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PLATO ON PLEASURE AND PAIN

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Plato seems ambivalent about pleasure. He argues once that pleasure is the good (*Protagoras* 351b–e, 353c–354e), but more often, he argues that it is not (*Gorgias* 495b–499b; *Republic* VI. 505c; *Philebus* 53c–55c). Even when he rejects hedonism, he insists that the best life is choiceworthy in part for its pleasures (*Republic* IX. 580d–588a; *Philebus* 21d–e, 60e; *Laws* 661d–664c, 732e–734e). At the same time, he often stresses the dangers of pleasure (*Gorgias* 492d–495a; *Phaedo* 64d–67b, 83b–e; *Republic* VI. 585e–587a), and his warnings sometimes verge on asceticism.[1] It is difficult to know what to make of this collection of claims and arguments.

Facing this situation, one might turn to Plato's dictum that we cannot know what anything is like without first knowing what that thing is (e.g., *Meno* 70a–71a; *Republic* I. 345b–c). In this case, one might seek insight into the value of pleasure by first asking what it is. Such an approach leads to the *Philebus*, Plato's most detailed discussion of the nature and value of pleasure. This strategy faces a major obstacle, though: it is unclear whether the *Philebus* contains a unified account of pleasure or of its value. At the same time, we should not give up on the idea too quickly. In this chapter, I propose a unified reading of pleasure's nature and value in the *Philebus*, and I show how such a reading illuminates Plato's diverse claims about pleasure across the corpus.

The *Philebus* as a whole considers whether the human good is constituted by pleasure or by reason and its associated goods (such as knowledge). Socrates argues early on that neither pleasure nor reason is our good, since the best human life contains both (20b–22c). However, he continues to ask which constituent is more responsible for our living well and so wins "second prize" (22c–e). He ultimately awards this prize to reason (64c–67b). In the interim, Socrates reflects on the nature of pleasure in general (31b–36c), draws a striking distinction between false and true pleasures (36c–50e, 50e–53c), and argues again that pleasure is not the good (53c–55c). The present chapter maps roughly onto these three phases of Socrates' discussion: I first examine the nature of pleasure (Section 1), then the nature of false pleasure (Section 2), and finally the value and disvalue of pleasure (Section 3).[2]

DOI: 10.4324/9781003541134-25

The Nature of Pleasure

Plato often associates pain with lack or disintegration, and pleasure with fulfillment or restoration (*Gorgias* 493a–497d; *Republic* IX. 583b–585e). For example, he associates the pain of dehydration with lack of water and the pleasure of drinking with fulfillment of that lack.[3] He also associates pain and pleasure – especially bodily pain and pleasure – with perception (*Phaedo* 64c–66d; *Theaetetus* 156b; *Timaeus* 64a–65b). The *Philebus* combines these two themes. Socrates develops the restoration model by reference to healthy organisms (31d–32b): bodily health is a harmony of bodily elements, but bodies often fall short of such a state, and can then be restored to harmony. (One way to depart from harmony is to be deficient in some bodily element, such as water.) At first, it is unclear whether Socrates thinks disintegration and restoration *are* pain and pleasure, or are their *causes*. He soon clarifies that they are the causes and that he also has the perception aspect of pleasure in view. Sometimes we feel disintegration and sometimes not; pain requires that we feel it (33e–34a; 43b–c). A state free from disintegration and restoration (32d–33c), or one in which the changes are too small to feel (43c–e), causes neither pleasure nor pain. Thus, Socrates thinks the *feeling* caused by departure from a harmonious state is pain and that caused by return to harmony is pleasure. A similar account of pleasure as felt restoration also appears in the *Timaeus* (64c–65b). In both places, these *restorative pleasures* are functional and representational. The functions of pain and pleasure are to track departures from, and restorations to, health and harmony.[4]

Socrates concludes that felt disintegration and restoration relative to a state of harmony is one kind of pain and pleasure (32b). He follows this with a second kind, initially exemplified by anticipation of pain or pleasure of the first kind (32b–c). Such pains and pleasures depend on the ability to remember disintegrative pains and restorative pleasures, and to form desires that we expect to be satisfied or frustrated (34a–36c). After introducing this category of pleasure, Socrates expands it to include those that anticipate, reflect on, or remember some other pleasure future, present, or past (39c–d, 40c, 40d). These clearly require the ability to anticipate, reflect, and remember (cp. 21c). Call these *reflective* pleasures.[5] Reflective pleasures seem familiar, and not readily assimilable to restorative ones.[6] Nor is there any immediately obvious way to treat these as species of a common genus. So, the distinction between restorative and reflective pleasures seems to threaten the unity of pleasure. However, deciding the question requires a closer look.

