

# Aristotle on Pleasure and Ἐνέργεια: Two Lacunae

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## Introduction

Aristotle's principal treatments of pleasure, at *Nicomachean Ethics* 7.11-14 and 10.1-5, occur within ethical contexts. Aristotle's primary aim in these treatments is to assess the value of pleasure and its place within the good life of humans.<sup>1,2</sup> In offering his assessments, Aristotle's orientations in 7 and 10 are rather distinct. 7 is more defensive and adversarial. Its primary target is the anti-hedonism of the Academy, Plato above all, but also Speusippus.<sup>3</sup> In particular, Aristotle engages and rejects the Platonic thesis that pleasure is a γένεσις. Instead, he maintains that pleasure is an ἐνέργεια. This dispute over the metaphysical category to which pleasure belongs has evaluative implications because Aristotle and his opponent both agree that γενέσεις are not ends (τέλη) and hence not good in themselves.

In 10, Aristotle's discussion also has a critical dimension. However, its constructive dimension is greater than that in 7. From the outset, Aristotle airs both hedonist and anti-hedonist arguments. The anti-hedonist arguments again derive from the Academy. The hedonist arguments derive from Eudoxus and largely relate to motivation. One of these arguments runs as follows:

The good is increased by the good.  
When pleasure is added to any good, that to which it is added is more choiceworthy (αἰρετώτερον).  
For example, when pleasure is added to just or temperate action, that action is more choiceworthy.  
[That which is choiceworthy is good.]  
Therefore, pleasure is good.<sup>4</sup>

I single out this argument because I believe it bears on Aristotle's own constructive view in 10. I will return to this later in the paper.<sup>5</sup>

In 10, as in 7, metaphysics plays a central role in Aristotle's discussion. Here too, Aristotle assesses the value of pleasure in view of the nature of pleasure. For instance, Aristotle examines the views that pleasure cannot be good because it is not a quality, admits degrees, is a κίνησις, and, once again, is a γένεσις.

With respect to the fundamental, long-standing debate over whether Aristotle's central constructive contribution in 10 is consistent with that in 7, let me here state without argument that I view 10 as a development in Aristotle's conceptualization of pleasure.<sup>6</sup> In 10, Aristotle denies that pleasure is an ἐνέργεια. Instead, he maintains, variously, that pleasure is congenial with (συγγενές), accompanies (ἔπεται), is in (ἐν), and, most controversially, completes (τελειοῖ) ἐνέργεια.

In this paper, I focus on Aristotle's accounts of the relation between pleasure and ἐνέργεια in 7 and 10. More exactly, I focus on what I perceive to be fundamental

theoretical lacunae in each treatment. The lacuna in 7 is especially noteworthy in view of the fact that Aristotle attempts to advance his position as a compelling alternative to the Academic position. It is precisely in view of so-called pleasures of γένεσις or restoration that Aristotle's account falls into obscurity. The lacuna in 10 lies elsewhere. In this case, at just the point where Aristotle qualifies his constructive account in 7, his conceptual resources appear to reach their limit. While most scholars acknowledge some serious difficulty with Aristotle's constructive account in 10, I argue that they fail to recognize its central lacuna: Aristotle simply does not answer the question "What is pleasure?"

In short, this paper advances two central theses, one regarding 7, the other 10. The theses are obviously topically-related, but, so far as I can see, they are logically independent. The problem in 10 does not, for instance, somehow descend from that in 7.

Finally, while my theses are critical, the interest or spirit in which they are offered is by no means Aristotle-bashing. My aim is a nuanced and faithful interpretation of Aristotle's theories. In this case, I propose that we understand these theories more clearly once we appreciate their limits.

### Pleasure and Ἐνέργεια in 7

In 7 Aristotle argues against the Platonic view that pleasure is a γένεσις. More precisely, Plato's view is that pleasure is a perceived restoration. Aristotle acknowledges both formulations. Against them, he maintains that pleasure is an ἐνέργεια.

By "ἐνέργεια" in 7— and 10, for that matter— Aristotle understands *activation*. That is to say, an ἐνέργεια, in this context, is the activation of a capability (δύναμις) or a disposition (ἔξις). For instance, compare the following passage from *Protrepticus*:

"Things are said to be alive in two senses, in virtue of capability (κατὰ δύναμιν) and in virtue of activation (κατ' ἐνέργειαν). For we describe as seeing both those animals that have sight and the natural ability to see, even if they happen to have their eyes shut, and those that are using this capability (τὰ χρώμενα τῇ δυνάμει) and are looking at something. Similarly with knowing and cognition: we sometimes mean by it the deployment (τὸ χρῆσθαι) of the capability and contemplation, sometimes the possession of the capability (τὸ κεκτηῖσθαι τὴν δύναμιν) and having of knowledge."<sup>7</sup>

Granted, in 7 and 10 an ἐνέργεια is the exercise, employment, or activation of a disposition. More precisely, it is the disposition to φ, where φ-ing is a psychological or mental act. David Bostock has influentially argued that the psychological act is limited to two kinds: sense-perceiving and thinking.<sup>8</sup> I worry that this is too restrictive. In all of his ethical works, Aristotle is centrally concerned with the exercise of character. Hence, φ-ing must include emotional and more generally characterological acts. If these involve thought, then Bostock's thesis stands. However, it may still be questioned whether that is the most illuminating formulation of the kinds of activation with which Aristotle is concerned. An alternative possibility is that Aristotle recognizes various kinds or forms of psychological activation in accordance with various kinds or forms of psychological capacity, namely, sense-perceptual, characterological, and intellectual.<sup>9</sup>

Returning now to the thesis that pleasure is a γένεσις— Aristotle has two arguments against this Platonic position. First, only some pleasures involve γένεσις.

