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Plato's Recollection Argument in the *Philebus*

Abstract: Many scholars have denied that Plato's argument about desire at *Philebus* 34c10–35d7 is related to his recollection arguments in the *Meno* and *Phaedo*, because it is concerned only with postnatal experiences of pleasure. This paper argues against their denial by showing that the desire argument in question is intended to prove the soul's possession of innate memory of pleasure. This innateness interpretation will be supported by a close analysis of the *Timaeus*, where Plato suggests that our inborn desires for food and drink derive from the primitive experiences of pleasure that have naturally been incorporated into the appetitive part of the soul.

Keywords: soul, desire, pleasure, perception, memory, recollection, *Meno*, *Phaedo*, *Timaeus*

At *Philebus* 34C10–35D7 Socrates argues that the nature of desire (ἐπιθυμία) consists in the soul's anticipation of replenishing the depleted body, aroused by its memory of past pleasant experiences of replenishment, and therefore that desire does not belong to the body but to the soul. In the course of this argument he asks a question about those who are being depleted for the first time and who are neither getting replenished presently nor have ever got replenished in their lives—presumably about babies who have just been born (35A6–9). It has been widely assumed that the question is intended to mean that such new-born babies do not desire to be replenished, but they would do so if they somehow gain the first pleasant experience of replenishment and store the memory of it in the soul. Socrates' point, on this assumption, is that desire is a psychic function one acquires as a result of one's relevant experiences after birth.

In this paper I shall argue that this widespread construal of desire as of postnatal origin is mistaken, and that the main purpose of Socrates' argument is rather to prove the presence of some *innate* memory of pleasure in the soul by invoking the observable fact that we all desire to eat and drink as soon as we are born. The central idea here, on this reading, is that we all have had pleasant experiences of replenishment before we were born, and that our innate memory of those prenatal experiences, although implicit,

drives us to desire food and drink even on the first occasion of depletion after birth. Socrates' argument about desire in the *Philebus* is thus closely related to those recollection arguments given in the *Meno* and *Phaedo*, where Socrates attempts to prove that we are born with innate memory of knowledge we have prenatally acquired. It is true that, as we shall see in detail below, there is also an evident difference between the *Philebus* and the other two dialogues: while the latter are concerned with the knowledge the discarnate soul acquired, the former is concerned with the experiences the incarnate soul had. Still, I argue, the close analogy can be found in that the soul is shown to be born with the innate memory of something prenatally acquired: of geometrical truths in the *Meno*, of Forms in the *Phaedo* and of pleasure in the *Philebus*. As such, in my view, the desire argument in the *Philebus* has more to do with the recollection arguments in the *Meno* and *Phaedo* than often claimed.¹

I start by critically examining the above *empirical interpretation* of the origin of desire at *Philebus* 34C10–35D7 and also a variant of it, which I will call the *equilibrium interpretation*. And I suggest as an alternative my *innateness interpretation* (Section I). The next section is devoted to substantiating the point of the innateness interpretation that Plato believes that we are all born with the innate memory of disintegrative pains and restorative pleasures, by drawing attention to the *Timaeus*, which offers a supplementary account of how the bodily desires in question are naturally embedded in the human race (Section II). Then I come back to the *Philebus* argument about desire, explaining how my innateness interpretation makes better sense of its conclusion

¹ Many scholars deny that at *Philebus* 34B2–C3, where Socrates gives a brief discussion of recollection in preparation for the desire argument, he alludes to the theory of recollection exhibited in the *Meno* and *Phaedo* (see, for example, Davidson 1990, p. 340–3; Frede 1993, p. 35 n. 1; 1997, p. 235 n. 23; Warren 2014, p. 47). This is mainly because they think that the ensuing argument about desire is concerned only with the memory of postnatal perceptual experiences. Some scholars suppose that he alludes to the recollection theory, but do not see its relevance to the desire argument (Delcomminette 2006, p. 329–30; Friedländer 1969, p. 332–3). Delcomminette, for example, says that we can find the connection between the dialogues, not in a technical sense of the theory of recollection but in the more general sense that the soul remembers something by itself, independently of the body. On the other hand, there are some scholars (e.g. Benitez 1989, p. 115–16; Guthrie 1978, p. 217–18) who pointed out the connection of the desire argument to some innate memory. However, they simply suggested it but did not give any analysis of the desire argument based on the suggestion; in addition, Benitez wrongly, as I shall show below, connected the desire argument to the recollection of one's prenatal *knowledge*. As a result, as far as I can see, their suggestions have not been taken seriously in the literature. This paper, in contrast, aims to offer a substantial argument for the relevance of the desire argument to innate memory of pleasure.

(Section III). Lastly, I conclude by suggesting that Plato was well aware of the close relevance of our passage in the *Philebus* to the recollection arguments given in the *Meno* and *Phaedo*.

I. Socrates' Argument about Desire in the *Philebus*

The argument about desire at *Philebus* 34C10–35D7 comes in an earlier part of the dialogue's long and winding discussion of pleasure, starting in 31B. Socrates begins the discussion by saying that one feels painful when a naturally harmonized state of the body disintegrates, and pleasant when it is being restored (31C–32B). He then claims that the soul itself has the two corresponding kinds of experiences: the expectation of bodily pleasure and that of bodily pain (32B–C). All these purely psychic pleasure and pain are then said to come about through memory (33C5–6). In order to understand this mechanism, Socrates says, it is necessary to clarify first what perception is and then what memory is (33C8–11).

The next section is thus devoted to explaining the nature of perception and that of memory, followed by an account of the latter's difference from recollection (33D2–34C9). Perception is defined as the soul's reception of the affections (*παθήματα*) that penetrate the body; when affections do not penetrate the body, perception does not occur (33D2–34A9). This forms the basis for the definition of memory as the preservation of perception (A10–B1). Then Socrates goes on to mention two apparently distinct cases where recollection occurs: (1) when the soul recaptures by itself what it has experienced with the body and (2) when the soul resumes by itself that memory of a perceptual experience or of a piece of knowledge it has lost (B2–C3). And we are reminded in conclusion that all the discussion so far was aimed at understanding the psychic pleasure and, at the same time, desire (C4–9).

This is how Socrates introduces the argument about desire at 34C10–35D7. Its main aim is to grasp what desire is and where it arises. He starts by saying that thirst, hunger and many other things of this sort are desires, and that they share the common feature by reference to which we can treat all of them as one single phenomenon (34D8–E6). The following discussion is highly important for our purposes and therefore worth citing in full.

Step (A)

Soc. Shall we go back to the same point of departure?

Pro. What point?