Simple cases of reflective pleasure take restorative pleasures as objects – for example, the pleasure of anticipating future bodily pleasure (again, 32b–c). But two elaborations are in order.

First, reflective pleasure A may take reflective pleasure B as an object, and B may take reflective pleasure C as an object. However, if every reflective pleasure takes another pleasure as an object, this must come to an end on pain of regress. If every pleasure is either reflective or restorative, a full account of any reflective pleasure must ultimately mention some restorative pleasure. Second, simple cases of reflective pleasure take other *pleasures* as objects. But reflective pleasures can be directed at what *produces* other pleasures, precisely because of its causal connection to pleasure. For example, one may take reflective pleasure in expecting that one will possess wealth in the future. This is an apt object of reflective pleasure precisely because wealth produces pleasure (40a).[7] Again, though, any full account

of a reflective pleasure must ultimately mention some other *pleasure* (here, those produced by the immediate object of the reflective pleasure, i.e., wealth).

Thus, a full account of any reflective pleasure must ultimately mention some restorative pleasure. Restorative pleasures, by contrast, can be fully characterized without reference to any other pleasure. Restorative pleasures are thus psychologically *basic*, while reflective pleasures are psychologically *derivative* and depend on relatively sophisticated cognition that takes restorative pleasures and their causes as inputs and objects. Compare the later Epicurean view that all mental pleasures are "referred to" bodily pleasures. Their clearest examples are mental pleasures that anticipate, recall, or reflect on bodily pleasures. All the same nuances apply here: mental pleasures can anticipate, recall, or reflect on other mental pleasures, or on things productive of pleasures, bodily or mental. But the Epicureans insist that any full account of a mental pleasure must mention some bodily pleasure. At a certain level of abstraction, the Epicureans endorse the *Philebus* view of derivative, reflective pleasures ultimately referred to other, basic pleasures, where the pleasantness of the basic pleasures explains why reflecting on them and their causes is pleasant.

However, there is a key difference. The Epicureans say that all basic, restorative pleasures are bodily, but Plato disagrees. When Socrates introduces anticipatory pleasures, he points out that these are mental pleasures (32b–c), in contrast to the bodily, restorative pleasures he has just discussed. This might lead one to conclude that all bodily pleasures are restorative, and all mental pleasures reflective.[8] But this reading is untenable. Socrates describes pleasures of learning – definitely mental pleasures – on the fulfillment model (51e–52b). Similarly in the *Republic*, Socrates distinguishes among basic pleasures that belong to the appetitive part of the soul (tied to the body), to spirit, and to reason (IX. 580d–581c), and these are all described on the fulfillment model (IX. 585b–e). Later Platonists objected to the Epicurean view of pleasure partly on grounds that reason has its own pleasures, requiring no reference to the body (Cicero *De Finibus*. I.25; Plutarch *Non Posse* 1092d–1096e).

In fact, Socrates alludes to the distinction between restorative and reflective pleasures when he applies the restoration model to pleasures of learning. He argues that these are pure – unmixed with pain – because the deficiency of ignorance causes no pain. Protarchus grants that ignorance is not painful in itself but notes that "in our reflection on this loss when we need it, we experience it as a painful loss." Socrates replies "but . . . we are here concerned only with the natural affections themselves, apart from reflection on them" (52a–b). That is, there are basic, restorative pleasures of learning but only derivative, reflective pains of ignorance. Compare Socrates' earlier treatment of bodily pleasure and pain: one must distinguish what is true of them as such from what is true of the soul's reflections on them (31b–36c). So too one must distinguish what is true of the soul's affections as such from what happens when the soul reflects on its *own* affections.