Second, among those pleasures that do involve γένεσις, the γένεσις does not constitute the pleasure. Rather, a certain ἐνέργεια coincides with the γένεσις, but it is the ἐνέργεια that constitutes the pleasure. What is common to hedonic episodes, then, is ἐνέργεια of some kind. Compare the following passage from *Magna Moralia*:

"Since there is pleasure both when the natural condition is being constituted (καθισταμένης) and when the natural condition has been constituted (καθεστηκυίας) – for example, the former includes replenishments of deficiencies, the latter includes pleasures of vision, hearing, and such things – the activations (ἐνέργεια) that occur when the natural condition has been constituted (καθεστηκυίας τῆς φύσεως) are better. For the pleasures that are spoken of in both ways are activations (ἐνέργεια)."<sup>10</sup>

For convenience, I will refer to those pleasures that coincide with restorations as *restorative pleasures*. One central question for the interpretation of 7 is how, in the case of restorative pleasure, Aristotle understands the coincidence of ἐνέργεια and γένεσις. I suggest that Aristotle understands these events to be concurrent, but to occur in different parts of the animal. More precisely, the γένεσις is a nutritive and hence a non-conscious process. For example, in drinking, hydration of the body occurs. In contrast, the ἐνέργεια is a conscious event. Compare Aristotle's criticism (with my glosses) of the Platonic thesis at 10.3:

"If pleasure is a replenishment ... it would follow that the subject of the replenishment is what is being pleased. So it is the body. [That is, it involves no consciousness.] But it seems not to be. [That is, what is pleased is the conscious psyche.] So then the replenishment is not pleasure. Rather, someone will undergo pleasure while replenishment occurs ..."<sup>11</sup>

Somewhat more precisely, in 7 Aristotle says that the ἐνέργεια that coincides with restoration is "in the appetites" (ἐν ταῖς ἐπιθυμίαις). Hence, the ἐνέργεια is an appetitive event. Granted this, it remains unclear precisely what such activation consists of. In pursuing this question, let's briefly turn to consider Aristotle's claim that pleasure is an unimpeded activation of the natural disposition. I emphasize that this thesis concerns non-restorative pleasure, that is, pleasure that does not coincide with restoration. This is precisely because the coincident restoration is an impediment to activation. The impediment is the fact that one's nature is not intact. For example, one is hungry or thirsty and hence physiologically depleted. In this case, as Aristotle claims, one takes pleasure in nutriment that is not pleasant by nature:

"People do not take pleasure in the same thing while their nature is being replenished (ἀναπληρουμένης) and when it has been constituted (καθεστηκυίας). When it has been constituted, they enjoy things that are pleasant without qualification (ἀπλῶς). But while it is being replenished, they enjoy (χαίρουσιν) even things that are the contrary of these ... sharp and bitter things ... none of which is pleasant by nature (φύσει) or pleasant without qualification."<sup>12</sup>

In the case of restorative pleasure, then, the impediment is internal. Contrast this with the sorts of external impediments that elsewhere in *EN* and *EE* Aristotle recognizes

as compromising the τελεία ἐνέργεια that constitutes εὐδαιμονία. But although, in the case of restorative pleasure, the impediment is internal, it is not internal in the sense of being of the active faculty. Rather, the impediment is a degraded condition of the subject that is external to the active faculty. This physiological depletion, in turn, causes the natural activation of the appetites. After all, hunger or thirsty is the appropriate reaction to physiological depletion.

Given this, consider Aristotle's following remark:

"Hence, it is not right to say that pleasure is a perceived γένεσις. Rather, one should say that it is an activation of a natural disposition, and replace 'perceived' with 'unimpeded.'"<sup>13</sup>

An adequate interpretation here must explain not merely what Aristotle means by "unimpeded," but why he claims that "unimpeded" must replace "perceived." According to Plato's conception, restoration itself is but one necessary constituent of pleasure. If, for instance, the restoration is too subtle or weak to register psychologically, then no pleasure occurs. Hence, for pleasure to occur, the restoration must be perceived. Analogously, on Aristotle's view, activation of the psychological disposition is but one constituent of pleasure. The activation itself must be unimpeded for pleasure, in an unqualified sense, to occur. Consequently, since restoration constitutes an impediment, Aristotle holds in 7 that restorative pleasure is not, strictly speaking, pleasure, but only, as he says, pleasure in a qualified sense.