Soc. When we say 'he is thirsty', we always have something in mind?

Pro. We do.

Soc. Meaning that he is being depleted (κενοῦται)?

Pro. Certainly.

Soc. But thirst is a desire?

Pro. Yes, the desire for drink.

Soc. For drink or for replenishment (πληρώσεως) with drink?

Pro. For replenishment with drink, I think.

Soc. Whoever among us is being depleted, it seems, desires the opposite of what he is suffering. Being depleted, he desires to be replenished.

Pro. That is perfectly obvious. (34E7–35A5, tr. modified²)

Step (B)

Soc. Well, then. Whence could someone who is being depleted for the first time be in touch (ἐφάπτοιο), either through perception or memory, with replenishment, namely, with something which he is neither experiencing in the present nor has ever experienced in the past?

Pro. How could he? (35A6–10, tr. modified)

Step (C)

Soc. But we do maintain that he who has a desire desires something?

Pro. Naturally.

Soc. He does, then, not have a desire for what he is experiencing. For he is thirsty, and this is a process of depletion. His desire is rather for replenishment.

Pro. Yes.

Soc. Something in the person who is thirsty must necessarily somehow be in touch with replenishment.

Pro. Necessarily.

Soc. But it is impossible that this should be the body, for the body is being depleted.

Pro. Yes.

Soc. The only option we are left with is that the soul is in touch with replenishment, and it clearly must do so through memory. Or could it be in touch through anything else?

Pro. Clearly through nothing else. (35B1–C2, tr. modified)

For the sake of convenience, I have divided the above passage into three steps. Step (A) is the introductory part that establishes that all relevant desires accompany bodily

² All translations of Plato's passages in this paper are based on Cooper (1997). But they are modified when necessary for clarity of the argument.

depletion. Step (B) is the part at issue, which brings up for discussion the case of someone who is being depleted for the first time and who is neither experiencing replenishment in the present nor has ever experienced it in the past—namely of a new-born baby. Step (C) is the part of demonstration where he argues that the soul is in touch with replenishment through memory.

It has been alleged that there appears to be a contradiction in the argument: while Socrates suggests at Step (B) that on the first occasion of depletion a new-born baby is not in touch with replenishment through either perception or memory, he concludes at Step (C) that the soul of the person in question is in touch with replenishment through memory. In order to resolve this apparent contradiction, most scholars have construed Step (B) as implying that the new-born babies who are being depleted for the first time do *not* desire to be replenished because they do not have the memory of past pleasant experiences of replenishment (Frede 1993, p. 37 n. 1; 1997, p. 236 n. 26; Gosling 1975, p. 104–6; Hackforth 1972, p. 66–7 n. 1; Harte 2014, p. 49–50, 64–5; Lee 1966, p. 32–3; Waterfield 1982, p. 92 n. 1; cf. Damascius [Westerink 1959, p. 78–9]). But they are usually given breast-milk by their mothers or replenished in some other way after they are born. Only after that first pleasant experience of replenishment can they desire to be replenished because of their soul’s memory of it. And Step (C) is about those who have already acquired the pleasant experiences in question. I call this construal of desire as an acquired psychic function after birth the *empirical interpretation*.

I do not think that the empirical interpretation offers the right reading of the passage. There are mainly three reasons for my disagreement. First of all, at Step (B), Socrates only *asks* how those who are being depleted for the first time can be in touch with replenishment through either perception or memory. Although Protarchus denies promptly that they can, this does not necessarily mean that Socrates agrees with his denial, as the empirical interpreters plainly think. The context rather indicates the contrary. For at Step (A), Socrates seems to have established that bodily depletion *always* leads to the occurrence of the type of desire he is considering. Although he does not use the word ‘always’, it is clearly implied by his remark at the end of Step (A), 35A3–4, that whoever among us is being depleted desires to be replenished. This would be a very careless way of speaking if he intended to qualify the claim immediately after. In fact, the particle connecting Step (A) and Step (B), οὐν at 35A6, marks a new stage in

the argument rather than an adversative conjunction (cf. Denniston 1954, p. 425–6). It therefore does not match the empirical interpreters' view that at Step (B) Socrates is modifying the natural process, which he pointed out at Step (A), from bodily depletion to arousing desire. And the argument at Step (C) is concerned only with those who desire to be replenished, not with those who do not.

Second, it is not easy, on the empirical interpretation, to see what role Step (B) is supposed to play in the structure of the argument. This is because, if Step (B) introduces the case of those who are being depleted but do not desire to be replenished, it appears to be a digression from the rest of the argument, where Socrates does not discuss such a case.³ In view of this problem, the empirical interpreters have suggested two (non-exclusive) roles Step (B) may play in the argument, neither of which I think is convincing. One suggested role is to point out that the way in which one can be in touch with replenishment is limited to either perception or memory (Harte 2014, p. 49–50; Lee 1966, p. 33–4). However, Socrates asks Protarchus at the end of Step (C), 35C1, whether the soul can be in touch with replenishment through anything else (τῷ [...] ἔτ' ἄλλῳ), if not through memory. Since the preceding denial at 35B9–10 that the body is experiencing replenishment at the moment entails that the soul is not perceiving it (cf. 33D2–34A9), the question at 35C1 is clearly intended to be whether there is a third way for the soul to be in touch with replenishment, aside from perception and memory. The context therefore indicates that at the stage of Step (B) Socrates rather does not limit the possible means of being in touch only to perception and memory. The other suggested role of Step (B) is to make it reasonable for Socrates to conclude that desire is not a bodily function. For Protarchus might object that, since desire occurs when the body is being depleted, it is the body that desires to be replenished; Socrates therefore wards off his interlocutor's potential objection by pointing out at Step (B) that desire does not occur on the first occasion of depletion, namely that bodily depletion is not sufficient for the occurrence of desire, which requires memory. If this is what Socrates means,

³ Hackforth (1972), p. 66–7 n. 1 claims that, when Socrates says at 35B9 that the body cannot be in touch with replenishment *because it is being depleted*, the because-clause does not mean that the same thing cannot be in touch with two opposites simultaneously, but that the body has not experienced any replenishment yet, which is the claim made at Step (B). As Lee (1966), p. 33 n. 9 rightly points out, however, the subject of the sentence at 35B9 is not the body of someone merely depleted but rather the body of someone thirsty, namely desiring to be replenished with drink (cf. 35B6–7). Given that Hackforth endorses the empirical interpretation, therefore, his remark about 35B9 is contradictory.

however, Step (B) is not only excessively periphrastic but structurally redundant. For what he establishes at Step (C) is the very point that the essence of desire consists in the soul's memory of pleasure. The point obviously excludes the idea that desire is a bodily function (cf. 35C6–7). As a result, Step (B), on the empirical interpretation, plays no substantial role in the argument.

