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PLATO ON THE PLEASURES AND PAINS OF KNOWING

JAMES WARREN

PLATO often assures us that it is pleasant to acquire knowledge. In the *Republic* the philosopher is said to live the most pleasant life because only he experiences the true and pure pleasures to be had from acquiring knowledge of the special objects that are the Forms. Similarly, in the *Philebus* Socrates claims that learning is a good example of a pure pleasure, namely a pleasure that is essentially neither preceded nor followed by pain. But Plato is also well aware that the process of coming to know something is not always pleasant. Indeed, in matters that would seem to be for Plato of the utmost importance, he is quite clear that our progress towards knowledge can be accompanied by a variety of affective experiences, and it can often be difficult and painful.

The claim in *Republic* 9 that the philosopher's life is the most pleasant possible has often been thought problematic, not least because of the various passages which appear to depict philosophical life and philosophical progress as painful. I investigate this problem first by considering a stretch of argument at *Philebus* 51 E–52 B in which Socrates tries to give an account of the nature of the pleasures of learning and which includes a specification of the conditions under which certain kinds of learning might be painful or a mixture of pleasure and pain (Section I). Teasing out the precise implications of what is said there will allow us to reconsider the pleasures and pains of the philosopher's life outlined in the *Republic*, since Protarchus' suggestion of the conditions under which learning might not be a pure pleasure but will instead be a relief from pain turns out to be directly applicable to the experience of

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the prisoner released from the cave in the allegory in *Republic* 7 (Section II). However, there remain some important obstacles in the way of producing a fully satisfying account of the hedonic life of the philosopher. One of these problems stems from an objection sometimes raised against the portrayal in book 9. This objection holds that the understanding of the nature of pleasure presumed in that argument should force Socrates to claim that only the acquisition of new philosophical knowledge and not the continued possession and exercise of philosophical knowledge is wonderfully pleasant (Section III). I canvass some possible answers to this problem (Section IV) and conclude that the analysis of various pleasures of learning in the *Philebus* can usefully be brought to bear on this question (Section V).

I

At *Philebus* 51 E 7–52 B 9 Socrates and Protarchus discuss the pleasures associated with learning and try to give an account of their nature:

SOC. Then let us also add to these the pleasures of learning, if indeed we are agreed that there is no such thing as hunger for learning connected with them, nor any pains that have their source in a hunger for learning.

PRO. Here, too, I agree with you.

SOC. Well, then, if after such filling with knowledge, people lose it again through forgetting, do you notice any kinds of pain?

PRO. None that could be called inherent by nature, but in our reflections on what we undergo whenever, deprived of something, we are pained because of the usefulness of what was lost [*οὔ τι φύσει γε, ἀλλ' ἔν τισι λογισμοῖς τοῦ παθήματος, ὅταν τις στερηθεὶς λυπηθῇ διὰ τὴν χρείαν*].

SOC. But, my dear, we are here concerned only with the natural affections themselves, independently of our reflection on them [*χωρὶς τοῦ λογισμοῦ*].

PRO. Then you are right in saying that the lapse of knowledge never causes us any pain [*χωρὶς λύπης ἡμῖν λήθη γίγνεται*].

SOC. Then we may say that the pleasures of learning are unmixed with pain and belong, not to the masses, but only to a few?

PRO. How could one fail to agree? (trans. D. Frede, modified)

Socrates is looking for another example of a pure pleasure, that is a pleasure which is neither necessarily preceded nor necessarily followed by a pain. His first example was the pleasure of smell. The

pleasure of learning is the second example. It too, Socrates thinks, is a process of filling a lack, but since simply not-knowing-X is not painful and having-forgotten-X is not painful, then the pleasure of learning X is a pure pleasure.

A brief comment specifies that these pleasures of learning that are unmixed with pains belong to 'the few and not the many' (52 B 7–8), which suggests that Socrates has in mind cases of learning that are not mundane examples of simply coming-to-know something. Most likely, the sort of learning intended is to be connected with the dialogue's later discussions of the various special *epistēmai*.[1] There are, of course, important differences between how the *Philebus* and the *Republic* imagine *epistēmē* and its objects. Nevertheless, in both dialogues there is an evident commitment to the idea that certain kinds of special cognitive achievement are to be associated with a particular and superior form of pleasure. Furthermore, in both cases the dominant model for understanding the pleasure of this form of achievement is the filling of some kind of lack which may or may not be recognized or painful.

However, it seems quite implausible to think that a philosopher's cognitive progress is unaccompanied by pains, frustrations, and the like, which are connected with the fact that there is a conscious desire to know or understand something as yet ungrasped.[2] Plato himself is acutely aware that philosophical understanding is often hard-won. In fact, the *Philebus* passage is very careful to clarify the precise sense in which the pleasures of learning are unmixed with pain. Protarchus voices an important qualification at 52 A 5–7 when he notes that, although the simple fact of forgetting is not itself painful, the fact of *having forgotten* can perhaps be said to be painful just in cases when a person comes to reflect upon his lack of previous knowledge and on occasions when that knowledge is needed. Socrates swiftly brushes aside Protarchus' concern as irrelevant to the precise point he wishes to make. As he reminds Protarchus, what they want to grasp is the nature of these experiences in themselves, shorn of any further complicating factors. Socrates is right. There are lots of things I do not know for which it is true that I am entirely indifferent about not knowing them; the fact of my not knowing

[1] Cf. S. Delcomminette, *Le Philèbe de Platon: introduction à l'agathologie platonicienne* (Leiden, 2006) [*Le Philèbe*], 470.

[2] Cf. D. Frede (trans. and comm.), *Platon: Philebos* [*Philebos*] (Göttingen, 1997), 300–2; Delcomminette, *Le Philèbe*, 471 and 476–7.

them causes me no distress. There are lots of things I did know and no longer know for which it is also true that I am entirely indifferent about not knowing them. To be sure, if I think that something I do not know (or used to know) is something that I ought to know or ought still to know, then that secondary thought might be something that causes me distress. But the first-order fact of simply not knowing is not painful. So learning something need not be a relief from something painful.

And yet, Protarchus has pointed to something important. He has given an important set of conditions under which a lack of knowledge (whether the result of forgetting something previously known or, we might add, the simple lack of a piece of knowledge never previously possessed) might be rightly thought to be painful. The conditions are twofold: (i) the lack of knowledge must be noticed or reflected upon, and (ii) the knowledge that is lacking must be recognized as needed or necessary in some way. Each of the two is necessary but insufficient for the state to be painful: I might recognize I do not know the capital city of Botswana but feel no pain at that realization so long as I have no need to know it. Similarly, I might have a genuine need to know some important philosophical truths in the sense that my life will be miserable unless I come to acquire that knowledge. But so long as I remain unaware of this need, the simple fact of not knowing will not of itself be painful to me. When combined, however, the two conditions will be sufficient to generate pain attendant upon a desire to know. While the first of these conditions is often noted, the second is often missed.[3] Yet both are obviously necessary since it is the second which is required to generate in the person concerned a desire to know whatever it is that he does not know and it is crucial for the presence of some kind of negative affective response.

The full psychological commitments of Protarchus' comment at 52 A 8–B 1 are worth further thought. Clearly, he is distinguishing between 'something we undergo' (a *pathēma*), which we can presume is what is later glossed as 'a kind of deprivation' (the state of lacking some piece of knowledge), and something additional, which we have already identified as a further necessary condition for this *pathēma* to be painful. Protarchus refers to this additional

[3] e.g. Delcomminette, *Le Philèbe*, 471: 'En effet, pour qu'il y ait désir, il faut qu'il y ait non seulement manque, mais encore manque *conscient*, si du moins le désir doit avoir une direction, un objet.'

factor as '*logismoi*'.[4] The *Philebus* can provide a satisfying account of what *logismos* amounts to in this context if we look back to its initial stipulation that the best human life must consist in some kind of combination of both pleasure and reason (20 E–22 E). Socrates and Protarchus consider two extreme cases: on the one hand, a life which contains pleasure but is devoid of any cognitive capacities such as memory, knowledge, opinion, and wisdom and, on the other hand, a life which retains all those capacities but is without even the least experience of pleasure. Neither alternative seems to them to be choiceworthy, and the remainder of the dialogue proceeds with this conclusion taken as its basis. In outlining the life of a mollusc, the life of pleasure without reasoning, Socrates explains his point as follows: 'Having no true opinion, nor believing that he is experiencing pleasure when he does so and, being deprived of reasoning [*λογισμοῦ δὲ στερόμενον*, 21 C 5], not being able to reason how he will experience pleasure at some later time, he lives not a human life but the life of some jellyfish or crustacean' (21 C 4–8). From this it seems that *logismos* is, first of all, something that is an essential pre-requisite for living a recognizable human life and, more specifically, is related to what we might call a capacity for self-awareness and for considering one's well-being or hedonic state at non-present times. Such a capacity might not exhaust the range of what *logismos* may do, but it is the important characteristic for present purposes.

