanding that pleasure occurs only when the process of restoration is perceived, the former view takes pain to occur, symmetrically, only when the process of deterioration is perceived. The latter view, by contrast, takes pain to occur only when the absence of the natural state is perceived, whether the process of destruction or restoration is taking place.³⁵ On the state view, therefore, impure pleasures can consist of a simultaneous mixture of pleasure and pain because pleasure results from the perceived restoration while pain results, at the same time, from the perceived distance from the natural state.³⁶ It is worth emphasizing that the alternative views are not construed as definitions of pain, since a variety of definitions are possible under each view.³⁷ I leave aside, for the present purposes, what Plato takes the

³⁵ Presumably pain involves a perception not merely of one's not being in the natural state, but also of how far one has deviated from it, the distance between one's condition and the natural state determining the magnitude of the pain. Plato does not, however, supply such details, which his charitable readers must do instead.

³⁶ It follows from the state view that simultaneous mixtures of pleasure and pain are possible, but the stronger thesis that *all* mixed pleasures are *necessarily* simultaneous mixtures does not follow. There are, however, reasons for thinking that Plato actually endorses the stronger thesis in the *Gorgias* and the *Republic*, which I address in sections 4 and 5.

³⁷ See, for instance, Evans, 'Pain', for a discussion of alternative ways in which Plato may be taken to define pain. Evans casts all of the alternative formulations (including the one he endorses) in terms of the process view, taking pain to occur only during the

definition of pain to be, focusing rather on a particular necessary condition of pain and whether it should be understood in terms of a process or a state.

3. General considerations in favour of the state view

In this section I put forward, before addressing the textual evidence in each of the four dialogues separately, two general considerations in favour of interpreting Plato as endorsing the state view of pain.

(i) *The principle of charity*

The first general consideration that I would like to raise in favor of attributing to Plato the state view of pain derives from the principle of charity: other things being equal, we ought to prefer interpreting Plato as holding this view, since it is by far the more plausible view of pain. The notion that we experience pain only during the process of deterioration strikes me as implausible, since it seems implausible that pain disappears completely as soon as restoration begins. According to the process view of pain, my pain of hunger – which would actually be the pain of getting increasingly hungry – ceases completely as soon as the process of filling my stomach begins, even if I had been starving to death. To be more specific, on this view the pain ceases as soon as the perceived process of getting emptier comes to an end, whether or not I have started to perceive a process of filling or restoration. Consider, moreover, cases of severe pain, such as being stretched on a rack or exposed to extreme heat. The process view would have us believe that the pain in such cases ends as soon as the person is no longer

process of destruction (although I take the essence of his interpretation to be compatible with the state view).

deteriorating perceptibly, for instance because the tension of the rack is being gradually reduced, or the temperature is dropping slowly. There would also be no pain at all if the person could be kept at the same level of destruction or even further deteriorating but with too little variation in the level of destruction to be perceived.³⁸ Plato's model, moreover, applies to all kinds of pain, including pains involved in bodily injury, which can only be painful while the injury (i.e., the destruction process) is taking place according to the process view. In a case of spraining one's ankle, for instance, this view takes pain to exist only during the brief moment when the spraining occurs, while the lengthy healing process, which begins immediately afterwards, is supposed to be painless. As anyone who has torn a ligament knows, however, there is much pain on the path to recovery.

It may be pointed out, on the other hand, that the process view does more justice to many ordinary pleasures of satisfying a desire, which may appear extremely, or even purely, pleasant. Having a wholesome meal when moderately hungry and at the speed one wishes, for instance, one may think that the pleasure far outweighs the pain, or that the experience contains no pain at all. On such matters we may encounter a clash of intuitions, and I do not intend to adjudicate between them here. It should be pointed out, however, that there is a concrete difference between the arguably counterintuitive entailments of the state and process views: Plato is well aware of the lure of impure pleasures, and makes significant effort to explain why people may *mistakenly* believe that impure pleasures are extremely pleasant or even purely pleasant (e.g., at *Rep.* 9, 583d-584d and *Phileb.* 45b-c). By contrast, he has no interest

³⁸ See also Erginel, 'Psychology', 297.

in defending the claim that pain disappears completely whenever restoration begins. Supposing that we face a psychologically counterintuitive result on either view, we ought to attribute to Plato the one that he is prepared to defend – whether successfully or not – rather than treating him as unaware of, and unprepared to defend his position against, the counter-intuitive consequences of the view.

In evaluating the plausibility or otherwise of Plato's position, we should also keep in mind the distinction between a variety of pleasures and pains that may co-occur during what appears to be a single experience, such as drinking or getting thirsty: When Plato discusses thirst and the concomitant pain, he has in mind solely the perceived dehydration of one's body (31e10-32a1). Parallel to this pain, we may experience a pain associated with the fear that we may die of dehydration, which would disappear altogether as soon as we have found a source that supplies water (even if the source provides water slowly and it will take time to quench our thirst). There may be, therefore, *some* pain related to dehydration and rehydration that ceases completely as soon as the restoration process begins. But to claim, as the process view must, that the pain of thirst or dehydration too ceases at this point is an altogether different matter.³⁹

³⁹ In the *Philebus*, Plato leaves no room for doubt about the distinctions between (a) a basic pleasure or pain, such as eating (or hunger); (b) an anticipatory pleasure or pain related to (a), such as the pain of anticipating severe hunger (32b-c); and (c) a pleasure or pain resulting from reflecting on our condition, such as the pain arising from thinking about how ignorant we are (52b-c). (Cf. J. Warren, *The Pleasures of Reason in Plato, Aristotle, and the Hellenistic Hedonists* (Cambridge, 2014), 24-5.)

(ii) *The ancient medical tradition*

The second point I would like to raise is interpretive in a broad sense: it concerns not the ideas found in Plato's texts as such – to which I turn in the following sections – but the genealogy of those ideas. The restoration model that, as we have seen, Plato employs consistently across the relevant works appears to be based on widely held views in the ancient medical tradition, with which he would have been familiar. Taylor represents the commonly held view in arguing that the restoration model has its roots in Alcmaeon's doctrine that health consists in the balance of bodily opposites.⁴⁰ In a similar vein, Cornford contends that the account in the *Timaeus* of bodily health and disease largely follows the medical views of the time: 'the fundamental notion of nearly all Greek medicine was that health depends on a due balance of proportioned mixture of the ultimate constituents of the body. Where the schools differed was on the question, what these ultimate constituents are' (1935, 332).

That Plato's restoration model is rooted in the ancient medical tradition appears plain enough, but it has not been recognized that this connection provides further

⁴⁰ Taylor, *Timaeus*, 448, 587-9; and Taylor, *Philebus*, 56. Hackforth, *Examination*, 58, cites Taylor in agreement. Wolfsdorf (*Pleasure*, 35-7) too argues that the restoration model is based on the ancient medical tradition. For a discussion of the influence on Plato of various ancient medical authors, see F. M. Cornford (trans. and comm.), *Plato's Cosmology: The Timaeus of Plato [Cosmology]* (London, 1935; repr. Indianapolis, 1997), 332-43. For a recent treatment of Plato's complicated relationship with the ancient medical tradition, see also S. B. Levin, *Plato's Rivalry with Medicine: A Struggle and Its Dissolution* (Oxford, 2014).

reason to reject the process view of pain. Crucially for our purposes, disease and the attendant pains were understood in this tradition as resulting from a lack of balance and not some process of destruction of the balanced state. The author of *Diseases IV*, for instance, offers a version of the restoration model and explains the pain caused by an imbalance (excess) of phlegm:

εἰ δὲ ἐν τῇ κεφαλῇ μείνειε, πολλὸν ἂν πόνον παράσχοι τῇ κεφαλῇ, ἐν τῇσι φλεψὶν ἕόν· εἰ δὲ ὀλίγον, οὐκ ἂν ποιήσειε τοῦτο.⁴¹ (35.20-22)

If [much of it] were to remain in the head, it would cause the head much pain, being in the veins; while it would not do this if the quantity were small.⁴²

Philistion of Locri, on the other hand, maintains that we consist of the four elements – fire, air, water, and earth – each of which has its own power – the hot, cold, moist, and dry, respectively. Diseases, accordingly, result from an imbalance of these powers, such as an excess of heat, and not from the process of becoming too hot.⁴³ While this thesis is about diseases, which lead to pains, the hot and the cold are taken up *explicitly* in relation to pain in the Hippocratic *Ancient Medicine*:

⁴¹ É. Littré (ed.), *Oeuvres Complètes d'Hippocrate*, vol. 7: De semine, de natura pueri, de morbis iv (Paris, 1851).

⁴² Translation by I. M. Lonie, *The Hippocratic Treatises 'On Generation', 'On the Nature of the Child', 'Diseases IV', A Commentary* (Berlin, 1981). The surrounding passages offer further examples of pain caused by imbalance.

⁴³ M. Wellmann, *Fragmentsammlung der Griechischen Ärzte*, Band I: Sikelischen Ärzte, Akron, Philistion und des Diokles Von Karystos (Berlin, 1901), 110-11. (See also Cornford, *Cosmology*, 333).