Third, more importantly, the empirical interpreters' claim that new-born babies acquire the psychic function of desire after having the first relevant pleasant experience not only has no support from other Platonic corpus but also contradicts what he says elsewhere. At *Phaedrus* 237D6–9, for example, Socrates distinguishes two types of desires that rule and lead us, saying that one of them is our *inborn* desire for pleasures (ἔμφυτος [...] ἐπιθυμία ἡδονῶν), such as the desire for food and that for drink, the other is our acquired judgement that pursues what is best. At *Laws* 782D10–783A4, in addition, the Athenian claims that all human actions are motivated by three needs and desires (ἐπιθυμίας): the *inborn* lust (ἔμφυτος ἔρωσ⁴) for food, that for drink and the last but greatest lust, for procreation. There he says that all animals, including human beings, possess the former two desires *as soon as they are born* (εὐθὺς γενομένοις), and that they blindly devote themselves to satisfying those desires (ἐπιθυμίας) and gaining the relevant pleasures (ἡδονάς). And the *Timaeus*, as I shall discuss in detail in the next section, tells us that human beings are necessarily saddled with the desire for nourishment once their immortal soul is embodied. These pieces of textual evidence make it implausible for Socrates here in the *Philebus* to endorse the view that we are born without the desire for food and for drink. As a matter of fact, how could such appetite-free babies be motivated to take nourishment necessary to survive? Even if their mothers put them to her breasts, they would not attempt to suck in breast milk without any appetite for drink. The burden of proof is clearly on the empirical interpreters, who need to give a plausible account of how those who do not desire to be replenished can get the first experience of replenishment.

For these three reasons the empirical interpretation should be rejected. Still, before presenting my innateness interpretation, I need to examine a variant of the empirical interpretation that has attracted some scholars. The proponents of this interpretation suggest that the essence of desire consists in the soul's memory of the *state* of repletion

⁴ In this context the Athenian uses ἐπιθυμία and ἔρωσ interchangeably.

rather than that of a process of replenishment (Apelt 1912, 144 n. 53; Benardete 1993, p. 174; Delcomminette 2006, p. 331–4; Taylor and Klibansky 1956, p. 261–2; Warren 2014, p. 143–4). The alleged contradiction between Step (B) and the conclusion of Step (C), on this reading, is thus resolved because, even if the new-born babies who are being depleted for the first time are neither experiencing replenishment presently nor have ever experienced replenishment before, they are nonetheless in the state of repletion before suffering the first depletion and thus they can desire to be replenished by referring to the memory of that preceding state.⁵ The point of Socrates’ argument is therefore to show that what enables one to desire is the soul’s memory of the body’s original state of equilibrium. I call this construal of desire and memory the *equilibrium interpretation*.

However, the equilibrium interpretation is also unsatisfactory, especially because its claim that the memory in question is that of the state of repletion is inconsistent with Socrates’ preceding definition of memory.⁶ As we saw at the beginning of this section, memory was defined at 34A10–11 as the preservation of perception, which was said at 33D2–34A9 to occur when bodily affections reach the soul. If the equilibrium interpretation were right, the memory necessary to have a desire would be the soul’s preservation of something *unperceived*, because the body’s state of repletion does not involve any affection or change.⁷ But this inconsistency is intolerable because Socrates gave the above definition of memory exactly for the purpose of explaining what desire is. The preceding context seems to me to provide sufficient reason to reject the equilibrium interpretation.

As we have shown so far, both the empirical and equilibrium interpretations fail to clear up the apparent contradiction in the argument. As an alternative, then, I suggest the

⁵ Benardete (1993), p. 37 and Delcomminette (2006), p. 333–4 interpret τὸ πρῶτον at 35A6 not as ‘for the first time’ but as ‘first of all’ or ‘to begin with’, which entails that Socrates here is not discussing the condition of new-born babies but that of desiring people in general. But this does not make any difference to my following criticism of their equilibrium interpretation as a whole.

⁶ See also Lee (1966), p. 31–2, who reasonably rejects the equilibrium interpretation on linguistic grounds.

⁷ At 41C5–6 Socrates says, ‘the soul is a thing that desires the states (ἐπιθυμοῦν [...] τῶν [...] ἕξεων) opposite to the body’, which might be taken as supporting the equilibrium interpretation. However, the phrase ‘desires the states’ should be merely a loose way of expressing ‘desires to return to the states’. A little later, in fact, he reminds us at 42C9–D8 that pleasure and pain involve restorative and disintegrative processes respectively (cf. 47C6), and at 42E4–12 that the state of equilibrium does not yield any pleasure or pain (cf. 32D9–33C4).

innateness interpretation according to which Socrates here argues that we are born with the innate memory of restorative pleasures in the soul by reference to which new-born babies desire to be replenished even before obtaining the first replenishment. The drift of the overall argument about desire, on this view, would be as follows. At Step (A) Socrates points out that those who are being depleted desire to be replenished. At Step (B) he asks Protarchus how, then, those who are being depleted for the first time *and thus desire to be replenished* can be in touch with replenishment, since they are neither experiencing it in the present nor have ever experienced it before; Protarchus denies that they can. *Objecting to his immediate denial*,⁸ Socrates starts Step (C) by persuading him that those who are having desire, *namely* the new-born babies in question, at least desire something (B1–2). It is then agreed that, since the objects of their desire are the opposite of what they are experiencing (from Step (A)), some element of them is somehow in touch with replenishment (B3–8). But the element in question cannot be their bodies, because the bodies is being depleted or perceiving depletion at present (B9–10).⁹ It is therefore clear that the souls are in touch with replenishment by means of memory; although Socrates asks Protarchus whether or not he can come up with another option, Protarchus answers that he cannot (B11–C2).

The point of my innateness interpretation is that when Socrates asks Protarchus the question at Step (B), he does not suggest that the new-born babies who are being depleted for the first time cannot be in touch with replenishment. The suggestion is rather that, as long as they are being depleted *and thus desire to be replenished*, they must somehow be in touch with replenishment, and he asks how. Step (C) is therefore devoted to convincing Protarchus of that apparently paradoxical claim suggested at Step (B), that, even though the new-born babies have never got replenished, they nonetheless

⁸ Hackforth (1972), p. 66–7 n. 1 claims that ἀλλὰ μὴν [...] γε at 35B1 strongly indicates the contrast between those who desire here and those who do not at 35A6. But what is contrasted with Socrates' remark here is not necessarily his own at 35A6, but more naturally Protarchus' reply immediately before, at 35A10.