We can now see that the real distinction between restorative and reflective pleasures does not preclude a unified account. The two kinds share a representational and functional character: they ultimately concern restoration and aim at maintaining health and harmony. Disintegrative pains and restorative pleasures represent and regulate health and harmony by directly registering simultaneous departure from and return to a healthy state. Reflective pains and pleasures also represent and regulate health and harmony, but in ways that involve cognition ranging over past, present and future, all by reference to basic, disintegrative pains and restorative pleasures. For Plato, unlike for the Epicureans, some of the basic, restorative pleasures are mental.

False Pleasures

The distinction between restorative and reflective pleasures is not Socrates' only division of pleasure in the *Philebus*. He also distinguishes false pleasures (36c–50d) from true ones (50e–53c). He further subdivides false pleasures into three classes. The first subclass is exemplified by false anticipatory pleasures (36c–41b). But this subclass is wider than anticipatory pleasures, including false pleasures that arise from cognition about the past and present, not just the future (39c–e, 40c–d).[9] We may thus call these *false reflective pleasures*. Socrates follows these with "false pleasures in another sense," sometimes called *false pleasures of overestimation* (41a–42c). Lastly, he describes some "pleasures and pains . . . even falser than these" (42c–50d), concluding with a long passage on mixed pleasures (46a–50d).[10] As before, this variety raises a question: is there even a unified view of false pleasure here? Also as before, I argue that there are really just two, intelligibly related kinds of false pleasure. I begin by arguing that the second and third classes differ only in degree, not in kind.[11]

Socrates compares "false pleasures of overestimation" to perceptual errors, as when vision is distorted by distance from or proximity to what is seen (41e–42a). As one can correct for the effect of distance to find the true size of what is seen, so one can correct these false pleasures and sever "that portion of them by which they appear greater or smaller than they are" to find their true size (42b–c). This recalls the *Protagoras*, where Socrates says that proximate pleasures seem larger than they are and distant pleasures smaller but that appearances can be corrected by measurement (356a–e). However, there is a crucial difference. Both passages discuss how distant and proximate pleasures seem smaller or larger than they are. This uses spatial distance as a proxy for temporal distance; for a pleasure, to be near is to be "immediate," while to be distant is to be "future." But further, "immediate" pleasures are not those felt *now*, but those lying in the *near* future. This sort of overestimation occurs only in anticipation, not at the moment of pleasure. The *Philebus* adds a present form of distortion: contrast effects. Such overestimation occurs when "pleasures and pains exist side by side, and there are simultaneously opposite perceptions of them" (41d; cf. 42b).[12] Juxtaposition with pain makes pleasure seem more intense, just as seeing a color against a contrasting background makes it seem brighter. The *Protagoras* is silent on these *false contrastive pleasures*.[13]

The third, "even falser," class also comprises false contrastive pleasures and differs only in degree. This is clearest in the second half of Socrates' discussion of the third class, which concerns mixed pleasures. Recall that false contrastive pleasures are caused by juxtaposition and contrast with pain – that is, mixture. So too, mixed pleasures "have the appearance of enormous size . . . but . . . are in truth commingled with pain or with respite from severe pains (51a–b; cf. 47a–b). That is, mixed pleasures *seem* to be large, precisely because they are mixed, but actually are not. These two classes do not differ in kind, then; the last class can be "even falser" because, in the interim, Socrates has introduced cases of extreme contrast (42c–46a).

This interim passage also contains a limit case of false contrastive pleasures, which depends on the existence of a neutral state between pleasure and pain (42c–43e; cf. 32d–33c): pain-removal seems to be pleasure by contrast with pain (43e–44c). If intensification of mixed pleasures is akin to visual color intensification due to contrast, the apparent pleasure of pain-removal is akin to afterimages. But whereas with mixed pleasures severing the false appearance left a true remainder (42b–c), in this case there is no pleasure at all, so that

severing the false portion leaves nothing at all. The figures to whom Socrates attributes this insight hold that all "pleasure" is of this sort (44b), but Socrates insists that only some is (51a). The clearest counterexamples are pure, unmixed pleasures, but he also denies that mixed pleasures are mere pain-removal. If they were, nothing would be left after severing the false appearance.

