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**Introduction:
The Nature of Pleasantness**

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Introduction

The nature of pleasantness

Specific vs. Generic sense of pleasure

Sometimes we say that pleasure is distinct from joy, happiness, or good mood. Some other times we say the joy, happiness or good mood are types of pleasure. This suggests the existence of two concepts of pleasure: one *specific*, the other *generic*. According to the specific concept, pleasure is one type of positive affects among others. Pleasure is to be distinguished from joy, gladness, contentment, merriment, glee, ecstasy, euphoria, exhilaration, elation, jubilation; happiness, felicity, bliss, well-being; enjoyment, amusement, fun, rejoicing, delectation, enchantment, delight, rapture, relish, thrill; satisfaction, gratification, pride, triumph; good mood, jollity, gaiety, cheerfulness; relief (or at least from some of these concepts).

According to the generic concept of pleasure, a pleasure is any of these positive affects. Joy, gladness, contentment, merriment, glee, ecstasy, euphoria, exhilaration, elation, jubilation, happiness, felicity, bliss, well-being, enjoyment, amusement, fun, rejoicing, delectation, enchantment, delight, rapture, relish, thrill, satisfaction, gratification, pride, triumph, good mood, jollity, gaiety, cheerfulness, relief and pleasure in the specific sense are all species of pleasures. In this thesis, I shall focus on the generic concept of pleasure, in order to address the question “what is the property of pleasantness common to all positive affects?” In order to address this question nevertheless, one need to have at least rough grip on pleasure in the specific sense and on what distinguishes it from other positive affects. I shall therefore start by hinting at the problem of the definition of the specific concept of pleasure.

Specific pleasure as bodily pleasure

One uncontroversial point about the specific concept of pleasure is that it encompasses *bodily pleasures*, such as the pleasure we feel in entering in a hot bath, in being caressed, in stretching one’s limbs, in having an orgasm or in eating a florentine. These are *bodily pleasures* in the sense of being felt as located in some parts of our body. Bodily pleasures are

often taken to be equivalent with *sensory* pleasures, but this is misleading. The pleasure we take in looking at certain photographs is a sensory pleasure, but it is not obviously felt as being located somewhere in our body: where does exactly the photograph pleases us (in our eyes)? Sensory pleasures are pleasures that arise from the use of our senses, by contrast to pleasure that arise from the use of our imagination or understanding for instance. Some of these sensory pleasures may be bodily. This is often (but not always) the case with tactile or gustative pleasures. But some of them can also be non-bodily. This is often (but not always) the case with visual pleasures. The distinction between bodily and non-bodily pleasures on the one hand, and sensory and non-sensory pleasures on the other, are orthogonal. The first one concerns the spatial phenomenology of pleasure. The second one concerns the faculties our pleasures arise from.

Though the idea that specific pleasures include bodily pleasures is uncontroversial, one more disputed issue is whether all specific pleasures are bodily pleasures. Are there also non-bodily specific pleasures? Or do every putative non-bodily pleasures amount to joy, enjoyment or any other positive affect? In order to answer this question, one has to determine which other criteria of distinction can be used among positive affects, apart from the bodily/non-bodily one, in order to catch pleasure in the specific sense.

(1) One first criterion is intensity. Euphoria is a more intense positive affect than gladness. Unfortunately, intensity seems to be of no help if one is to contrast specific pleasure with other positive affects since specific pleasure can be more or less intense. An orgasm is a very intense specific pleasure, while the pleasure that result from blowing in one's cold hands is more moderate.

(2) One second criterion distinguishes between what can be called *transitive* and *non-transitive* affects¹. Some positive affects such as enjoyment, amusement, rejoicing, delectation, enchantment, delight or rapture appears to be directed at an external object: one enjoy *something*, one take delight or rejoice in something, or goes into rapture about something or somebody. Such affect may be called transitive. On the other hand, some other affect appears to be directed at nothing else than themselves or the subject that has them: this might be the case of gladness, contentment, merriment, glee, ecstasy, euphoria, exhilaration, elation, jubilation; happiness, felicity, bliss or well-being. One can be happy, or euphoric without being aware of any object toward which our positive state is directed. Arguably, specific pleasure should be considered as a non-transitive affect. The reason why is that

¹ D. Armstrong (1962) makes a similar distinction between transitive and non-transitive bodily sensations.

bodily pleasure aren't *obviously* directed at something else than themselves. Even if one thinks that bodily pains are directed at bodily damages, there are no obvious analogues for bodily pleasures. How is this transitive/intransitive distinction between positive affects to be understood?

A first strong interpretation is to read it as a distinction between intentional and non-intentional positive affects. Enjoyment would be an intentional state, contrary to ecstasy or specific pleasure. Thus, Duncker (1941) claims that pleasure is a non-intentional phenomena, contrary to joy which is intentional (Duncker also believes that pleasure is a sensory phenomena while joy is a non-sensory one, so that bodily and non-intentional mental states are coextensive²). There are nevertheless reasons to doubt that this is the case. First, such a view implies that there are non-intentional mental states, a view that it would be better to avoid. Second, the difference between transitive and intransitive positive affects doesn't seem to be of real ontological significance: it seems rather to be a matter of "accent". One reason why the distinction shouldn't be taken too seriously is that most of non-transitive affects are sometimes described as being directed at an external object (one can be happy *that* something is the case, to feeling exhilarated *by* something or to take pleasure *in* something); and that many transitive affects are sometimes referred to without any mention of their object. We shouldn't take this to imply that there is no distinction between transitive and non-transitive affect nevertheless.

A better proposal is to claim that while both types of affect are intentional (=are directed toward an object beyond themselves), in transitive affects, the attention is typically directed outward (= toward the intentional object) while in non-transitive affects, the attention is typically directed inward (=toward the intentional act). Transitive affects are usually transparent to the attention: the attention goes directly to the intentional objects of those affects. So a plausible claim is that in specific pleasure the attention usually focus on the intentional act, while in joy or other transitive affects the attention focuses on the intentional object.

(3) A third criterion of distinction among the positive affects contrasts occurrent affects, with dispositional ones. Good mood, jollity, gaiety, cheerfulness appear to be dispositions to react positively various stimuli: one feel well-disposed. On the other hand,

² Note that the sense in which Duncker uses « intentional » is quite peculiar. For him, intentionality doesn't refer to a mental act being directed at an object distinct from itself, but to a mental act directed at an object *external to the subject of the mental act*. In Duncker's use of « intentional », there is no room for intentionality whose object is internal to the subject: to take pleasure in a sensation isn't, according to him, an intentional phenomena.

pleasure in the specific sense, joy, gladness, contentment, merriment, glee, ecstasy, euphoria, exhilaration, elation, jubilation, enjoyment, amusement, fun, rejoicing, delectation, enchantment, delight, rapture, relish, thrill, satisfaction, gratification, pride, triumph appear to be occurrent states.