Returning now to the question of what the activation of restorative pleasure consists of, recall that Aristotle explicitly says that it is "in the appetites." Observe, however, that at *EE* 2.10 Aristotle claims that "ἐπιθυμῖαι always involve pain."<sup>14</sup> Certainly, this claim applies to the present case: hunger and thirst are at least unpleasant conditions.<sup>15</sup> But given this, it would appear that in 7 restorative pleasure must be a function of desire-satisfaction.<sup>16, 17</sup>

But now, if appetitive desire-satisfaction is hedonic and a kind of activation, it would seem to be an activation of a part of the appetitive system whose function is to indicate that physiological depletion is being remedied and that appetitive desire is being satisfied. Yet even if this is correct – and I am not aware of any further evidence from the Aristotelian corpus that corroborates this account – I am dubious that this alone adequately accounts for the hedonic activation operative in restorative pleasure. Recall that in 7 Aristotle says that "while [their nature] is being replenished, [people] enjoy even ... sharp and bitter things ... none of which is pleasant by nature or pleasant without qualification." Aristotle seems to be saying here that in the case of restorative pleasure sharp and bitter things may be experienced as pleasant. But *these* pleasures clearly involve activation of the gustatory sense-perceptual faculty, for it is that faculty that senses flavors. Indeed, it would seem that in this case either physiological depletion or appetite or both affect gustatory sense-perceptual experience and unnaturally distort it. But on this view, restorative pleasure will depend on both gustatory and appetitive activation.

I submit, then, that Aristotle owes his audience a clearer account of the kind of activation that restorative pleasure consists of. Aristotle incurs this explanatory debt precisely because he advances his account of restorative pleasure against the Platonic thesis that pleasure is a γένεσις.<sup>18</sup>

## Pleasure and Ἐνέργεια in 10

Aristotle begins 10.4 with the following statement: "It will be clearer what (τί) pleasure is or (ἢ) what sort of thing (ποῖόν τι) it is, if we start at the beginning."<sup>19</sup> But within 10.4 Aristotle never answers the τί ἐστὶ question. Aristotle never tells us *what* pleasure is. He clarifies only what sort of thing it is. In fact, nowhere in 10 does Aristotle identify what pleasure is. I will return to this point below.

10.4 continues, at 1174a13-b14, with the following mereological argument. A κίνησις is a sequence consisting of formally distinct parts. Hence, a κίνησις is not complete (τελειόν) at any stage during its occurrence. In contrast, pleasure is uniform, a part-less whole (ὅλον), and hence complete at each instant of its occurrence. Therefore, pleasure is not a κίνησις.<sup>20</sup> (It must be emphasized here that while Aristotle denies that pleasure is a κίνησις, he does not instead state that it is an ἐνέργεια. He simply does not explicitly subsume pleasure under any genus.)

Now, central to the mereological argument are the contradictory terms "τέλειον" and "ἄτελής." It is crucial to appreciate that within this argument these terms are used mereologically. It is crucial to appreciate this because immediately following the mereological argument, Aristotle turns, at 1174b14-1175a3, to advance the thesis that pleasure completes (τελειοῖ) activation. For convenience, I will refer to this passage as "the evaluative passage." The concept of τελείωσις that Aristotle employs in the evaluative passage is not a mereological concept. Rather, it is an evaluative concept.<sup>21</sup> Consequently, Aristotle's claim that pleasure completes activation is intended to convey that pleasure adds positive value to activation. For the sake of clarity, I will speak of *evaluative completion*. Recall here Eudoxus' argument for the value of pleasure: the good is added to the good; when pleasure is added to any good, that to which it is added is more choiceworthy.

In short, Aristotle employs two distinct senses of "τέλειον" in immediate sequence, but without carefully explaining the distinction to his audience. He does, however, give some indication that he is shifting senses when, at the beginning of the evaluative passage, he says that:

"Since every sense is active in relation to its sense-object, and completely (τελείως) active when the sense is in good condition and its object is the finest in the domain of that sense – for something like this, above all, is what τελεία activation seems to be."<sup>22</sup>

Evidence that Aristotle recognizes precisely the two senses of "τέλειον" operative in the mereological argument and the evaluative passage in 10.4 derives from the account of "τέλειον" at *Metaphysics* Δ.16:

"We call τέλειον (1) that outside of which it is not possible to find even one of the parts proper to it, for example, the τέλειος time of each thing is that outside of which it is not possible to find any time which is a part proper to it. (2) That which in respect of excellence and goodness cannot be excelled in its kind, for example, a doctor is τέλειος and a flute-player is τέλειος when they lack nothing in respect of their proper kind of excellence."<sup>23</sup>

Now, in the case of sense-perceiving, the sense-faculty and the sense-object also evaluatively complete the activation. That is, the positive value of the sense-faculty and the sense-object both contribute to the positive value of the activation. But Aristotle states that pleasure evaluatively completes and thus adds positive value to the activation in a different way than they do:

"But pleasure does not complete [activation] in the same way (τὸν αὐτὸν τρόπον) that the sense-object and the sense-faculty do, when they are good (σπουδαῖα ὄντα), any more than health and a doctor are similarly (ὁμοίως) causes (αἰτία) of being healthy (τοῦ ὑγιαίνειν)."<sup>24</sup>

The sense-object and the sense-faculty are efficient causes of the activation. Hence they evaluatively complete the activation by efficiently transmitting their value to the value of the activation. Analogously, a good surgeon will perform a good surgery, and a good symphony will make for a good listening experience. The point here deserves emphasis. Positive value is itself constitutive of the final cause. Hence, Aristotle is here claiming that the sense-faculty and the sense-object are efficient causes of the final cause. They efficiently serve to bring about the final cause. In contrast, in his analogy, health is a formal cause of being healthy. Hence, I submit, Aristotle is claiming that pleasure evaluatively completes activation not through an efficiently causal relation, but through a formal relation. That is, pleasure adds positive value to the activation by being an additional formal part or aspect of the activation. Precisely what this formal relation is, I will return to consider below.