Neither this concern with false contrastive pleasures nor the limit case of pain-removal is unique to the *Philebus*. Most notably, in the *Republic* Socrates also distinguishes pleasure from pain-removal, which seems like pleasure but is not (IX. 583b–584a). There too he insists that some pleasures are not like this, as evinced by true pleasures unmixed with pain (584b–c). This might seem to exclude the middle sort, mixed pleasures that are real but seem larger than they are. However, Socrates' subsequent discussion of hedonic measurement assumes that mixed pleasures have some magnitude to measure (585a–e). So, the *Republic* envisions the full range of hedonic states discussed to this point: pure, unmixed pleasures; pure pain-removals that seem like pleasure but are not; and genuine pleasures mixed with pain that seem larger and more intense as a result.[14]

So again, the second and third classes of false pleasure in the *Philebus* reduce to just one, false contrastive pleasures. What about false reflective pleasures? Socrates starts his discussion with false hopes. Someone might judge that they will gain wealth in the future, judge that they will derive enjoyment from that wealth, and imagine the future in which this happens. The judgments that lie behind the mental image can be false, in which case the image inherits their falsity. But the mental image *is* anticipatory pleasure.[15] So, there are false anticipatory pleasures. We make similar false judgments about past and present and produce similar images from those judgments (39c–e, 40c–d). These are false pleasures of the same sort, all depending on reflective judgments.

False contrastive pleasures and false reflective pleasures are two distinct kinds, and it is not immediately clear how they are related. However, Socrates tells us how they differ: false contrastive pleasures *cause* false judgments, but false reflective pleasures *are caused by* false judgments (41e–42a). This offers a way to unify the two kinds, if the false judgments that cause false reflective pleasures are the very same ones caused by false contrastive pleasures. On this hypothesis, false contrastive pleasures are *basic* and false reflective pleasures are *derivative*, in that false reflective pleasures result from judgments formed in part on the basis of false contrastive pleasures.

Two further observations confirm the reconstruction above. First, Socrates says that those who experience pain-removal often falsely *judge* that they feel pleasure (44a; cp. *Republic* IX. 584d–585a). That is, pain-removal *feels* like pleasure, and this produces a false *judgment* that one feels pleasure. But just moments earlier, Socrates distinguished false contrastive pleasures from false reflective pleasures by their relationship to false judgments: false contrastive pleasures cause false judgments, while false judgments cause false reflective pleasures (41e–42a). This confirms the claim that the "pleasures" of pain-removal are just the limit case of false contrastive pleasures. Second, Socrates' account of true pleasure (50e–53c) focuses on those that are pure and free from mixture and contrast. If false reflective pleasures involved an utterly distinct form of falsity not grounded in false contrastive pleasures, it would be odd for his account of true pleasure to neglect the distinct form of truth opposed to this distinct form of falsehood. However, this neglect makes sense if false contrastive pleasures are more basic in his theory, and false reflective pleasures are derivative.[16]

This reading also offers new insight into false reflective pleasures. Consider again Socrates' example of someone who falsely judges they will acquire wealth and experience pleasure as

a result, and whose anticipatory pleasure of imagining this scenario is thus also false. Their false judgment may be false because they never acquire the wealth, or because they do but don't enjoy it (or don't enjoy it as much as expected). Scholars sometimes assume that in the latter case, they will *realize* that they enjoy themselves less than expected. This is plausible only on the assumption that we are infallible with respect to present pleasures – that these are always exactly as pleasant as they seem. Socrates' view of false contrastive pleasures rejects this assumption. For example, someone might be hungry and anticipate the pleasures of eating. Their anticipatory pleasure may be false because they never eat the meal. It may be false because they eat the meal but the felt intensity is less than expected. But third, it may be false even if they eat the meal and it *feels* as pleasant as expected, but this feeling derives from juxtaposition with the pain of hunger. This is a false contrastive pleasure, and it can produce a false simultaneous judgment (that one feels some amount of pleasure, when in fact it is less). Such experiences also produce future-directed judgments (that one *will* feel that much pleasure in relevantly similar conditions) that are false in the same way.