(4) A fourth criterion contrasts long-term states, with short-term episodes. Happiness, felicity, bliss, well-being are typically long-term states, contrary to pleasure in the specific sense, and other positive affects such as ecstasy, euphoria, jubilation or enjoyment. Note nevertheless that some people deny that there is any significant distinction between pleasure and happiness. Eudaimonist conceptions of pleasure reduce pleasure to happiness (David, 1982). Hedonic conceptions of happiness, on the opposite, reduce happiness to sum of pleasures (F. Feldman, 2006). Haybron (2002) argues against both kinds of reductionism and claims that pleasure and happiness are indeed two primitive types of affective phenomena.

If these remarks are true, specific pleasures are (2) salient to the attention (3) occurrent and (4) short-term. In order to determine whether all specific pleasures are bodily pleasures, one can wonder whether there are non-bodily positive affects that exemplify those four properties. Plausibly, though many intellectual positive affects are occurrent, short-term and evaluative, none of them are salient to the attention, in the sense of eclipsing their object. It seems hard to imagine a case of intellectual (specific) pleasure where the pleasant object isn't consciously represented³. By contrast, what can one easily conceive of an intense pleasure in a part of our body without any awareness of the pleasant object. This suggests that pleasures in the specific sense can be equated with bodily pleasures. Though this would require further justification, I shall assume in the following that the specific concept of pleasure amounts to the concept of bodily pleasures, that is, pleasure that are felt to be located in our body.

If so, the distinction between the specific sense and the generic sense of pleasure can be spelt out as follows: in a restricted sense, pleasure refers to bodily pleasure only. In a more generic sense, bodily pleasures are only one kind of pleasure among others. There are also non-bodily pleasures, pleasures that aren't exhausted by bodily sensations. This is this generic sense of pleasure that shall interest us in the following. I shall from now on use the term pleasure in the generic sense: a pleasure is a positive affect, whatever it is.

³ To say that we « feel good » is one possible counterexample, but it is not clear that the expression refers to an occurrent state rather than a dispositional one.

Pleasantness as the essential property of generic pleasures

Whatever the right definition of specific pleasure, there is also a generic concept of pleasure that encompass every positive affects. The main difficulty, relatively to generic pleasure is to understand what *unifies* it, that is, how are we to account for the property of pleasantness shared by all positive affects?

This is the problem of explaining why generic pleasures constitute a natural class. Why does the list “joy, happiness, good mood, rapture, enjoyment, well-being, delight, contentment, ecstasy, satisfaction euphoria, enjoyment, bliss, pride, enchantment” sounds natural (non arbitrary)? In virtue of what do we include “joy” in this list, but not “sadness”, “shame”, “boredom”, “indifference”, “perception”, “desire” or “belief”? What makes the following examples instances of pleasure, despite their diversity: looking at a beautiful photograph, entering in a hot bath, playing badminton, winning the game, looking for the answer of a mathematical problem, finding the answer, feeling proud, laughing, feeling a pain decreasing, making love, having an orgasm, eating chocolate, being complimented, enjoying a movie count as pleasures?

We may call this problem of explaining what all diverse (generic) pleasures have in common the problem of the unity of pleasure. This is the problem I shall be interested in this thesis.

I shall call *pleasantness*, whatever it is, the property that all pleasures have in common. Pleasantness is the property in virtue of which all the items in this list count as pleasure. If something is a pleasure, it is a pleasure in virtue of exemplifying pleasantness. Since pleasantness is the property shared by all positive affects, pleasantness is just another name for the positive element in positive affects, what I shall call their positive hedonic valence. Pleasantness (or positive hedonic valence), is the unifying property of pleasures (or positive affects). I shall therefore admit the following definition:

D1 x is a pleasure $=_{df}$ x is pleasant

Such a definition may seem controversial. It assumes that exemplifying pleasantness is necessary and sufficient in order to be a pleasure. The problem comes from sufficiency: one may object that certain things are pleasant but aren't pleasures: a pleasant journey. The answer to this worry is, I submit, that “pleasant” is ambiguous. A journey, a story or a

situation are not pleasant in the same sense than a sensation, a feeling or an emotion are. “Pleasant” apply either to the object of our mental states, or to the mental states themselves. One should distinguish therefore between an *objectual* and an *mental* sense of “pleasant”. Here I shall use the term in the mental sense: only mental states can be pleasant. Journeys, movies or evenings are pleasant in another sense, the objectual one.

A further thesis, that isn’t needed here though, is to claim that “pleasant” in the mental sense is more fundamental than “pleasant” in the objectual sense. According to this thesis, journeys, movies and evenings are pleasant only in a derived sense, because they are the objects of our pleasant states in the mental sense. The mental sense would be the most literal and strict one. If some objects are pleasant, this is because they are the object of some pleasant mental states. This amounts to say that objectual pleasantness is never an intrinsic property of the object: it depends on it being the object of a mental act. Though this sounds plausible to me, I don’t need to commit myself to such a priority thesis of mental pleasantness over objectual one. The only points here are that those two senses should be distinguished and that the above definition (D1) relies on the mental sense.

Pleasantness and its opposites.

