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PLATO'S THEORY OF PLEASURE

BY

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the requirements for the degree of
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VITA

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CHAPTER I

ARISTOTLE'S THEORY OF PLEASURE

The purpose of this first chapter is merely an introductory delineation of the theory of pleasure carefully worked out by Aristotle.¹ The advantage of this initial analysis will consist in giving us a basis for plotting the theory of Plato. The sources for the doctrine of Plato are scattered, difficult to interpret and reconcile. The opinion of Aristotle is more concise and compact. The thesis of Aristotle is treated in scholastic order giving a logical refutation of opponents and preceding to a definition of pleasure and its justification. The whole Aristotelian discussion of pleasure, moreover, occupies a particular place in his well-planned ethics and thus enables the student of his thought to judge more easily the ethical value of pleasure in his scheme of life.

Aristotle's discussion of pleasure may be divided into two main parts, a negative and a positive.² In the negative section he considers the arguments of two classes of thought and estimating their value he draws his own conclusion from their arguments. By treating his opponents first we are given a background for his own determination of the question and are enabled to comprehend more fully the explanation of his stand.

¹ Aristotle's theory of pleasure is taken from Book X of the Nicomachean Ethics.

² A.J. Festugiere, Aristote: Le Plaisir, Bibliothèque des Textes Philosophiques, Librairie Philosophique J. Vrin, Paris, 1936, XX.

The exponent of the first class of thought is Eudoxus, who presents two arguments, which maintain the thesis that pleasure is the Sovereign Good, τὸ ἀρίστον, and so becomes the ultimate aim of all our actions in life.³ Without displaying the arguments, since they are the subject of objections offered by the second class of opponents discussed by Aristotle, we may hurriedly dismiss Eudoxus as does Aristotle himself. Aristotle is willing to accept the premises of Eudoxus' arguments, but draws from them a more moderate conclusion. The arguments do not prove that pleasure is identified with the Supreme Good, and, therefore, is not the final end of life, but they merely demonstrate that pleasure must be considered as a good. Fundamentally in agreement with Eudoxus, in so far as he accepts the premises of the arguments, Aristotle passes quickly to the more serious refutation of the second group of adversaries.

The arguments of the second class of thought Aristotle treats with greater care and detail.⁴ Evidently, he considers them of more importance. The arguments, though in the tenth book of the Nichomachean Ethics they are not stated as belonging to any definite man or group, may be identified with the thesis and proofs of the Platonic school headed by Speusippus. Their contention is that pleasure far from being the Supreme Good is not a good at all.

³ Aristotle, Ethica Nichomachea, translated by W.D. Ross, IX. Works of Aristotle, edited by W.D. Ross, 11 vols. Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1172 b 10-25.

⁴ Ibid., 1172 b 35.

Aristotle makes short work of Speusippus' first two arguments, which are treated in the manner of two objections to the proofs Eudoxus presented in the defense of his thesis. Speusippus objects that, "that at which all things aim is not necessarily good."⁵ Aristotle dismisses him with disdain. That is nonsense. If the animals alone sought after pleasure the point might be maintained, but not when "intelligent creatures do so as well."⁶ St. Thomas in commenting on this section of the Ethics succinctly puts it: "quia non est possibile quod naturale iudicium in omnibus fallatur."⁷

Speusippus attacks the second argument of contraries, asserting that if pain is an evil and an object of aversion, it does not follow that pleasure must be good and an object of choice. A fact of common experience is the basis of Aristotle's response to this. Speusippus wishes pain to have for its contrary another evil, which he considers to be pleasure; and pain and pleasure would be opposed to one another as the very great is to the very little. But pleasure, then, would have to be an object of aversion just as pain and it is manifest that people avoid pain as an evil, and make pleasure the object of their choice. Therefore it is good.

Aristotle continues his opposition to the doctrine of Speusippus by breaking down his objections. However, the remaining objections of

⁵ Ibid., 1172 b 35.

⁶ Ibid., 1173 a 5.

⁷ St. Thomas Aquinas, In X Libros Ethicorum ad Nichomachum, XXI. Opera Omnia, 25 vols. Typis Petri Fiaccadori, 1866, Lib. X, lect. II, 330 b.

Speusippus are leveled at arguments independent of the proofs of Eudoxus.

Pleasure, the adversary claims, is not a good, because good pertains to the genus of quality, but pleasure is not a quality. Aristotle denies the conclusion that therefore it follows that pleasure is not good, because happiness itself and the other forms of virtue are not qualities. The argument proves too much. It is further pointed out by St. Thomas in his commentary: "Bonum enim dicitur non solum in qualitate sed etiam in omnibus generibus."⁸

Speusippus further persists that good is determined, while pleasure is unlimited, for it admits of degrees. By making use of a distinction Aristotle clears this hazard. Pleasure can be said to be more or less in a concrete subject, because the subject participates in the form of pleasure more or less, but taken in the abstract pleasure is one and simple, even as the good, or justice or any of the other virtues. In this sense there is no question of degree.