Presently, in a notorious line, Aristotle claims that:

"Pleasure completes the activation, not as the inherent disposition does, but as a sort of added on end (ἐπιγιγνόμενόν τι τέλος), like flourishing added on to those in the prime of life (τοῖς ἀκμαίοις ἢ ὥρα)."<sup>25</sup>

With respect to the simile, Peter Hadreas has argued that the traditional rendition of "τοῖς ἀκμαίοις ἢ ὥρα" as "the bloom of youth" is mistaken. After reviewing the evidence, I agree that "τοῖς ἀκμαίοις" does not denote youth. "Ἀκμή" and its cognates are ubiquitously used in Aristotle's corpus in contrast to νεότης and γήρας (or πρεσβύτης). For example, consider the following passage from *EN* 8.1:

"Friends are an aid to the young (νέοις), to guard them from error; to the elderly (πρεσβυτέροις) to tend to them and to supplement their failing powers of action; and to those in the prime of life (τοῖς τ' ἐν ἀκμῇ), to assist them in noble deeds, for two are better able to plan and execute."<sup>26</sup>

At *Rhetoric* 2.14, 1390b9-10 Aristotle gives a precise age range for ἀκμή in men. He states that bodily ἀκμή occurs at 30-35, while psychological ἀκμή occurs at 49. Consequently, when at *EN* 10.4, 1175b31-33 Aristotle states that pleasure is added on to activation as ὥρα to in their ἀκμή, he must be referring to those in the prime of adulthood. Accordingly, by "ὥρα" he cannot here mean "youthful beauty." "ὥρα" means "flourishing" or "bloom." Hence, my translation. But the nature of the flourishing or bloom depends on the entity in question. In this case, Aristotle must be referring to some distinguished and exceptional characteristic of adulthood. I assume that Aristotle

is referring to maturity, be it bodily or psychological.<sup>27</sup> For the sake of clarification, assume Aristotle is thinking of psychological maturity. Psychological maturity is a qualitative property of mind. In contrast, being at a stage in the course of life is a temporal property of the life span. Clearly, the psychological property adds value to the bio-temporal property. Hence, the simile is consistent with my evaluative interpretation of the relation between pleasure and activation.

A further piece of supporting evidence for the interpretation of the simile I am offering derives from the one other use of the participle "ἐπιγινόμενον" in *Nicomachean Ethics*. This occurs at 2.3:

"We should treat the pleasure or pain that is added on (ἐπιγινομένην) to one's actions as an indicator of one's [characterological] dispositions. For one who holds back from bodily pleasure and enjoys doing so is a moderate person, while one who is upset at doing so is self-indulgent ..."<sup>28</sup>

The hedonic condition here described is precisely a condition of maturity of the characterological disposition.

Now, I have been translating the participle "ἐπιγινόμενον" as "added on." Often, it is rendered as "supervening." Given the theoretical load that this term carries in contemporary philosophy of mind, that rendition requires substantive justification.<sup>29</sup> Curiously, however, "supervenient" had been used to translate "ἐπιγινόμενον" long before the burgeoning of contemporary philosophy of mind. Indeed, the first Latin translation of *Nicomachean Ethics*, Robert Grosseteste's of the 13<sup>th</sup> century, employs "*superveniens*." However, the Latin, like the earlier English uses, carries no theoretical load. In *EN* 10.4, as elsewhere in Aristotle's corpus, "ἐπιγίνεσθαι" can simply mean "to be or come to be on or on top of." For example, in the *History of Animals*, Aristotle describes the vegetation that grows on mollusk shells:

"Mollusks live for about fifty days after being captured. During this period they feed off of one another, for there grows on top of their shells (ἐπιγίνεται ἐπὶ τοῖς ὄστράκοις) a kind of seaweed or moss."<sup>30</sup>

Hence, as I have suggested, pleasure evaluatively completes activation by supplementing the activation. In other words, pleasure is some sort of addition to the activation. Note that Aristotle has not, to this point, claimed that the activation that the pleasure accompanies is itself evaluatively or formally complete. As such, there is no impediment to my proposal. Indeed, in 10.5 Aristotle explains that pleasure congenial with (οἰκεῖον) activation can serve to enhance and augment (συναύξει, ἐξακριβοῖ)<sup>31</sup> that activation; hence, he cannot hold that the activation is already evaluatively or formally complete.

Finally, Aristotle says that the pleasure that evaluatively completes activation is an end (τέλος). Ends may be formal or final causes. But in this passage, the end is a good, hence a final cause. Thus, once again, in accord with the interpretation I have been proposing, pleasure *evaluatively* completes activation.