ὄν μὲν ἂν δῆπου χρόνον μεμιγμένα αὐτὰ ἑαυτοῖς ἅμα τὸ θερμόν τε καὶ ψυχρόν ἐνῆ, οὐ λυπεῖ. κρῆσις γὰρ καὶ μετριότης τῷ μὲν θερμῷ γίνεται ἀπὸ τοῦ ψυχροῦ, τῷ δὲ ψυχρῷ ἀπὸ τοῦ θερμοῦ. ὅταν δ' ἀποκριθῆ χωρὶς ἑκάτερον, τότε λυπεῖ.
(16.3–7)

So long as the hot and cold in the body are mixed up together, they cause no pain. For the hot is tempered and moderated by the cold, and the cold by the hot. But when either is entirely separated from the other, then it causes pain.⁴⁴

Here we find that pain is absent when the hot and the cold are mixed, but present when they are separated. Pain does not, then, occur only during a process of destruction – getting too hot or too cold – but rather during the state of imbalance, whether one is moving away from balance or returning to it. It seems safe to conclude, therefore, that the precursor of Plato's restoration model in the medical tradition construes pain as occurring in a state of imbalance, during the processes of restoration and destruction alike, as the state view maintains.

4. *Gorgias*

In the *Gorgias* Socrates presents a complex and remarkable argument against Calliclean hedonism at 496b-497a, which turns out to contain the core of what I have called the state view of pain. The argument proceeds as follows, the translation reconstructed from the original format of questions and answers, by Socrates and Callicles, respectively:

⁴⁴ The text and translation are from W. H. S. Jones, *Hippocrates*, Volume I (Cambridge, Mass., 1923).

1. Doing well and doing badly are opposites (τὸναντίον, 495e2-4).
2. Opposites do not exist in the same thing at the same time, nor does the same thing lose opposites at the same time (495e6-9).⁴⁵
3. Hunger and thirst are, themselves, painful (πεινῆν αὐτὸ ἀνιαρόν ... καὶ τὸ διψῆν, 496d1-2).
4. Every lack and desire, therefore, is painful (ἅπασαν ἔνδειαν καὶ ἐπιθυμίαν ἀνιαρόν εἶναι, 496d3-4).⁴⁶
5. The filling of a lack (πλήρωσις τῆς ἐνδείας), such as drinking when thirsty, is pleasure (496e1-4).⁴⁷

⁴⁵ In these lines, Plato extrapolates from the case of health and disease to the key pair of opposites under discussion – doing well and doing badly – apparently on the grounds that all pairs of opposites are alike in this respect. Just as one cannot be healthy and sick at the same time (οὐ γὰρ ἅμα δήπου ὑγιαίνει τε καὶ νοσεῖ), Socrates argues, nor lose health and sickness at the same time (οὐδὲ ἅμα ἀπαλλάττεται ὑγείας τε καὶ νόσου), so the same holds in the case of the other pair (ἀνάγκη περὶ αὐτῶν ἔχειν ὥσπερ περὶ ὑγείας ἔχει καὶ νόσου), since they too are opposites (εἴπερ ἐναντία ἐστὶν ταῦτα ἀλλήλοις).

⁴⁶ The text does not contain a term corresponding to ‘therefore’. What corresponds to it, rather, is Callicles’ affirmative answer to Socrates’ question whether he needs to keep asking questions, or whether Callicles is willing to agree to the general statement. The cases of hunger and thirst are treated, apparently, as sufficient evidence for the general statement.

6. During the filling of a lack we experience a pleasure and a pain, in the same place and at the same time (λυπούμενον χαίρειν ... ἄμα, 496e4-6).
7. But it is impossible to do well and do badly at the same time (496e9-497a1).
8. Therefore, pleasure and pain are not the same things as doing well and doing badly (497a3-5).

This is then supplemented with the following:

9. Moreover, desires and the pain they involve cease at the same time as (ἄμα παύεται) the pleasure of satisfying the appetite (497c6-d1).
10. But it is impossible for goods and evils to cease together (497d1-3).
11. Therefore, once again, pleasures and pains are not the same things as goods and evils (497d4-5).

We encounter here, among other things, a clear and explicit rejection of the process view of pain, and an endorsement of the state view (at least insofar as the pains involved in the desires in question are concerned).⁴⁸ Socrates' anti-hedonist argument

⁴⁷ The qualification 'when thirsty' to Socrates' question at 496e1-2 is necessary since not all drinking is pleasure, and is implied by τούτου οὗ λέγεις at 496d7, referring to 'drinking when thirsty' (διψῶντα δὲ δὴ πίνειν) at 496d5-6. Cf. Dodds, *Gorgias*, 311.

⁴⁸ This passage in fact endorses, for the range of pleasures it covers, the stronger thesis that the pleasure involved in satisfying a desire is *always* mixed with pain simultaneously, given the unqualified claims that all lacks and desires are painful and that in satisfying them the pleasure and pain cease together. This does not seem to allow the possibility of a mixed pleasure being mixed only sequentially, even though the weaker thesis would suffice as far as the case against hedonism is concerned.

turns on the understanding that pleasure and the related pain coexist and cease at the same time, the pain of hunger and the pleasure of eating coexisting, for instance, and ceasing together when fullness is achieved. This, according to the argument, is precisely why hedonism is wrong, since doing well and doing badly, being opposites, cannot coexist in the same thing at the same time, nor can they be acquired or lost by the same thing at the same time.⁴⁹

It can be seen that the model put forward in the course of this argument contains two fundamental theses about desire that jointly entail the falsity of the process view of pain and confirm the state view:

The pain thesis: All desires (such as hunger and thirst) are painful.⁵⁰

The lack thesis: All desires are lacks.

Despite being unnecessary, the stronger thesis seems unavoidable given the absence of the perception condition in the *Gorgias* (which I discuss in n. 51 below): without this condition there is no room for claiming that a lack may not be painful even though filling it is pleasant (given the state view of pain).

⁴⁹ Van Riel (*Good Life*, 11) seems to think that Callicles agrees with Socrates that pleasure and pain occur together ‘though not at the same time and in the same respect’. But coexisting at the same time and in the same respect is precisely what the argument requires and is explicitly agreed upon at 496e4-6. Socrates’ argument would be ineffective against hedonism if it turned on the coexistence of, for instance, the pleasure of eating and the pain of a headache.

⁵⁰ The claim here is that all desires *involve* pain, not the clearly mistaken one that they simply *are* (or are kinds of) pain.

It follows from these two theses that desires persist as long as there is some lack, even if some filling has begun, and that since all desires are painful, pain too persists during the filling process, thus contradicting the process view. The first thesis is stated explicitly at (4), as following from the agreement at (3) that hunger and thirst are painful. It is less obvious from those lines (496d1-4), however, that the second thesis is being affirmed, since Socrates could conceivably have meant that all lacks and all desires are painful, without implying that all desires are lacks. But this would be very odd, given that he presents the joint general statement (that every lack and desire is painful) as following from the painfulness of hunger and thirst, which are desires that are obviously lacks. Insofar as we can generalize from the cases of hunger and thirst, Socrates seems to suggest, desires *are* lacks, affirming the lack thesis. The outstanding feature of this argument for our purposes is that the state view of pain entailed by the two theses is stated explicitly in the following lines, at (5)-(6), where Socrates argues that thirst, and the concomitant pain, continue while we take pleasure in drinking, which constitutes a filling of the lack in question. At (9), moreover, Socrates reaffirms that when the pleasure of satisfying an appetite ceases, so does the appetite itself, along with the pain that it involves.⁵¹

⁵¹ The perception requirement for pleasure and pain seems neither explicit nor implied in the *Gorgias*, and we may wonder whether introducing it to the argument would alter the conclusion of this argument. We might consider the possibility, for instance, that one may experience a pause in the restoration process at such a point that the lack is unperceived and thus painless but one feels pleased. It might seem, in such a case, that pleasure and pain do come apart, contrary to the argument's claim. But Plato would

An interpretive difficulty regarding this passage is that Plato does not specify the scope of the desires (ἐπιθυμῖαι) in question. It is possible, in principle, that the

dismiss such a case as illusory, since a pleasure must be a (perceived) filling and even if a phase in which we are neither filling nor emptying is physiologically possible (cf. n. 17), it would not *really* contain any pleasure. This would amount to thinking that the cessation of pain is pleasure, a mistake Plato identifies at *Rep.* 9, 584a9: ‘there is nothing sound in these illusions regarding the truth about pleasure’ (οὐδὲν ὑγιὲς τούτων τῶν φαντασμάτων πρὸς ἡδονῆς ἀλήθειαν). What, then, of a phase during an ongoing restoration process where the filling is perceived but the disharmony is somehow not, such that a bodily restoration involves only pleasure? I find it doubtful that Plato would concede this possibility since it would threaten his claim about the superior pleasantness of pure pleasures to those mixed with pain. (I return to this claim in the next section.) Regardless, however, it would pose no threat to the argument: all that this argument needs is to demonstrate that there is at least one pair of pleasure and pain such that they coexist and cease together, which would be impossible if hedonism were true. The possibility of cases where pleasure and pain do not coexist or cease together does not, therefore, constitute a threat to the argument. One may, of course, be unhappy with the restoration model in general, and insist that pleasure may occur where there is no restoration whatsoever. Yet this line of questioning falls outside the scope of this paper, which concerns how we ought to understand the model in the first place.