⁹ The hidden premise is that the body can be in touch with replenishment only through perception. The point is that, since the body is not experiencing replenishment at present, it cannot be in touch with it through perception. I take the since-clause to come from the focus of discussion placed at Step (B), which is still in force at Step (C). Lee (1966), p. 32–3 n. 8 appeals to the general principle that the same thing cannot experience two opposites simultaneously. But this principle clearly contradicts Socrates' later remark at 46C–D about mixed pleasures that the body itself sometimes undergoes restoration and disintegration at the same time, such as feeling hot while shivering.

have the memory that enables them to desire to be replenished even on the first occasion of depletion. As such, the argument does not entail the contradiction between Step (B) and the consequence of Step (C) in the first place. The innateness interpretation can easily avoid the three objections I made to the empirical interpretation. Firstly, Socrates, throughout his argument about desire, does not modify but maintains the point he indicates at Step (A), that those who are being depleted *always* desire to be replenished. Secondly, Step (B) plays a clear role in the argument, because it poses the main question to be answered at Step (C); it is far from being a digression from the rest of the argument. Thirdly, the innateness interpretation is perfectly consistent with Plato's remarks elsewhere that all animals have the inborn desire for food and that for drink as soon as they are born. In this way the innateness interpretation offers the more plausible reading of the passage.

However, one may object that the innateness interpretation faces the same objection as I made to the equilibrium interpretation above: if Socrates is arguing for the soul's possession of some innate memory, is not this memory, after all, the memory of something unperceived? For I do not deny the point at Step (B) that the new-born babies who are being depleted for the first time are neither experiencing replenishment at present nor have ever experienced it in the past. It therefore entails, one may say, that they have never had the relevant perceptual experiences but nevertheless possess the memory of them when they are born—it is inconsistent, as I myself pointed out, with Socrates' earlier definition of memory as the preservation of perception. What I am about to show in the next section by referring to the *Timaeus*, however, is that all human beings are born with the *perceptual* experiences of disintegrative pain and restorative pleasure they have had before they were born. The idea is that those bodily experiences were implanted by the gods into the human soul—more precisely, in its appetitive part—when they created mankind by amalgamating the reasoning part of the soul with the body. This constitutes strong evidence for the innateness interpretation, and we shall therefore look into this discussion in the *Timaeus*.

II. The Origin of Desire in the *Timaeus*

There are ample reasons why the *Timaeus* could help us understand what Plato says about desire in the *Philebus*. To begin with, the *Timaeus* advances a theory of perception that is very similar to or more detailed than the one we saw given in the *Philebus*. At *Timaeus* 43B6–C7 Timaeus explains how human beings start to perceive the external world: as soon as we are born, external objects strike against our body and their ‘affections’ (παθήματα) make it move; when the produced motions are conducted through the body to the soul, the soul perceives the affections that caused them. At 64B3–C7 Timaeus gives a more detailed explanation by saying that when an external object affects mobile parts of the body, composed chiefly of fire and air, like the organ of sight and that of hearing, the affection is passed on in a chain reaction with the bodily particles (μόρια) there, each affecting their neighbouring ones, until the initial affection reaches ‘the wise’ (τὸ φρόνιμον), which is probably the rational part of the soul,¹⁰ and reports the property that produced the reaction; but that when an external object affects immobile parts of the body, composed chiefly of earth, like bones and hair, on the other hand, the affection is blocked in the middle and remains unperceived.

Moreover, there is also a close affinity between the two dialogues regarding the explanation of the nature of bodily pleasure and pain. By drawing on the above theory of perception, Timaeus explains at 64C7–65B3 how we experience pleasure and pain as follows. An affection that violently and suddenly disintegrates the natural state of the body (παρὰ φύσιν) is painful, while an affection that suddenly restores the natural state (εἰς φύσιν) is pleasant; those parts of the body that consist of small and readily mobile particles, like the organ of sight, do not yield pains or pleasures because they do not involve any violent process; on the other hand, those parts that consist of large and immobile particles yield pains and pleasures because, when passing on the motions to the entire body, they do not easily give way to what acts on them;¹¹ concerning the latter case, however, if the departure from the natural state or depletion (κενώσεις) is

¹⁰ Cf. Brisson (1999), p. 153, 159–60; Fletcher (2016), p. 410 n. 24; Wolfsdorf (2013), p. 60.

¹¹ This description may seem to contradict the remark at 64B6–C5 about perception we saw above, that immobile parts of the body block the affection they receive and do not pass it on to the soul. But, as we can see from the specific examples Timaeus gives for those immobile parts that do not make the soul perceive (bones and hair), he is likely referring to only *extremely* immobile parts. Therefore, his remark there does not necessarily exclude the possibility that immobile parts of the body that are nonetheless more mobile than bones and hair can still pass on the motions they receive and make the soul perceive. For a more detailed discussion of the issue, see Fletcher (2016), p. 408–18.

gradual, but the replenishment (πληρώσεις) is sudden, the mortal part of the soul (τὸ θητὸς τῆς ψυχῆς) perceives no pain but only pleasure (e.g. sweet smells); and if the disintegration of the natural state is sudden, but the restoration is gradual, the mortal part perceives pain but not pleasure (e.g. cuts or burns in the body). I shall come back shortly to the point that Timaeus allocates painful and pleasant experiences to the mortal part of the soul and other perceptual experiences to the rational part of the soul. Crucially, Timaeus' explanation of bodily pain and pleasure clearly shares the basic idea Socrates gives at *Philebus* 31C–32B, that their nature respectively lies in the disintegration and restoration of the naturally harmonized state of the body.

Since the theory of perception and the mechanism of bodily pleasure and pain Socrates gives in the *Philebus* is supposed to lay foundations for his explanation of the nature of desire (cf. *Philebus* 33C4–9), and we can find similar and more elaborate accounts of those two basic elements in the *Timaeus*, it is reasonable to expect the *Timaeus* to shed some light on what Socrates says about desire in the *Philebus*.