Granted this, pleasure appears to be an end and a good in several different ways. In relation to activation, a congenial pleasure is *instrumentally* valuable. As Aristotle emphasizes in 10.5, pleasure motivates engagement in both contemporaneous and future activation:

"An activation's congenial pleasure contributes to refining (ἐξακριβοῖ) that activation and making it longer-lasting (χρονιωτέρως)."32

"For the pleasure congenial with the activation contributes to increasing (συνάξει) the activation."33

Additionally, a congenial pleasure is extrinsically (but non-instrumentally) valuable in relation to its activation. This is because pleasure derives value from the value of the activation with which it is congenial:

"But since activations differ in goodness (ἐπιεικεία) and worthlessness (φαυλότητι), and some are choiceworthy (αἰρετῶν), others to be avoided, and others neither, so it is with pleasures too. For each activation, there is a congenial pleasure. So the pleasure congenial with a worthy (σπουδαία) activation is good (ἐπιεικής), while that congenial with a worthless (φαύλη) one is bad (μοχθηρά)."34

Finally, elsewhere in *Nicomachean Ethics* Aristotle states that pleasure is chosen for its own sake. This strongly suggests that pleasure is also intrinsically valuable:

"We choose honor, pleasure, intelligence, and each excellence because of itself. For we would choose each of these if nothing came of them."35

I will not pursue the topic of the intrinsic value of pleasure further here, save to note the following difficulty. If pleasure both derives value from its congenial activation and is intrinsically valuable, then one and the same pleasure may have intrinsic value, but extrinsic disvalue. While there is no logical inconsistency in this, it does raise the question of how to construe the aggregate or cumulative value of the pleasure in question.

In short, 10.4 tells us that pleasure is a whole (ὅλον) and hence mereologically complete (τέλειον), rather than a κίνησις. 10.4 also tells us that pleasure evaluatively completes activation; more precisely, pleasure evaluatively completes its congenial activation. These are metaphysical and evaluative claims concerning properties of pleasure respectively. Hence, as I said, in 10 Aristotle contributes to an account of what sort of thing (ποῖόν τι) pleasure is. However, he does not say *what* pleasure is.

Additionally, 10.4 and 10.5 tell us the following two things about the *psychological* relation between pleasure and its congenial activation. First, given a restricted range of kinds of psychological activation – namely, sense-perceptual, intellectual, and, I suppose, characterological – each kind of psychological activation engenders its own kind of pleasure.<sup>36</sup> In other words, kinds of pleasure are proprietary to kinds of activation. Second and relatedly, each hedonic kind plays a particular pro-motivational role with respect to its congenial activation.

Granted this, once again, Aristotle does not explain *what* pleasure is. More precisely, he does not explain what *psychological* kind pleasure is. Why is this? One reason may be that Aristotle regards pleasure as a *sui generis* psychological kind. Perhaps. But Aristotle appears to regard pleasure and pain as polar opposites of a kind. Hence, he ought to have something to say about that common genus. Yet Aristotle's taxonomy of psychological kinds appears to lack a categorical slot for this genus.



Pleasure is neither sense-perceiving nor intellecting, for it must be something that can accompany both kinds of activation. Further, in 10.5 Aristotle explicitly says that pleasure is not desire (ὄρεξις), for desire is temporally antecedent to pleasure and indeed of a different nature (φύσις).<sup>37</sup> What plausible Aristotelian psychological categories are left? Πάθος, as in emotion, seems to me the best candidate. But Aristotle's view is that pleasure and pain accompany (ἔπειτα) emotions – just as they accompany other kinds of activation – not that they *are* emotions.<sup>38</sup> In short, pleasure accompanies various familiar kinds of Aristotelian psychological activation, yet it is distinct from these.

In considering Aristotle's difficulty here, it is helpful to reflect on some contemporary attempts clarify the nature of pleasure. Contemporary Anglophone examinations of the nature of pleasure were galvanized by Gilbert Ryle's work in the late 40s and early 50s.<sup>39</sup> Indeed, Ryle was influenced by his reading of Aristotle.

In these works, Ryle criticizes the commonsensical conception of pleasure as a feeling or sensation. Instead, he argues that pleasure is a mode of engagement in activity. This mode of engagement he struggled to clarify, suggesting that it is a member of the "polymorphous" genus of attending. He proposed that the hedonic species of attending is like being absorbed, as ink by blotting paper, or like being occupied, as a town by a fraternal military corps. Professedly, he was unable to transcend these picturesque similes.<sup>40</sup>

Despite its limitations, an important result to emerge from Ryle's contributions was the idea that pleasure is an intentional or attitudinal state. That is, pleasure is a certain mental attitude and takes a certain object.<sup>41</sup> In the 60s, David Perry and Terence Penelhum developed this idea in the following way.<sup>42</sup> They suggested that in fact there are two basic kinds of pleasure: enjoyment and being-pleased-that. Penelhum distinguished these two hedonic kinds in the following three respects:

- (1) nature of objects: being pleased that typically has facts or propositions as objects; enjoyment typically has actions or events.
- (2) nature of awareness: being pleased that requires knowing or thinking one knows about the fact; enjoyment requires active engagement or "paying fairly close attention to [the action or event], or rather [having one's] attention drawn by it or [being] absorbed in it."
- (3) temporal relation to object: being pleased that can endure for a considerable period of time following the thing that pleased one; "it is a (mild) emotion that can effect one's actions over a considerable period of time"; but enjoyment ceases when its object ceases.<sup>43</sup>

For example, compare enjoying an ice-cream with being pleased that one has made the winning move in a chess game. When one enjoys an ice-cream, one enjoys eating the ice-cream; such enjoyment does not require any knowledge or even belief about the object. For example, an infant or animal might enjoy eating something. But clearly one must be aware of the object of enjoyment in a certain way. Finally, the enjoyment must be contemporaneous with activity of eating the ice-cream. One might get pleasure from anticipating eating the ice-cream or from recollecting eating the ice-cream, but in such cases the anticipation or recollection is the activity with which the enjoyment is

contemporaneous. In the case of being pleased that one has made the winning move in chess, the object is the fact or proposition that one has made the winning move. And given that the object is a fact or proposition, one's awareness of it must be of a relatively high cognitive order. Finally, at least according to Penelhum, the pleasure can outlast the fact; for example, one may still be glowing from the win, although one has now moved on to another activity.<sup>44</sup>