analysis offered here is meant to apply to all desire, and not any particular subset.⁵² Such a thesis would be bold but also rather unappealing, due to both its implausibility as a psychological thesis and its inconsistency with what Plato says elsewhere. It would be implausible, I believe, to claim that *all* desires are painful lacks, since at least some intellectual desires appear to be painless. The decisive point, however, is that in *Republic 9*, there clearly are pure pleasures resulting from the satisfaction of painless desires (filling painless lacks), namely the desires of the rational part of the soul.⁵³ As scholars have noted, the *Gorgias* does not provide sufficient evidence to determine the precise scope of the desires intended in this argument.⁵⁴ But it is important to recognize that this vagueness does not pose a threat to Socrates' argument, since even a small subset of painful desire – the satisfaction of which involves the coexistence of pleasure and pain – would suffice to refute the hedonistic thesis at issue. Given the dialectical role of the argument, and that no claim is made to offer a general account of pleasure and pain (or desire), the argument succeeds as long as it appeals to the pleasures (and pains) that Callicles is familiar with, and obtains his consent that pleasure and pain coexist, and cease together. More importantly for our purposes, the

⁵² After all, Plato uses the term *epithumia* to refer to all desire in *Rep.* 9 (580d) which means, given the tripartition of the soul, the desires of all three parts – appetitive, spirited, and rational.

⁵³ As I argue in Erginel, 'Inconsistency', this is a key component of Plato's argument that the philosopher's life is the most pleasant.

⁵⁴ See, for instance, T. Irwin (trans.), *Plato, Gorgias* (Oxford, 1979), 202, and Gosling and Taylor, *Greeks*, 72-3.

process view of pain is rejected regardless of the scope of the desires in question, since this view categorically rules out the possibility of pain occurring during the restoration process. The state view, on the other hand, is confirmed here even if the analysis is meant to apply only to a subset of desire: this view maintains that pain *may* occur during the restoration process, not that it always does.⁵⁵ It seems evident, therefore, that the state view of pain is employed within the *Gorgias*. What remains to be seen is whether in later dialogues, Plato continues to operate with this understanding of pain, or abandons it in favour of the process view, as scholars tend to suppose.

5. *Republic*

Plato's discussion of pleasure and pain in the *Republic* is markedly different from what we found in the *Gorgias*: by contrast with the limited goal and unclear scope of the analysis in the earlier dialogue, here Plato offers a general account in the course of developing the third and most decisive proof of the central thesis that the just man is happier than the unjust. Yet the *Republic* passage contains several indications that Plato means to remind the reader of the *Gorgias*. One of these indications is the remark at 9, 586b3-4 that those who pursue the inferior kinds of pleasure – such as the appetitive pleasures of eating, drinking and sex – are trying in vain to fill a leaking vessel. This strongly echoes the metaphor employed at *Gorgias* 493b-c, where Socrates argues that the part of the soul where the insatiable appetites (ἐπιθυμίας) of fools are located is like a leaking jar, such that the quest to fill it is hopeless. Second, as noted earlier, the simplistic version of the restoration model in terms of filling

⁵⁵ As we have seen, the state view of pain is consistent with the existence of pure pleasures, which involve painless restorations.

(πλήρωσις) a lack, which features prominently in the *Republic* (585a-e), makes an earlier appearance in the *Gorgias* passage that we have examined.

The most complicated reference to the *Gorgias*, however, is also the earliest one: at the beginning of the third proof, Socrates claims that pleasure and pain are opposites (583c3-8), when the argument against Calliclean hedonism turned precisely on pleasure and pain *not* being opposites. This could be taken to mark a shift in Plato's position (or reveal an inconsistency), but it seems, rather, to make a more nuanced point: prior to this remark Plato mentions (583b4), and in what follows introduces (584a12-c1), a class of pleasures that he had not addressed in the *Gorgias*, the pure pleasures that belong to the rational part of the soul. These pleasures, unlike those discussed in the *Gorgias* passage, do not coexist with pains, nor do they cease together with pains. The reasons, therefore, why the pleasures addressed in that argument – those of eating and drinking – could not be opposites of pains, do not apply in the case of pure pleasures. The pleasures that are mixed with pain, which had failed to be opposites with pain in the *Gorgias* argument, are in *Republic* 9 claimed to be impure and inferior pleasures (586a) that are, given the criterion of truth, also less trustworthy and less true (ἀπιστοτέρας ἂν ἡδονῆς καὶ ἥττον ἀληθοῦς, 585e4). Rather than indicating a retraction of his earlier view, then, Plato's claim that pleasure and pain are opposites signals the introduction of pure pleasures, and is perfectly consistent with the treatment of impure pleasures in the *Gorgias*.⁵⁶

⁵⁶ Dodds, *Gorgias*, 310, achieves consistency between the *Gorgias* and *Republic* 9 by arguing rather that Plato did not deny that pleasure and pain are opposites in the *Gorgias*. While this denial is not explicitly stated in the text, Socrates' argument makes

It is worthwhile, I believe, to note the references to the *Gorgias* and trace the lines of continuity between the two works, not only for its own sake but also because it helps us recognize also the continuity with respect to the state view of pain. While the treatment of pleasure and pain in *Republic* 9 is denser, the text provides us with sufficient evidence that Plato maintains the same view of pain here.⁵⁷ I take the most salient pieces of evidence for this interpretation to be the following:

5.1 *A mistake about pleasure*

Having identified pleasure and pain as opposites, Plato notes that there is, midway between them, a neutral or calm state (ἡσυχία, 583c7-8). On the basis of this distinction between three hedonic values – positive, negative, and neutral – Plato proceeds to explain two kinds of mistake people commonly make about pleasure: (a) thinking that the cessation of pain (παῦλαν λύπης) is pleasure (584b1-3); (b) thinking that liberation from pain (λύπης ἀπαλλαγὴν), i.e., impure pleasure, is pure pleasure

sense only if we take it to be implied, charity therefore requiring us to reject Dodds' solution.

⁵⁷ The literature on *Rep.* 9 contains extremely little discussion of pain. Among scholars who do address the matter, Warren ('Pleasures', 13) supports the state view while C. D. C. Reeve, *Philosopher-Kings: The Argument of Plato's Republic* [*Philosopher-Kings*] (Princeton, 1988), 307, seems inclined to agree but does not clearly commit to this reading. Taylor, *Timaeus*, 451, and Wolfsdorf, *Pleasure*, 48, on the other hand, endorse the process reading of *Rep.* 9, taking only the process of emptying to be painful.

(584b9-c2). Leaving the second mistake aside for now, a consideration of the first mistake reveals a grave difficulty for the process view. Plato explains that people make this mistake because we evaluate our experiences by comparison with our experiences immediately preceding the current one: he points out at 584a7-9 that the neutral state appears pleasant when it is next to a painful experience (παρὰ τὸ ἀλγεινόν) while the same neutral state appears painful when it is next to a pleasant experience. But this explanation makes sense only if we assume the state view of pain, for only on this view does arriving at the neutral state constitute a cessation of pain, for instance the pain of hunger ceasing when we reach fullness, which yields a neutral state on Plato's model. On the process view, by contrast, the process of filling or restoration does not contain pain, so reaching the neutral state resulting from fullness would constitute not the cessation of pain but rather the cessation of pleasure. The neutral state, therefore, cannot on this view follow a painful experience, at least in the ordinary cases of bodily filling that Plato's discussion draws on.

A defender of the view could point out that a painful experience could be followed by the neutral state if a process of destruction is reversed but the restoration is so gradual as to be imperceptible. But this cannot be what Plato has in mind when he writes about mistaking the cessation of pain for pleasure. First, the perception condition is implied by the claim at 583e9-10 that all pleasure and pain is a movement (κίνησις τις) in the soul, but nothing is said, here or elsewhere in the *Republic*, of the conditions under which perception may or may not occur. More importantly, the example that Plato does provide is clearly not of this kind and is inconsistent with the process view: a common example of people mistaking the cessation of pain for pleasure, Plato argues, is that of people who are ill claiming that nothing is more

pleasant than being healthy (583c10-d4). The painful experience preceding the neutral state evidently corresponds here not only to the process of destruction but also to that of restoration, encompassing the entire episode of illness, lasting until the harmonious and healthy state is restored.⁵⁸ Plato's explicit example, then, *confirms* the understanding that mistaking the cessation of pain to be pleasure occurs when the neutral state follows a process of restoration during which the pain continues – an experience that is possible only on the state view of pain.