There is a close parallel between this section and the last. In the last section, I argued that there is a real distinction between restorative and reflective pleasures: restorative pleasures can be fully characterized without reference to other pleasures, but a full account of any reflective pleasure must ultimately refer to some restorative pleasure. This account of the distinction implies a close relationship, and even a unity to pleasure. Restorative and reflective pleasures both track and aim at health and harmony; this shared functional and representational character stems from the fact that reflective pleasures ultimately take restorative pleasures and their causes as inputs and objects.

This section provides a similar picture. There is a real distinction between false contrastive and false reflective pleasures: the former cause false judgments, while the latter are caused by false judgments. However, these are connected; false judgments caused by false contrastive pleasures go on to cause false reflective pleasures. False contrastive pleasures are thus basic, and false reflective pleasures derivative. This connection between the two kinds also unifies false pleasure. False contrastive pleasures, through intensification, exaggerate the goods they track and aim at. False reflective pleasures likewise exaggerate the goods they track and aim at, in a way that is cognitively downstream from false contrastive pleasures.[17] So, Socrates has unified views of pleasure and false pleasure.[18] As we shall see, these unified accounts illuminate Plato's views on the value of pleasure.

The Value of Pleasure

Socrates argues against hedonism long before he considers the nature of pleasure (20b–21d), but his early argument gets less to the heart of matters than what he can say after a detailed analysis. Here, I focus on his opening post-analysis argument against hedonism (53c–54d).[19] This argument does not depend on the existence of bad or false pleasures but only on his general account of pleasure. Socrates starts from the claim that pleasure belongs in the class of becoming rather than being. He associates being (*ousia*) with what is sufficient, dignified, beloved, and final, while becoming (*genesis*) is needy, inferior, loving, and instrumental. Whatever has the former characteristics belongs in the class of goods, and whatever has the latter does not. Since pleasure is a sort of becoming, then, it does not belong in the class of goods.

This argument is obscure, but start from a basic reading. Socrates goes on to associate the idea of pleasure as becoming with the restorative account (54e–55a), and thinking of

pleasure as restoration yields a plausible argument: restorations are processes of becoming that culminate in health and harmony. Health and harmony are good in themselves, while processes of restoration to health and harmony are at best remedial goods. Restoration requires antecedent disintegration and departure from a good, healthy state. It would have been better for one not to have been disintegrated at all than to have been disintegrated and then restored (54e; cp. *G.* 478c–d, 492d–495a). So, pleasure is at best a remedial good desired for the sake of a distinct healthy state.

There are two difficulties with this reconstruction. First, even on the ultimate restorative account, pleasure is not restoration itself, but *felt* restoration. Second, only some pleasures are restorative. Reflective pleasures – those that initially swayed Protarchus away from strict hedonism (21a–d) – are not restorative. So, either this argument is narrower and less interesting than it initially seems, or we need a revised understanding to avoid these problems.

Such a revised understanding is available and textually well justified. The basic reading above focused on the instrumental/final distinction as characteristic of becoming and being. Socrates' example of this is the relationship between shipbuilding and a ship (54b). However, he uses a few parallel distinctions in dividing becoming from being, among them the lover/beloved distinction (53d). This is not a case of process and product. Lovers do not *produce* beloveds, just as love is not for the sake of beauty in that it produces beauty. Rather, love is for the sake of beauty in that it *tracks* beauty and aims to get it.[20] The parallel claim about pleasure – that it tracks and aims at health and harmony – just is our representational and functional account of pleasure. This observation resolves both problems with the basic argument. First, the account of pleasure as *felt* restoration (not simply restoration) makes the feeling a *representation* that tracks and aims to get health and harmony. This tracking function puts pleasure in the category of becoming relative to the being it tracks. Second, although reflective pleasures are not themselves felt restorations, their derivative concern with restorations means that they too have the function of tracking and aiming to get health and harmony. Socrates' argument thus applies to both restorative and reflective pleasure – in short, to pleasure in general.[21]