In Protarchus' proposal at 52 A–B too, an important condition of feeling the pain of an absence of understanding is the human capacity to reflect upon or notice that condition and perhaps also to compare it with some previous or hoped-for future state. It is possible, in that case, to give an account of the conditions under which an absence of knowledge is painful by making use of a distinction between first- and second-order knowledge according to which the presence or absence of the first-order knowledge can be the object of a second-order form of knowledge and in which this second-order knowledge will be the exercise of the human capacity here referred to as *logismos*. Take a case in which I come to know that I do not know X. Imagine also that coming to know that I do not know X is painful to me. It is true that I do not know X, of course, so what I have acquired in coming to know that I do not know is a different

[4] The plural form is clearly not significant since Socrates' immediate reply replaces it with the singular *logismos* (B 3) with no apology; the replacement does not seem to bother Protarchus.

truth. I know more than I did when I simply did not know X and did not know that I did not know X. We noted, remember, that for such a second-order knowledge of an absence of first-order knowledge to be registered as painful there would need in addition to be some awareness of the first-order knowledge that is lacking being something worth having. There must, in other words, be a recognized need for that first-order knowledge. The *Philebus*' analysis of human psychological capacities can also supply that additional requirement, once again by referring to the capacity of *logismos*.

The prospective and retrospective faculties associated with *logismos* at 21 C are not only stressed as essential characteristics of human psychology; they are both also involved in what might at a cursory glance seem to be solely future-directed attitudes such as desire. Later in the dialogue, Socrates is preoccupied with arguing for a division between the roles of the body and of the soul in desire, but while he is doing so he states clearly that he thinks all desires and impulses which initiate a drive for the removal or replenishment involve some sort of memory (35 C–D). Specifically, the memory involved in desire is a memory of the opposite state to that in which the desirer currently finds himself. The desire involved when a person is thirsty, for example, involves the memory of the state of not being thirsty which supplies the drive and impulse towards finding something to drink. Presumably, the drive to find a drink to remove a thirst involves the conjuring from memory of some appropriate representation of the proper state of that desire being fulfilled. Socrates then goes on to distinguish two cases involving a person who is in pain but can remember the pleasant things he lacks. In the first, he has a 'clear hope or expectation' of attaining what he lacks. In that case, the memory provides some pleasure while he is also experiencing pain (36 A–B). In the second, he is both in pain and also aware that there is no hope of replenishment. In that case his suffering is twofold (36 B–C). We should note, then, that hopes and desires all involve some activity of memory since it is memory which provides the store of experiences that can be drawn upon to generate the appropriate objects of pursuit in any given situation and which allows the animal to bring to mind some state (which it has experienced in the past) which is the opposite of its present condition.[5]

[5] See D. Frede, 'Rumpelstiltskins's Pleasures: True and False Pleasures in Plato's *Philebus*', *Phronesis*, 30 (1985), 151–80 at 164–5; D. Russell, *Plato on Pleasure and the Good Life* [*Plato on Pleasure*] (Oxford, 2005), 175–6. Delcomminette, *Le Philèbe*,

We can now offer a full account of the painful cases of coming-to-know which Protarchus mentions at 52 A–B: these are cases in which a first-order ignorance is recognized as a result of second-order reflection on a person's own cognitive state. This ignorance might be simply something that the person has never known or it might be the result of a loss of memory. The same capacity for second-order reflection that can recognize present ignorance, *logismos*, is also responsible for the person being able either to reflect upon a prior state of knowledge or imagine a future state of comprehension, and in cases where the possession of the relevant piece of knowledge would serve some recognized end, this will generate a desire to know. That desire can be painful. Indeed, if it is to motivate the person sufficiently, its painful nature might itself be something instrumentally useful. In such a way we can imagine the possibility of knowledge causing pain. This is a possibility which might initially be surprising but which on reflection is something that is only to be expected, particularly when the knowledge concerned is of a certain sort, namely the knowledge of an important personal failing.

II

Republic 9 contains the longest sustained account of the pleasure associated with a life of philosophy and also presents the most difficult problems for anyone trying to claim that the life of a fully fledged philosopher is pleasant while holding on firmly to the analysis of pleasure—even an intellectual pleasure—as the process of filling some kind of lack. Before we apply to this problem the analysis in the *Philebus* of the pleasures of learning and the pains of some kinds of ignorance, we should first consider the most famous Platonic account of the experience of radical and transformative cognitive progress, namely the story of the prisoner's release from bondage and ascent from the cave into the sunlight at the beginning of *Republic* 7. The description of the ascent from the cave emphasizes not the pleasures of discovery and the satisfaction of intellectual lack but quite the opposite: the dizzying and startling effect produced by the taxing and disorienting acquisition of a new perspective on

470–6, has a good account of the sense in which philosophy itself in the *Philebus* is imagined as a kind of desire (see 58 D 4–5, 67 B 4–7), an image familiar from other dialogues such as the *Symposium* or *Phaedrus* but present also in the *Republic*.

reality and value. Indeed, Socrates repeatedly notes the pain and discomfort felt by the student on his way up out of the cave as the bright light and the journey take their toll.[6]

We might also relate his experience to the analysis offered by Protarchus. The release of the prisoner from his bonds and his ignorance (*ἀφροσύνη*, 515 C 5) is painful perhaps because it makes that ignorance obvious to him. The first stage of his education reveals to him the truth of his situation: although he previously thought that he was viewing real objects, in fact he was viewing only shadows cast by the fire behind the puppeteers. Such a realization is hard to endure and the prisoner may well prefer to return to his previous comfortable acceptance of mere shadows. Indeed, the prisoner will be confused if he is told that, despite his struggles to cope with the glaring light, his eyesight is in fact now working better (515 D 2–7). Socrates notes that when presented with new and more real objects for consideration the prisoner will become confused or at a loss and will perhaps even initially refuse to consider them, preferring instead to turn back towards the objects with which he is more familiar; a degree of compulsion is therefore needed to force him to persist through the uncomfortable—indeed painful—initial transition. We might also note that the freed prisoner feels pain not only when he emerges from underground into the light outside but also when he first turns round and looks away from the shadows to the fire within the cave. In that case, if the first stage of the conversion might plausibly be likened to the unsettling effects of a Socratic elenchus and the undermining of the passive acceptance of mere cultural norms, then this too—as well as the eventual first encounter with the dazzling realities of genuinely intelligible objects—is said to be a painful process.[7] The prisoner is confronted with his own ignorance about things which he previously thought that he knew, but also, we are to assume, acquires a need or desire to know something of which he now realizes he is ignorant: just the two conditions

[6] Cf. *ἀλγοῖ*, 515 C 8; *ἀλγεῖν*, 515 E 1; *ὀδυνᾶσθαι*, 515 E 7. There is a helpful account of the experience of the freed prisoner in M. Schofield, 'Metaspeleology', in D. Scott (ed.), *Maieusis: Essays in Ancient Philosophy in Honour of Myles Burnyeat* (Oxford, 2007), 216–31 at 225–8, which does not, however, ask specifically why it is painful.

[7] A similar phenomenon is illustrated by the case of what Socrates calls 'summoners' of thought (*παρακαλοῦντα*, 523 B 9; cf. *παρακλητικά*, 524 D 2). Faced with conflicting appearances, the soul is forced into an *aporia* and is compelled to find a resolution to its confusion by summoning the intellect (524 E 2–525 A 3). Socrates makes no reference there to the possibility that the confusion might be painful.

noted by Protarchus as sufficient to make a case of acquiring knowledge only a mixed pleasure.