5.2 *The deficiency of non-philosophers' hedonic experience*

To shed light on both of the mistakes noted above, Plato offers a spatial metaphor of being located in a lower region, an upper region, or the middle between them:

οἶει οὖν ἄν τινα ἐκ τοῦ κάτω φερόμενον πρὸς μέσον ἄλλο τι οἶεσθαι ἢ ἄνω φέρεσθαι; καὶ ἐν μέσῳ στάντα, ἀφορῶντα ὅθεν ἐνήγεκται, ἄλλοθί που ἂν ἠγεῖσθαι εἶναι ἢ ἐν τῷ ἄνω, μὴ ἐωρακότα τὸ ἀληθῶς ἄνω; (584d6-9)

Do you think that someone being carried from the lower region towards the middle would suppose anything other than that he was being carried up? And standing in the middle and looking at the place from which he was carried, would he think he was anywhere other than the upper region, as he hasn't seen what is truly up?

⁵⁸ The lines immediately following (583d6–9) indicate that people who are in pain quite generally (καὶ ἐν ἄλλοις γε) praise the absence of pain, not only in cases of illness. An instance of being in pain, then, is being ill, which continues during the processes of both deterioration and restoration.

Reaching the mid-point after climbing out of the lower region and thinking that one is in the upper region is an apt metaphor for mistaking the cessation of pain to be pleasure. Likewise, moving upwards in the lower region towards the middle and thinking that one is really moving upwards is a helpful representation of thinking that the liberation from pain is pure pleasure.⁵⁹ A key point in the explanation afforded by the metaphor is that those who make these mistakes do so because they have not seen what is truly up, i.e., they have not enjoyed pure pleasure. This point is so important for Plato that he repeats it three times in the course of such a terse account: we are told at 584e3-4 that all these (mistakes) would happen due to the person's lack of experience (διὰ τὸ μὴ ἔμπειρος εἶναι) with what is truly up, middle, and down. Again, at 585a3-5 mistaking the cessation of pain for pleasure is likened to misjudging gray by comparing it with black, without having experienced white (ἀπειρία λευκοῦ). Finally, towards the end of the third proof, Plato argues that those who spend their lives pursuing 'feasts and the like' always look downward like cattle, reaching only as far as the middle, 'never ascending beyond this, never looking up at, or being brought to, what is truly up' (586a1-5). Crucially, we are told explicitly that this amounts to never enjoying any stable and pure pleasure (586a6).

⁵⁹ I have argued ('Psychology') that the metaphor must be understood as representing a hedonic scale, with negative and positive segments, as well as a neutral point between them. Leaving aside the details, it should be clear that spatial positions on the metaphor represent hedonic values rather than the causes of pleasure or pain: if reaching the middle represented achieving fullness, being above it, in the upper region, would make no sense.

The emphatic claim that those who live in the pursuit of impure pleasures (non-philosophers) have no experience of pure pleasure at all is important for our purposes, because it can be meaningfully defended only on the state view of pain. For on the process view impure pleasures involve merely a sequential mixture of pleasure and pain, each restorative process itself being ‘purely pleasant’.⁶⁰ Every instance of impure pleasure, accordingly, contains a purely pleasant episode, even if it is preceded and followed by pain. It would make little sense to claim, then, that non-philosophers overrate their pleasures because they have no experience whatsoever of pleasure without pain. While they would lack experience with pleasures that are neither preceded nor followed by pain, this would not suffice for Plato’s purposes, since the spatial and chromatic metaphors suggest that non-philosophers have no idea how pleasant – how much more pleasant than impure pleasures – pure pleasures actually are. On the process view, however, non-philosophers know quite well how pleasant pure pleasures are, since *all* their pleasures contain episodes of pleasure without pain, even though episodes of pain occur before and/or after them. Although their pleasures follow and/or precede pain, in other words, the phenomenology of pleasure that is unadulterated by concurrent pain is not unfamiliar for non-philosophers on this view. Someone with abundant experience of such pleasures would, contrary to Plato’s claim, have a fairly good sense of what it would be like to enjoy pleasures that consist entirely of the pleasant episodes, without the preceding or following pain. By contrast, Plato’s claim makes good sense on a particular version of the state view involving the

⁶⁰ Such episodes would not, of course, be *pure pleasures* in the proper sense of not being mixed with pain in any way at all – neither simultaneously nor sequentially.

stronger thesis that *all* impure pleasure is necessarily mixed with pain not only sequentially but also simultaneously.⁶¹ Non-philosophers who have not experienced

⁶¹ Assuming that the perception condition is at play in the *Republic* (even though Plato says very little about it here) the idea would be that pain occurs when one perceives a state of disharmony in oneself, and there is no state of disharmony such that one could perceive it during the process of destruction (or a stable state of disharmony) but not during the process of restoration. (Of course, if the state of disharmony corresponding to a pleasant restoration is not perceived at any stage, then the pleasure would not be mixed at all.) Indeed, it would be difficult to explain why, given the state view, a perceptible state of disharmony would suddenly become imperceptible once the process of restoration begins. The factors determining whether we perceive our restorations and destructions, namely the magnitude and the speed of change, seem unfit to accommodate such a possibility: if the disharmony is large enough to be perceived on the way down, how could it not be large enough to be perceived on the way back up? This consideration applies equally to the *Timaeus* and *Philebus* (where the mechanics of perception is discussed) but I see no further textual evidence in these dialogues for the stronger thesis that all impure pleasures involve pleasures and pains mixed both sequentially and simultaneously. I am therefore reluctant to attribute to Plato the stronger and more restrictive thesis in these dialogues as well, although they are compatible with it.

pure pleasure, on this view, have never experienced any episode of pleasure unadulterated by pain, arguably having no idea how pleasant that can be.⁶²

5.3 Two theses about non-rational desire

We saw, in the *Gorgias*, two fundamental theses concerning desire, jointly confirming the state view of pain. These theses may be observed in *Republic* 9 as well, now in a more qualified form since Plato has distinguished between the desires (ἐπιθυμῖαι) of the three soul-parts, informing us that only those of the rational part are painless.⁶³ The theses, therefore, must now be stated as being only about non-rational desires.

*The pain thesis**: All non-rational desires are painful.

*The lack thesis**: All non-rational desires are lacks.

We do not find an explicit statement of the pain thesis* in *Republic* 9, possibly because Plato considered it to be too obvious to need stating. Earlier in Book 4, however, he

⁶² This does not, by itself, establish that you are not better off leading a life of impure pleasures. Reeve, *Philosopher-Kings*, 148, for instance, argues that the purity criterion fails to establish the greater pleasantness of the philosopher's pleasures compared to non-rational pleasures: 'For the latter, though impure, might yet contain enough pure pleasure to make them more pleasant overall than learning the truth, even when the pure pain they contain is taken into consideration.' I argue in 'Psychology' that Plato takes this to be impossible, the pain component always being greater than the pleasure component in any instance of impure pleasure.

⁶³ In drawing a contrast with the pleasures (and desires) of the rational part, Plato focuses on bodily pleasures, but it is clear that the contrast in *Rep.* 9, 586c7-d2, is meant to be with all pleasures of the appetitive and spirited parts.

cites hunger, along with cold, as a condition that one might *suffer* at the hands of someone. Moreover, one would be angry about being subjected to hunger and cold if one believes one is being treated unjustly (440b9-d3), presumably because these are painful conditions. Far from abandoning his view of bodily desire as painful, in fact, Plato continued to hold it in the *Philebus*: at 31e6 it is established that hunger is a kind of disintegration and pain (πείνη μὲν που λύσις καὶ λύπη), and at 31e10 that thirst too is a destruction, disintegration and pain (δίψος δ' αὖ φθορὰ καὶ λύπη [καὶ λύσις]).

As for the lack thesis*, we have strong textual evidence at *Republic* 9, 585b1-3, where desires such as hunger and thirst are said to be some kind of emptiness (κενώσεις τινές) of the body, and likened to foolishness and ignorance, which are some kind of emptiness (κενότης) of the soul. One may suppose that κένωσις refers to the process of emptying, since nouns generated from verbs with the suffix -σις often refer to processes. However, this is not always the case, as many scholars have noted.⁶⁴ There is actually good reason to read κένωσις as emptiness, since the term is often used in this way in the ancient medical tradition, on which Plato's restoration model is based.⁶⁵ This is confirmed in the present context by Plato's treatment of the term as interchangeable with κενότης, which undoubtedly refers to a state of emptiness and not a process of emptying.⁶⁶ It seems, therefore, that the passage supports the lack thesis*,

⁶⁴ See, for instance, Carone, 'Hedonism', 267 n. 19 and Warren, 'Pleasures', 13.

⁶⁵ See, especially the Hippocratic works *VM* 9, 9-13 Littré, and *Art.* 49, 14-19 Littré.