By reducing pleasure to a movement or generation Speusippus hopes to uphold his point, for movement or generation is imperfect and this hinders pleasure from being the good, which is perfect. For his answer Aristotle makes use of his doctrine on motion already treated in the Physics. Motion and generation require time for their completion and by reason of this they are termed imperfect, but pleasure is like vision, it does not require time, in an instant it is accomplished. Pleasure must be

⁸ Ibid., Lib. X, lect. III, 332 a.

viewed as a whole, complete at every instant. It is maintained, of course, that "pain is a lack of that which is according to nature and pleasure is the replenishment,"⁹ but all generation supposes a common subject. According to Speusippus this is the body. In this he is mistaken, for that which feels pleasure is not the body, but the soul. There is a confusion, therefore, between the restoration of the natural state and pleasure, which results thereby. Moreover, it is clear that the objection restricts the generality of pleasures to one single species, namely, the corporal pleasures, for the examples of pleasure and pain are those connected with nutrition. There are many of the other pleasures, for instance, the pleasures of learning, which presuppose no pain and therefore are not connected with a replenishment.

The final objection refers to the displaying of the disgraceful pleasures as a proof that pleasure is not good. It may be denied simply that these so-called pleasures are really pleasant, for things are not sweet or bitter to those suffering from a vitiated taste, nor can whiteness be attributed to those things which seem to be so to a person suffering from a disease of the eye. No more should we consider as pleasures those which seem to be pleasant to one of a vicious constitution. It may be further answered that, although all pleasures are desirable, yet not in every case. To be wealthy is a good thing, but not when it requires the

⁹ Ross, 1173 b 5.

betrayal of our ideals, or again, health is a good thing, but not if it requires eating everything. They are pleasures, but not by reason of these sources. There are various species of pleasure. Some are derived from noble sources, some from base sources. One who is not just cannot experience the pleasure proper to the just, and the same applies to the pleasures of music and the others.

To conclude the negative section of his treatise Aristotle submits three proofs that pleasure is not in itself and universally good.

Pleasures, depending upon their sources, belong to diverse species, of which certain ones are good, others are bad. An illustration of this is the pleasure, which comes from the praise of a friend and that from the praise of a flatterer. Secondly, though the pleasures of childhood are many and wonderful, one would scarcely desire to go through his whole life with the mind of a child, nor even if pain were never to be our lot as a result, would we choose the pleasures which arise from disgraceful actions.

Finally, there are some things which men would be eager for, even granting that no pleasure is attached to them, for example, seeing, remembering, knowing, and having virtue. "Id autem quod est per se bonum, tale est, sine quo nihil est eligibile, ut patet de felicitate."¹⁰

We have reached now the positive section of Aristotle's discussion, which is the more important, because of his valuable and permanent contributions to the intricate problem of pleasure.¹¹ Aristotle enters

¹⁰ St. Thomas, Lib. X, lect. IV, 335 b.

¹¹ Ross, 1174 a 10.

upon his own disquisition on pleasure by explaining its nature from which he formulates a definition and concludes to certain properties. He then reveals how pleasures according to the difference of their operations differ in kind or species and also in goodness or badness.

Pleasure is concerned with activity or operation. Hence, Aristotle begins by explaining what he means by perfect activity and for his model he uses sensation. Sensation is the condition of a sense acting in relation to something sensible, which is the object of the sense. Two things must be considered in sensation, the principle of the activity, which is the sense, and the sensible, which is the object of the operation. In order that the activity be perfect, both must be in good condition. Hence, activity is perfect when a sense which is in good condition acts in relation to the most excellent of its objects, or, to use Aristotle's own definition, "the best activity is that of the best-conditioned organ in the relation to the finest of its objects."¹²

Aristotle now shows that pleasure is the perfection of activity. We see that the same operation, which has just been defined as most perfect is also the most pleasant. "Ubi cumque enim invenitur in aliquo cognoscente operatio perfecta, ibi etiam invenitur operatio delectabilis."¹³ Not only in respect of all the senses, but even in respect to thought and contemplation the most complete or perfect is the most pleasant. If, therefore, the perfect activity is pleasant, the most perfect is the most

¹² Ross, 1174 b 15.

¹³ St. Thomas, Lib. X, lect. VI, 338 b.

pleasant, it follows that activity, in so far as it is perfect, is pleasant. Pleasure is the perfection of activity or that which completes activity.

But in what way does it complete activity? Health and the doctor, for example, are not the cause in exactly the same way of a man's being healthy. Health acts in the manner of a form, the doctor acts in the manner of an agent. Pleasure is akin to health in a similar way, for it completes activity as a form, while the sense or the intellect well-disposed toward its most suitable object acts in the manner of an agent. "Delectatio perficit operationem non efficienter sed formaliter."¹⁴ But there is also a two-fold formal perfection. One is intrinsic and constitutes the very essence of a thing, but the other is that which supervenes the thing already constituted in its own species and may be called extrinsic. Pleasure is not as a form intrinsic and constituting the essence of the activity, but it supervenes as the bloom or beauty of youth, not existing, as it were, of the essence of youth, but as a certain consequent of the good disposition of the causes of youth. Pleasure likewise follows upon the good condition of the causes of activity.