On this more nuanced reading, *Philebus* 53c–54d critiques hedonism because it conflates what pleasure tracks and aims at with pleasure itself. Much as students often consider a good grade the point of a course, rather than something that tracks the learning that is the point, so human beings in general often take pleasure to be the point of life, rather than something that tracks the goods that are the point. One attractive feature of this argument is that it explains why many people find hedonism plausible (*Republic* VI. 505b): because pleasure tracks and aims at goods, it is an obvious candidate for the common feature of the various goods our lives contain.[22]

This approach to arguing against hedonism also helps to explain two Platonic claims about pleasure that otherwise seem to pull in opposite directions: he regularly claims both that the best life is choiceworthy in part for its pleasures and that pleasure is dangerous. Because pleasures track and aim at genuine goods for us, well-functioning pleasures are a crucial aspect of any good human life. Of course, pain is functionally as important and valuable as pleasure. So one might ask why, on this account, one should prefer a life of pleasure over pain. But because we would rather have *good* things and be reflectively aware of having them (which produces reflective pleasures), pleasures are a crucial facet of a *good* human life. At the same time, because pleasure's function is to track and obtain goods, if it is fallible, then it can *mistrack* goods and lead us away from them. Socrates' functional

and representational account of pleasure thus simultaneously explains three points: why pleasure is not the good, why it is choiceworthy, and why it is dangerous.

This account of why pleasure is dangerous – by being fallible and mistracking goods – leads back to false pleasures, and especially to Socrates' claim that being false is the only way a pleasure can be bad (40e). Start with false contrastive pleasures. Through intensification by contrast with pain, these pleasures mislead us about the magnitude of the goods they track. For example, the pleasure of eating is often mixed with the pain of hunger, and the pleasure of recognition is often mixed with the pain of envy. Since these pleasures are juxtaposed with pain, they are intensified, and their objects seem more important than they are. Insofar as we trust such false contrastive pleasures, we form false judgments about what is valuable and important in life, and these false judgments produce warped desires and associated false reflective pleasures. This is unfortunate both for how we live our lives (focused on relatively minor goods, at best) and for how we fail to live our lives (we could instead have sought more important goods such as virtue and knowledge). To be a good person requires us to distance ourselves from the reports of false contrastive pleasures, to avoid the false reflective pleasures that flow from them, and instead to form accurate reflective judgments (and reflective pleasures) about what matters in life. Hence, not only are false pleasures bad (40e), but bad people tend to have more of them (40b–c).

This account of the dangers of pleasure is not unique to the *Philebus*. Again, the clearest parallels are in the *Republic*. Socrates there argues that the just, philosophical life is most pleasant and so most choiceworthy (IX. 583b–588a). As we have seen, his argument starts with an account of false contrastive pleasures (IX. 583b–585a). After a cramped discussion on measuring pleasures (IX. 585a–e), Socrates considers what happens to those whose lives are guided by false contrastive pleasures. They focus on material, perceptible goods that provide such pleasures, and their intense pursuit of such goods puts them in conflict with each other (IX. 585e–586d). Effectively, Socrates explains why false contrastive pleasures are individually bad but also why they make us bad when we trust them.

Less obviously, the Cave image (VII. 514a–517a), which describes our cognitive failings through an extended comparison with prisoners bound in a cave, reflects the same outlook. Discussions of the Cave tend to neglect the cause of the prisoners' imprisonment.[23] Socrates says that the bonds keeping the prisoners in place are fastened by "feasting, greed, and other such pleasures" that "pull [the soul's] vision downwards" (519a–b). Why do pleasures fasten these bonds, and what are the bonds? Socrates' later treatment of pleasure echoes the language he uses in the Cave image: those who trust the felt intensity of pleasures

> always look down at the ground like cattle, and, with their heads bent over the dinner table, they feed, fatten, and fornicate. To outdo others in these things, they kick and butt them with iron horns and hooves, killing each other, because their desires are insatiable.
>
> (IX. 586a–b)

The parallels between these passages suggest that what fastens the prisoners' bonds are false contrastive pleasures and that the bonds are the desires that these pleasures produce. So, the most famous image in Plato depicts our cognitive failings as the result of hedonic contrast effects that intensify many pleasures, making their causes seem better and more desirable than they are.