The overall portrayal of the prisoner's experience might therefore be thought to pose a problem for what Socrates will eventually claim for the great intellectual pleasures of philosophical enlightenment. The budding philosopher-ruler will certainly turn his gaze towards new and more knowable objects, and he too might have to come to realize a prior ignorance. In some passages any pleasure that the philosopher will eventually experience from finally acquiring the truth does indeed seem to be connected to a kind of pain, presumably closely linked to the philosopher's tremendous desire to acquire the truth.[8] Socrates refers, for example, to the philosopher's 'birth pangs' as he struggles to grasp each thing's nature (490 A–B) and, once the philosopher has achieved the goal of his intellectual desire, Socrates says that he then 'would understand and truly live and be nourished and, in this way, be relieved of his pain' (490 B 6–7). Such comments invite us to think that any pleasure involved is mixed rather than pure. Perhaps the student's intense desire to know that is often associated with the life of a philosopher, coupled with the realization that there are some terribly important things that he does not know, will always make philosophical progress a rather mixed affair in hedonic terms; the final hoped-for understanding will then be experienced not merely as a great pleasure, but also as a kind of relief. Such comments might be combined with the account of the prisoner's difficult ascent from the cave to raise concerns about the plausibility of the claim in book 9 that the philosophical life is most pleasant in so far as it contains episodes in which the philosopher learns important truths. There are evidently cases in which learning the truth can also be associated with significant pain.[9]

[8] B. Gibbs, 'Pleasure, Pain and Rhetoric in *Republic* 9' ['Rhetoric'], in D. Baltzly, D. Blyth, and H. Tarrant (eds.), *Power and Pleasure, Virtues and Vices* (*Prudentia* suppl.; Auckland, 2001), 7–34, comments at 20: 'In Bk 9 Socrates appears to have forgotten his own warnings about the toils and pains and hardships involved in becoming a philosopher and living the philosophical life.' I see no reason to think there is an inconsistency.

[9] The use of psychic pregnancy, labour, and birth as a metaphor for intellectual progress and production is prominent also in the *Symposium*. At 206 C–E Diotima associates any pain that might be felt on this account specifically with the experience of those who are pregnant in the soul but faced with ugliness. When such people manage to associate with beauty instead, their pains recede, and they can produce their offspring. The message seems to be that intellectual progress (here: the bringing to

Those concerns can be set aside, fortunately, once we understand properly the reasons for the prisoner's pain. The prisoner is pained at being forced suddenly to view objects of increasing brightness. We can distinguish three aspects here: (i) the glare of the new objects of his sight, (ii) the fact of his being forced to view them, and (iii) the fact of this being a sudden turn from familiar to unfamiliar objects. The first aspect is presumably part of Socrates' demonstration that the prisoner is being asked to turn his cognitive apparatus to objects that are more and more real—that is, have a greater share of 'being', are more purely 'just', 'beautiful', and so on—and are therefore more and more knowable. The cognitive apparatus, the 'eye of the soul', that had previously been dealing only with the dimmest objects is now being presented with objects that activate its powers of cognition more and more effectively. But such things take some getting used to, particularly when they occur by compulsion: it is difficult to adjust when moving from a dark room out into the light even though it is true to say that out in the daylight is where a person's powers of sight work best.[10] It is not therefore simply the fact of being faced with these more knowable objects that generates the pain; rather, the prisoner is pained at being compelled all of a sudden to turn from his previous and familiar objects of attention—the shadows—and being forced to keep his gaze on these new and surprising things.

A life of philosophical progress and understanding is not *per se* painful, but it is so in the case of the prisoner in the cave because of the necessary compulsion and the shocking revelation involved in effecting a rapid transition from the prisoner's dreadful initial state. When Socrates goes on to describe the education of the budding philosophers, in contrast, he makes it clear that they have to undergo a lengthy process of careful preparation that begins very

fulfilment of psychic potential) is not *per se* painful, but can be so if undertaken in the wrong circumstances or for the sake of the wrong kind of object. See further F. C. C. Sheffield, *Plato's* Symposium*: The Ethics of Desire* (Oxford, 2006), 86–99. Socrates' special form of midwifery described in the *Theaetetus* is also dedicated to first bringing on birth pangs and then, ideally, allaying them (*Theaet*. 148 E–151 D). Pain, in that case, is associated with the initial possibly confused or inchoate state of a person's thoughts before Socrates can coax out a viable intellectual offspring. The pain of this intellectual labour may be generated by a kind of *aporia*, perhaps similar to the prisoner's confusion at *Rep*. 515 C 6–D 7.

[10] For more discussion of Plato's use of imagery and metaphor in describing the philosophical life see A. Nightingale, *Spectacles of Truth in Classical Greek Philosophy* (Cambridge, 2004), 94–138.

early in life (see e.g. 519 A 7–B 5). We can therefore be more optimistic about the experience of philosophical students in the ideal city, since there is a significant difference between the tremendous involuntary cognitive upheavals experienced by someone plucked out of the cave and dragged into the light and the altogether less horrific experience of a young person educated in the ideally organized city and led willingly and slowly through a carefully constructed programme of philosophical education which has an assured level of success. Unlike the various people who complain of distress as a result of talking with Socrates and unlike the dazzled and pained prisoner escaping the cave at the beginning of *Republic* 7, a philosopher-in-training in the ideal city will be making intellectual progress in maximally beneficial circumstances. As the *Philebus* notes, there is a great difference between cases in which a desire—including presumably a desire to know something—is coupled with the realization that its satisfaction is extremely unlikely and a desire accompanied by the assurance that it will be fulfilled (36 A–C). The painful experience of the prisoner may resemble the discomfort felt by people in Socrates' own Athens struggling to make intellectual headway, but that should not generate a general pessimism about intellectual progress itself nor about the great pleasures which it will ideally produce.

In short, philosophical progress may never be entirely straightforward, but we should be able to grant to Socrates the concession that, under ideal circumstances, the pain involved will be, at the very least, significantly lessened. And, in any case, elsewhere in the dialogue Socrates is often very upbeat about the pleasures of intellectual discovery. Consider, for example, his description of the 'philosophical natures' at 485 A ff., especially 485 D 10–E 1.[11] These fortunate people, fitted with all the traits of character necessary to allow them to be potential philosopher-rulers, desire 'the pleasure of the soul itself by itself' (*τὴν τῆς ψυχῆς ἡδονὴν αὐτῆς καθ' αὑτήν*), a description very reminiscent of book 9's characterization of the pure and true pleasures at 585 B ff. There is no mention here of the 'pleasure of the soul by itself' always being accompanied by pain, nor is there any need for such qualifications.

[11] See M. Lane, 'Virtue as the Love of Knowledge in Plato's *Symposium* and *Republic*', in D. Scott (ed.), *Maieusis: Essays on Ancient Philosophy in Honour of Myles Burnyeat* (Oxford, 2007), 44–67, esp. 50–9.

III

There are also, no doubt, distinctions to be drawn between the experiences of someone progressing towards philosophical understanding and a fully qualified philosopher-ruler, and those distinctions will be important in what follows. Still, Socrates is clearly interested in explaining the affective aspects of the philosophical life as a whole, and is also interested in explaining them in part by reference to the specific kinds of knowledge and ignorance—including knowing that one is ignorant or that one knows—that are involved in acquiring and possessing philosophical understanding. We can now approach directly the most significant difficulty which has been raised both for the characterization of the pleasures of learning in the *Philebus* and also for the account of the philosopher's pleasures in *Republic* 9. In both works the emphasis is squarely on the pleasures of the process of coming-to-know something previously unknown or previously known but now forgotten. In that case it might remain mysterious how the philosopher might be said to continue to live a pleasant life once the necessary and previously lacking knowledge has been acquired.

The difficulty begins with the closest Socrates comes in the *Republic* to an explicit statement of what he thinks pleasure and pain are. In the course of an argument intended to secure the conclusion that pleasure and pain are both to be distinguished from an intermediate state of calm or rest (ἡσυχία), he clearly states that pleasure and pain are both changes or motions: *kinēseis* (κίνησίς τις ἀμφοτέρω ἐστόν, 583 D 9–10). That comment is left without further expansion until he comes some two pages later to give a more elaborate account of the different pleasures of the body and the soul. At 585 A Socrates begins a new argument for the superiority of the philosopher's life by offering two premisses. They deal with first the body and then the soul and assert an analogous relationship between their respective states of need.