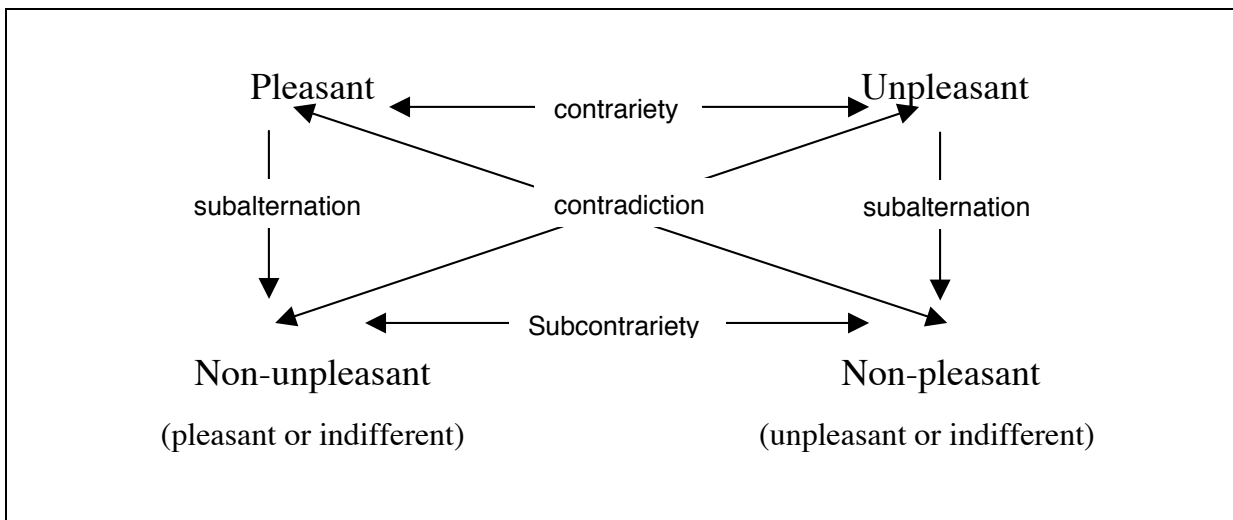
Pleasures are therefore those mental states that exemplify the property of pleasantness, that is, of positive valence, however we construe it. The antonym (polar opposite) of pleasure is sometimes held to be pain. Nevertheless, since pain is often restricted to bodily sensation, pain is better construed as the antonym of bodily pleasure that is, of pleasure in the specific sense. The antonym of pleasure in the generic sense is better called displeasure. S. Rachels (2004) argues that “unpleasure” should be preferred to “displeasure” because “displeasure” connotes disapproval. But unpleasure has also a restricted sense, connoted by psychoanalysis. And more importantly “un-” is basically a privative prefix, while “dis-” expresses contrariety. Therefore it seems to me that the word “displeasure” is a lesser evil in order to designate the antonym of pleasure.

Following Hamilton (vol. 2, p. 436-437), the relations between pleasure and its opposites go as follows (Hamilton uses pain instead of displeasure):

Pleasure and pain are opposed to each other as contraries, not as contradictories, that is, the affirmation of the one implies the negation of the other, but the negation of the

one does not infer the affirmation of the other; for there may be a third or intermediate state, which is neither one of pleasure nor of pain but one of indifference.

We get the following “hedonic square” :



Note first that while the essential property of pleasure is pleasantness, the essential property of displeasure is called unpleasantness (which may be a further argument in favour of Rachel’s terminological choice). This is somewhat unfortunate because “un-” being privative, “unpleasant” may also mean “non-pleasant”. “Dis-” is here again a better prefix that always expresses contrariety, but unfortunately the words “displeasant” and “displeasantness” don’t exist.

Second, displeasure is not the only contrary of pleasure: presumably, pleasure has also contraries of the same sign. For instance, an experience cannot be both extremely and moderately pleasant (just as the same water cannot be both extremely hot and warm at the

same time). Nevertheless, displeasure is the only *antonym*, or *polar opposite* of pleasure: displeasure is the only contrary of pleasure that is of opposite sign.

Some definitions of pleasantness

To say that pleasantness is the essential property of pleasure doesn't commit us to any particular view of pleasantness (except to the view that pleasantness is a property of mental states). Here are some of the main definitions of pleasantness, all of them being compatible with the view that pleasantness is the unifying property of pleasures (where x is always a mental state). In order to answer the problem of the unity of pleasures, one has to endorse one of those definitions of pleasantness (or another one) or a conjunction of them.

D2 x is pleasant =_{df} x exemplifies a primitive phenomenological property, the *hedonic tone*. The unifying property of all positive affects is unanalysable and phenomenological. (C.D. Broad, 1930 ; M. Schlick, 1939; Duncker, 1941 ; Penelhum, 1975 ; I. Goldstein, M. Aydede, 2001 ; I. Johansson, 2001.)

Remorse, which is memory of certain events, having a certain emotional tone, is plainly a pain as much as toothache. And hope, which is expectation of certain events, having a certain emotional tone, is plainly as much a pleasure as the sensation of smell which we get from a rose or a violet. C.D. Broad, 1930 : 230.

D3 x is pleasant =_{df} x exemplifies a primitive *hedonic value*. The unifying property of all positive affects is unanalysable and axiological.

D4 x is pleasant =_{df} x is a primitive attitude of *taking pleasure in*. The unifying property of all positive affects is unanalysable, it is a primitive mode of intentional reference. (Brentano, Olson, Bengtsson, to appear)

To feel pleasure or delight is an emotional act, a taking pleasure or a loving; it always has an object, is necessarily a pleasure in something which we perceive or imagine, have an idea of. For example, sensual pleasure has a certain localised sense quality as its object. (Brentano, 1973, p. 164).

D5 x is pleasant =_{df} x is the perception/intuition of a positive value. The unifying feature of all positive affects is analysable in terms of their intentional object. (Descartes, Malebranche, Spinoza, Leibniz, Wolff⁴)

All our pleasure is nothing more than the consciousness of some one or other of our perfections” Descartes, Lettre à Elisabeth⁵

D6 x is pleasant =_{df} x is liked. The unifying property of all positive affects is analysable in terms of their being the object of a certain attitude (liking).

The unpleasantness of pain sensations consists in their being disliked (R.J. Hall, 1989: 646)⁶

D7 x is pleasant =_{df} if x is desired. The unifying property of all positive affects is analysable in terms of their being the object of a certain attitude (desire)⁷.

We have identified the generic class of « pleasure » as the set of all feelings we desire or wish to sustain or cultivate, and the generic class of « pain » as the set of all feelings we wish or desire to eliminate and avoid (R.B. Edwards, 1979 : 92-3).

D8 x is pleasant =_{df} x represents a desire as satisfied. The unifying property of all positive affects is analysable in terms satisfaction of desire. (Stewart, Hume, Hamilton, Green, von Hartmann, Natorp, Scheler McDougall, 1923, 1928 1936 ; Allen, 1930, Sigdwick, 1930 , D.M. Armstrong, 1968 ; R. Roberts, 2003 ; T. Schroeder, 2004)

To be pleased is (at least) to represent a net increase in desire satisfaction ; to be displeased is to represent a net decrease in desire

⁴ see Hamilton, Vol II, Lect. XLIII, p. 460 ff. for a presentation of the difference between their views.