⁶⁶ It may be argued that the latter refers only to psychic desires, but then it would be very misleading for Plato to treat the *kenōsis* of the body and the *kenotēs* of the soul as playing the same role on the model being proposed. Cf. Taylor, *Timaeus*, 450-1.

which, in conjunction with the pain thesis*, shows that non-rational desires involve pain as long as the deficiency exists, during both the emptying and filling stages.

6. *Timaeus*

In the *Timaeus*, Plato leaves behind the simplistic construal of the restoration model in terms of fillings and emptiness, showing much greater interest in the physical description of how pleasure and pain occur, in the context of an extended discussion of the physical world and the human body. Given the context, it is understandable that Plato's interest in pleasure and pain is restricted here to those involving the body (64a).

Let us remember the passage, mentioned above, where Plato indicates how pleasure and pain should be understood: 'An unnatural affection that occurs within us violently and suddenly is painful, while a sudden return to the natural state, is pleasant'⁶⁷ (64c8-d2). This passage has been taken to support the process view of pain (Wolfsdorf *Pleasure*, 56), because it seems to describe pain in terms of an unnatural change, which presumably corresponds to a process of destruction. While it is undoubtedly consistent with the process view, I do not see the passage as inconsistent with the state view either: the passage does not offer a definition of pain, and need not be taken as providing a complete list of the conditions under which painful experiences can occur. It may be taken, rather, as describing the onset of pain, the conditions under which pain arises, from the painless natural state as the starting point.⁶⁸ On *both* views,

⁶⁷ τὸ μὲν παρὰ φύσιν καὶ βίαιον γινόμενον ἄθρόον παρ' ἡμῖν πάθος ἀλγεινόν, τὸ δ' εἰς φύσιν ἀπιὸν πάλιν ἄθρόον ἡδύ.

⁶⁸ Indeed, the passage need not be taken as stipulating a necessary condition for either the occurrence or the emergence of pain – it could be merely describing one kind of

of course, pain arises as a result of the destruction process, which leaves this passage neutral with respect to the two views of pain. In what follows, however, we find passages that are considerably more favourable to the state view.

(i) At 81e1-2 there is another general statement about pleasure and pain: ‘All that is unnatural is painful while all that occurs naturally is pleasant.’ (πᾶν γὰρ τὸ μὲν παρὰ φύσιν ἀλγεινόν, τὸ δ’ ἢ πέφυκεν γιγνόμενον ἡδύ). This statement about what is painful, in striking contrast to the passage above, takes all that is unnatural to be painful.⁶⁹ In the light of the perception requirement introduced at 64b-d, this must mean that every unnatural condition of a body that is perceived is painful, regardless of

pain (and pleasure). But since the *Timaeus* does not offer another kind of pain, taking this passage to be about the emergence of all (bodily) pain seems more plausible.

⁶⁹ Some translators take γιγνόμενον to go with παρὰ φύσιν too, yielding ‘whereas every process which is contrary to nature is painful, that which takes place naturally is pleasurable’, which does not support the state view (R. G. Bury (ed. and trans.), *Plato: Timaeus, Critias, Cleitophon, Menexenus, Epistles* (Cambridge, Mass., 1929)). While this way of reading the sentence is grammatically possible, it is an interpretive choice that conceals a contrast that may be intended by the μέν... δέ construction. This choice could be justified if the sentence made no sense without supplying γιγνόμενον in the first clause, but it clearly does, in accordance with the state view of pain. Perhaps guided by such concerns, Cornford, *Cosmology*, and Zeyl, *Timaeus*, do not extend the scope of γιγνόμενον.

whether one is undergoing destruction or returning to the natural state.⁷⁰ While the restoration process is a movement *towards* the natural state, someone undergoing this process is, by definition, *not yet at* the natural state and hence still suffers from being in an unnatural condition.

(ii) The explanation of bodily diseases offered in the *Timaeus* is significant, given the strong link between disease and pain (81e, 84e):

τὸ δὲ τῶν νόσων ὅθεν συνίσταται, δῆλόν που καὶ παντί. τετάρων γὰρ ὄντων γενῶν ἐξ ὧν συμπέπηγεν τὸ σῶμα, γῆς πυρὸς ὕδατός τε καὶ ἀέρος, τούτων ἢ παρὰ φύσιν πλεονεξία καὶ ἔνδεια ... στάσεις καὶ νόσους παρέχει. (81e6-82a7)

The origin of diseases is, I suppose, obvious to all. Since there are four kinds that the body is composed of – earth, fire, water, and air – disorders and disease arise from the unnatural excess or deficiency of these.

As noted earlier, the account of health and disease in the *Timaeus* follows the ancient medical tradition in construing health in terms of a balance of the body's constituents and disease in terms of the lack of this balance. Insofar as diseases are painful, the explanation of disease in terms of an imbalance, rather than a process of destruction, suggests that pain too occurs as a result of the lack of natural balance, regardless of whether the condition is in decline or recovery.

(iii) As Plato elaborates on bodily diseases, we find more explicit reference to the conditions under which diseases leads to pain. One of the passages that stand out is 84e2-7:

⁷⁰ This leaves open the possibility that some unnatural conditions are unperceived and therefore painless.

πολλάκις δ' ἐν τῷ σώματι διακριθείσης σαρκὸς πνεῦμα ἐγγενόμενον καὶ ἀδυνατοῦν ἔξω πορευθῆναι τὰς αὐτὰς τοῖς ἐπεισεληλυθόσιν ὠδῖνας παρέσχεν, μεγίστας δέ, ὅταν περι τὰ νεῦρα καὶ τὰ ταύτη φλέβια περιστὰν καὶ ἀνοιδῆσαν τοὺς τε ἐπιτόνους καὶ τὰ συνεχῆ νεῦρα οὕτως εἰς τὸ ἐξόπισθεν κατατείνη τούτοις.

And often, when flesh disintegrates inside the body, air is generated there and is unable to get out, causing as much pain as the air that comes in from outside. The pain is most severe when the air surrounds the sinews and the veins there and by swelling up strains backwards the tendons and the sinews attached to them ...

What is remarkable here for our purposes is that the cause of pain is described as the presence of an excessive (and unnatural) amount of air trapped inside the body, exerting pressure on the surrounding body parts. No mention is made of a process of destruction in relation to the pain, nor does it seem relevant whether such a process or its reverse is taking place. This approach to disease and the concomitant pain can be observed in numerous other passages, including 86c3-6, where we are told that ‘when a man’s seed grows to overflowing abundance in his marrow ... he is in for a long series of bursts of pain ...’.⁷¹ Here too, the pain is caused not by a process of deterioration, moving farther from the natural state, but rather by an overabundance of a man’s seed, regardless of the direction in which the condition is moving.

In the *Timaeus*, Plato’s approach to bodily health and disease, as well as bodily pleasure and pain, is firmly based on the restoration model, as adapted from the work of his predecessors. In keeping with that tradition, the relevant passages suggest,

⁷¹ τὸ δὲ σπέρμα ὄτω πολὺ καὶ ῥυῶδες περι τὸν μυελὸν γίγνεται... πολλὰς μὲν καθ' ἕκαστον ὠδῖνας ...

Plato's focus is on the presence or absence of balance, construing pain too as resulting from an absence of the natural, balanced state.

7. *Philebus*

The *Philebus* presents Plato's most comprehensive and sophisticated account of pleasure and pain, as the rich secondary literature on the dialogue demonstrates beyond any doubt. It is clear that here Plato introduces important insights, fruitful distinctions, and compelling, if not entirely convincing, criteria by which to evaluate pleasures. Yet the psychological core of Plato's account, and the corollary distinction between pure and impure pleasure, remain committed to the state view of pain, for which the *Philebus* also contains the greatest amount of evidence:

7.1 *The state vs. the process of destruction*

After the early passages of the *Philebus*, where Socrates and Protarchus' discussion of hedonism takes a methodological and metaphysical detour, at 31b8-9 Plato turns to the *genesis* of pleasure and pain. They arise, Plato writes, in the kind that was earlier identified as the combination of the unlimited and the limit, which includes health and harmony (*ἁρμονία*). This provides the metaphysical foundation for Plato's claim that, when the harmony in living beings has disintegrated (*λυομένης*), a disintegration of their nature (*λύσιν τῆς φύσεως*) and an onset of pain occur at the same time (31d4-6). Pleasure, on the other hand, arises (*γίγνεσθαι*) when the 'harmony is regained and the former nature restored' (31d8-9), in accordance with the restoration model with which Plato's readers are familiar from his earlier work. These remarks introducing the restoration model in the *Philebus* are recapitulated at 31a8-32b4, where we are told, as

we saw, that the *phthora* or destruction of the natural combination of the unlimited and the limit is pain, while the return to its own nature is pleasure.

The way in which the restoration model is presented here may be taken, as Frede takes it, to support the process view of pain, given that pain seems here to correspond to the process of disintegration or destruction of the natural, harmonious state.⁷² However, the passages in fact fail to provide evidence for the process view, since they contain neither a definition of pleasure and pain nor an exhaustive account of the conditions under which pleasure and pain occur. This is plain because, as indicated earlier, Plato will later add perception as a condition for the existence of pleasure and pain (43b-d). More importantly, the passages do not stipulate that a process of disintegration or destruction is a necessary condition for the possibility of pain.