(i) Hunger, thirst, and the like are 'emptyings' (κενώσεις) of the state (ἕξις) of the body (585 A 8–B 1).
(ii) Ignorance (ἄγνοια) and foolishness (ἀφρονύνη) are 'emptyings' of the state of the soul (585 B 3–4).

He then infers:

(iii) Someone taking in nutrition (ὁ τῆς τροφῆς μεταλαβάνων) and someone having understanding (ὁ νοῦν ἴσχων) would be filled (585 B 6–7).

By this, he presumably means that the ingestion of food and drink would remove the 'emptying' identified in (i) and the acquisition of understanding would remove that in (ii).[12] One of the fundamental problems in interpreting this argument is the question whether Socrates exploits an ambiguity in the terms 'emptying' (κένωσις) and the associated 'fulfilment' (πλήρωσις) since they can both refer both to a state (of being empty, of being fulfilled) and to a process (of emptying, of fulfilling). From what we have seen of the argument so far, it is difficult to think that anything other than the state of 'being empty' is intended in (i) and (ii). Certainly, it is not easy to imagine that the ignorance in (ii) is meant to be only a process of becoming less knowledgeable. On the other hand, the present participle μεταλαμβάνων in (iii) might suggest a process of ingestion rather than a state of being free from e.g. hunger, whereas ἴσχων might rightly be thought to suggest a continued possession of understanding. Despite such uncertainties, the most satisfying overall interpretation holds that the states of ignorance or hunger are painful but the processes of eating or learning are pleasant.

The question whether pleasures are always *kinēseis* becomes acute, of course, when we glance forward to the intended conclusion of the argument, which holds that the philosopher is the one most truly fulfilled since he grasps objects which are themselves most pure and true, and 'are' without qualification. If this refers merely to the *process* of acquiring understanding, then we might now agree only that the process of becoming a philosopher is exquisitely pleasant, but also infer that the resulting state of understanding is not. (Much as we might think that the process of eating when hungry is present while the state of feeling no hunger is not.) Socrates does offer some more information about

[12] N. Pappas, *Routledge Philosophy Guidebook to Plato and the* Republic (London, 1995), 168–9, mistakenly detects an inconsistency here: '[W]hereas the first half of the argument shrank from praising any pleasure that follows from the *relief* of pain, the second half endorses the *relief* from ignorance as though it could raise a person higher than the middle state of calm (586 A). Nothing in the argument prepares for this claim, which feels like a gratuitous insistence on the pleasure of philosophy.' The inconsistency disappears when we note that Socrates nowhere claims that ignorance is painful *per se*. Rather, it is often a painless lack and so the pleasure of learning is not necessarily preceded by pain.

how he understands the pleasures of the philosophical life, but when it comes to the specific question whether these pleasures are associated entirely with the process of acquiring knowledge or may also include pleasures associated with the possession of knowledege, there is unfortunately only limited help to be found in the immediate context of this argument.

A survey of the various references in the surrounding discussion to the sorts of pleasure said to characterize the philosophical life proves to be frustrating. In the description of the discussion between three spokesmen for the three kinds of life, each dedicated to the cultivation of one of the three parts of the soul, Socrates has various ways of describing the pleasures characteristic of the life dedicated to reason: the life of the lover of wisdom, the *philosophos*. Sometimes these expressions point in the direction suggested by the argument thus far, namely that intellectual pleasures are associated with the process of acquiring knowledge, that is to say, with learning. For example, when Socrates imagines the attitude of the other two sorts of people—the profit-lover and the victory-lover—to the philosopher's life, he often puts it emphatically in terms of their attitude to the pleasures of learning (e.g. 581 D 2, 6, *μανθάνειν*; E 1, *μανθάνοντα*). This lends support to the conception of philosophical pleasures as primarily—and perhaps exclusively—the pleasures of coming-to-know special objects. But this manner of expression is not applied consistently. Elsewhere, Socrates is prepared to talk about the pleasures of knowing (582 A 10, *τῆς ἀπὸ τοῦ εἰδέναι ἡδονῆς*) or about the pleasures of contemplating what is (582 C 7–8, *τῆς δὲ τοῦ ὄντος θέας, οἵαν ἡδονὴν ἔχει*).

There are also occasions on which Socrates refers in the same sentence both to the pleasures of learning and also to the pleasure of knowing. For example, at 581 D 9–E 1 he wonders how the philosopher will think of other pleasures in relation to his own preferred intellectual pleasures. He compares the other pleasures with the pleasure 'of knowing how the truth stands' (*τὴν* [sc. *ἡδονὴν*] *τοῦ εἰδέναι τἀληθὲς ὅπῃ ἔχει*) and 'always being in such a state [sc. of pleasure] when learning' (*καὶ ἐν τοιούτῳ τινὶ ἀεὶ εἶναι μανθάνοντα*).[13] It is hard to be sure whether Socrates means in this case to refer

[13] The phrasing echoes an earlier description of the special characteristic of the rational part of the soul, being that 'with which we learn and which quite evidently is entirely focused upon knowing how the truth lies [*πρὸς τὸ εἰδέναι τὴν ἀλήθειαν ὅπῃ ἔχει πᾶν ἀεὶ τέτραται*], and is least of all of them concerned with money and reputation' (581 B 5–8).

to two different kinds of pleasure that the philosopher may experience and to contrast both with the pleasures of the spirit or the appetites, and it is unclear whether the adverb 'always' (ἀεί) is supposed to show that the philosopher is always learning or that he is always experiencing pleasure when he learns. But it certainly suggests that there is pleasure associated with knowing the truth, of having acquired knowledge, whatever it may or may not then claim about that state.[14]

In short, the problem is that much of the argument so far is plausible only on the understanding that pleasure is the replenishing of a desire or lack. On the other hand, Socrates is apparently happy to talk as if there are also pleasures to be had from knowing, rather than learning, the special objects of the philosopher's expertise. To be sure, we might understand ignorance as a state of cognitive lack much as hunger is a state of bodily lack, but if pleasure is associated with the process of making good that lack, there seems no other conclusion possible than that the pleasures of replenishing the soul—exquisite and intense though they may be since they are trained on pure and true objects—will be experienced only while the philosopher is acquiring knowledge. What pleasures can be left for the philosopher once he has the understanding he requires? If pleasure ceases when the process of replenishing ends, then 'the more successful a philosopher is, the sooner his life will cease to be pleasant'.[15] It is essential for the overall political project of the *Republic* that the ruling philosophers take up their role in the possession of a kind of knowledge that makes them experts in the areas relevant for political decision-making. Readers of the *Republic* are familiar with the concern that once they have acquired the required expertise the philosophers may be made to live a worse life by being obliged to give up their intellectual pursuits, descend back into the cave, and rule. The present worry is that the fully fledged philosophers may also be made to live a less pleasant life simply because the ascent out of the cave comes to an end.[16]

[14] For more on this somewhat opaque and contested sentence see below, pp. 17–18 and n. 19.

[15] J. C. B. Gosling and C. C. W. Taylor, *The Greeks on Pleasure* [*Pleasure*] (Oxford, 1982), 122–3.

[16] See also C. C. W. Taylor, 'Platonic Ethics', in S. Everson (ed.), *Ethics* (Cambridge, 1998), 49–76, who objects to Socrates' argument on the grounds that (69) 'no doubt a truth once discovered does not have to be rediscovered, but a meal once eaten does not have to be eaten over again, and an intellectual *life* will require repeated acts

We have already seen that the *Republic* contains a complex and varied story of the affective aspects of intellectual advancement, beyond the arguments concerning pleasure in book 9. And we have seen indications that Socrates wants to say that even the accomplished philosopher's intellectual life would display a similarly complex affective aspect. Such considerations might alleviate some of the worries about the hedonic life of the philosopher-rulers or, less charitably, they might be taken merely to demonstrate a rift between what Socrates evidently wishes to claim about their pleasant lives and the inadequacy of the model of pleasure in *Republic* 9 to support such a claim. It would be far more satisfying if we could construct an account that will allow this expanded sense in which the philosopher, even once he has attained the knowledge required for being a ruler, will continue to live a life characterized by great intellectual pleasures and which also remains consistent with Socrates' explicitly professed account of the nature of those intellectual pleasures in terms of a process of satisfying some kind of cognitive lack. But we are hampered in the construction of such an account by the fact that although Socrates spends rather a lot of time on describing the various epistemological and psychological, not to mention ethical, aspects of someone's progress towards philosophical understanding and the comprehension of the Good itself, what that person's life might be like after that point is left relatively underexplored.[17] Perhaps this is excusable in the sense that Socrates' major task is to persuade us that such an understanding is possible for a human to acquire and that, once properly installed as the rulers of a city, such rulers would set things up so as to be the best they could possibly be. Quite what it would be like to be such a ruler is not such a pressing concern. We are told, of course, that they will desire and endeavour to enact whatever is good and just, and we can extrapolate something about them having no desire for certain things the rest of us might hanker after—money, fame, familiar familial relationships, and the like—but that is about it.

of thought (whether new discoveries or the recapitulation of truths already known) no less than a life of bodily satisfactions will require repeated episodes of bodily pleasure'. See also Gibbs, 'Rhetoric', 28–30; Russell, *Plato on Pleasure*, 128 n. 45.