From the nature of pleasure now determined we may consider the three consequent properties discussed by Aristotle. Pleasure will endure in any activity as long as the object be it sensible or intelligible is in a suitable or apt condition and the sense or intellect, the "causa agens," is working. The reason for this is that when both the active and passive factor remain in the same disposition and are related to each other in the

¹⁴ Ibid., Lib. X, lect. VI, 339 a.

same way the same effect also remains.

But no pleasure can be continuous and it is a fact of common experience that no one is actually continuously pleased. The reason for this lies in the fact that there is labor involved in the activity which pleasure completes. Our bodily organs, the necessary instruments of activity, are changed from their good disposition by reason of the motion, which is joined to activity. A sensitive operation is immediately produced by the corporeal organ, an intellectual operation works mediately through the sensitive powers, which are produced by corporeal organs. Continual activity breaks down the good condition of the bodily organs and destroys the perfect activity and consequently pleasure.

We see here also the reason why new things give greater pleasure. A new thing attracts more intense and attentive activity, which, of course, increases the pleasure in proportion. Afterwards, when an activity becomes routine or accustomed the activity is more negligently performed and the activity is less perfect. Naturally the pleasure also decreases.

Lastly we may consider the appetibility of pleasure, why all people seek after it. It is reasonable that all should desire pleasure, because there is in us all a natural desire to live. Life in its ultimate perfection consists in a certain activity. Pleasure being that which completes or perfects activity, it necessarily completes life itself, which all so greatly desire, and pleasure because of its connection becomes also an object of desire.

Aristotle suggests a doubt whether we choose pleasure for the sake of life, or life for the sake of pleasure. However, though pleasure and activity are so intimately wrapped together that there cannot be one without the other, yet activity seems to be prior to pleasure and of primary importance. Activity, and therefore, life, should be the principle object of desire.¹⁵

Having considered the nature of pleasure and its conditions along with a brief discussion of some of the properties flowing from the nature, Aristotle proceeds to his last point, the differentiation of pleasures both as to kind and to goodness.

We might accept it almost as a principle that those things which are different in kind are perfected or completed by perfections, which also differ in kind. Pleasure is a perfection of activity so that as activities differ in kind. Pleasure is a perfection of activity so that as activities differ in species so must the pleasures which are proper to them. Certainly it is manifest that the activities of the intellect differ in kind from the activities of the senses, and the senses themselves are differentiated from one another according to their objects and powers, which are the principles of the activities. And in respect to artificial activities we see the same thing, for a painting, which is distinctive for its pleasing colors is different from a photograph, which is pleasing by reason of its faithfulness and clarity in exactly representing its objects.

¹⁵ W.D. Ross, Aristotle, revised edition, Methuen and Co. Ltd., London, 1930, 229.

To illustrate his point, Aristotle indicates three signs that pleasures are proper to activities differing in kind, and thus the pleasures themselves must differ. Pleasures intensify activities in such a way that we are led to perform the activities well. Thus, we see that those, who take pleasure in working geometrical problems, make greater progress and learn the propositions more easily and well, and similarly in regard to those who are fond of music, or building, and so forth. "...what intensifies a thing is proper to it, but things different in kind have properties different in kind."¹⁶

We find, too, that one activity may be hindered by the pleasure arising from another activity. To give one example of Aristotle, "people who are fond of playing the flute are incapable of attending to arguments, if they overhear someone playing the flute, since they enjoy flute-playing more than the activity at hand."¹⁷

As a final sign he compares alien pleasures to the proper pains of each activity, "for alien pleasures do pretty much what proper pains do, since activities are destroyed by their proper pains."¹⁸ One who has a great distaste for philosophy or for playing the violin finds it painful to buckle down to the study of philosophy or to practicing on the violin and the activity is destroyed. An alien pleasure has much the same effect. Listening

¹⁶ Ross, Ethica, 1175 a 35.

¹⁷ Ibid., 1175 b 5.

¹⁸ Ibid., 1175 b 15.

to a good program on the radio destroys our activity of reading a serious book. From this and his other considerations Aristotle believes that each activity different in kind has pleasures proper to it which also differ in kind.

We are prepared now for the last and most important discussion. What pleasures are good and what pleasures are bad? What pleasures should be considered proper to man? Of those that are thought to be good what kind of pleasure or what pleasure should man pursue?

To answer these questions Aristotle returns again to the difference of activities. They differ in respect of goodness and desirability, so that some we should choose, others we should avoid, while still others might be said to be in a neutral state. Since every activity has its proper pleasure, then "the pleasure proper to a worthy activity is good and that proper to an unworthy activity is bad."¹⁹ The goodness of the pleasures depends upon the goodness of the activity.

Aristotle introduces here the question of a distinction between the pleasures proper to activities and the pleasures proper to desires, also the distinction between the purity and impurity of the various pleasures, especially of the senses. We omit the discussion, for, interesting though it might be, it is of minor importance to our thesis.