Let us, then, consider some relevant passages of the *Timaeus*. The first passage to look at is *Timaeus* 69C5–D6, where Timaeus gives an account of how mankind comes to possess desire at its birth:

They [the created, celestial gods] imitated him [the Demiurge]: having taken the immortal origin of the soul, they proceeded next to encase it within a round mortal body [the head], and to give it the entire body as its vehicle. And within the body they built another kind of soul as well, the mortal kind, which contains within it those dreadful and necessary affections (παθήματα): pleasure, first of all, evil's most powerful lure; then pains, that make us run away from what is good; besides these, boldness also and fear, foolish counsellors both; then also the spirit of anger hard to assuage, and expectation easily led astray. These they fused with unreasoning perception (ἄλόγῳ αἰσθήσει) and all-venturing lust (ἐπιχειρητῆ παντὸς ἔρωτι), and so, as was necessary, they constructed the mortal type of soul. (*Timaeus* 69C5–D6, tr. modified)

Here Timaeus is speaking of all-venturing 'lust' (ἔρωξ). It is true that this word is used towards the end of the dialogue to mean specifically 'the desire for sexual intercourse' (91A2, B4, D1). But he says there that the gods constructed that sexual desire when some men were transformed at the second birth into women. In the present context, the topic is about the celestial gods' creation of the first men; therefore, by 'lust' he cannot mean

the sexual desire. In the ensuing passage (69D6–70A7), Timaeus divides the mortal kind of soul into its spirited and appetitive parts, and describes the latter as consisting of the desires (τῶν ἐπιθυμιῶν, 70A5; cf. 70B5). And he goes on to say that the appetitive part of the soul desires food and drink and whatever it needs due to the body’s nature (70D7–8). It should be safe to infer that the lust in question is equivalent to the kind of desire (ἐπιθυμία) we have been focusing on, such as the desire for food and that for drink (cf. 88B1–2).

Timaeus’ remark is that the gods constructed the mortal kind of soul by incorporating into it not only pleasure, pains, and other affections, but also unreasoning perception and lust or desire as necessary components. It indicates that desire is an inherent and indispensable element of the human soul. The idea seems fundamentally different from the view the empirical interpreters endorse, that human beings are born without desire but acquire that psychic function after experiencing the first pleasure of replenishment by eating or drinking. It is rather that desire is what the gods implanted in the human soul at mankind’s creation, and therefore that all human beings innately possess desire and the other psychic functions, such as fear and spiritedness, from the beginning of their lives.¹²

Some might object, however, that Timaeus’ view could still be compatible with the empirical interpretation, at least with regard to the first men. For his earlier description of human creation at 42A3–B1, which the cited passage above is meant to recapitulate, appears to indicate, at first sight, such an empirical origin of desire. We should therefore give it a closer inspection, which would further clarify the relation between perception and desire.

So, once the souls [of the first men] were of necessity implanted in bodies, and these bodies had things coming to them and leaving them, the first thing they all would of necessity come to have would be one innate perception (αἴσθησιν [...] μίαν [...] σύμφυτον¹³), which arises out of violent affections (βιαίων παθημάτων). The second would be lust (ἔρωτα), mingled with

¹² Cf. *R.* 441A7–B1, where Plato says that children are full of the spirit of anger as soon as they are born. Thanks to an anonymous referee for this reference.

¹³ This word is also used in the sense of ‘growing together’ at *Phd.* 81C6 or ‘united’ at *Phdr.* 246A6. Although I translate it here as ‘innate’, it does not necessarily mean that one starts having these perceptions as soon as one is born. The point is rather that the process starts when the soul is combined with the body at the time of incarnation.

pleasure and pain. And they would come to have fear and spiritedness as well, plus whatever goes with having these emotions, as well as all their natural opposites. (42A3–B1, tr. modified)

Here Timaeus says that the embodied soul comes to have first some perception *and then* desire. His ensuing explanation at 43B6–C7 is that the first men, after they are created or born,¹⁴ have their body exposed to the strong turbulence caused by the affections of the external objects that strike against the body and make it conduct the motions to the soul, and that those motions as a group are called ‘perceptions’ (αἰσθήσεις). One might therefore construe Timaeus’ point as being that the first men, immediately after birth, start to perceive those strong affections, including restorative pleasures and disintegrative pains, and as a result they become able to desire to eat and drink. If so, why shouldn’t we (later human generations) acquire the psychic function of desire in the same way? This description of the acquisition process seems to support rather the empirical interpretation of the origin of desire in the *Philebus*.

However, we should consider more carefully what kind of perception Timaeus means by ‘one innate perception’, which arises out of ‘violent affections’ (βιαιῶν παθημάτων). The meaning of ‘violent affections’ is sometimes explained by referring to the distinction we saw at 64B3–C7 (cf. *Philebus* 33D2–34A9), between the affections that penetrate the body and make the soul perceive, and those that do not (Waterfield and Gregory 2008, p. 136). The underlying idea is that the violent affections in question are those *powerful* affections that can penetrate the body and cause the soul to see, hear and so on. However, *violent* affections do not mean such *powerful* affections. Reference should rather be made to Timaeus’ discussion of the nature of bodily pleasure and pain at 64C7–65B3, where he says that a violent (βίαιον) and sudden affection that disintegrates the natural state of the body is painful, while a sudden affection that restores the natural state is pleasant, and that the act of seeing does not yield any pleasure or pain because there is no violence (βία) involved when the sense organ of sight is severed and reconstituted. Likewise, we can also find several other passages

¹⁴ Timaeus does not say this explicitly. But immediately before the above passage, at 43A7–B5, he says that the living creature as a whole (namely the compound of body and soul) moves in a disorderly, random and irrational way that involves all six of the motions. This is highly likely to be a description of new-born babies (cf. Cooper 1997, p. 1246 n. 21; Taylor 1928, p. 268). And it is reasonable to suppose that the first men come into contact with external objects after birth, and that the perceptions Timaeus refers to at 43B6–C7 start then.

where he associates some ‘violent’ change in the body with the occurrence of pain, and its restoration, unless that is gradual and slow (cf. 65A6–B3), with the occurrence of pleasure.¹⁵ It is true that, given that violent affections are perceivable, they are also those powerful affections that penetrate the body, and thus they can accompany other sense perceptions like tasting and smelling. But the passages referred to clearly show that they are primarily involved in pleasure and pain. It is therefore likely that in the present passage by ‘one innate perception’, Timaeus means the specific kind of perceptual experiences that consist of pleasant and painful sensations.¹⁶ This gives an excellent account of why Timaeus says at 69D4 that the mortal kind of soul is necessarily burdened with ‘unreasoning perception’: the perception in question is specifically concerned with pleasure and pain, which involve the appetitive part of the soul. The other kinds of perception, such as seeing and hearing, were said at 64B3–C7 to involve the rational part of the soul. In fact, when attributing to plants the same soul as our appetitive part of the soul alone, at 77B3–6, Timaeus claims that they are totally devoid of opinion, reasoning or understanding and only share ‘in sensation, pleasant and painful, and desires (αἰσθήσεως [...] ἡδείας καὶ ἀλγεινῆς μετὰ ἐπιθυμιῶν)’.¹⁷