⁵ Also quoted by Hamilton, Lecture XLIII, p. 460. Hamilton answers to this suggestion as follows :

Pleasure is a feeling, and a feeling is a merely subjective state, that is, a state which has no reference to anything beyond itself, — which exists only as we are conscious of its existence. Now, then, the perfection or imperfection of an object, considered in itself, and as out of relation to our subjective states, is thought, — is judged, but is not felt ; and this judgment is not pleasure or pain, but approbation or disapprobation, that is, an act of the cognitive faculties, but not an affection of the capacities of feeling. In this point of view, therefore, the definition of pleasure, as the cognition of a any sort of perfection, is erroneous. », Vol II, Lecture XLIII, p. 463

⁶ see also C.D. Broad (1930 : 234 ff.): « this experience of mine is pleasant » means « I like this experience for its non-hedonic qualities ». Also quoted by Rachels (2000).

⁷ S. Rachels (2000) clearly distinguishes between D6 and D7 which are sometimes mixed up.

satisfaction. Intensity of pleasure or displeasure represents degree of change in desire satisfaction. (Schroeder, 2004 : 90)

D9 x is pleasant =_{df} x is the unimpeded exercise of an activity. (Aristotle, Du Bos, Pouilly, Sulzer⁸)

D10 x is pleasant =_{df} x is the absence or end of pain. (Plato, *Philèbe*; J. Locke , Genovesi, Verri⁹, Kant, Von Frey 1894¹⁰)

I shall defend D3, the view that pleasantness is a basic kind of value. But let us first have a look on the different ways those definitions can be classified. A first distinction contrasts conative views of pleasure with non-conative ones. A second distinction contrasts primitivist views of pleasure with reductionist ones. A third distinction contrasts realist views of pleasure with anti-realist ones. Let us review those three distinctions in turn.

Primitivist vs. Reductionist views of pleasantness

A first distinction contrasts primitivist views of pleasure with non-primitivist ones. According to primitivism about pleasure (D2, D3, D4) pleasantness is an unanalysable simple property (phenomenological, axiological or intentional). Non-primitivist views of pleasantness consider it as a complex, analysable property. D10, the view that pleasantness is the absence or end of an pain, deserves special attention here. In a sense, it is a reductionist view of pleasantness, since it defines pleasantness in terms of pain. But in another, it is a primitivist view insofar as it takes pain, which is an affective phenomenon, to be primitive. One may say that D10 is a form of hedonic reductionism but a form algedonic primitivism (“hedonic” being relative to pleasure only, “algedonic” being relative to both pleasure or displeasure)¹¹.

⁸ See Hamilton, Vol. II, Lect XLIII p. 465 for references.

⁹ Genovesi and Verri are mentioned by Hamilton, Vol. II, Lect XLIII, p. 471.

¹⁰ Quoted by Titchener, 1908: 82

¹¹ Of course, D10 can only be a form of algedonic primitivism if pain itself is taken to be unanalysable. This is not the case, for instance in Kant. Kant (*Anthropologie d'un point de vue pragmatique*) defines pleasure the absence of pain, and pain as the feeling of the hindrance of life. That is, Kant assumes a definition of pain close to D8 (desire's satisfactionism) or D9 (pain as impeded activity).

Note that reductionism here refers to some kind of “horizontal” reduction rather than to “vertical” reduction. What is at stake is the reduction of pleasure to other kinds of mental states, and not the reduction of pleasure to physical or biological processes. One important *rationale* for reductionism is the common bipartition of psychological states into cognitions and conations (beliefs and desires for instances). This distinction may appear to be exhaustive insofar as we take the notion *direction of fit* as the basic criterion for distinguishing types of mental states and admit that there are only two direction of fit: the mind-to-world direction of cognitions ; the world-to-mind direction of conations. *Prima facie*, pleasure and displeasure aren’t obviously cognitions, conations, nor mixes of the two. This is one reason why reductionist views of pleasantness are interesting. Despite the recentness of the expression « direction of fit » (which is due to E. Anscombe and was popularized by J. Searle), the concept itself, and the problem it raises for the definition of pleasantness was seen before. Here is a quotation of Krug (given by Hamilton, [ref](#)) which clearly express this worry:

The powers of cognition and the powers of conation are, in propriety, to be regarded as two different fundamental powers, only because the operation of our mind exhibits a twofold direction of its whole activity, —one inwards, another outwards; ...

Now this activity of feeling must necessarily have either a direction inwards, or a direction outwards, or both directions at once, or finally neither of the two, that is, no direction at all; for apart from the directions inwards and outwards, there is no direction conceivable. But, in the first case, the activity of feeling would not be different from the cognitive activity, at least not essentially; in the second case there is nothing but a certain appetency manifested under the form of a feeling; in the third, the activity of feeling would be only a combination of theoretical and practical activity; consequently, there remains only the supposition that I has no direction. We confess, however, that an hypothetical activity of such a kind we connate imagine to ourselves as a real activity.

One important advantage of the reductionist definitions of pleasantness is their ability to answer Krug’s worry. I shall argue nevertheless in favour of a form of primitivism, which implies that pleasantness has no direction of fit¹². If so, we face the following dilemma: either intentionality isn’t the mark of the mental (there are mental states without any direction of fit) or pleasantness isn’t a mental property. I shall defend the second answer: pleasantness is a

¹² The implication from primitivism (non-reducibility to cognition or conation) to the non-intentionality of pleasantness may sounds odd regarding D4 (the view that pleasantness is basically an intentional attitude of taking pleasure in). I shall argue latter that the implication is true, and that it is D4 which is inconsistent in this respect.

basic kind of value. Though it is exemplified only by mental states, it is not itself a mental property, but an axiological one.

Conative vs. non-conative views of pleasantness

A second distinction contrasts conative and non-conative views of pleasure. Conative views of pleasure analyse pleasure in terms of conations, such as desire. D7 and D8 are the two main ones, as well shall see. But we should note that the Aristotelian definition of pleasure in terms of unimpeded activity (D9), when activity is analysed with the help of some conation (volition, striving, trying...), may also count as a conative view.

Conative view of pleasantness are a sub-types of reductionist view of pleasantness. They inherit the advantages of these view, namely they fit with the bipartition of the mind into cognitions and conations. One further advantage of the conative view of pleasantness is that they give a straightforward explanation of the connexion between pleasure and motivation. While the views that define pleasure as an object of desire (D7) are committed to some form of psychological hedonism (the view that every conation as pleasure for its object), the views that define pleasure as a satisfaction of desire (D8) are often committed to the opposite view that pleasure is only a by-product of our conations, but not their aim.

Realist vs. Anti-realist views of pleasantness

Realism about x is often defined in terms of x existing independently of the mind. Such a definition raises two difficulties if one wishes to make sense of pleasure realism. (i) First pleasantness has been defined as a property of mental states exclusively. (ii) Second, pleasantness is often claimed to be necessarily conscious. Both contentions appear to imply that pleasantness is essentially mind-dependent. I shall argue that this isn't the case.