But what pleasure is proper to man? In the case of the animals the question is easily decided by referring to the proper activities and

¹⁹ Ibid., 1175 b 25.

functions of the various species of animal. But the case of man is more involved, for what is a delight to some is real pain to others, although all men are of one and the same species. The reason appears to be that the activities and pleasures of the animals follow upon their natural inclination, but the activities and pleasures of man spring from reason, which is not determined to one course. We find, therefore, the same things to some are painful and hateful, to others delightful and desirable. But just as in the matter of taste, sweet things do not appear the same to one suffering from a fever as to one who is healthy, so pleasures differ to those better or worse disposed or equipped with reason to judge. Since we abide by the healthy man's verdict in the matter of taste it is reasonable that the distinctly human pleasures should be those in which the wise and virtuous man delights, because he possesses a more sane and sound reason and judgment.

Virtue, therefore, is the measure we should follow in all human affairs and those are the true pleasures which seem so to the virtuous man. "If things he finds tiresome seem pleasant to someone, that is not to be wondered at; for men may be ruined and spoilt in many ways; but the things are not pleasant, but only pleasant to these people and to people in this condition."²⁰ The pleasures which the virtuous man repudiates are not really pleasures at all, but only to those whose reason and appetite have been perverted. The pleasures which all confess are base are only pleasures to men corrupt.

²⁰ Ibid., 1176 a 20.

Aristotle thus concludes his treatise on the universal nature of pleasure. Summing up, we may say that pleasure is the inseparable companion of activity. Pleasure is not a norm reserved to a particular type of life, but extends to every form of life. It cannot be claimed alone by the devotees of pleasure for such a life recognizes only the pleasures of the body, which, if pleasures at all, are only so in a secondary way. Pleasure belongs to all life properly human, by which Aristotle means all virtuous life which being founded upon the exercise of virtue or good activity is in itself pleasant.

Now too we can see Aristotle's plan in treating of pleasure in his book of Ethics, which purposes to find the ultimate end at which all our particular actions aim as their chief good. The end of human nature is happiness, an activity consisting, as Festigiere asserts in summing up his own treatise on Aristotle, in the "exercise of all those virtues which make us truly men and in its essence happiness is the full blossoming of our faculties properly human."²¹ Pleasure being the inseparable companion of activity there exists a necessary link between pleasure and the ultimate end of our life. To quote Festugiere again, "happiness implies pleasure not only because we cannot live without a certain amount of corporal pleasure, not only because pleasure is a helpful condition or a necessary accidental of happiness, but in virtue of the very nature of pleasure."²² Happiness is virtuous activity and this activity is necessarily completed by pleasure.

²¹Festugiere, LXI.

²²Ibid., LXI.

CHAPTER II

THE PROBLEM OF HEDONISM IN PLATO

After the systematic treatment of Aristotle's theory of pleasure in the previous chapter it is possible that the remainder of the thesis may be a little disappointing. No such system will be found in Plato's writings, in fact, many have gone awry by trying to interpret Plato's doctrine in such fashion, fixing it according to definite lines of a system.¹ However, this is no fault in Plato. It is due to the richness and variety of his thought and the character of his writings. Plato was not content like Aristotle to express his mind in a colorless, philosophical style. Plato's ideas are always placed in a definite setting and atmosphere and worked out in a personal, human way. He has always been acclaimed as much as an artist and dramatist as a great thinker.

Such a presentation has created difficulties, nevertheless, for the student of Plato's thought. One is forced to assemble Plato's ideas on a particular subject from diverse places and divest them of any particular dramatic or stylistic value to reach the bedrock of his true thought. On the other hand, misinterpretations can especially occur in Plato by divorcing any group of his words from their particular context, which very often adds a distinct color and tone to his opinion.

¹ A.E. Taylor, Plato the Man and His Work, Dial Press Inc., New York, 1936, 23.

Just such difficulties beset this thesis, but we will attempt to sift all of Plato's references to pleasure and set them down in an orderly fashion with the purpose of determining as accurately as possible what is Plato's theory of pleasure.

The order of the treatment is to be based upon the clear-cut outline which Aristotle follows in his exposition, namely, in this chapter we shall discuss the negative side of Plato's theory, what pleasure is not, considering Plato's refutations of various opponents. In the following chapters the positive side of the doctrine will be explained. In the next chapter what pleasure is, its nature and variety, will be expounded. Finally, we shall, in the last chapter, examine the ethical value of pleasure in Plato's philosophy of life.

It must be noted that it is not the intention of the thesis to make a comparison or judge the respective merits of the treatment of the subject by the two ancient and eminent philosophers. The purpose throughout is to set down the facts of Plato's theory without approving or disapproving of them. The advantage of having considered Aristotle's theory first is that it furnishes a touchstone for arranging and expounding Plato's theory.

The exposition of Plato's theory of pleasure will be based generally upon the ideas expressed in the Philebus, the Republic, the Gorgias, the Protagoras, the Phaedo, and the Laws.