Perry maintains that pleasure, in both its basic forms, is a pro-attitude, and he distinguishes pleasure among an array of other pro-attitudes, for example, desire, love, hope, approval, gratitude.<sup>45</sup> But Perry was professedly unable to identify pleasure *qua* kind of pro-attitude any further than by contrast with these other kinds. A number of contributors who have endorsed an attitudinal conception of pleasure have also emphasized that the hedonic attitude is an evaluative attitude, be it cognitive or non-cognitive. But perhaps the very notion of a *pro*-attitude already entails evaluation.

In short, according to contemporary attitudinal theories of pleasure, pleasure is a second-order psychological condition and precisely a pro- or pro-evaluative condition. In the case of enjoyment specifically, the first-order psychological condition toward which this second-order attitude is taken is a kind of experience or activity, and this experience or activity is contemporaneous with the second-order attitude.

It seems to me – and others have thought so as well – that the sort of pleasure Aristotle endeavors to explain in both 7 and 10 is enjoyment. Accordingly, I would say that Aristotle's identification of pleasure and activation in 7 marks a failure to distinguish pleasure from its object. This mistake, we may say, is remedied in 10. But despite the improvement, Aristotle never manages to clarify what pleasure itself is.

## Conclusion

There are holes in Aristotle's theories of pleasure. He ought to say things at points where he does not. The lacuna in 7 seems especially problematic. Aristotle should offer a clearer account of restorative pleasure in place of the Academic theory he criticizes. Perhaps it is more questionable in 10 whether he *owes* his audience an answer to the τί ἐστι question. He never unambiguously claims that he will answer this question. He only says it must be investigated what pleasure is *or* what sort of thing it is; and he does address the latter. Nonetheless, if, as I believe, Aristotle's account in 10 qualifies his account in 7, then he *ought* to clarify just what pleasure is. In this case, I have tried to explain Aristotle's silence: his conceptual options are too limited. In contrast, I have not offered an explanation for the lacuna in 7. This is a limitation of my own account. One responsibility of the interpreter is to acknowledge problems with the ancients' views as we find them. We sharpen our understanding of these views by recognizing their weaknesses as well as their strengths. But when we do criticize, I believe we have a further obligation: to explain, so far as possible, why the author goes wrong. I hope to remedy this lacuna in my account at a later stage.

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<sup>1</sup> Cp., e.g., C. C. W. Taylor: "Aristotle discusses pleasure in the context of lively debate both about its nature and about its value ... For him the question of value predominates. His treatment of the topic belongs to the ethical treatises, not to his discussion of the soul and its faculties, and while

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both principal discussions include accounts of the nature of pleasure those accounts are subordinated to his evaluative interests; his primary concern is to give pleasure its proper place in his account of the best form of human life, and it is because that concern requires a proper understanding of what pleasure is that the account of its nature engages his attention." (Pleasure: Aristotle's Response to Plato," in *Plato and Aristotle's Ethics*, R. Heinaman, ed., Ashgate, 2003, 1-20, at 1.)

<sup>2</sup> Elsewhere in his corpus when he discusses human and animal psychology and physiology, Aristotle has very little to say about pleasure. The treatment in *Rhetoric* (1.11) is a partial exception. This orientation in Aristotle's treatment of the subject is consistent with those of Greek philosophers generally. While they tend to view ethics as continuous with physics or the study of nature (the Cyrenaics are an exception here since they reject *physiologia*) they are, for the most part, interested in pleasure only for ethical reasons. (For exceptions, which support the rule, see David Wolfsdorf, *Pleasure in Ancient Greek Philosophy*, Cambridge University Press, 2013, chapter 2 *passim*, chapter 3, chapter 6 appendix.)

<sup>3</sup> With respect to each of the three anti-hedonist positions, Aristotle contests various arguments. Some of these arguments cast doubt on the value of pleasure through the value and motivation of their subjects: irrational children and brutes pursue pleasure, whereas temperate men avoid pleasure; and wise men (allegedly) pursue not pleasure, but freedom from pain. Other arguments concern the intrinsic or instrumental value of pleasure: some pleasures are base, harmful, or impediments to goods such as contemplation.

<sup>4</sup> 1172b23-25.

<sup>5</sup> On the relatively more and less critical and constructive emphases in 7 and 10, cp. Taylor: "The discussion of book VII is very largely devoted to examination, leading to the rebuttal, of arguments hostile to pleasure, to which is appended a brief statement of Aristotle's positive view. In book X, by contrast, the positive view is set out much more elaborately ..." (2003, 2) Consider also the character of the concluding chapter in 10 as a striking mark of its relatively more constructive emphasis. 10 closes with an account of how pleasures differ in kind and gestures at an evaluative ranking of pleasures by kind. In contrast, 7 closes with a discussion of bodily pleasures. These are precisely the pleasures that give rise to the mistaken view that pleasure is a γένεσις and not good.