What, then, do those ‘violent affections’ come from? This question is closely related to what Timaeus means in the cited passage by ‘one innate (σύμφυτον) perception’, in which our psychic function originates. He says there that the bodies in which the souls are implanted have ‘had things coming to them and leaving them’ (42A4). A little later

¹⁵ ‘Whenever the composition of the moistened parts that enter the vessels of the tongue is such that it is congruent with the natural condition of the tongue, these entering parts make smooth and lubricate the roughened parts and in some cases constrict while in others they relax the parts that have been abnormally dilated or contracted. They decisively restore all those parts back to their natural position. As such, they prove to be a cure for the violent affections (τῶν βιάων παθημάτων) [just discussed], being fully pleasant and agreeable to one and all, and are called sweet.’ (66C1–7); ‘The painful odour irritates and violates (βιάζόμενον) the whole upper body from the top of the head to the navel, while the pleasant odour soothes that area and welcomes it back to its natural state.’ (67A4–6); ‘All that is unnatural, we recall, is painful while all that occurs naturally is pleasant. This is true of death as well: a death that is due to disease or injury is painful and forced (βίαιος), while a death that comes naturally, when the aging process has run its course, is of all deaths the least distressing—a pleasant, not a painful death.’ (81E2–5).

¹⁶ It is worth noting that when mentioning perceptions in general like seeing and hearing, he uses the plural (αἰσθήσεις, 43C6). For the difference between the affections at 42A6 and those at 43B7, see also Cornford (1937), p. 148 n. 2. Cf. *Lg.* 653A5–6, where the Athenian says that when we are children, the first perception (πρώτην αἴσθησιν) we have is of pleasure and pain.

¹⁷ For a helpful discussion of the distinction in the *Timaeus* between the hedonistic kind of perception and the other kinds, see Fletcher (2016), p. 397–418.

(42E7–43A4) he notes that, after receiving the immortal soul from the Demiurge, the created gods compose the human body of parts of fire, earth, water, and air, and says:

And they went on to invest this body—into and out of which things were to flow—with the orbits of the immortal soul. These orbits, now bound within a mighty river, neither mastered that river nor were mastered by it, but tossed it violently (βίᾳ) and were violently tossed by it. (43A4–7)

What flows into and out of the body is said a little later, at 43B5–6, to be ‘the nourishment-bearing billow’ (κύματος ὃ τὴν τροφήν παρεῖχεν). So Timaeus means here that as soon as the immortal soul is amalgamated with the body, it becomes subject to ‘violent’ streams of nourishment for the body (βίᾳ, 43A7). The passage certainly shows that the ‘violent affections’ in question derive from the ebb and flow of material elements, whose violent streams disintegrate and restore the natural state of the body and thus cause the soul to perceive pain and pleasure. What is important is that such violent streams of nourishment involve a much more primitive form of bodily depletion and replenishment than new-born babies’ getting thirsty and quenching thirst by drinking and so on. Later in the dialogue (73B1–C6) Timaeus says that the god¹⁸ implanted the different parts of the soul in the marrow (μυελός), which is likewise composed of the four material elements, and divided the marrow into different kinds and then constructed the whole body around it. Remember Timaeus’ above remark that the immortal soul is subject to violent streams of nourishment once it is combined with the body (42A3–B1; 43A4–7). It is highly likely that the phase in question starts sometime in the course of the gods’ differentiation of the marrow, and that they incorporated perceptual experiences of pleasure and pain into the appetitive part of the soul at the incipient stage of human creation.

Now there should be no doubt that in the *Timaeus*, the human race is supposed to have been necessarily saddled by the gods with painful experiences of depletion and pleasant experiences of replenishment since the very beginning of its creation. Timaeus says, as we saw above, that those perceptual experiences are inseparably tied to desire, fused with pleasure and pain (42A6–7; cf. 69D4–6). This strongly suggests that the desire for nourishment we have focused on is also innately implanted in the human soul.

¹⁸ In the third part of the dialogue (69Aff.) Timaeus does not consistently distinguish between the Demiurge and the created gods. See Cornford (1937), p. 280.

It is true that Timaeus' story is limited to the creation of the first men, not encompassing later, ordinary human generations, and therefore it does not strictly exclude the possibility that *we* might have empirically acquired our psychic function of desire after birth. But this is highly unlikely to be Plato's position, given Timaeus' remarks at 90E6–91A4 that, when some of the first men were reborn in the second generation as women, the gods fashioned (ἐτεκτίνωντο) the desire for sexual union. We have already seen that this sexual desire is treated as one of the three needs and desires *all* humans have, the other two of which are the inborn desire for food and that for drink, and that it is different from the other two in that it is manifested only later in life (*Laws* 782D10–783A4). The remark that the gods fashioned sexual desire does not suggest that we acquire it empirically after having experienced the first sexual intercourse, rather, that sexual desire is innately and potentially present in us, and somehow actualized later in life before the first experience. Likewise, Plato's view would be, more naturally, that the entire human race, because of its necessary connection to the body, is by nature preloaded with perceptual experiences of pleasure and pain and the desire for nourishment combined with them. This innateness interpretation of the origin of desire shows that the kind of desire in question, as the empirical interpretation suggests, is not an extrinsic function of the soul that comes from such contingent experiences as one might have after birth, depending on the external environment, but an intrinsic function of the soul that comes from such fundamental experiences as one necessarily has from the beginning of one's life due to its embodied state. Those inherent experiences, as I have emphasized, are concerned with the efflux and influx of bodily elements, which constitute a primitive form of bodily depletion and replenishment. This ultimate source of desire, as I shall discuss in the concluding section, has non-trivial implications for the nature of memory by reference to which we have desire.

III. The Soul as the First Principle of Action

We have seen that the *Timaeus* supplies us with important information about the primeval origin of our desires for nourishment: they ultimately derive from the perceptual experiences of disintegrative pains and restorative pleasures caused by the violent streams of nourishment to which the embodied soul is subjected. However, the

dialogue does not say anything about the intermediary role of memory in how such innate experiences lead to the inborn desires for food and drink. I suppose that this absence is why in the *Philebus*, Socrates goes to some lengths to argue that the nature of desire consists in one's innate memory of those primitive experiences—it is a substantially new point. In the rest of the paper, I show how this innateness interpretation gives an account better than the empirical interpretation of the conclusion of Socrates' argument about desire in the *Philebus*.

After establishing that the soul is in touch with replenishment through memory down to 35C2, Socrates concludes the argument as follows.

Soc. Do we understand, then, what conclusions we have to draw from what has been said?