In the dialogues in which Plato treats most fully the subject of pleasure there is only one opposing view, which Plato persists in refuting. His opponents hold that pleasure is identified with the good and therefore

is to be sought after in all our actions as the ultimate end of life. So eager is Plato to combat and overthrow this doctrine that he seems to spend his energy in arguing in this negative fashion, rather than in explaining positively his own view, which, however, is implicitly contained. The entire Gorgias, one of Plato's longer dialogues, is nothing but a vigorous objection to the hedonistic principle of life. However, since pleasure was the motive force for the actions of the people of the street and Sophists by their own admission, or by the ultimate reduction of their principles were exponents of Hedonism, Plato's vigorous opposition was justified.

A comparatively early mention in Plato of the ethical doctrine of pleasure occurs in the dialogue, Gorgias. Gorgias himself is introduced into the dialogue only for a brief discussion, and then he departs from the scene in favor of his more outspoken disciples, Polus and Callicles. Polus enunciates the direct moral issue,² when he objects to Socrates' statement that to do wrong is a greater evil than to suffer wrong, for, Polus declares, he is envious of the liberty of doing whatever one thinks fit, even to killing or imprisoning anyone he pleases. Rhetoric, to determine the purpose of which the discussion began, gives just such a power, because it makes its end Pleasure, and enables anyone to obtain what he desires. An appeal is made by Polus to the example and opinion of the majority of men to justify his belief.

² Plato, Gorgias, V, translated by W.R.M. Lamb. Loeb Classical Library, Wm. Heinemann, London, 1925, 469 c.

There is little progress made in the argument, however, until Polus finally admits that to do wrong is more shameful, αἰσχρόν, than to suffer wrong, though it is not more evil. To the foul or shameful is opposed the fair or noble, καλόν, and to Polus there is a distinction between the fair and good, between the foul and evil. Socrates leads him to agree to the definition that the fair is that which gives either pleasure, benefit or both, for our standard of judging fine color, sound, or figures always is that they are of some use or confer pleasure. Such a definition appeals at once to Polus, for the fair is defined by the pleasure and good. But he is unaware of what must follow from this. The shameful must be that which causes harm, pain or both and the shameful is thus defined by the opposites of pleasure and good, namely, pain and evil.

It is an easy step now for Socrates to show that, although doing wrong does not exceed suffering wrong in the matter of pain, yet it is fouler by reason of an excess of evil and no one, surely, would choose that which is more evil. Hence, no one would choose to do wrong rather than to suffer it.

But we still have a second point to prove, "whether for a wrong-doer to pay the penalty is the greatest of evils," as Polus supposes, "or to escape the penalty is greater."³ Socrates demonstrates his opinion by showing that the "patient" receives an effect of the same kind as the action of the agent, for example, if the striker strikes hard or quick, the thing

³ Ibid., 476 a.

struck is struck in the same way. Just punishment, however, is fair and confers good. Therefore, he who suffers it is benefitted and is relieved from badness of soul. Further, injustice, the vice of the soul, is the most shameful of all things, not by reason of the pain it causes, but by reason of the harm it brings. And whatever confers the greatest harm must be the greatest evil in the world. Justice, on the contrary, which relieves us of this evil, must be the fairest of all things. Now paying the penalty imparts to us justice and relieves us of injustice. The true use of rhetoric, therefore, would be, not to obtain whatever pleasure we desire, even protecting us from penalty, but to preserve us from wrongdoing, or if we should do wrong, to secure punishment and thus relieve us of the greatest evil.

Polus is thus dismissed to admit a more vigorous and more dangerous opponent, who is a thorough-going Hedonist, sincere and confident in his convictions. The fair-mindedness of Plato and his eagerness for the truth, we might mention here, are nowhere more evident than in this scene. In the person of Callicles Plato puts the strongest defense of the hedonistic doctrine, a defense, which even its ablest followers could scarcely equal.

Callicles introduces immediately the distinction, familiar to readers of Plato and the writers of the period, between nature and convention, φύσις - νόμος. In one full sweep he pushes aside the current code of morality as conventional, "made by the laws of the weaker sort of men to prevent the stronger from taking advantage of them." But the law of nature decrees otherwise, and "it is obvious in many cases, that ...right has been

decided to consist in the sway and advantage of the stronger over the weaker."⁴

Callicles goes on to chide Socrates for remaining in the pursuit of philosophy, which is a fine thing for a young lad to toy with, but is no fit occupation for a mature man, since it hinders him from attending to more practical duties and renders him helpless as a child and unfit to protect himself against the encroachments of unjust men.

There is no doubt about Callicles' opinion, for he is clear and outspoken, qualities, which Socrates is not loath to commend. Here is a worthy opponent to test his mettle and prove the strength of Hedonism, if it be possible.

Socrates proceeds with his usual definition of terms. The stronger are the better and determine what is right. But who are the stronger? Callicles makes it clear that he is not referring to the physically stronger, but to the better and the wiser, "who should have rule and advantage over the weaker people."⁵ Advantage? queries Socrates. A doctor is wiser in the matter of proper nourishment, and therefore, he should have more food? Or the weaver is wiser and should have more clothes? Or the shoemaker should wear the biggest shoes? In what respect is the superior man to have the advantage of the larger number?

Irritated Callicles now develops his view more fully. The better are "men of wisdom and manliness in public affairs. These are the persons who ought to rule our cities and justice means this, that these should have

⁴ Ibid., 483 d.