(i) Does the fact that pleasantness is an exclusive property of mental states entails anti-realism about pleasantness? Such an impression follows from a too rough definition of realism. Realism, correctly defined, is not (only) the claim that x exist independently of the mind, but rather the claim that x exists independently of the mental act that takes x for its object. Independence of the mind means indeed independence from being (re)presented by the mind. Pleasantness, in many of the definitions above, is indeed dependent of the mind, but it isn't dependent on it being (re)presented by the mind, that is, on it being the object of a mental act. The only two definitions that are clearly anti-realist then are D6 (pleasant = being

like) and D7 (pleasant = being desired). None of the other definitions explicitly claims that pleasantness is dependent on a mental state whose it is the object: they are therefore realists definitions of pleasure.

Incidentally, it is sometimes claimed that definitions of realism in terms of mind-independence cannot make room for realism about mental states. The very same answer can be given to such a worry: a mental states is real if and only if it is existentially independent of any other (second order) mental state whose it would be the object¹³. The only way to be anti-realist about everything then, it to engage either into an infinite regress and to claim that every mental states that exist, is the object of a second order mental state, which is in turn the object of a third order mental state...; or into a circularity regress and to claim that every mental states that exists is the object of another mental state, which is also the object of the first mental state.

(ii) The second objection to the possibility of pleasure realism is the following: if pleasure is necessarily conscious, then pleasure appear to be existentially dependent on an act of consciousness whose it is the object, and therefore, pleasure anti-realism is the only possible option.

A first and straightforward answer to it is to deny that pleasure is necessarily conscious. Nevertheless, for the sake of the argument, I shall try to answer the objection while granting that premise.

A second answer is to claim that “*x* is conscious” does not amount to “*x* is the object of *another* act of consciousness”. To claim to pleasantness is conscious, rather, would be to claim that pleasantness is reflectively conscious: it is not conscious in virtue of being the object of another, second order, mental act. It is only conscious of itself, it is its own object. If this true, then a slight revision of the definition of realism can ensure the possibility of pleasure realism: one can claim that in order for *x* to be real, *x* as to be dependent of a mental state *distinct from itself*, that takes it for its object. If pleasure is necessarily conscious, this is not, according to the present hypothesis, in virtue of it being the object of another mental act, but in virtue of being sui-referential. Therefore, pleasure realism can be a viable option.

Such a self-reflective view of pleasantness nevertheless is controversial. First, it is not clear how a same property of pleasantness can be at once what any one of the above definitions claims that it is and an intentional property making reference to itself. These are, for instance, two very different things to be a value (D3) and to be self-conscious. How a

¹³ This idea is put forward by J.Heil, 2003 : 58-59.

single property of pleasantness could achieve those two tasks remain mysterious. Second, circularity, or self-reflexivity, has many of the appearances of a *deus ex machina*, a queer and *ad hoc* property in order regression problems. Third, self-reflexivity of pleasantness is plausibly committed to the Cartesian view that consciousness of pleasantness is infallible. But to claim that every pleasure is conscious is clearly different from claiming that every consciousness of pleasure is veridical. One can, for instance, be conscious of a pleasure, but not in the right way (to take it for more intense than it is for instance); or one can have the impression that one is pleased, even if it is not the case. Such possibilities shouldn't at least be dismissed right away, from the mere claim that every pleasure is conscious.

The third and right answer, I submit, in order to make pleasure realism compatible with the claim that every pleasure is conscious is the following one. The reason why pleasure is necessarily conscious might not lie in the nature of pleasantness, but in the nature of consciousness. After all, none of the above definitions of pleasantness mentions consciousness. Consciousness, on the other hand, may be essentially pleasure-attracted. In other words, what grounds the fact that all pleasures are conscious, if it is a fact, may be an essential property of consciousness, not an essential property of pleasure. If so, pleasure is necessarily conscious not because it is what it is, but because consciousness is what it is. This suggests that pleasure realism can be true even if all pleasures are the objects of consciousness.

This answer relies on the idea that the fact that x (pleasantness) cannot exist without y (consciousness) isn't sufficient for having an existential dependence between x and y . Existential dependence shouldn't be defined in modal terms. The general problem with the modal approach of existential independence is that it registers only the fact that in each world where x exists, y exists, but it remains silent about the source of such a modal correlation. The correlation may be due to the nature of x , but it may as well be due to the nature of y . We wish to exclude the latter case. Let us take an example from the domain of perception. Suppose that God exists, that he is a necessary being, that he sees everything, that he created the world and its laws a long time ago, and that he no more intervenes in it except for sporadic miracles.



According to the modal notion of independence, the world then existentially depends on the perception of God: no objects are real since nothing could possibly exist without his perception¹⁴. Therefore, the mere existence of an all-knowing God undermines realism. But this is strongly counter-intuitive: for even if the world can't exist without being perceived by God, this is not *because* God perceives it that the world exists. The world appears to follow its course independently of any perception of God. God's perceptions are here incidental relatively to ontological status of the world. Yet the Modal view of Independence implies that they determine its reality. So the Modal view of Independence appears to be false: possibly existing unperceived is a sufficient, but not a necessary condition for existential independence. In the same way, pleasure need not to possibly exist unconsciously in order to be real.

If the modal account of existential is wrong, what positive account of existential independence can we use in order to define realism? K. Fine (1995) and J. Lowe (1998) have proposed to define existential dependence with the help of the notion of the identity (or

¹⁴ I've adapted the God example proposed by P. Simons (1987: 295) to the case of perception. For more detailed critics of the modal conception of dependence, see Fine 1994, 1995; Lowe 1998, chap. 6; Correia, 2005. Jenkins (xxx) applies this critic to the definition of realism.

essence) of an object¹⁵. The notion of essence is taken to be modally irreducible: the essence of a thing is what makes it what it is, its real definition (Fine, 1994). Every essential property is a necessary property but not every necessary property is essential. To take an example from Fine, it is necessary that Socrates is distinct from the Eiffel Tower, but this is not essential to him. In the same way, it is necessary that if I exist, then $2+2 = 4$, but I'm not essentially dependent on $2+2 = 4$. The idea is then that x depends on y if and only if the existence of x necessarily implies the existence of y *in virtue of the identity of x* . In other words, the source of the dependence must rely in the dependent object in order to avoid the conclusion that everything is dependent on necessary beings (God, the number 2). This solves the problem of the all-seeing God: it is true that the world can't exist without being perceived by God, but *this is not true in virtue of the nature of the world*. What the world is doesn't necessitate that God perceives it (though it may necessitate that God created it). We arrive at the following essential definition of independence:

(EI) x is real iff it is not true in virtue of the identity of x (=it is not part of the essence of x) that x exists only if the object of a mental act.