For Plato initiates the discussion by asking about the *genesis* of pleasure and pain (τῆς γενέσεως αὐτῶν, 31b8-9), and the following answers are cast accordingly, in terms of how pleasure and pain *arise*. As in the *Timaeus* passage discussed above (64c8-d2), here Plato explains how, taking the natural state as the starting point, pain arises when this state is disrupted, and pleasure arises when there is a return to that state. But this is compatible with the state view of pain: starting from the natural state, pain *arises*, on both views, only if a process of disintegration begins. It is consistent with this to maintain that pain *continues* even after the disintegration process ceases, once a return towards the natural state has begun or a stable state of destruction is

⁷² Use of the imperfective aspect of the present participle λυομένης at 31d4 may be taken as an indication that pain is associated with the *process* of disintegration.

reached. It may be argued that the recapitulation at 31a8-32b4 avoids this ambivalence, since it links destruction or *phthora* with not merely how pain arises but what pain *is*. Yet this key passage fails to provide the process view with the support it needs, since the Greek *phthora* has the same ambiguity as the English ‘destruction’, referring either to a process, or to a state, of destruction.⁷³ Indeed, Plato tends to use *phthora* in the latter sense, referring clearly to states of destruction or death at *Tim.* 21d6 and 23c4, *Phaedo* 106d3-4, and *Laws* 3, 677b1.

An examination of the context, moreover, turns up no evidence in favour of the more restrictive and, I have argued, less plausible process view. After offering the basic framework of the restoration model at *Philebus* 31b-d, Plato illustrates the model through the examples of hunger, thirst, and excessive heat and cold. At 31e we are told that hunger is a case of disintegration and pain, while eating, the corresponding refilling, is a pleasure. Thirst, similarly, is a destruction, disintegration, and pain, while the filling of what is emptied out is pleasure. These references to ‘disintegration’ (λύσις) and ‘destruction’ (φθορά) are ambiguous with respect to process and state readings, as are the analyses of excessive heat and cold: Plato explains that ‘heat causes an unnatural separation and dissolution (διάκρισις καὶ διάλυσις) of elements that is painful, while a cooling restoration to the natural state is pleasure’ (32a1-4). Similarly, excessive cold is painful because it ‘produces an unnatural coagulation of the fluids in an animal’ (ἢ παρὰ φύσιν τοῦ ζώου τῆς ὑγρότητος πήξις, 32a6-7). The key terms here – separation, dissolution, coagulation – may, in Greek as well as in English,

⁷³ As the LSJ indicates, in fact, the primary meanings of *phthora* besides ‘destruction’ are ‘ruin’ and ‘death’, in favour of understanding the term as referring to a state.

refer to either processes or states. The pain in these cases, then, can be explained in terms of how far we deviate from the harmonious or natural condition of the body, and not in terms of a process of disintegration or destruction.⁷⁴ Plato's discussion of examples, therefore, provides no evidence against reading the following statement of the restoration model at 31a8-32b4 as associating pain with the *state* of destruction (φθορά), which emerges when the natural balance is destroyed (φθείρηται, 32b2) and continues until balance is restored.⁷⁵ Accordingly, the *process* of destruction is a necessary condition not of pain as such, but rather of the onset of pain with respect to a condition that was previously harmonious and therefore painless.⁷⁶

7.2 Two theses about non-intellectual desire

The two fundamental theses entailing the state view can be identified in the *Philebus* as well, though in the absence of the *Republic*'s tripartite psychology, the relevant

⁷⁴ With the addition of the perception condition, Plato's account of bodily pleasure and pain will be more complex, requiring that the speed and/or intensity of the restoration, and the magnitude of the imbalance, respectively, be such as to be perceived.

⁷⁵ Being in a *state* of destruction is consistent with experiencing *processes* of destruction and restoration, just as one's health may be declining or improving when one is in a state of illness. Indeed, being in a state of destruction must be accompanied by one of the two opposite processes, *if* we suppose that Plato takes the body to be incapable of remaining in any unchanging state, harmonious or otherwise. (See n. 17 above.)

⁷⁶ Here we can see the significance of reading 31a8-32b4 as being only about one kind of pain, mentioned in n. 13 above.

desires are no longer classified as belonging to the non-rational soul-parts. Here those desires may be classified, roughly, as ‘non-intellectual’ desires, encompassing bodily desires and those associated with various emotions, such as love, anger, and malice (to which I return below).⁷⁷

*The pain thesis***: All non-intellectual desires are painful.

*The lack thesis***: All non-intellectual desires are lacks.⁷⁸

As I point out above, the *Philebus* confirms the pain thesis**, at 31e6 and 31e10, where hunger and thirst, respectively, are claimed to be pains.⁷⁹ We may now observe

⁷⁷ These are contrasted with what we may classify, again roughly, as ‘intellectual’ desires, which aim at learning, pure colors, shapes, and sounds, as well as pleasant smells (51b-e). There is a question here as to what unites the ‘intellectual’ desires, paralleling the question in *Rep.* 9 as to what unites the rational desires, both questions problematized especially by the pure pleasures of smell. These are complex interpretive questions that must be left aside for the present purposes. I address the question concerning the *Republic* in ‘Inconsistency’.

⁷⁸ Given the greater sophistication of the restoration model in the *Philebus*, ‘lack’ should be understood broadly, as any absence of the harmonious state, whether or not this amounts to having too little of something.

⁷⁹ Crucially, Plato claims that the non-intellectual desire is *itself* painful, and not that there may be incidental pains that are related to the desire, such as a pain of anticipation, or a pain arising from one’s evaluation of one’s condition. In these early passages, Plato’s remarks on desire are relatively simplistic, treating the desires in question merely as kinds of pain and lack. We will find at 35a-d that rather more is required for desire than it is for pain: all desire

that the text confirms the lack thesis** explicitly as well (independently of the above interpretation of *phthora* as a state, of which hunger and thirst are said to be species): at 34e9-12, Socrates obtains Protarchus's agreement that to say of a thing that 'it is thirsty' (διψῆ) means that 'it is empty' (κενοῦται). As the LSJ indicates, the key verb here, κενόω in passive form, has the meanings of 'to be emptied, made or left empty', pointing towards a state of emptiness rather than a process of emptying. Indeed, instances of the verb elsewhere refer consistently to the state of emptiness, and never, as far as I can see, to a process of emptying. Thus the verb is translated by Fowler as 'being empty', by Taylor as 'the creature is suffering a depletion', by Gosling as 'he is deprived', and by Waterfield as 'he has a lack', all of which endorse the lack thesis**. ⁸⁰ Frede, on the other hand, translates it as 'he is getting empty', which rejects it. ⁸¹ In her translation to German Frede also has 'it becomes empty' (*daß dasjenige leer wird*), while the alternate sense is captured by Georgii's 'it is empty' (*es ist leer*),

requires the involvement of the soul, and more specifically, memory of the corresponding restoration. See Harte, 'Desire', for a recent discussion of this requirement.

⁸⁰ H. N. Fowler and W. R. M. Lamb (trans.), *Plato: Statesman, Philebus, Ion* (Cambridge, Mass., 1925); Taylor, *Philebus*; Gosling, *Philebus*; and R. A. H. Waterfield (trans. and intro.), *Plato: Philebus* (Middlesex, 1982).

⁸¹ Frede, *Philebus*. To find an English translation of the dialogue that renders the verb in this way one needs to go, it seems, as far back as Hackforth's translation (*Examination*). Among recent interpreters, only Harte, 'Desire', 41, as far as I am aware, translates the verb as 'becoming empty'.

confirming the lack thesis**.⁸² Frede's translations to both languages appear unwarranted, coloured by her interpretation, and the text seems to favour the confirmation of the lack thesis**. It follows from the combination of the pain thesis** and the lack thesis** that pain may occur, as the state view of pain has it, during the processes of both disintegration and restoration, since the possibility of pain depends not on the direction of the change but rather on the occurrence of a lack.⁸³

7.3 *A paradox about desire?*

We have seen that the pain thesis** is, at least in the case of bodily desires such as hunger and thirst, endorsed in the text unequivocally. Granting this premise alone, in fact, renders the process view of pain indefensible. For given that non-intellectual desires are painful, taking pain to exist *only* during the process of disintegration or destruction – as the process view does – leads to the conclusion that the desires in question disappear as soon as process of restoration begins. This means, for instance, that our thirst disappears as soon as we start to drink and the process of rehydration begins.⁸⁴ Yet Plato makes it clear that we wish to drink only as long as we are thirsty,

⁸² Frede, *Philebos*; and L. Georgii (trans.), *Philebos*, in *Platon, Sämtliche Werke III* (Heidelberg, 1982), 41.

⁸³ Plato does refer to thirst as a *kenōsis* at 35b3-4, but as I point out above, this does not necessarily refer to a process of emptying, and therefore does not constitute evidence against the state reading.