⁵ Ibid., 490 a.

more than other people, the ruler than the ruled."⁶ They must, then, Socrates rejoins, have more than themselves, for they must be "self-controlled, self-mastering, ruler of the pleasures and the desires that are in themselves."⁷ Callicles' frank reply to this is that temperance is nonsense, for no one can be happy when he is enslaved. To live rightly we should let our desires be strong as possible and satisfy each desire by our intelligence and manliness. People regard licentiousness as disgraceful only because they cannot achieve all the pleasures they desire. Stones and corpses would be extremely happy, if to want nothing were happiness.

The fables of the sieve and the jars are brought forth by Socrates to answer Callicles. The licentious man's soul is like a sieve, which is constantly being filled up and leaking out. No matter how much such a man attempts to satisfy his cravings he never reaches satiety. Far better is the life of the self-controlled man, who keeps his soul well-ordered and content with what it possesses. A further comparison may be stressed in the example of the two men having many jars, one filled with honey, a second with milk, and so forth. These supplies are not readily available, but can be obtained only through strenuous labor. One of the men has good jars and once he fills them is at ease, but the other possesses leaky and decayed jars, so that he must be filling them constantly with a great deal of trouble. So it is with the self-controlled and the licentious man. Is it not manifest which of the two lives is the happier?

⁶ Ibid., 491 d.

⁷ Ibid., 491 e.

All this has no effect on Callicles. Pleasure consists in a constant filling up and when one has had his fill he can have no more pleasure than a stone. The life of pleasure is eating when hungry, drinking when thirsty, and having all the other desires and satisfying them. Socrates abashes Callicles by suggesting also that "a man who has an itch and wants to scratch, and may scratch in all freedom, can pass his life happily in continually scratching."⁸ Callicles is bound to admit on his own principles that even such a life would be pleasant and happy.

Callicles is no longer pleased with the trend of the discussion, but he need not have allowed such a turn, as Socrates suggests, had he distinguished between the good and bad sorts of pleasures. Is there no distinction of pleasures, or is pleasure the same as the good, or is there some pleasure which is not good? To be consistent Callicles must maintain, as he admits, that pleasure and good are the same.⁹ The good in the mind of Callicles is thus mere unconditional enjoyment. Socrates introduces the question of opposites to prove that there must be a distinction. A man cannot possess health and disease, for example, in respect to his eye at the same time, for they are incompatible. To speed and slowness, even to goodness and happiness, and badness and wretchedness, to all classes of opposites the same thing must apply. To this Callicles assents, but he has already asserted that being hungry is painful and eating while hungry is

⁸ Ibid., 494 c.

⁹ Ibid., 495 a.

pleasant, and the same with being thirsty and drinking. It is evident then that pain and pleasure occupy the same subject at the same time, and depart at the same time, for when one ceases to be hungry he ceases to feel pleasure in eating. The good and bad, however, cannot exist simultaneously in the same subject, therefore, pleasure is different from the good.

The argument may be considered in a slightly varied form. The good men are the brave and the wise; the cowardly and the fools are bad. But both the foolish and the wise feel pleasure almost equally, the fool, perhaps, feels even more, for instance, in war, when the enemy retreats, and in the opposite circumstances, when the enemy advances, both alike experience pain. Now it is agreed upon that the good are good by the presence of good things, and the bad are bad by the presence of bad things. Consider then what we must conclude, if pleasure is the same as good and pain is the same as bad. The more pleasure which a man experiences the better he becomes and in our previous example shall we say that the bad man, who feels more pleasure, is made better than the wise man, who is already good?

Callicles is, therefore, forced to abandon his former position and he tries to escape by declaring that all along he really believed that there was such a distinction as good and bad between pleasures. Those which are beneficial, conferring health or strength and the like are good, the opposite are evil.¹⁰ In like manner there are good and bad pains. With this admission we reach the conclusion of our whole argument. Pleasure is not

¹⁰ Ibid., 499 b c d.

the norm of our conduct, but the good, which is distinct from it. All our actions should be performed with the good in view, and pleasure too is for the sake of the good. To determine the pleasures that are good for us we need a man with professional skill and knowledge, a knowledge which is deeper and more true than the mere art of rhetoric, which seeks only to gratify us with pleasures without inquiring whether they are good or bad.

So there is my account of the matter, and I say that this is the truth; and that, if this is true, anyone as it seems, who desires to be happy must ensue and practice temperance, and flee licentiousness, each of us as fast as his feet will carry him, and must contrive, if possible, to need no correction; but if he have need of it, either himself or anyone belonging to him, either an individual or a city, then right must be applied and they must be corrected, if they are to be happy. This, in my opinion, is the mark on which a man should fix his eyes throughout life; he should concentrate all his own and his city's efforts on this one business of providing a man who would be blessed with needful justice and temperance; not letting one's desires go unrestrained and in one's attempts to satisfy them -- an interminable trouble -- leading the life of a robber. For neither to any of his fellow men can such a one be dear, nor to God... ¹¹

Akin to this argument between Socrates and Callicles over the advantages of rhetoric whose aim is pleasure and of philosophy whose aim is the good is the debate in the Philebus between Socrates and Protarchus. The dialogue opens with the direct statement of its aim to prove clearly whether the life of pleasure or the life of wisdom can be the good and happy

¹¹ Ibid., 507 d e.

life for all men. To express it in the terms already used in the Gorgias, whether pleasure rather than intelligence is the good.