[17] For a discussion of the various psychological, epistemological, and ethical aspects of dialectic, see M. M. McCabe, 'Is Dialectic as Dialectic Does? The Virtue of Philosophical Conversation', in B. Reis (ed.), *The Virtuous Life in Greek Ethics* (Cambridge, 2006), 70–98.

IV

A recent attempt by Sylvain Delcomminette to resolve the problem seems to me to be ultimately unsatisfactory. Nevertheless, it deserves serious consideration since it points the way to what I think is a more promising solution. Delcomminette's overall interpretation aims to show that for Plato knowing ('connaissance') and learning ('apprentisage') are regularly held to be one and the same, or, perhaps better, that for Plato human knowledge always consists in the regular relearning of previously known things.[18] Delcomminette's principal piece of textual evidence comes from the immediate context of *Republic* 9. He notes the following question from earlier in Socrates' defence of the superior pleasures of the philosopher's life, a question which we have already considered briefly above:

τὸν δὲ φιλόσοφον, ἦν δ' ἐγώ, τί οἰώμεθα τὰς ἄλλας ἡδονὰς νομίζειν πρὸς τὴν τοῦ εἰδέναι τἀληθὲς ὅπῃ ἔχει καὶ ἐν τοιούτῳ τινὶ ἀεὶ εἶναι μανθάνοντα; οὐ πάνυ πόρρω; (581 D 9–E 1)

I said, 'How are we to think the philosopher considers the other pleasures in comparison with that of knowing how the truth is and always being in such a state when learning? Will he not think them greatly deficient?'

Delcomminette argues that Socrates here refers to the 'plaisir de connaître le vrai tel qu'il est et d'être toujours dans un tel état en apprenant' (*Le Philèbe*, 477). If that is indeed how the second half of the sentence must be understood, then it would appear to lend explicit support to his proposal that the philosopher's life is best understood as a kind of 'apprentisage permanent'. He further supports this interpretation by appealing to the *Symposium*'s famous account at 207 E–208 A of human psychological flux, in which Diotima claims that

. . . not only does one branch of knowledge [*ἐπιστήμη*] come to be in us while another passes away and . . . we are never the same even in respect of our knowledge, but . . . each single piece of knowledge has the same fate. For what we call *studying* [*μελετᾶν*] exists because knowledge is leaving us, because forgetting is the departure of knowledge, while studying puts back a fresh memory in place of what went away, thereby preserving a piece of

[18] Delcomminette, *Le Philèbe*, 477: 'En réalité, tant dans la *République* que dans le *Philèbe*, le plaisir pur résulte bien du processus d'apprentissage, mais *en tant précisément qu'il est identique à la connaissance*' (emphasis original).

knowledge, so that it seems to be the same. (Trans. A. Nehamas and P. Woodruff)

I have already noted that the passage at *Republic* 518 D 9–E 1 is not entirely clear in its commitments. The text itself is debated, and it is therefore understandable that different translators render the sentence differently.[19] In that case, it is prudent not to rely heavily on a particular interpretation of a controversial passage. In addition, the reference to the *Symposium*'s notion of psychological flux is not consistent with the most plausible interpretation of the contrast between the pleasures of the body and those of the soul as outlined in *Republic* 9. To make that inconsistency clear, it is necessary to return to the argument we left at 585 B with Socrates having just set out an initial analogy between fillings and emptyings of the body and the soul. With a full account of Socrates' conception of the nature of the philosopher's pleasures, we might then be able to give an informed answer to the question of the pleasures of a philosopher's life after he has come to know the Forms. Socrates continues:

(iv) A filling with what is to a greater degree is more truly a filling than a filling with what is to a lesser degree (*πλήρωσις δὲ ἀληθεστέρα τοῦ ἧττον ἢ τοῦ μᾶλλον ὄντος; δῆλον ὅτι τοῦ μᾶλλον*, 585 B 9–10).[20]

The central difficulty here is in making good sense of the notion of degrees of being and then applying it to the intended analogue of de-

[19] J. Adam (ed. and comm.), *The* Republic *of Plato*, 2 vols. (Cambridge, 1902), devotes appendix III of his commentary on book 9 to the discussion of how to construe these lines and, in particular, whether they contain one or two questions. I have cited them, following Slings's Oxford text, with two questions. Burnet punctuates similarly, bracketing *τῆς ἡδονῆς*, which appears in some manuscripts after *μανθάνοντα*. Adam thinks there is only one question and retains *τῆς ἡδονῆς*, to read: *καὶ ἐν τοιούτῳ τινὶ ἀεὶ εἶναι μανθάνοντα τῆς ἡδονῆς; οὐ πάνυ πόρρω καὶ καλεῖν . . .*, translating: 'compared with that [pleasure] of knowing how the truth stands and always enjoying a kindred sort of pleasure while he learns? Will he not think them very far away and . . .?' Recent translations reflect the difficulty of fixing the precise intended meaning. For example, Griffith's translation has 'the pleasure of knowing where the truth lies and always enjoying some similar sort of pleasure while he is learning it? Won't he regard them as far inferior?'; Grube's translation has '[pleasure] of knowing where the truth lies and always being in some such pleasant condition while learning'.

[20] Literally, the filling with what is is a 'truer' filling. The idea is presumably that filling a body with food is less of a filling than filling a soul with knowledge. J. Annas, *An Introduction to Plato's* Republic [*Introduction*] (Oxford, 1981), 312, complains of an illegitimate slide from 'being filled with what really/truly is' to 'being really/truly filled'.

grees of filling.[21] Socrates himself helps only a little with the first of these problems, since he merely reminds Glaucon in a brisk fashion of a previously agreed distinction between things which share in 'pure being' and those which do not. Even so, there is enough spelt out in these lines for us to be fairly confident about Socrates' view. The general contrast he invokes is between bodily nutrition and the means of caring for the soul (585 D 1–3); the former obviously makes use of food, drink, and the like, while the latter makes use of true opinion, knowledge, understanding, and every virtue (585 C 1–2). The question of degrees or categories of 'what is' is then explained by a contrast between two kinds of filling, their objects, and their proper location, which is spelt out in the next few exchanges between Socrates and Glaucon. The contrast is complex, but worth exploring carefully because it holds the key to the remaining argument. There is both a kind of filling related to what is always the same, what is immortal, and the truth, which is itself of such a kind and comes to be in such a thing, and, in contrast, another which is related to what is never the same, is mortal, is itself of such a kind, and comes to be in such a thing. It emerges, therefore, that there are three variables involved in the complex set of associations which Socrates wishes to use. There are what we might call (*a*) the subject of the filling or thing to be filled, (*b*) the method of filling, and (*c*) the object of filling, viz. whatever is used to fill (*a*).

Learning, for example, is a method of filling which is taken to be a means of seeing to the care of the soul, and knowledge is necessarily related to objects which are changeless and true. Through learning, we fill the soul with knowledge of these changeless and true objects. Eating, on the other hand, is a means of seeing to the care of the body but is related to objects which are changeable and inconsistent. Socrates insists that the character of the kind of filling is determined by the character of its object, so learning itself is of a kind with its objects. He also insists that the kind of filling comes to be in something which is also of such a kind as it and its objects, so knowledge—which is stable and unchanging—comes to be in a

[21] Cf. S. Rosen, *Plato's* Republic*: A Study* (New Haven and London, 2005), 344–6. Annas, *Introduction*, 312–13, is unhappy with this section. She wonders (312) 'how what is changeless can *come about in* what is changeless' and is also concerned because (313) 'it is not clear how this passage should be related to claims elsewhere about the Forms. For the contrast drawn here is not one between Forms and other things, since it has as much application to soul and body as to other things (585 D), and the soul is not a Form.'

soul which is also immortal and, in important ways, unchanging. The fulfilment of the body's needs, in contrast, has as its objects perceptible items, bits of food and so on, is itself only temporary—because it has to be constantly repeated using always new items—and comes to be in something equally temporary and changeable, namely the body.