Conclusion

As promised, then, looking to the *Philebus*, and its accounts of pleasure and false pleasure, clarifies Plato's overall view of the nature and value of pleasure. Basic pleasure is felt restoration from a needy, deficient physical or mental condition to a good, harmonious one. Pleasure thus tracks what is good for us. That explains why pleasure is not the good (a feeling that tracks and aims at the good cannot be what that feeling tracks), why pleasure is valuable (it helps us track and aim at goods, and when we achieve those goods, reflective pleasure is a mode of awareness of them), and why pleasure is dangerous (false pleasures mislead us about what is important in life by misrepresenting what pleasure tracks and aims at). The dangers posed by false pleasure are not limited to particular occasions of pleasure and the objects they track. If we do not correct for false pleasures, they warp our desires, our characters, our intellects, and our very lives. Thus, how we approach pleasure is a question of incomparably high stakes (cf. *Laws* I. 636d–e). This explains perhaps the most striking feature of Plato's discussions of pleasure: how frequently he returns to the topic.[24]

Notes

1 For an argument that Socrates in the *Phaedo* actually is an ascetic, see Butler 2012.
2 Inevitably, my discussion is limited along several dimensions. My focus on pleasure limits discussion of the whole *Philebus*. Even with respect to pleasure in the *Philebus*, I cannot track every claim in the text, let alone every point of interpretive agreement or disagreement with other scholars. Likewise, my focus on the *Philebus* constrains my ability to explore other dialogues that contain significant discussions of pleasure.
3 Other dialogues identify the pain of dehydration with thirst. The *Philebus* distinguishes these: thirst is a desire that requires prior acquaintance with drink's fulfillment of the painful lack (34d–35d). See further Harte 2014.
4 Contemporary philosophers of mind often discuss the relationship between representational and phenomenal aspects of experience. Plato does not theorize this distinction, but he seems to suppose that the phenomenal aspect of pleasure (and pain, and perception) is its mode of representation. Contrast Evans 2007 and cf. n.6. I am here using "representational" broadly to include any mental state that conveys information about the world.
5 This terminology derives from Tuozzo 1996, and my reading in this section resembles his, but I deny that pleasure is an epiphenomenon (497). For an argument that there is no unity to pleasure in the *Philebus*, see Fletcher 2017.
6 Frede 1992, among others, argues that for Socrates, all pleasures are restorative. Evans 2007 rejects a distinction between two kinds as well, first by holding that all mental pains involve mental disintegration (86), and second by holding that even bodily pain and pleasure are not feelings, but require a further attitude towards those feelings (91–2). The latter claim would prevent primitive animals from feeling pleasure, contrary to Socrates' view (21a–d).
7 *Philebus* 34e–35a says a thirsty person desires filling with drink, not drink. Desire mediates anticipatory pleasure, so one might infer that nobody ever takes anticipatory pleasure in drink, but only in filling with drink. However, Socrates here aims to show that desire belongs to the soul by arguing that the dehydrated body lacks contact with what thirst is *ultimately* for. He would hardly deny that one can desire drink derivatively (cf. *Lysis* 219d–220a).
8 Cf. Gosling and Taylor 1982; Fletcher 2014; Ogihara 2019. Fletcher 2014 also argues that some pleasures that seem bodily – certain pure visual and auditory ones – are really mental pleasures and so are non-restorative.
9 It is perhaps easiest to motivate the claim that anticipatory pleasures are false because it is easiest to argue that the judgments they are based on are false; cp. *Tht*. 178a–179c.
10 Frede 1992 treats mixed pleasures as a fourth class, but Pearson 2019 explains well how 42c–50d hangs together.
11 See also Shaw 2016, §6; Fletcher 2018; and Proios unpublished.