Socrates definitely states in the very beginning what he means by the good, so that the goal of the discussion will be true and clear. The good for man is a condition and state, $\xi\lambda\iota\varsigma$ καὶ δὲ $\delta\iota\theta\epsilon\omega\iota\varsigma$, of soul which can make any man's life happy.¹² With this definition Protarchus is also in accord. The question, therefore, to be decided is whether pleasure or thought, or even something else is this state and condition.

The question of the kinds of pleasure is broached by Socrates and he immediately enters upon a brief delineation of the ever troublesome and important problem of the one and many. Since this section of the dialogue has little influence on the argument we are now considering, it is not to the point to summarize the thought content here. Indeed, it seems to confuse the issue for Socrates and Protarchus at the moment, so they leave it aside to decide apart the primary issue.

Some notion of the nature of the good would make it clear whether pleasure or thought fulfil the proper requirements. The good, it is agreed, is necessarily something perfect or complete, $\tau\acute{\epsilon}\lambda\epsilon\omicron\nu$, and sufficient in itself, $\xi\kappa\alpha\nu\acute{\omicron}\nu$. But what does experience and reason show us to be the case in the life of pleasure or of thought considered separately? Protarchus at first believes that he could be supremely happy spending his whole life in the enjoyment of the greatest pleasures with no need for wisdom or

¹² Cf. Plato, Philebus, III, translated by H.N. Fowler. Loeb Classical Library, Wm. Heinemann, London, 1925, 11 d.

intelligence. Socrates, however, prodding him with questions, convinces him that without mind or memory or true opinion a man could not know if he was feeling pleasure at the moment, nor recall that he had ever enjoyed pleasure, nor consider the manifold pleasures that he might experience in the future. Some intellectual activity is demanded in the life of man. Hence, no one would choose a life of mere pleasure. But no one, also, would choose a life of mere thought, for who could ever discover any man leading a life of wisdom and knowledge entirely void of any feeling? It is a life unnatural for man.

It is manifest, then, that the good for man is neither all pleasure nor all thought, but it seems to consist in a mixture of the two. Although neither of the two can be identified with the good, because they are not, taken separately, sufficient in themselves, it is possible that joined together they might be the good. The discussion continues on with pleasure and thought vying for the second prize, the highest place in the mixture of the two lives. The dispute, however, is so closely linked to the discussion of the nature and kinds of pleasure that it would only confuse us to follow it up here. The main point, at least, is established. Pleasure is not the good.

In the first book of the Republic we have a definite restatement of the argument of Callicles in the Gorgias. Though no direct mention is made of pleasure, it is implicit in Thrasymachus' contention that right is the advantage of the stronger. Moreover, we are again faced with a strong defense by a capable opponent of immorality, the obtaining of what one desires by any means whatsoever.

The argument is built around the search for a true definition of justice, and Socrates' pursuit against immoral claims is much the same as that in the Gorgias, where the discussion was pointed towards the discovery of the purpose of rhetoric. It takes a slightly different twist, however, when Thrasymachus, unlike Polus in the Gorgias, maintains that injustice is not disgraceful, but profitable. Moreover, injustice is virtue and wisdom, while justice is the contrary. Socrates secures the upper hand, when Thrasymachus admits that "each man is as his like is. If the unjust man is like the wise and good, then he is wise and good, and so for the just man."¹³ But we see, argues Socrates, that the just man tries to get the better of only the unjust man, while the unjust man tries to secure an advantage over both the just and unjust, for he strives to be superior over all. The good and wise craftsman tries to outdo only the foolish and ignorant craftsman. Take the example of the musician. A musician would not overtighten the strings of his lyre to exceed another musician, but would try to tighten them properly only to exceed a non-musician, or a foolish man, ignorant of these matters. The just man is like this good and wise musician, and must, therefore according to the principle stated, himself be good and wise.

Socrates strengthens his argument by observing that even among thieves there must be honor in order that hatreds and dissensions may be avoided. In a state, too, or in an army, a family, or in one's own person justice is the source of union, while injustice creates variances and

¹³ Plato, The Republic, I, translated by Paul Shorey. Loeb Classical Library, Wm. Heineman, London, 1930, 349 d.

renders the state or army or family or person incapable of action.

Thrasymachus' contention that right is the advantage of the stronger, by which he means that one should have the power to do whatever he likes and obtain whatever he desires, cannot stand up under the fire of Socrates' relentless logic. In the downfall of Thrasymachus we witness another refutation of the very doctrine, which Callicles upheld in the Gorgias. Our own pleasure cannot be the motive force and only goal of our life to the exclusion of everything else. Certainly, then, pleasure is not the good, which must be the end of all our actions.