A chain of explanation is set in place. The important determining factor is the nature of the ultimate object used for the filling in each case. The nature of the object then determines the nature of the filling itself, which must in turn be related to an appropriate subject to be filled. It remains only for Socrates to spell out the distinctions between the two sets of relations and to rank them. Unfortunately, the text of 585 C 8 has been transmitted in a corrupt state, so it is not easy to see how the argument begins.[22] The conclusion, however, at 585 D 1–3 is what we might have expected, namely that the forms of care for the body have a lesser share in being and truth than the forms of care for the soul. And at 585 D 5 it is added that the body differs from the soul in the same way, namely because the body shares less in being and truth than the soul. Something that is always the same shares more in being and truth than something which is not always the same. And if that is the case for the objects of the fillings, then it must also be the case for the fillings themselves.

It should be clear why the thrust of this argument sits poorly with the idea that Socrates here holds the view that the philosopher's soul is in a state of permanent learning of the kind suggested by Diotima at *Symposium* 207 E–208 A. The argument as a whole rests on the assumption that the filling appropriate for the soul is the filling of something that is always alike, immortal, and true with something that shares those characteristics. The central contrast is between the stability and permanence of the filling appropriate to the soul and the impermanence and changeability of the body and the objects in which it takes pleasure. The upshot of this argument in book 9 is that filling a bodily need is less truly a filling than filling a psychic need. The subject being filled (the body), the means of filling (eating), and the items used for the filling (food) are all changeable and inconstant. Hunger is sated only temporarily. The body and the food used to feed it are such that the filling cannot be permanent and is at best only ever partial. As he later comments, those who are try-

[22] Slings ad loc. comments: 'locus desperatus'. See Adam ad loc. and his appendix VI to book 9 for further discussion and for his own preferred solution.

ing to satisfy their bodily desires fail to do so because they are filling something 'which neither is, nor is water-tight, with things which are not' (586 B 3–4). Socrates tellingly compares their state to that of the Danaids of myth, who were condemned to toil fruitlessly trying to fill a leaky vessel by carrying water in a sieve, reusing an image he exploits to good effect in his conversation with Callicles at *Gorgias* 493 A 1–C 7.[23] It would be very surprising—not to say unhelpful to his argument—if Socrates simultaneously holds that the intellectual pleasures he is praising for the stability of their objects and the stability and permanence of the soul which they fulfil in fact also display a similar kind of impermanence. And, what is more, Socrates stipulated back at 485 C–D that a philosophical nature would have to display an excellent memory. It is therefore very unlikely that the kind of psychological fluidity emphasized in the *Symposium* is something we are invited to bring to bear on the understanding of intellectual pleasures in the *Republic*.

As the discussion progresses, there are more reasons offered in support of the view that the intellectual pleasures are thought of as being provoked by a change that has a permanent and stable result and, moreover, that they are associated with that part of us that is also permanent and unchanging. At 585 D 11 ff. Socrates brings all of the complicated discussion about different kinds of filling of different kinds of vessel with different kinds of object finally to bear on the question of pleasure.

(v) Fulfilment by what is appropriate to our nature is pleasant (585 D 11).

(vi) That which is to a greater degree filled really and with things that are generates to a greater degree the enjoyment of true pleasure really and more truly. That which receives things that are to a lesser degree would be filled less truly and securely and would receive more untrustworthy and less true pleasure (585 E 1–5).

Critical attention has focused on (vi), but premiss (v) is undoubtedly just as important. When Socrates considers the pleasures enjoyed by those who are focused on bodily delights, it is

[23] Cf. Gosling and Taylor, *Pleasure*, 128: 'The thought seems to be that a firm lasting container filled with firm lasting contents can truly be said to be filled, whereas when one has a non-stable container and volatile contents it is only in a dubious sense to be called a filling at all: can one fill a hair-sieve with liquid?'; see also C. Bobonich, *Plato's Utopia Recast* (Oxford, 2002), 55–6.

not coincidental that he casts such people and their pleasures in decidedly bestial terms. They are 'like cattle, always looking down and bent over towards the ground, feeding at the table, growing fat, and mounting one another' (586 A 6–7). The metaphor of rutting herd animals continues as these people are described as butting one another with 'iron horns and weapons' (586 B 2). Clearly, Socrates is encouraging us to disown such behaviour as not appropriate to our proper, human and rational, nature. It is a mere bestial nature which such pleasures fulfil, to the extent to which they can fulfil anything at all.[24] The strong implication is that this vignette sketches the state of people who are focused on enjoying the pleasures produced when they try to satisfy the desires of the appetitive part of the soul. They have become misled by these impure and false pleasures and have created for themselves a misinformed conception of the good life. Tragically, the subsequent constant pandering to the desires of the appetitive part of the soul merely compounds their misfortune and further distorts their conceptions of value. Socrates goes on to refer explicitly to the elements familiar from the tripartition of the soul when he turns at 586 C 7 ff. to consider the pleasures of the spirited, money- and victory-loving part of the soul. The discussion of pleasure is, after all, part of a much more extensive discussion of the relative happiness of different character types, an enquiry which has taken up much of this and the previous book and in which Socrates has made extensive use of the three parts of the soul to explain the origin and nature of various kinds of life.[25]

The question of the precise account of our human nature offered by Socrates in the *Republic* is complicated and controversial. But, in general terms, Socrates appears to be committed to an account of our nature which encourages us to identify ourselves, first and foremost, with the rational part of our soul which should take care of the other two parts. That is the overall message of the concluding sections of book 9 and their depiction of a person as composed of a human, a lion, and a many-headed beast (see 589 A–592 B). The fulfilment of the needs of the rational soul is what best fulfils the best part of our nature and produces the most and finest pleasure. (It

[24] Gibbs, 'Rhetoric', 31, cannot be correct in reading this passage as merely rhetorical.

[25] For discussion see Annas, *Introduction*, 294–305; D. Scott, 'Plato's Critique of the Democratic Character', *Phronesis*, 45 (2000), 19–37.

is impossible, at least while the soul is incarnated, to rid ourselves entirely of the desires and associated pleasures of the appetites and of spirit, but they ought at least to be controlled and reined in as far as possible: 571 B–572 B.) Such an identification with the rational part of the soul is necessary for the proper harmony of the soul's parts and also, apparently, for the proper functioning of each individual part of the soul. Certainly, in the coda to this argument which once again surveys the various character types distinguished by the prominence of each one of the three parts of the soul, Socrates notes that in the absence of proper guidance by reason even the pleasures of the spirited or appetitive parts are not maximized. Only the philosophical and just soul, ruled by reason, properly enjoys the pleasures of the appetitive and spirited parts, since only with the guidance of reason will each enjoy 'the best and truest of its own pleasures, in so far as it is possible' (586 E 4–587 A 2). A glutton, for example, will not enjoy the pleasures of the appetite as much as the philosopher, since he is not controlled by reason. Socrates spells out this view in the case of the money- and victory-loving character: his constant irascibility and overwhelming desire for victory prevent the successful satisfaction of his predominant desires (586 C 7–D 2).[26]

Premiss (vi) says very little that has not been explained or, at the very least, discussed already; it adds only the association of pleasure with the degree of fulfilment attained and the kind of object being used for the fulfilment. If we have by now accepted the notion outlined and explained at 585 B 11–C 6 that bodily fulfilment is less a fulfilment than proper intellectual fulfilment, then this new point follows without much trouble. We might still imagine a staunch supporter of the pleasures of eating and drinking objecting that he sees no particular reason to think that his preferred pleasures are any less intense than those of his more intellectually inclined counterpart. And, indeed, perhaps Socrates would agree with him; the problem with bodily pleasures, after all, is that they are based in such violent fluctuations and contrasts between satiety and emptiness that they can mislead people into concentrating on them to the detriment of the health of their souls (586 B 7–C 5). The obstinate hedonist might also claim that his preferred pleasures are no