The mind-independence of x is compatible with its being necessarily conscious. F. Correia (2005) has recently given another definition of dependence in terms of *ground*, which avoids the reference to essences or natures while still excluding the trivial dependence on necessary beings. According to him, x depends on y iff "y's existing helps makes x exist." That is, an entity existentially depends on another when its existence is *explained* (in an objective sense) or *grounded* in the existence of the other. Then mind-independence can be defined as follows:

(R) x is real iff its existence is not grounded in its being the object of a mental act.

There are important differences between EI and FI but they don't seem to be crucial for our problem of realism about pleasantness. In both cases, realism about pleasantness is

¹⁵ In fact their focus is wider since it includes every kind of dependence, not only existential ones. Lowe even claims that a purely essential dependence entails existential one, which is rejected by Correia (2005, 2.5.)

compatible with the fact that pleasantness is necessarily conscious (or the object of any other mental act).

One apparent way to be anti-realist about pleasantness, is to claim that the consciousness of it modifies it. Such a claim has often been endorsed concerning attention. Titchener thought that one essential feature of pleasantness and unpleasantness, was their lack of clearness. By this he means that pleasantness can't be attended to without being destroyed:

Attention to an affection is impossible. If it is attempted, the pleasantness or unpleasantness at once eludes us and disappears, and we find ourselves attending to some obtrusive sensation or idea that we had not the slightest desire to observe (Titchener, 1908: 69).

He quotes a close passage of Külpe:

While pleasure and pain are brought far more vividly to consciousness by the concentration of attention upon their concomitant sensations, they disappear entirely when we succeed (and we can succeed only for a moment) in making the feeling as such the object of attentive observation. (Külpe, quoted by Titchener, 1908: 71).

But here again, it is not clear that such remarks can't be accounted for in a realist view of pleasantness. Maybe the reason why pleasantness disappears when attended to lies in the power of attention, not in the essence of pleasantness. Charland (2005) has recently proposed a clear defence of pleasantness anti-realism. According to him, pleasantness (or hedonic valence) is not an intrinsic property of affect, but depends on the attentional mechanisms directed at those affects. A same affects isn't by itself positive or negative: its polarity depends on the way we attend to it. Such a view is clearly anti-realist about pleasantness: pleasantness essentially dependent on an attentional act directed at it.

As a conclusion, pleasantness realism is a possible option. The axiological view of pleasantness is a form of hedonic realism: hedonic doesn't existentially depend on their being represented.

Scepticism about pleasantness: is pleasantness a natural property?

By raising the question of the unity of generic pleasures, I assume that pleasantness is a natural property. That is, it is assumed that all pleasant states share a same property of pleasantness, or at least resemble each other to some degree with respect to pleasantness. This assumption is controversial though. One may subsume under "pleasantness" a heterogeneous class of phenomena. There may be different types of pleasantnesses, so that

“pleasantness” refers only to a disjunction of miscellaneous phenomena. Note that the idea here is not (only) that there are different types of positive affects (=different type of generic pleasures) but (mainly) that there are different ways for affects to be positive (=different types of pleasantnesses). We may call *disjunctive views of pleasantness*, the definitions that take the following general form:

x is pleasant_{df} x is F or x is G or... (where F and G refers to any pleasant mental phenomena).

The most extreme disjunctive view of pleasantness will include in the disjunction each of the positive affect, so that to say that x is pleasant is only to say that x is joy, or x is bodily pleasure, or x is gladness, or x is felicity, and so on. No attempt is made at all to unify this different phenomena.

Moderate disjunctive views of pleasantness are more interesting. Though they all agree that there are at least two disjointed forms of pleasantness they nevertheless strive to limit the number of disjuncts by reducing some pleasures to others.

A first moderate disjunctive view of pleasure that is worth mentioning is the one defended by Perry (1967). According to him, a pleasure is either something that one enjoys, or something that one is pleased about.

D11 x is pleasant_{df} x is the object of *enjoyment*, or x is the object of *being pleased by*.

The main difference between those two attitudes, Perry argues, is that enjoyment isn't an evaluative attitude, while being pleased by entails that one believes or judges that the object of one's pleasure is valuable. One can enjoy a movie without believing it has any positive value, but what pleases us is always attributed a positive value. Perry then writes:

“No general definition of pleasure will be attempted, for even though the notions of enjoyment and being pleased about can both be expressed by the same forms of words containing the term “pleasure” they are radically different concepts. (1967: 192)

But the two principal versions of moderate disjunctive view of pleasantness come from considerations concerning the specific place of bodily sensations in a theory of generic

pleasures. One first common account is to reduce the pleasantness of positive affect to the pleasantness of the bodily sensations it is correlated with. This account still makes pleasantness a disjunctive property because while the pleasantness of bodily sensation is taken to be primitive, the pleasantness of other positive affect is analysable in terms of their correlation with primitively pleasant bodily sensation:

D12 x is pleasant_{df} x is a pleasant bodily sensation or x is correlated with some pleasant bodily sensations (A. Bain, W. James, Lange, L. B., Hoisington, G.E. Moore, R. Chisholm, 1986: 17-32; A. Damasio, 1994)

In mere tender emotion not sexual, there is nothing but the sense of touch to gratify, unless we assume the occult magnetic influences. ... In a word, our love pleasures begin and end with sensual contact. Touch is both the alpha and omega of affection. As the terminal and satisfying sensation, the *ne plus ultra*, it must be a pleasure of the highest degree. A. Bain¹⁶.

Note that the type of correlation involved varies in the different theories. One can maintain that the mere *association* of a mental attitude with hedonic bodily feeling is sufficient. But one may require, as Chisholm does that the mental attitude *causes* the bodily feelings. (Feldman, 1997, and Chisholm, 1986, attribute this view to Brentano, but Olson convincingly argues that Brentano's view was close to the attitudinal view of D4).

The second principal moderate disjunctive of pleasantness is in a sense opposed to this one. While bodily feelings are taken in D12 to be the basic hedonic phenomena, in terms of which the pleasantness of intellectual acts should be analysed, the next definition takes the attitude of taking pleasure in to be fundamental:

D13 x is pleasant_{df} x is a primitive attitude of *taking pleasure in* (D4) or x is a pleasant bodily sensation.