Pro. What are they?

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

Pro. Why is that?

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

Pro. And very much so.

Soc. This impulse, then, that drives it towards the opposite of its own experience reveals (δηλοῖ) that it has the memory of that opposite experience?

Pro. Certainly.

Soc. By pointing out that it is this memory that directs it towards the objects of its desires, our argument has established that every impulse and desire and the origin (τὴν ἀρχήν) of the whole animal belong to the soul.

Pro. Very much so.

Soc. Our argument will, then, never allow that it is our body that experiences thirst, hunger, or anything of that sort.

Pro. Absolutely not. (35C3–D7, tr. modified)

Here Socrates claims without notice that his preceding argument about desire applies to animals in general. But this sudden expansion of discussion does not invalidate my overall argument so far. For I have pointed out that at *Laws* 782D10–783A4, Plato makes the Athenian say that not only human beings but also all other animals have the desire for food and that for drink as soon as they are born. Unless there is any evidence for the opposite, it is reasonable to suppose that Socrates holds the same view here in the *Philebus* as well. As long as all animals are assumed to possess inborn desires, the innateness interpretation works equally well for them.

The innateness interpretation makes good sense of Socrates' remark at C12–14 that the impulse leading to the opposite of one's experience *reveals* (δηλοῖ) that one has the memory of that opposite experience. The remark indicates that it was initially unclear whether one possesses that memory, and that one's possession was then revealed in the argument by reference to the desire for the opposite of one's own experience. This characterisation matches well with the drift of the argument based on my innateness interpretation. I argued above that at Step (B) Protarchus denies that the new-born babies who are being depleted for the first time can be in touch with replenishment either through perception or memory, and that at Step (C) Socrates convinces him that, since they nonetheless desire to be replenished without perceiving replenishment presently, they must be in touch with it through memory. The point of the argument at Step (C) therefore lies in proving that they possess some innate memory of restorative pleasures in the soul, by appealing to the observable fact that they desire to be replenished even on the first occasion of depletion. It would follow from the empirical interpretation, in contrast, that neither Socrates nor Protarchus doubts at any point of the argument whether those who desire *possess* the memory of restorative pleasures, because they are supposed to have these pleasant experiences after birth. The focus of the argument at Step (C) would be solely on point that the desires are aroused through memory rather than perception, but not, as I am arguing, on whether they possess the memory in question.

Lastly, we should look at Socrates' remark at D2–3 that all animals have their principle (τὴν ἀρχήν) in the soul. Verity Harte, who is one of the empirical interpreters, has recently argued that the word ἀρχή should be translated in the present context as 'rule', not as 'origin', although the latter is more natural (Harte 2014, p. 63–70). This is because the latter translation connotes temporal antecedence, but Socrates and Protarchus have agreed at Step (B), according to the empirical interpretation, that such desires as thirst and hunger derive from one's prior pleasant experiences of replenishment after birth; given, however, that the soul has those perceptual experiences with the body (cf. 33D2–34A9), Socrates cannot conclude that the temporally antecedent origin of animal action based on desire belongs solely to the soul. In view of this problem, Harte translates ἀρχή as 'rule' and takes the sentence to mean that all animal souls possess the *authority* to act for the sake of restoring the body to the natural state.

The idea is that what Socrates assigns exclusively to the soul in virtue of its acquired desires for food and drink is not a starting point of animal action but the regulatory principle that orders the body to maintain its natural state by gaining the appropriate restorative pleasures. I do not mean to say that her attention to such a regulatory role of the soul is off the mark. However, I contend that the innateness interpretation can easily accommodate the more natural sense of the word Harte rejects, namely the ‘origin’ or ‘first principle’ of animal action. For what Socrates has shown in the argument, on this view, is that all animals are born with the innate memory of restorative pleasures (and disintegrative pains). It clearly entails that the memory in question, by reference to which they desire to be replenished as soon as they are born, is temporally prior to any replenishment with food or drink they get after birth. Once Socrates has established that all animals, through innate memory, desire to get pleasure and avoid pain even before obtaining the first relevant experiences, he can reasonably conclude that such an origin or first principle of animal action belongs solely to the soul.

IV. Conclusion

It is important that Socrates’ argument about desire we have examined so far follows his preparatory discussion of recollection (34B6–C3). Many scholars have denied the relevance of this desire argument to the recollection arguments given in the *Meno* and *Phaedo* because of their assumption that the *Philebus* argument is concerned only with experiences one gains after birth. At the beginning of the paper, I suggested that rather it has more to do with those recollection arguments than these commentators assume because it argues that we are born with innate memory of perceptual experiences of restorative pleasure, even though this innate memory does not involve any knowledge of intelligible objects. I conclude the paper by explaining this point in more detail.

Just before introducing the desire argument in the *Philebus*, Socrates articulates two apparently distinctive kinds of recollection as follows:

Soc. Do we not call it ‘recollection’ when the soul recalls as much as possible by itself, without the aid of the body, what she had once experienced together with the body? Or how would you put it?

Pro. I quite agree.

Soc. But on the other hand, when, after the loss of memory of either a perception or again a piece of knowledge (μαθήματος), the soul calls up this memory for itself, we also call these events recollection.

Pro. You are right. (34B6–C3)

The intended distinction here is likely between what one remembers without having paid attention to it and what one has forgotten and cannot call in mind easily without conscious effort (cf. Delcomminette 2006, p. 324–30). We can see that the latter description matches well with the examples of memory we find in the *Meno* and *Phaedo*. At *Meno* 85C9–D5, Socrates notes that although the slave boy, due to Socrates' cross examination, has stirred up his own true beliefs about geometrical truths, he still needs to repeat the process many times in order to retrieve his knowledge of them. At *Phaedo* 75C7–76D6, Socrates emphasizes that we all have lost the knowledge of the Form of the Good, the Form of the Beautiful and so on at the time of birth, and that some of us attempt to retrieve it later in life by learning. Although the *Meno* passage does not directly discuss oblivion, its point clearly implies the loss of prenatal knowledge at birth and the necessity of conscious efforts to recover it later in life, in common with the *Phaedo* passage. When Plato adds in the *Philebus* 'a piece of knowledge' to the items the memory of which one has lost, it is very hard to believe that he is not at least alluding to the innate memory of intelligible objects he once argued for in the *Meno* and *Phaedo*.¹⁹