[26] Cf. Russell, *Plato on Pleasure*, 131–5. Compare also Socrates' diagnosis of the constant futile toils of the tyrannical man, trying desperately to satisfy his uncontrolled and changing appetites: 573 B–581 C.

less truly *pleasures* than the more intellectual varieties. Socrates' response to this objection is not so clear. He describes the pleasures in dispute here not only as mixed with pain but also as 'copies and shadow-pictures' of true pleasure (586 B 7–8).[27] It is not immediately clear what the precise connotations are of such a metaphor, which is evidently meant to resonate with other related passages of general epistemological and metaphysical importance elsewhere in the work. It might be wondered whether Socrates means to say that such 'shadow-pictures' of true pleasure are not really pleasures at all. Alternatively, he might mean only that they are pleasures of a deficient and unsatisfying sort: pale imitations of the rich and developed true intellectual pleasures. It is hard to be sure because, throughout this section of the book, Socrates sets out to distinguish between kinds of pleasure using a variety of criteria without pausing always to make clear their precise significance or the precise connections between them, although they are evidently connected. We hear, for example, about pleasures which are 'pure' (*καθαραί*), 'true' (*ἀληθεῖς*), or 'really' (*ὄντως*) pleasures and those which are not. We are also told that the more 'true' a pleasure is, the more 'real' it is (e.g. 585 C 13), and Socrates is prepared to praise those pleasures whose objects 'share in pure being' (*καθαρᾶς οὐσίας μετέχειν*, 585 B 11). It is unsurprising, therefore, that it is sometimes suggested that in the *Republic* Plato fails to distinguish satisfactorily between claiming that some pleasures are not genuine pleasures at all and that some pleasures, although still pleasant, are 'false' in the sense that their object or the content of the pleasure is somehow false.[28]

That particular problem can be left aside for our present pur-

[27] *ἆρ' οὖν οὐκ ἀνάγκη καὶ ἡδοναῖς συνεῖναι μεμειγμέναις λύπαις, εἰδώλοις τῆς ἀληθοῦς ἡδονῆς καὶ ἐσκιαγραφημέναις*; Compare shadows as an object of *εἰκασία* (509 E–510 A); shadows in the cave (515 A–D); painters as imitators of things that are themselves only *εἴδωλα* (598 A–B); *σκιαγραφία* as a form of deceptive appearance (602 C–D).

[28] See D. Frede, 'Disintegration and Restoration: Pleasure and Pain in Plato's *Philebus*', in R. Kraut (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Plato* (Cambridge, 1992), 425–63 at 435–7; and cf. Gosling and Taylor, *Pleasure*, 107–11 and 126–8. It is also sometimes claimed that the necessary distinction is found more properly articulated in the *Philebus*. (Much discussion of the *Philebus* has concentrated on the proper understanding of the characterization of a pleasure as 'true' or 'false', but on the question of the relationship between the categories of true/false and pure/impure pleasures in that dialogue see Frede, this note, and also J. Cooper, 'Plato's Theory of Human Good in the *Philebus*', *Journal of Philosophy*, 74 (1977), 713–30. Note the close assimilation of the purity and truth of pleasure at *Phileb.* 53 A–C.) There is a good discussion of the 'shadow-pictures' of pleasure of *Republic* 9 in M. M. Erginel,

poses since, whatever we finally decide about the precise nature of these 'shadow-pictures' of true pleasure, we are still faced with the problem of what to say about the hedonic life of the fully fledged philosopher and his true and genuine pleasures. The argument so far, after all, strongly implies that the true pleasure to be had is associated with the *kinēsis* that is learning, filling up the cognitive lack that is ignorance, and that this filling is something which takes place in a stable and everlasting container, uses stable and everlasting objects, and therefore does not have to be repeated. Indeed, the fact that, unlike the bodily pleasures with which it is contrasted, such true pleasure is not in constant need of repetition is one of the reasons why Socrates thinks it is a superior form of pleasure.

There are a number of ways in which Socrates can respond to the concern that the philosophical life will contain great and exquisite pleasures while the philosopher is in the process of acquiring knowledge but, after that point, will seem to have many fewer opportunities for continued enjoyment of those same pleasures. A first general point to bear in mind is that Socrates nowhere promised to show that the philosopher is at every moment of his life experiencing the greatest pleasures; we are not to imagine him in a constant state of intellectual ecstasy. Rather, the *demonstrandum* is that the philosopher's life, taken as a whole, is most pleasant. This lessens the need for us to show that the philosopher is at all times experiencing the greatest pleasures, since we might well agree that the philosopher's life will contain at some point in it the greatest, most true, and purest pleasures.

Second, the life of a fully fledged philosopher will nevertheless contain a great variety of pleasures and, moreover, will contain pleasures which are still superior to those found in any other possible life. Socrates asserts at 586 E 4–587 A 2 that only in the light of the rule of reason in the soul is a person able to experience appetitive and spirited pleasures of the best and truest variety available. Of course, these pleasures are never going to be pure and true in the sense that the intellectual pleasures are, but nevertheless this passage serves as an important reminder that the philosopher will also continue to enjoy the pleasures of eating and so on and, more to the point, we are assured that because of the harmonious arrangement of his soul, free from internal conflict (586 E 5), and the fact that

'Pleasures in *Republic* IX' ['Pleasures'] (Ph.D. diss., University of Texas at Austin, 2004), ch. 2.

therefore his desires are all marshalled and arranged by reason *sub specie boni*, he will be able to do so to the greatest extent possible for any person.[29] In contrast, when one of the other parts of the soul is dominant, it forces its fellow soul-parts to pursue pleasures which are alien to them (587 A 4–6).

This observation remains unsatisfying to the extent that it concerns pleasures that are not related directly to the philosopher's special emphasis on living a life identified with the activities of reason. A philosopher might well take great pleasure from eating his healthy diet, perhaps even more pleasure than the glutton or gourmand take from theirs, because he eats in a way that is ultimately guided by a conception of the good. But that still falls short of the hoped-for account of why a philosophical life remains most pleasant, and Socrates himself seems most interested in locating the superiority of the philosopher's hedonic life in its being related closely to the experience of pleasures that are both true and also—as we have seen—appropriate to our best nature.

Another possibility is that Socrates has in mind a wider conception of intellectual pleasures than just those concerned with Forms.[30] Perhaps the fully qualified philosopher will continue his intellectual development by acquiring various true beliefs, finding out various facts about the world, reading literature or history, even doing some mathematics or revisiting his old harmonic theory textbooks and trying out some new problems. There is some textual support for such a view since at 585 B 11–C 2 Socrates groups not only the pleasures of knowledge and understanding but also true beliefs and generally all virtue against those concerned with food,

[29] This is important additional support for the earlier contention (580 D–583 A) that the philosopher's life is the most pleasant because only he has experienced true and pure intellectual pleasures and, as an expert in all pleasures, he would judge his life to be the most pleasant. C. C. W. Taylor, 'Plato and Aristotle on the Criterion of Real Pleasures', in his *Pleasure, Mind, and Soul: Selected Papers in Ancient Philosophy* (Oxford, 2008), 91–106, does not note this important point and perhaps as a result rejects Socrates' claim that the philosopher excels other types of men in his experience of pleasure. Erginel, 'Pleasures', ch. 3, has a wide-ranging discussion of this argument.

[30] An interpretation of this kind is developed by Erginel, 'Pleasures', ch. 4, which he further supports by relying on a scalar interpretation of the being and truth of various objects of pleasure: there are, in other words, objects that stand between those that are 'always the same, immortal, and the truth' and those that are 'never alike and mortal' (585 C 2–6). In J. Warren, 'Pleasure, Plutarch's *Non posse*, and Plato's *Republic*', forthcoming in *Classical Quarterly*, I argue that Plutarch uses a similarly expanded notion of the pleasures of reason in his criticism of Epicurean hedonism.

drink, and nutrition as a whole. All of the former types, it seems, will produce pleasures that are superior to those of the latter type. This is a further important reminder that the philosopher-ruler will not be a disembodied soul; he will continue to live and take enjoyment in various pursuits and activities beyond the special case of acquiring knowledge of perfect, intelligible, and everlasting Forms. But yet again, the proposed pleasures that are said to characterize the philosopher's life are not obviously of a kind that cannot also be enjoyed by those less fortunate people who cannot be said to live a philosophical life. A rather wide group of people, we might imagine, can come to acquire and perhaps enjoy acquiring true beliefs or a grasp of empirical facts, even if we grant the possibility that such learning would be transformed significantly by a proper grasp of the nature of the good.