<sup>6</sup> This seems to me the dominant view. Two recent defenders of a unified view are: Michael Pakaluk, "Pleasure: *Nicomachean Ethics* 7.11-14 and 10.1-5," in *Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics*, Cambridge University Press, 2005, 286-315; Christopher Shields, "Perfecting pleasures: The metaphysics of pleasure in *Nicomachean Ethics* X," in *Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics: A Critical Guide*, J. Miller, ed., Cambridge University Press, 2011, 191-210.

<sup>7</sup> fr. 79. Cf. "Likewise, also in the case of abilities (ἐπι τῶν δυνάμεων) and uses of things (χρήσεων) — for if an ability (δύναμις) is a disposition (διάθεσις), then also to be able (τὸ δύνασθαι) is to be disposed (διακέσθαι); and if the use (χρήσις) of anything is an activation (ἐνέργεια), then to use (τὸ χρῆσθαι) it is to activate (ἐνεργεῖν) it, and to have used (τὸ κεχρησθαι) it is to have activated (ἐνηργηκέναι) it." (*Top.* 124a31-34)

<sup>8</sup> David Bostock, "Pleasure and Activity in Aristotle's Ethics," *Phronesis* 33 (1989) 251-72; but cp. David Bostock, *Aristotle's Ethics*, Oxford University Press, 2000, esp. 160-65.

<sup>9</sup> The topic is complicated in numerous ways. For example, Hendrik Lorenz has recently argued that in *EN*, but not *EE*, excellence of character is partly constituted by the rational faculty properly speaking. See his "Virtue of Character in Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*," *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy* 37 (2009) 177-212. But this view is rejected in Jessica Moss, "'Virtue Makes the Go Right': Virtue and *Phronesis* in Aristotle's Ethics," *Phronesis* 56 (2011) 204-61.

<sup>10</sup> *MM* 2.7.18, 1205b21-25. Cp. "Moreover, see if one use of a term has a contrary, while another has absolutely none. For example, the pleasure of drinking has a contrary, the pain of thirst; whereas the pleasure of perceiving that the diagonal is incommensurate with the side has none — so that pleasure is used in more than one way." (*Top.* 106a-b)

<sup>11</sup> 1173b10-13.

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<sup>12</sup> 1153a3-6.

<sup>13</sup> 1153a13-15.

<sup>14</sup> 1225b30-31.

<sup>15</sup> Aristotle, like most ancient Greek philosophers, fails to appreciate the distinction between displeasure and pain.

<sup>16</sup> Cp. Giles Pearson, commenting on this section of 7.12: "This suggests that when pleasure *are* 'with pain and ἐπιθυμία' this is because in order to get such a pleasure one must be replenishing a painful disrupted state and so satisfying one's ἐπιθυμία." (*Aristotle on Desire*, Cambridge University Press, 2012, 92-93) Cp. also: "The pain in question will be the uncomfortable state of having the desire, the satisfaction of which will be pleasant." (*ibid.*, p.93, n.5)

<sup>17</sup> Some support for this view might be derived from the fact that once elsewhere in the corpus, at *Top.* 4.5, 126a9-10 (a reference I owe to Pearson, 2012, p.93, n.5.), Aristotle does speak of pleasure as well as pain as occurring in the ἐπιθυμητικόν. However, it is doubtful that the theses Aristotle employs in *Topics* can be employed straightforwardly as evidence of Aristotle's views.

<sup>18</sup> Aristotle's emphasis in 7, then, is on criticizing the Platonic view that pleasure is a γένεσις. In contrast – it must be noted – Aristotle has almost nothing to say about, let alone against, the view that pleasure is a κίνησις. One might think that Aristotle's rejection of the view that pleasure is a γένεσις entails rejection of the view that pleasure is a κίνησις. But that inference would be faulty. First, there are some κινήσεις that are not γενέσεις, for example, locomotion and qualitative alteration. (Cf. *Cat.* 15a14-15) Second, arguably some ἐνεργεῖαι themselves are κινήσεις. For example, at *EE* 2.6, 1222b29, Aristotle claims that πρᾶξις is κίνησις – and, I take it, πρᾶξις is a kind of ἐνέργεια. Consider also the following passage from *MM* 2.7: "There is a part of the soul with which we take pleasure ... This part of the soul is active (ἐνεργεῖ) and is changed (κινεῖται), and the change (κίνησις) and activation (ἐνέργεια) of [this psychic part] is pleasure." (*MM* 2.7.8, 1204b25-29) Finally, it is true that, among the concluding lines of 7, Aristotle claims that: "There is activation (ἐνέργεια) not only of change (κινήσεως), but also of lack of change (ἀκινήσις). And pleasure exists more in rest (ἡρεμία) than in change (κίνησις)." (1154b26-28) But this striking claim, which of course deserves careful consideration, does not deny that pleasure may be kinetic. In short, Aristotle's critical agenda in 7 is to reject the claim that pleasure is a γένεσις. It is not to reject the claim that pleasure is a κίνησις. (Cf. the claim at *Phys.* 7.3, 247a16-17 that pleasures and pains are "ἀλλοιώσεις τοῦ αἰσθητικοῦ.")

<sup>19</sup> 1174a13-14.