According to this definition, there would be two fundamentally different types of pleasures: the ones being intentional, the other being non-intentional. Such a difference between intentional and non-intentional pleasures was first noted by Husserl (RL, V, II, §15). Sensory pleasures, he claims, are closer to sensory content (he also uses the term

¹⁶ Bain, quoted by James, Principles, vol 2, footnote, p. 551.

“sensations”) such as redness or hardness than to intentional acts such as judgments or volitions. On the other hand many pleasures are clearly intentional: the pleasure we take in hearing a melody for instance. This suggests the existence of two strongly heterogeneous types of pleasures:

But we are led to doubt, then, whether two such sorts of ‘feelings’ really form a single class. We spoke previously of ‘feelings’ of liking and dislike, of approval and disapproval, of valuation and devaluation — experiences obviously akin to theoretical acts of assent and rejection, of taking something to be probable or improbable, or to deliberative acts of judgmental or voluntary decision etc. Here we have a *kind*, a plain unity of essence, which included nothing but acts, where such sensations of pain and pleasure have no place: descriptively the latter belong, in virtue of their specific essence, among tactual, gustatory, olfactory and other sensations. Being at best presentative contents of objects of intention, but not themselves intentions, they manifest descriptive differences so essential, that we cannot seriously believe in the unity of a genuine class. (RL, V, II, §15, p. 573).

C. Stumpf (1907), defends a close view. He contrasts *Gefühlempfindungen* (“emotional/affective/algedonic sensations”¹⁷) which includes bodily and sensory pleasure and pains, with *Gefühle* (“emotions”)¹⁸. Affective sensations, he claims, are mere sensations, on a par with sensations of the special senses such as temperatures, colours, tones, odors, or taste. They have no intentionality, but only happen to be conjoined with other sensations. On the opposite, emotions are understood as evaluation caused by judgment of value and that are themselves intentionally related to the content of those judgments.

M. Scheler (1973: 255 sqq.) also contrasts “feeling of something” (such as suffering, enduring, enjoying...) with “mere feeling-states”. Like Husserl and Stumpf, Scheler urges that feelings-states have not intrinsic intentionality, contrary to “feeling of something”. But contrary to Husserl and Stumpf, he includes in non-intentional feelings more than mere bodily and sensory feelings. Anger, he says, is a non-intentional feeling: “The connection of anger with the “about” of my anger is not intentional or original. ... It is quite different when I “rejoice in something,” or when I “am sad about something” or enthusiastic about something” (Scheler, 1973: 257).

More recently, F. Feldman (1997, 2004) has argued in favour of a distinction between attitudinal (or propositional) and sensory pleasures :

A person experiences *sensory* pleasure at a time if he feels pleasurable sensations then... sensory pleasures are ‘*feelings*’ — things relevantly like

¹⁷ The translation « Emotional sensations » was proposed by C. Stumpf himself, Titchener (1908 : 338, n. 5) prefers the translations « affective sensations » or « algedonic sensations ».

¹⁸ For a presentation of Stumpf’s view about affective sensations and emotions, see Titchener (1908, lecture III) ; K. Mulligan (1988) and R. Reisenzein & W. Schönplug (1992).

feelings of heat and cold, feelings of pressure, tickles, and itches; the feeling you get in your back when getting a massage.

Attitudinal pleasures are different. A person takes attitudinal pleasure in some state of affairs if he enjoys it, is pleased about it, is glad, that it is happening, is delighted by it. ... Attitudinal pleasures are always directed onto objects, just as beliefs and hopes and fears are directed onto objects. This is one respect in which they are different from sensory pleasures. Another difference is that attitudinal pleasures need not have any “feel”. We know we have them not by sensation, but in the same way (whatever it may be) that we know when we believe something, or hope for it, or fear that it might happen (2004: 56-7)

Feldman (1997) insists that attitudinal and sensory pleasures are “two different hedonic phenomena”. This raises the main worry for disjunctive view of pleasantness: in virtue of what are both types of phenomena (intentional vs non-intentional pleasures) phenomena of a same *pleasure* kind? How are we to define this hedonic kind otherwise than by an arbitrary disjunction?

Upholder of a disjunctive view of pleasantness, of course want to argue that there is here no more here than a disjunction of heterogeneous phenomena and that such a question is mistaken. There is nothing in common, as Husserl insists, between intentional and non-intentional pleasures, except that they are referred to by the same name. But if such an error-theory concerning our use of the term “pleasure” is true, upholder of the disjunctive view of pleasantness owe us an explanation of the source of this mistake. If the two kinds of phenomena are so heterogenous, we do we persist in calling them by the same name?

One important answer, put forward by F. Feldman is akin to the explanation we gave of the existence of a mental and a physical sense of pleasantness. In the same way that “pleasant” is said of mental states and by derivation of their external object, it may be that attitudinal pleasure is the basic hedonic phenomena, and that sensory pleasures are pleasant in virtue of being the objects of attitudinal pleasure.

My answer to the linkage question is, roughly, this: when we say that a person experiences sensory pleasure, what we mean is that there is a sensation such that he then takes a certain sort of propositional pleasure in the fact that he has that sensation. (Feldman, 1997: 96)

Feldman’s view is that the sensory pleasure can be conceptually analysed in terms of attitudinal pleasures. More precisely, sensory pleasures are given an anti-realist definition: they are pleasures in virtue of being the object of a certain attitude. Pleasantness, in Feldman’s account, is clearly a disjunctive property: it refers either to a real type of intentional attitude, or to an unreal class of non-intentional sensations. Though disjunctive and heterogeneous,

nevertheless, pleasantness is not an arbitrary property, since one of its disjunct can be analysed in terms of the other. That both type of phenomena are called pleasure is therefore not a complete accident.

Though I agree that pleasantness isn't a natural property insofar as it applies to both mental and physical states, I maintain that *mental* pleasantness refers to a natural property, contrary to Husserl, Stumpf, Scheler or Feldman. There is one unique sense in which mental phenomena are pleasant (in the generic sense), and this is this sense I shall try to define. I shall explain in chapter xx why I disagree with the view that pleasure is either intentional or non-intentional pleasure. Briefly, upholders of this distinction are making two mistakes. First, it is wrong to think that sensory, or bodily pleasures (which are often confused) aren't intrinsically intentional. I shall argue that bodily pleasures, as well as bodily pains, are directed at some state of the body distinct from themselves. Second, I shall raise some doubts against positing primitive hedonic attitudes, such as "taking pleasure in" or "enjoying". Types of mental acts aren't primitive: they should be analysed in terms of (i) types of their direction of fit (ii) types of their intentional objects (iii) types of intrinsic non-intentional property they exemplify (qualia, values). (iv) types of modes of presentation of their object. While some of these criteria fail to distinguish hedonic attitudes from non-hedonic ones, those that manage to ground the distinction lead to other definitions of pleasantness. For instance, if hedonic attitudes are attitudes that exemplify a primitive phenomenological *qualia*, then attitudinal pleasure (D4) is to be analysed in terms of hedonic tone (D2). Once both the intentional nature of bodily pleasures and the analysability of attitudinal pleasures is recognised, it appears that both can be subsumed under a same definition of pleasantness. The thesis I defend is that the right definition of pleasantness is the axiological one: pleasantness is a basic value, and pleasures are to be defined as the mental states that exemplify an hedonic value.