V

A better answer can be given if we allow ourselves to work with a richer conception of the workings of the reasoning part of the soul. We have already seen signs in the discussion of the pleasures and pains involved in the philosopher's ascent from the cave that the *Republic* must be using something like the conception of first- and second-order knowledge that Protarchus expresses in more explicit terms in the *Philebus* and that in both cases there is an evident interest in the pleasure and pain to be associated with a kind of reflexive knowledge. My further claim is that the analysis taken from the *Philebus* can be used to alleviate the problem of the philosopher's intellectual pleasures in *Republic* 9 by pointing to a set of pleasures that the philosopher will be able to experience after the point of coming to know the Forms and that are not accessible in any way or to any degree by someone who has not similarly come to know the Forms. It is certainly wrong to say that the philosopher, once he has acquired knowledge of the Forms, will continue to experience the pleasures of that initial and extremely satisfying discovery because he will in one way or another 'forget' what he has learnt. It is hard to square such a proposal with the evident emphasis in *Republic* 9 on the stability and permanence of not only the object of philosophical knowledge but also the rational soul with which that knowledge is acquired, not to mention the insistence that phi-

losophers will have excellent powers of memory (487 A). However, Delcomminette's proposal points in the right direction because it is true that the philosopher's life will continue to be characterized by various changes in the soul that might reasonably be said to be examples of coming-to-know of the sort that would qualify as potential pleasures. We do not, on the other hand, need to posit some kind of constant state of learning and forgetting of any first-order knowledge, since any psychological changes necessary can be restricted to the second-order kinds of knowing.

Protarchus drew our attention to the possibility of there being a second order of reflection on what a person knows and the connections this might have to experiences of pleasure or pain in coming to know something, since it allows a distinction between coming-to-know in some cases in which one does and in other cases in which one does not also know that one does not know that something. There are cases in which this second-order knowledge that one does not know something is coupled with the fact that one previously did know that something, in which case we are right to talk in terms of 'forgetting' or 'remembering'.[31] But this is not true of all cases. There is surely, we might insist, an important distinction between having forgotten something and merely not having to mind something that we still know. That distinction is brought out most forcefully by the fact that in the case of something forgotten but now recognized as necessary to know, the previously held piece of knowledge is not easily remembered. Indeed, the difficulty of remembering that previously held piece of knowledge coupled with the recognized need for it is precisely the combination of factors that would make it plausible to say that the experience is a painful one.

Once again we can turn to the *Philebus* for a more explicit expression of an idea that I want to suggest is relevant to Socrates' claims in *Republic* 9. In his discussion with Protarchus, Socrates articulates a distinction between 'remembering' something that has been forgotten and 'calling to mind' something that has not been forgotten but has simply not been the focus of attention. At 34 B–C he distinguishes between two forms of 'recollection', *anamnēsis*: one in which the soul 'takes up' (*ἀναλαμβάνῃ*, 34 B 8) a memory, which is some-

[31] And there is also the further question whether the person concerned knows *that* he has forgotten, which is a complicated combination of (i) not knowing X, (ii) knowing that he does not know X, and (iii) knowing that he previously did know X.

thing originally experienced together with the body, and another in which the soul unearths or recovers (ἀναπολήσῃ, 34 B 11) a memory which it previously had lost (ἀπολέσασα, 34 B 10) of a perception or a piece of learning. Both, he says, can rightly be called examples of *anamnēsis*, although it is evident that we are not meant to think on this occasion of the special kind of recollection considered in the *Meno* and *Phaedo*: both forms of *anamnēsis* in the *Philebus* deal with perceptions or things learnt during a person's life.[32] This distinction between the two forms is embedded in a longer section that tries to clarify what memory is (33 C–34 C), since Socrates wishes to use the pleasures belonging to memory as an example of pleasures which belong only to the soul and not to the soul and body together. His principal concern, therefore, is to show that even in cases where what is being recalled is something that originally involved the body (a perception or some other kind of experience) the recollection of it involves only the soul. But whatever the other subtleties of the passage, it is reasonable to identify here a recognition on Socrates' part that there is an important difference between the soul remembering something that has been forgotten—that is, a memory that has been lost (33 E 2–4)—and the soul recovering something stored in the memory. Calling a piece of latent knowledge to mind can hardly be called 'learning', of course, nor can it really be called 'remembering'. But the Socrates of the *Philebus* apparently thinks it might still be called a case of *anamnēsis*, and what matters for our purposes is that he does identify a psychological capacity involving the taking up of things stored in the memory.

At this point we might be put in mind of not only Aristotle's discussion of *anamnēsis* in *De memoria* 2, but also his useful distinction between the first and second actualities of knowing. Of course, Aristotle has his own account of how it can be both pleasant to learn and also pleasant to possess and use already learnt knowledge. And that account is in turn related to a more general disagreement between him and Plato on the necessity of thinking of pleasure as a kind of *kinēsis*. That disagreement is already well known and further consideration of it would be a distraction from the main point at hand. Still, it seems that the distinction between two species of *anamnēsis* at *Philebus* 34 B offers something that will do the same job as Aristotle's useful distinction. It provides a distinction between

[32] There is a helpful discussion of this passage in Delcomminette, *Le Philèbe*, 324–30.

the *kinēsis* that is the remembrance of knowledge that has been forgotten and a *kinēsis* that is the bringing to mind of knowledge that has become somehow latent but can be activated at will and without effort when it is found to be necessary.

We can now return to the *Republic*. Philosopher-rulers will not spend all of their time ruling. Indeed, we are told explicitly that for the most part they will be able to spend their time in philosophy (540 A–B). Socrates does not say much about what kind of philosophy a philosopher-ruler will do, nor does he give a detailed account of what a philosopher-ruler will do as he rules, but some of what he does say will allow me to illustrate some of the pleasures which will characterize the fully fledged philosopher-ruler's life. When the philosopher is not ruling but instead doing philosophy, we can assume that either he is acquiring more philosophical knowledge—which is pleasant in an uncontroversial way—or he is reviewing and revisiting philosophical knowledge he already has. The latter activity is neatly characterized as the first kind of *anamnēsis* canvassed in the *Philebus*: the soul takes up something stored in the memory. The philosopher will turn his attention back to this or that Form or consider how the Forms are related to one another. Whatever he does, precisely, it is reasonable to think that it involves a change of a kind in his soul, the bringing to mind of latent knowledge, and is therefore something we can readily classify as an intellectual pleasure. These pleasures are both most plausibly imagined as *kinēseis* and, furthermore, are related directly to his being a philosopher-ruler.

When the philosopher-ruler is actually ruling, although it is evidently not his preferred activity, it too presents opportunities for intellectual pleasures. At 501 B Socrates likens the activity of the philosophers in constructing the ideal city to that of a painter. Just as the painter will work by looking back and forth between his picture and the original that he is attempting to depict, so too the philosophers will turn their attention first to the Forms they are attempting to instantiate as best they can, then to their city, then back to the Form, and so on. Throughout this process they of course *know* what Justice is, for example, but the constant movement back and forth between the model and the original might rightly be said to correspond to a psychological shift of attention from the perceptible construction to the ideal model and back again. They call to mind the original and then, in the light of that, they turn their at-

tention back to the city. And the process goes on, not stopping when the city is complete but also being called into action whenever the philosophers are called to make a judgement about a specific question of the city's affairs.

To borrow the apparatus of Protarchus' observation, we might say that the philosopher-ruler will continue to use his faculty of *logismos* and in doing so call to mind and reconsider various things that he knows both when he is doing philosophy and when he is ruling. He needs to do this not because he has in any reasonable sense of the term *forgotten* the nature of the Just or the Fine but because, although he does know these things, his attention is moving to and from these intelligible objects. It is not at all implausible to imagine that on each occasion when he turns once again to consider, for example, the Just, this will involve a coming-to-know that, while not of the significance of the first time he came to know its nature, will share enough of the characteristics of that first occasion to be thought of as a *kinēsis* that fills a kind of lack in the soul. And, as such, it can be thought of as a true and pure pleasure. Finally, it is a kind of pleasure that is entirely unavailable to anyone who is not a philosopher-ruler.

Corpus Christi College, Cambridge

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