<sup>20</sup> Cp. the uses of temporal expressions: εἰς ὕστερον (a15), κατ' οὐδένα χρόνον (a17), ἐπὶ πλείω χρόνον (a18), ἐν χρόνῳ (a19), ἐν ἅπαντι τῷ χρόνῳ (a21), τῷ χρόνῳ (a22), ἐν ὄψεσιν χρόνῳ (a27-28), ἐν ἅπαντι χρόνῳ (at b3), ἐν ὄψεσιν χρόνῳ (at b5-6), ἐν χρόνῳ (b8).

<sup>21</sup> So far as I know Peter Hadreas, "Aristotle on the functions of pleasure," was the first to draw attention to this point – or at least something close to it. Cp. the prominence of evaluative language in this section: βελτίστη (b18), κράτιστον (b19), εὖ ἔχοντος (b22), σπουδαιότατον (b22-23), σπουδαία (b25), κρατίστη (b29). Aristotle's position commits him to the following: different pleasures can be of various values, while nonetheless being mereologically complete.

<sup>22</sup> 1174b14-17.

<sup>23</sup> 1021b12-17 (with my numerals added). See also *Physics* 7.3, 246a10-b3 for the evaluative sense of "τέλειον."

<sup>24</sup> 1174b23-26.

<sup>25</sup> "τελειοὶ δὲ τὴν ἐνέργειαν ἡδονὴ οὐχ ὡς ἡ ἕξις ἐνυπάρχουσα, ἀλλ' ὡς ἐπιγινόμενόν τι τέλος, οἷον τοῖς ἀκμαίοις ἡ ὥρα." (1174b31-33)

<sup>26</sup> 1155a12-15. Compare Aristotle's distinction between ἡβη, ἀκμή, and γήρας in the following passage from the *Generation of Animals*: "[In most animals, during gestation,] the female takes longer to develop than the male does. However, once birth has taken place, every [stage of life] is reached (ἐπιτελεῖται) sooner in females than in males, e.g., puberty (ἡβη), maturity (ἀκμή), old age (γήρας)." (775a12-14)

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<sup>27</sup> Compare the 16<sup>th</sup> century Latin rendition of Professor Dionysius Lambinus of the Collège Royal: "ut finis quidam subsequens, veluti eos qui florent aetate formae maturitas." Lambinus' translation can be found in *Aristoteles Latine*, O. Bekker, ed., 1831, Prussian Academy, 586. I owe the reference to Hadreas (1997) 372.

<sup>28</sup> 1104b3-7.

<sup>29</sup> Two recent interpretations of 1174b31-33 that commit to the view that pleasure supervenes on activation are Shields (2011) and Matthew S. Strohl, "Pleasure as Perfection: *Nicomachean Ethics* 10.4-5," *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy* 41 (2012) 257-87.

<sup>30</sup> 603a15-16.

<sup>31</sup> Cp. 1175a30, 1175b14.

<sup>32</sup> 1175b13-14. Compare Aristotle's claim at *EN* 1.7: "Since there appear to be several ends (τέλη) [at which our actions aim], and we choose some of these because of something else (δι' ἕτερον) [that is, we choose them instrumentally] – for instance, wealth, flutes, and instruments generally – it is clear that not all of them are τέλεια. But the best [end] appears to be something τέλειον. Consequently, if there is some one thing that alone is τέλειον, this is the thing sought – or, if there is than one, the τελειότατον among these. And we are claiming that a thing pursued for itself (τὸ καθ' αὐτὸ διωκτὸν) is τελειότερον than that which is pursued and chosen for the sake of something else (τοῦ δι' ἕτερον), and that a thing that is never chosen as a means to anything else (τὸ μηδέποτε δι' ἄλλο αἰρετὸν) is [τελειότερον] than things chosen both as ends in themselves and as means to that thing (τῶν καθ' αὐτὰ καὶ δι' αὐτὸ αἰρετῶν). And a thing chosen always as an end and never as a means (τὸ καθ' αὐτὸ αἰρετὸν αἰεὶ καὶ μηδέποτε δι' ἄλλο) we call simply τέλειον." (1097a25-34)

<sup>33</sup> 1175a30-31.

<sup>34</sup> 1175b24-28.

<sup>35</sup> 1097b2-3.

<sup>36</sup> Moreover, sub-kinds of kinds of psychological activation engender sub-kinds of congenial pleasure.

<sup>37</sup> 1175b30-32.

<sup>38</sup> Pace Jamie Dow, "Aristotle's Theory of the Emotions: Emotions as Pleasures and Pains," in *Moral Psychology and Human Action in Aristotle*, M. Pakaluk and G. Pearson, eds., Oxford University Press, 2011, 47-74.

<sup>39</sup> *The Concept of Mind*, Hutchinson, 1949, 107-109; "Symposium: Pleasure," *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, supp. vol. 28 (1954) 135-46; "Pleasure" in *Dilemmas*, Cambridge University Press, 1954, 54-67.

<sup>40</sup> *PAS* (1954) 143-5.

<sup>41</sup> Cp. Bernard Williams, "Pleasure and Belief," *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, supp. vol. 33 (1959) 57-72.

<sup>42</sup> Terence Penelhum, "Pleasure and Falsity," *American Philosophical Quarterly* 1 (1967) 81-91; David Barton Perry, *The Concept of Pleasure*, Mouton, 1967.

<sup>43</sup> (1967) 82.

<sup>44</sup> I say "at least according to Penelhum," since the temporal relation between being pleased and the fact or proposition is a tricky issue.

<sup>45</sup> (1967) 204-14.