12 Pleasure and pain suffer contrast effects precisely because they are opposites (*Republic* IX. 583c). Some hedonic experiences seem to violate the principle of non-opposition (cf. *Phaedo* 60b; *Gorgias* 495e–497d), but these result from contrast effects.
13 Proios unpublished suggests that *Philebus* 41e–42a does not even discuss distortions in anticipated pleasure due to temporal distance, but only cases of simultaneous contrast. Proios and I agree that distortions due to temporal distance are not Socrates' main concern in this passage.
14 Comparisons with other dialogues on these claims are also possible. See, for example, *Phaedo* 59a, 60b–c, 64d, 114d–115a.
15 Socrates presents this view through an extended analogy with a scribe who writes words in our soul and a painter who illustrates the scribe's words. It is tempting to say that the scribe and painter represent faculties of judgment and imagination, but Fletcher 2022 argues that Socrates does not here posit a faculty of imagination.
16 There is an apparent outlier: the sort of false anticipatory pleasure shared between *Protagoras* and *Philebus* – error in anticipated magnitude due to temporal distance – does not obviously depend on false contrastive pleasures.
17 There is more than a linguistic parallel between reflective pleasures (as opposed to restorative) and false reflective pleasures (as opposed to contrastive). False reflective pleasures are false in a way peculiar to reflective pleasures: being based on a (false) reflective judgment. However, reflective pleasures can also be *contrastively* false. If one is hungry and anticipates eating, the pleasure's felt intensity increases due to contrast with pain (47c–d; cf. 35e–36c). This can happen even when the judgment lying behind the anticipatory pleasure is true. Such reflective pleasures are false, but not false reflective pleasures. They are not false *qua* reflective. (Mixed pleasures of comedy are also contrastively false reflective pleasures. But these are probably also false *qua* reflective; this explains the injustice that they involve [49d], since vicious people have mostly false reflective pleasures [40b–c].)
18 Some (e.g., Frede 1992) hold that false reflective pleasures are "literally false," while false contrastive pleasures are false only in an extended sense. Similarly, Fletcher 2018 calls only the former false and the latter *deceptive*. She calls false contrastive pleasures deceptive rather than false because they mislead us about themselves, not about the world. This derives in part from the phrasing of 41d ("pains and pleasures exist side by side, and there are simultaneously opposite perceptions of them"). Fletcher reads this as positing higher-order perceptions of pleasures and pains. I read this instead as a subjective genitive: the perceptions simply are the pleasures and pains. On my view, all false pleasures are false in the same way: they exaggerate the value of their objects. Marechal 2022 also advocates for a single sense of falsity, but I reject her claim that all false pleasures involve mixture with pain.
19 Most scholars see two arguments at 53c–55e, one at 53c–55a and another at 55b–c. But Socrates draws his first conclusion at 54d, and then states a series of absurdities (which I cannot analyze here). I also cannot discuss the outlier passage in the *Protagoras* in which Socrates argues for hedonism; for one approach, see Shaw 2015.
20 In the *Symposium*, Diotima argues that love is not itself beautiful and is not a god (199d–202d), as Socrates here says that pleasure is not itself good and associates divine life with freedom from pain and pleasure (33b; cf. 55a). Some say the *Philebus* allows the gods to feel pleasure (e.g., Carone 2000; Fletcher 2014). Crucially, humans can feel reflective pleasure at a state of harmony, but this pleasure is conditioned on prior feelings of restoration (i.e., basic pleasures). Thus, *our* having such pleasures does not entail that the *gods* take pleasure in their harmony.
21 See also Evans 2008 and especially Carpenter 2011, who emphasizes aspects of the becoming/being divide beyond the process/product distinction. Fletcher 2014; Rangos 2019 deny that this argument applies to all pleasure.
22 Moss 2006 holds that pleasure itself appears good, and presumably that pleasure's causes or objects appear good derivatively (precisely in that they cause pleasure). On my view, in contrast, pleasure primarily makes its causes or objects appear good; the idea that *pleasure* is good involves a one-over-many inference from the obvious common feature of causes of pleasure: precisely that they cause pleasure.
23 But see Moss 2006, 533. Some focus on the role of the puppeteers whose puppets cast shadows on the wall (514b–515a). Socrates never says or implies that these figures are the original cause of the prisoners' bondage.

24 I owe thanks to Thomas Bonn, Vanessa de Harven, Emily Fletcher, Jon Garthoff, John Proios, and Rachel Singpurwalla for discussion and feedback on earlier versions of this chapter.

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