⁸⁴ In fact, given the perception condition, our thirst disappears on this view as soon as we take in as little water as is necessary to prevent the soul from perceiving the body as getting further dehydrated.

since thirst *just is* the desire to drink (34e13-35a2). It follows, paradoxically, that as soon as we begin to satisfy the desire in question, we lose all motivation to do so. Plato becomes unable, then, to make sense of how anyone could be motivated to drink enough water to be rehydrated, and why anyone engages in the activities ordinarily associated with satisfying a desire, such as drinking a full glass of water, or having a complete meal. To be sure, the view at hand allows one to keep drinking water, but not as a single process, and not as satisfying the same thirst: one could have a sip of water, then stop because one is no longer thirsty, then feel thirsty again when one perceives further emptying, have another sip, and keep repeating this sequence. Clearly, this is an absurd view of what happens when we drink water (or satisfy our other bodily desires), and there is nothing in Plato's text to suggest that he might endorse it. The process view of pain, then, makes nonsense of Plato's theory of desire in the *Philebus*, which is rightly appreciated for recognizing the role of the soul and memory in desire and rejecting the notion that it is the body that desires food or drink.

7.4 *The prevalence of emotional pains*

One of the extraordinary features of the *Philebus* is its extended discussion of pleasures pertaining to the emotions, which Socrates brings up in the course of examining 'the whole family' of pleasures that are mixed with pains (46b5-7). In other dialogues concerned with pleasure, Plato either ignores pleasures of this kind altogether, or acknowledges their existence but does not elaborate, as in *Republic 9's* acknowledgement of the pleasures of the spirited soul-part. In the *Philebus*, by contrast, we have three pages devoted to the mixed pleasures of the soul (47d-50d), where Plato's analysis begins with the claim that wrath, fear, longing, lamentations,

love, jealousy, malice, and the rest are all ‘a kind of pain within the soul’ (47e1-3).⁸⁵ Plato then argues that these conditions are full of amazing pleasures, resulting in pleasures that are mixed with pain (47e5-48a2) and reaffirms this claim, repeating the entire list of emotions, at 50b7-c3. The key point here, however, is that it is these conditions themselves that are said to be painful, and not the corresponding processes of deterioration, such as ‘getting angry’, ‘becoming jealous’, and so on. It is obvious, of course, that the items on the list are conditions that persist independently of whether one is experiencing a process of destruction or deterioration or the reverse: one has ‘anger’ in one’s soul whether one is getting angry or angrier or calming down.

Insofar as these emotions are construed as kinds of desire, the pain thesis** and the lack thesis** are here confirmed in the case of non-bodily (and non-intellectual) desires as well. Given Plato’s consistent treatment of pleasure as associated with the satisfaction of a desire, and the claim that the emotions involve pleasures, it seems safe to conclude that Plato construes each as being, or involving, a desire. Irrespective of the question about desire, however, what we find in this passage is that a disharmonious psychic condition that persists is painful independently of any process of deterioration, which is possible only under the state view of pain. This point is reaffirmed in Plato’s detailed examination of malice (φθόρος) and the pleasures involved in laughing at others, where he argues that these pleasures are mixed with pain (48a-50a).⁸⁶ The key point for our purposes is that the pain involved in this

⁸⁵ As I argue in section 2 above, this treatment of psychic pains and impure pleasures is best understood in terms of the restoration model.

⁸⁶ See M. M. McCabe, ‘Banana Skins and Custard Pies: Plato on Comedy and Self-

mixture is due to malice *itself*: we are told at 48b8-9 and again at 50a7-8 that malice is a pain in the soul (λύπην τινὰ ψυχῆς), whereas no mention is made anywhere of *becoming* malicious or any related process of deterioration.⁸⁷

7.5 *The simultaneity of emotional pleasures and pains*

A second point emerging from Plato's treatment of emotional pleasures is that these experiences involve *simultaneous* mixtures of pleasure and pain: speaking of the pain of malice and the corresponding pleasure of laughter, Plato writes 'on these occasions both occur simultaneously' (ἅμα γίνεσθαι δὲ τούτῳ ἐν τούτοις τοῖς χρόνοις, 50a8-9). This phenomenon is easily understood on the state view of pain, as the pain of being in the inharmonious condition of malice causes pain while the malicious laughter amounts to a partial restoration and hence causes pleasure. On the process view, by contrast, we saw that there can be only sequential mixtures of pleasure and pain with respect to the same natural state.

It might be objected that the coexistence of pleasure and pain during malicious laughter can also be explained from the process perspective, by extending Plato's analysis of the mixed pleasure of scratching an itch: at 46d-47b Plato explains that in

Knowledge', in J. Dillon and L. Brisson (eds.), *Plato's Philebus, Selected Papers from the Eighth Symposium Platonicum* (Sankt Augustin, 2010), 194-203, for an evenhanded examination of Plato's critical view on comedy and laughter.

⁸⁷ At 50a7-8 the painfulness of malice is treated as something they have long agreed on (τὸν γὰρ φθόνον ὁμολογήσθαι λύπην ψυχῆς ἡμῖν πάλαι). This presumably refers to the agreement at 48b8-9, but the expression indicates that the agreement held and the point was assumed throughout.

cases of itching, the cause of the irritation may be beneath the surface, such that scratching, or applying heat or cold to the skin, produces only a superficial restoration, leaving the internal condition unaltered or even aggravated. In such cases the restoration on the surface generates pleasure, while the internal condition continues to cause pain, simultaneously. It is possible, in those cases, for a simultaneous mixture of pleasure and pain to occur even on the process view of pain, since it is possible for a process of restoration to take place in one part of the body while a process of destruction takes place in another, adjacent yet distinct part. It might be argued, therefore, that in the case of emotional pleasures too the simultaneous mixtures of pleasure and pain arise not because pain can occur during restoration but because the pleasure results from a restoration in one part of the soul while the process of destruction continues in another part (analogously with the bodily case above).

The strategy here would be to reconcile the process view with the simultaneous psychic mixtures of pleasure and pain by claiming that what appears to be a single psychic condition, such as malice, actually covers distinct psychic parts such that opposite processes may be taking place in different parts. Yet this strategy is untenable, since there is no evidence, here or elsewhere, that Plato construes the soul as having so many distinct parts, or that emotions are spread over multiple soul-parts, some of which may undergo restoration while the others do not.⁸⁸ If Plato indeed came

⁸⁸ The multi-layered analysis of scratching an itch was presented as an examination of the ‘greatest’ cases of mixed pleasure, which are related to repulsive diseases (45e-46a), the only other example Plato offers being what is generally taken as a description of intense sexual pleasure (47a3-9). It appears, therefore, that only a subset of mixed pleasures is meant to be

to understand the soul and the emotions in terms of such micro-partitioning, we would expect him to give some indication of this, especially since this model bears no resemblance to anything Plato has said on the subject before.⁸⁹ One might respond that the strategy does not require psychic partitioning in any significant sense: it is sufficient for emotions to involve (at least) two conditions, one undergoing the process of destruction while the other is being restored to its natural state. Yet this is hardly better, given that Plato proceeds to apply the analysis of mixed pleasure involved in malicious laughter to *all* the mixed pleasures of the soul, repeating the list of emotions from 47e1-3 and arguing that they all contain the same kind of mixture of pleasure and pain (50b1-e2). It would follow, therefore, that all emotions involve two related conditions such that one deteriorates whenever the other is being restored. Some emotions might indeed involve this kind of duality, but it defies plausibility to deny the existence of simple emotions and to insist that *every* emotion involves two such related psychic conditions that move in opposite directions (with respect to the natural state)

explained by this analysis, which is, in any case, inconsistent with Plato's account of the basic bodily pleasures of eating, drinking, being cooled when hot and vice-versa: it is clear in those cases that the pleasure and pain are caused by the restoration and destruction, respectively, of precisely the same natural state.

⁸⁹ As I note in n. 19 above, the principle of opposites (*Rep.* 4, 436b9-c2) could be used to establish the distinctness of the things undergoing the opposite processes of restoration and destruction at the same time. It is clear, however, that Plato has no interest in dividing the soul based on the coexistence of these processes, or generating the kind of micro-partitioning this strategy involves (in the *Republic* or elsewhere).

whenever the pleasure relevant to that emotion arises. More importantly, there is no evidence anywhere in the Platonic corpus for such a bold psychological thesis.

7.6 The possibility of emotional complexity

The impure pleasures based on our emotions provide, arguably, the most compelling cases demonstrating the implausibility of the process view of pain. For it seems rather counterintuitive and unconvincing to claim that the pain involved in malice, anger, or longing occurs only during the process of deterioration, and that it disappears completely as soon as the corresponding pleasure begins. Yet given our observation above that Plato does not construe emotions as distributed over a range of miniature soul-parts, this is just what the process view of pain entails. If a man consumed by anger at his boss for constantly treating him disrespectfully were to enjoy keying his boss's car as an act of revenge, the process view would take this man's pain to disappear completely during his moment of enjoyment. In all such cases, I believe, the notion that no pain occurs during the restoration process is unrealistic and fails to do justice to the complexity of our emotional lives. By contrast, we have a much more plausible account of such cases on the state view, as involving a simultaneous mixture of pleasure and pain because the partial restoration generates pleasure while the persisting lack of harmony continues to generate pain.