A preliminary defence of the axiological view of pleasantness

The general aim of this thesis is then to answer to unity problem concerning the generic concept of pleasure: what do all positive affects have in common? The answer I endorse is that all positive affects exemplify an hedonic value. I shall in this last section sketch four types of arguments in favour of this axiological view.

(1) The first argument is negative: it is that all the other definition of pleasantness fail. Therefore, one chief task will be to review the different definition of pleasantness and to explain the reason of there failure.

(2) The second argument in favour the view that pleasantness is an axiological property is that it gives the most straightforward and simple explanation of the common view that pleasures have intrinsic positive value: namely, because pleasantness *is* an intrinsic positive value. One should admit in our axiology hedonic values on a par with aesthetic and epistemic ones (moral values being, as the consequentialist has it, properties of those actions that maximizes the quantity of aesthetic, epistemic, and hedonic values exemplified in the world).

(3) A third argument in favour of the view that pleasantness is a value, is the following one:

(i) Polarity is an exclusive property of values.

(ii) Pleasantness is nothing else that the polarity of affects¹⁹.

Therefore pleasantness is a value.

In order to defend (i) one has to deal with putative counterexamples such as physical polarity (positrons vs electrons) or mathematical one (negative vs positive numbers). Quickly, the main answer is to point out that though positrons and electrons, or negative and positive numbers are clearly polar opposite, the question “which of the two pole is the positive one, which is the negative one” can only receive an arbitrary, conventional answer (a positron isn’t intrinsically good or better than an electron, so that is deserve the term positive). This is not so with values: not only beauty is the polar opposite of ugliness, beauty is also essentially positive: that beauty is better than ugliness isn’t a matter of arbitrary choice. In order to defend (ii), one can use an argument by subtraction: once the intentional object and the polarity of pleasant experiences is taken up, nothing is left, or so it seems.

(4) A fourth argument in favour of the axiological view of pleasantness goes as follows:

¹⁹ Titchener (1908: p. 56 qq and p. 77) come close to this view. He claims that “qualitative antagonism” is one essential property of feelings (that is, of pleasantness and unpleasantness). The only other essential property of feeling he admit is their lack of clearness, that is, the fact that feelings disappears when they are attended to.

(i) Dx, the view that pleasantness is an phenomenological primitive property is the most plausible view apart from the axiological view.

(ii) But Dx cannot avoid saying that pleasantness is a mental but non-intentional property.

(iii) Intentionality is our only acceptable definition of the mental.

Therefore pleasantness should be a primitive property of mental states that is non mental. The only plausible option seems to be that it is an axiological property.

The axiological view of pleasantness raises some worries, nevertheless. Here are some of the main objections to it, with a brief sketch of the possible answers.

(1) A first problem concerns the relation between pleasure and consciousness. Pleasure is often said to be necessarily conscious. But if pleasantness is not a phenomenological property, such a claim is threatened. As a first answer, it may be, as we have seen before, that the reason why pleasure is necessarily conscious, if it is, is not to be found in the essence of pleasure but in the essence of consciousness: consciousness is essentially pleasure-attracted. Second, it is worth noting that even if every pleasures are conscious, many of them can still be sub-attentional: there may be many “background pleasures” (S. Rachles, 2000).

(ii) A second problem concerns the relation between the pleasantness of positive affect and the value of their intentional objects. Claiming that pleasantness is an axiological property implies that it is not intentionally directed towards an object distinct from itself (values have no intentionality). If so, the unpleasantness of our fear doesn't represent the danger of the dog, but is merely a reaction or response to it. This raises some worries because we nevertheless want to maintain that it is incorrect or inappropriate to feel pleasant emotions towards negative values (for instance in malicious pleasures such as *Schadenfreude*). As an answer, I try to argue that such incorrectness is not to be understood in terms of misrepresentation, but as violation of certain moral norms.

(iii) A third problem concerns the intuition that there must be some necessary link between pleasure and desire. The way I reject of conative views of pleasure (that reduces pleasure either to a desired state, or to desire's satisfaction), commits me to deny that there is any straightforward conceptual link between pleasure in the generic sense and desires understood generically as dispositions to act. Should we give up the intuition that pleasure and desire are somehow linked?

As an answer, it is still possible to make sense of the more modest claim that *some* (specific) pleasures are necessarily link with *some* (specific) desires. The first candidates are

pleasures of satisfaction. Denying that all pleasures are pleasures of satisfaction is of course compatible with claiming that some pleasures are pleasures of satisfaction. Nevertheless, I argue that though it is commonly agreed that desire's satisfactions are pleasant, this is not always so. As a consequence, the question "why is it pleasant to satisfy one's desire" merits some attention. I raise some sceptical worry about the very existence of such a primitive kind of pleasures of satisfaction, as distinct from (a) pleasure of relief (the end of a painful desire), (b) second-order feeling of pride or power, (c) mere enjoyment of the object of desire (which could have been experienced without any preceding desire), (d) pleasure in activity.

Pleasure in activity constitutes the second candidate of specific pleasure linked by necessity with desires. Pleasures in activity are the pleasures we sometimes take in pursuing a goal, by contrast to pleasure of attainment of this goal. We enjoy playing even if we finally lose the game. I argue that pleasure in activity is always a mixed feeling, the pleasure we take in activity being dependent on the unpleasant effort we have to overtake (too easy games aren't pleasant).

Finally, hedonic desires (desire for pleasure) though they don't constitute all desires (contra psychological hedonism) are essentially link with pleasure. If pleasantness is indeed a basic type of value, hedonic desires are certainly appropriate or correct, *ceteris paribus*. I argued that hedonic desires, *pace* psychological hedonists, essentially involve high cognitive abilities such as make-believe or pretence. Looking for pleasure is not a natural and spontaneous attitude, but results from sophisticated gourmet strategies.

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