The primary reason why scholars have denied Plato's allusion here to his technical theory of recollection is their assumption that innate memory is irrelevant to the discussion of psychic pleasure and desire, which is the focus of the present context (cf. 34C4–9): since Plato is not dealing with prenatal perceptual experiences of pleasure, they think, he is also not referring to prenatal knowledge (cf. Davidson 1990, p. 340–3; Delcomminette 2006, p. 329–30; Frede 1993, p. 35 n. 1; 1997, p. 235 n. 23). If the innateness interpretation I have argued for is correct, however, there is no cogent reason for their denial of the allusion. The passage cited above, in my view, rather indicates the relevance of innate memory to perceptions, and thus to the ensuing desire argument, by

¹⁹ Benitez (1989), p. 113–17 suggests that the theory of recollection is also presupposed at 52B6–8, where Socrates says that the pleasure of learning (μαθημάτων) belongs to only a few people, and at 58D4–5, where he indicates that the science of dialectic is by nature (πέφυκε) a power in our soul to love the truth.

juxtaposing ‘a piece of knowledge’ to ‘a perception’ in the second type of recollection. I have shown, with the help of the *Timaeus*, that innate memory of pleasure is concerned with primitive perceptual experiences that were implanted by the gods in the human soul at the birth of mankind, rather than with those of eating and drinking we have after birth—they are memories of things so distant that we cannot easily recall. In a sense, we have forgotten these memories and only latently keep them in the soul. Of course, the account of the second form of recollection itself does not exclude the ordinary case of recollection where we forget and recall the memory we have acquired in our lifetime. But neither does it exclude the special case where the memory in question is innate. The innateness interpretation strongly indicates that Socrates’ mention of ‘a piece of knowledge’ here implicitly points to innate memory of perceptual experiences by alluding to the recollection theory, and thus anticipates its significance for the successive argument about desire.

I admit, however, that there is also a difference between the *Philebus* and the *Meno* and *Phaedo*.²⁰ The recollection arguments in the latter two dialogues pertain to knowledge of items (geometrical truths or intelligible Forms) one is supposed to have acquired in the non-physical, intelligible world. The desire argument in the *Philebus*, in contrast, pertains to experiences one can have only in this physical realm, because the objects of the memory in question are our perceptual experiences of bodily pleasure and pain, even though they are primitive experiences. One might therefore think that the *Philebus* argument is not analogous to those recollection arguments given in the *Meno* and *Phaedo*. But I do not think that this difference outweighs an important structural similarity between the three arguments in question. What Plato aimed to demonstrate in the recollection arguments is that we have a certain experience that cannot satisfactorily be explained without assuming the presence in our soul of some innate memory: in the *Meno*, for example, the slave boy reaches and recognizes the geometrical truth he has never learnt in his life; in the *Phaedo*, according to Plato, we have a cognitive experience of comparing sensible particulars with their corresponding Form, the latter of which we have never encountered in the sensible world. Plato’s objective in the desire argument in the *Philebus* is likewise to explain why we desire to obtain something (a restorative pleasure) we have never yet experienced in our lifetime, by

²⁰ I thank an anonymous referee for raising this worry.

proposing the hypothesis that we are somehow born with innate memory of the same kind of experiences. According to the *Timaeus*, as I showed above, Plato certainly advances the view that those perceptual experiences of disintegrative pains and restorative pleasures from which our desire for nourishment ultimately derives were incorporated into the appetitive part of our soul at the birth of mankind. If this structural similarity—explaining the occurrence of a certain cognitive experience by appealing to the presence of some innate memory—is properly appreciated, it should be reasonable enough to view the desire argument in the *Philebus* as closely related to the recollection arguments in the *Meno* and *Phaedo*.

Still, we should be careful about the fact that the nature of psychic pleasure or desire is said in the *Philebus* to consist in *memory* rather than recollection (33C5–6), and that we cannot find any mention of recollection within the desire argument. Its conclusion, in fact, is that we desire or get in touch with replenishment by means of memory, not of recollection. Although we have to be speculative here, the probable implication is that, when we desire to be replenished, we are not supposed to visualize clearly or recollect our memory of past replenishment; rather, we would refer to it in a more implicit way. It is true that we sometimes desire something by remembering our specific past experiences distinctly—for example, you might desire to eat ice cream by calling to mind the one you ate before.²¹ But Plato’s present discussion of desire is clearly concerned not with such token experiences but with general types of experiences corresponding to thirst, hunger and such other desires, although it is difficult to distinguish thirst and hunger, especially for new-born babies. His idea, if my innateness interpretation is correct, is that the memory of the type of experiences relevant to thirst or hunger ultimately derives from primitive bodily depletion and replenishment, and that the memory is deeply incorporated into our soul from the beginning of our life. One might ask how such innate and latent memory can motivate us to obtain specific replenishment with food or drink when we are being depleted soon after we are born, as new-born babies have never eaten or drunk anything.²² However, those primitive experiences the memory of which makes us desire to eat and drink are supposed to involve a primeval form of lacking and obtaining nourishment that causes disintegrative

²¹ This instance may involve the first form of recollection.

²² I thank an anonymous referee for this clarificatory question.

pains and restorative pleasures. The point is that the memory in question consists of the same general kind of experiences as getting replenished with food or drink, and therefore it could supply sufficient motivational ground for us to take nourishment in general after birth. Even if we need to learn empirically what specific thing to eat or drink to replenish our depleted body, the object of the desire in question is treated, more generally, as a pleasure of replenishment. In addition, such a distant source of desire as primitive experiences of pleasure and pain gives a good account of why we would make only an implicit reference to the innate memory of those experiences. When we become thirsty, we do not usually call any specific past experience of quenching thirst in mind but, as it were, instinctively and impulsively try to get something to drink (cf. *Republic* 437D–439B). Plato's view would be that this impetuous mental reaction does not involve recollecting but merely *unconscious* referring to the latent memory of general restorative pleasures in the depths of the soul. Such unconscious referencing may well be different from the occurrence of recollection, but it can happen, according to Plato, only if we nonetheless preserve the memory in question somewhere in the soul.

This consideration does not stop us from concluding that the desire argument in the *Philebus* is structurally parallel to the *recollection* arguments in the *Meno* and *Phaedo*. The latter two arguments also focus on establishing the point that the people involved, the slave boy in the *Meno* and Simmias (and other human beings) in the *Phaedo*, possess latent innate knowledge of geometrical truths and of intelligible Forms. Plato suggests that they *could* recollect or retrieve that knowledge if they persevere in their inquiries, but he does not say that they have recollected or retrieved it. The desire argument in the *Philebus*, although not concerned with knowledge of those intelligible objects, likewise attempts to prove the presence of latent innate memory of pleasure in the human soul. In this sense, we can reasonably conclude that it is another recollection argument of Plato's.ⁱⁱ

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