The state view also provides better insight into such pleasures as those involved in laughter, helping us see the complexity and bittersweet nature of many cases. Plato argues at 48a-50b that in the cases of both laughter mixed with weeping in watching tragedies, and malicious laughter, we have a mixture of pleasure and pain. In both kinds of case, the state view entails the more plausible position that as we laugh, the underlying pain is diminished but may nonetheless continue, whereas the process view

denies the existence of any pain during laughter. An emotionally complex experience that might shed light on this contrast occurs in a memorable scene in the *Phaedo*: in the final hours of Socrates, we are told, his companions experience a strange mixture of pleasure and pain as they alternate between laughter and tears (59a).⁹⁰ Although they are about to witness the death of a friend, their tears are interspersed with laughter because, as Halliwell explains, ‘Socrates’ noble serenity set an example which tempered his friends’ impulses to grief and pity’.⁹¹ On the process view, however, the pain of grief is not tempered but rather eradicated during the episodes of laughter, which makes little sense in the context. Given the tragedy involved in the imminent death of a friend, feeling no pain at all even during brief episodes of laughter would require particularly callous ‘friends’, which is certainly not how Plato describes Socrates’ companions in this scene.

We may conclude our discussion of the *Philebus* with a point raised at the beginning, regarding the superior pleasantness of pure pleasure. Plato argues, as we have seen, that ‘any pleasure that is unmixed with pain, however small or infrequent, is pleasanter, truer, and more beautiful than impure pleasure that is great or frequently occurring’ (53b10-c2). Armed with the state view of pain, we can read this claim as having a stronger psychological or phenomenological component: pure pleasure is

⁹⁰ This may be just the kind of case Plato has in mind at *Phileb.* 50b3-4, where he argues that, like the experience of watching tragedies in a theatre, the ‘tragedies of life’ too involve mixtures of pleasure and pain.

⁹¹ S. Halliwell, *Greek Laughter: A Study of Cultural Psychology from Homer to Early Christianity* (Cambridge, 2008) at 278.

more pleasant than the impure not merely because the objects of pure pleasure are superior or because pure pleasure does not contain falsity: pure pleasure is more pleasant (also) because it alone provides an experience of pleasure unadulterated by pain, impure pleasure being, at least typically, mixed with pain at all stages and failing to offer a taste of pure pleasure at any stage. Insofar as Plato aims to appeal to the hedonist with the hedonic superiority of the philosophical life, the stronger *psychological* claim to greater pleasantness under the state view would better serve the dialogue's purposes.

8. An apparent problem in the *Phaedo*

Although it is not one of the dialogues where we find the restoration model, the *Phaedo* presents an apparent problem for the state view of pain, in the context where Socrates has been released from his bonds and describes his experience (60b-c). He seems to argue that pleasure and pain are opposites that do not coexist, but necessarily follow one another like two beings that were joined at their heads by a god, just as the pain caused by his bonds was followed by pleasure when they were removed. This approach to pleasure and pain may also appear to anticipate the cyclical argument that follows (70e-72d), that opposites must always balance each other by alternating, forever yielding to one another as if going around in a circle. This approach is, of course, inconsistent with not only the state view but also indisputable elements of Plato's thought on pleasure and pain, such as the existence of pure pleasure, which is *not* followed by pain. We would, therefore, be facing a severe interpretive challenge if this were actually Plato's position in the *Phaedo*. I believe, however, that the inconsistency is merely apparent, as the approach sketched above is not endorsed in the *Phaedo* either.

We should begin by noting the extent to which Socrates qualifies his statements and distances himself from the approach that is expressed in this passage: it is what *seems* (ἔοικε) to be the case with *what people call* (ὃ καλοῦσιν οἱ ἄνθρωποι) pleasure, that pain *seems* to be (δοκοῦν) its opposite, that these two are *disinclined* (μὴ ἐθέλειν) to coexist, and that this *seems* (ἔοικεν) to be happening to him, that pleasure *appears* (φαίνεται) to be following pain now that his bonds were removed (60b3–c7). To be sure, Platonic dialogues often involve statements of how things ‘seem’ to be the case without meaning to cast doubt on it, but here we have an extraordinary concentration of references to how things are *seemingly* so. The tentativeness in this passage is appropriate, given that elsewhere in the *Phaedo* we find corrections and qualifications to the approach being entertained here: the distinction between better and worse pleasures, absent in this passage, comes to the rescue later on, just as it resolved the apparent inconsistency between the *Gorgias* and *Republic* 9 above. At 64d–65a Socrates describes the pleasures of eating, drinking, and sex, as well as others concerned with the body, as so-called (καλουμένας) pleasures that the philosopher does not at all value (except insofar as they are necessary) and despises. Such bodily pleasures (and the corresponding pains) are condemned throughout the *Phaedo*, especially because ‘each is another nail that rivets the soul to the body’ (ὥσπερ ἕλκον ἔχουσα προσηλοῖ αὐτήν πρὸς τὸ σῶμα, 83d4–5). This point is obviously not applicable to non-bodily pleasure (or pain), as Plato acknowledges. Although the distinction is not always explicit, it is clear towards the end of the dialogue that the pleasures one should avoid are those of the body, while the pleasures of learning ought to be pursued (114e). The text provides us with sufficient indications, then, that the ‘pleasure’ resulting from Socrates’ shackles being removed is of an inferior kind, and that any account of the

relationship between pleasure and pain must observe the distinction between the inferior and superior kinds of pleasure. Borrowing details of this distinction from *Republic 9*, for instance, we could point out that the inferior pleasure Socrates experiences in fact coexists with pain – the pleasure is mixed with pain simultaneously as well as sequentially.

The tentative and muddled thoughts being entertained at 60b-c are not, I believe, pointless. A recurrent theme against bodily pleasure and pain in the *Phaedo* (e.g., 65a-c) is that these experiences interfere with philosophical activity and make it harder for the soul to grasp the truth. Since Socrates has just been relieved of bodily pain and is experiencing bodily pleasure at 60b-c, these ill-formed thoughts may be seen as illustrating the philosophical impairment caused by bodily pleasure and pain, from which Socrates recovers after some time and starts to think more clearly.

9. Conclusion

There is an abundance of evidence in Plato's works that he takes pleasure and pain to be of utmost importance for ethics. This is due to the role of pleasure and pain in ethical development as well as in motivating us at all stages of life, potentially luring us into bad forms of life, or deterring us from making the right choices. Naturally for an ancient Greek ethical thinker, Plato's response to this danger is not to insist that we ought to live well and make the right choices despite the alternatives being more pleasant or less painful, but rather to argue that the most pleasant and least painful life is, in fact, the virtuous and philosophical life. The response, then, addresses committed hedonists as well as people pursuing pleasure and avoiding pain without such a theoretical commitment. At the heart of this argument is his distinction between two kinds of pleasure, the better kind being a proper constituent of a good human life,

while the other, worse kind, is to be experienced only insofar as it is necessary for our embodied lives (and avoided completely if unnecessary). The argument and the distinction appear most prominently and explicitly in the *Republic* and *Philebus*, with some variation in the criteria by which the better and worse pleasures are classified. The unvarying feature of the classification, however, has been that the better kind of pleasure is not mixed with pain whereas the worse kind is mixed – pure vs. impure pleasure. Even in dialogues where Plato addresses the inferior kind of pleasure without discussing the contrast with the superior kind, such as the *Gorgias* and the *Phaedo*, it is an essential feature of his view that these pleasures are inferior because they are inseparable from pain. Understanding precisely how the impure pleasures come to be mixed with pain is, therefore, crucial for understanding a fundamental tenet of Platonic ethics. The nature of this mixture, as I emphasize above, in turn depends on the nature of pain, and the conditions under which it occurs.

We have seen that in all the dialogues where Plato offers an account of pleasure and pain – *Gorgias*, *Republic*, *Timaeus*, and *Philebus* – he does so in terms of the restoration model, which he inherits from the ancient medical tradition. Although the model develops and gains sophistication in its later incarnations, I have argued that core features of the model, as captured by the state view of pain, have remained constant. This reading of Plato's view of pain is significant not only for our evaluation of his comparison between the pleasantness of pure and impure pleasures, but also for understanding his account of desire and of emotional pleasures, such as those involved in love, anger, and malice. On all these issues, the unorthodox interpretation I have defended is more charitable to Plato than the alternative, as it attributes to him a more compelling argument for the hedonic superiority of the good life, and a far more

realistic picture of our desires and complex emotions. Despite the scholarly consensus behind the process view of pain, what I hope to have offered in this paper is a different interpretation that improves our understanding of the relevant texts as well as revealing the continuity in Plato's thought on pleasure and pain.

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