It is proper before closing this chapter to discuss here a difficulty that might be lodged against our claim that Plato was a determined adversary of the thesis identifying pleasure with the good. It is a little baffling at first reading to discover in the Protagoras that Socrates taking pleasure as the good makes a very plausible argument to prove a particular point and apparently contradicts his strong protestations in other dialogues.

Let us review the pertinent passage in the Protagoras first, then we will attempt a reconciliation.¹⁴ Pleasure is introduced into the dialogue in an attempt to decide whether courage like other forms of goodness already considered can be said to be a matter of knowledge. Socrates asks Protagoras whether he would agree with the majority of men in saying that things are good in so far as they are pleasant, and that painful things are

¹⁴ Plato, Protagoras, IV, translated by W.R.M. Lamb. Loeb Classical Library, Wm. Heinemann, London, 1924, 353 a.

bad. Protagoras is loath to grant the point outright, but is willing to gauge its merit by discussion. It is the people's opinion that knowledge has very little influence on human conduct, for men act only under the guidance of pleasure. Protagoras regards knowledge as the highest of all human things and declares himself ready to join forces with Socrates in refuting the people's opinion.

Socrates, therefore, pursues his argument with the imaginary people in the street. He would explain to them what "being overcome by pleasure" means by asking them questions. When a man is overpowered by the pleasantness of food or drink or sexual acts are they not evil, not according to the pleasure of the moment, but because of the later painful results of disease, poverty, and so forth? And are not painful things, as physical training, medical treatment, good, because, though they cause anguish for the moment, yet later on they produce health and good bodily condition? To these questions the people would certainly answer in the affirmative. Therefore things are good only in reference to pleasures and pains. A pleasant thing is bad if it deprives us of greater pleasure than it has in itself or leads to greater pains than the pleasure it contains. A painful thing is good if it rids us of greater pains than those it comprises or leads to pleasures greater than its pain.

Socrates is now able to explain why it is that people do evil, though cognisant of the good and claim that they were overcome by pleasure. It is because they fail to weigh accurately the pleasant with the painful. In regard to pleasure, the greater and the more are to be preferred, in

respect of pain, the fewer and smaller should be chosen. But people who do evil are mistaken in their calculation. When they weigh the pleasant against the painful and find that the painful are out-balanced by the pleasant, whether the near by the remote, or the remote by the near, they should choose that course of action to which the pleasant are attached, but not the course in which the pleasant are outweighed by the painful. It is precisely in this, however, that men err, for they do not measure things correctly. They consider the things of the moment the greater, just as in the matter of distance. Objects close up look larger than objects in the distance, though they are not really so. Therefore, this "being overcome by pleasure" is a matter of ignorance. Men err through a lack of knowledge and, to be accurate, a knowledge of measurement.

The facility and precision with which Plato states the case for the common man should not shock us or blind us to the fact that Socrates does not truly identify himself with hedonistic principles. To explain away the apparent contradiction in Plato's theory of pleasure has not presented an insurmountable obstacle for eminent Plato scholars.¹⁵ Though their explanations vary, they are all in agreement that there is no contradiction nor change of opinion.

It must be remembered that the argument of pleasure is introduced into the dialogue only to show that courage, a form of goodness, is identified with knowledge. Adopting the fundamental principle of the common man,

¹⁵ Cf. A.E. Taylor, Plato the Man and His Work, Dial Press Inc., New York, 1936; Paul Shorey, What Plato Said, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1934; G.M.A. Grube, Plato's Thought, Methuen and Co. Ltd., London, 1935.

who bases his life upon the choice of the greatest pleasure, because he believes pleasure to be the good, we must admit that knowledge is goodness, and that we do evil through ignorance. The point Socrates wishes to make is, not that he considers pleasure to be the good, but that even accepting this principle we must be led to the inevitable conclusion that knowledge and goodness are identified, which is a key point in Plato's ethics.

Furthermore, taken in its context, it has been explained as an admirable display of Socrates' dialectical ability and by it Plato reveals Protagoras, a sophist skilled in the art of rhetoric, unable to cope with Socrates in argument. The shallowness of the Sophist's skill is shown by the fact that he is led to deny the position with which he started.

It can be shown, moreover, to be one of its purposes to attribute Hedonism to the Sophists and to confound Protagoras, who, though unwilling to avow the doctrine, yet is logically reduced to hold on his own principles that pleasure and the good are identified.

But apart from these arguments there is a point to be stressed more apropos to our thesis, as we shall see even more clearly in the final chapter. It is clearly expressed by Paul Shorey in his publication, The Unity of Plato's Thought.

The Gorgias and Philebus nowhere explicitly contradict the thesis of the Protagoras that a preponderance of the pleasure rightly estimated and abstracted from all evil consequences is good. The doctrine which they combat is the unqualified identification of pleasure and the good, coupled with the affirmation that true

happiness is to be sought by developing and gratifying the appetite for the pleasures of sense and ambition.¹⁶

In the Gorgias, Philebus, and Republic, then, we have treated of Plato's view of Hedonism as the sole opponent to his theory of pleasure. With the explanation of the agreement of the Protagoras with his criticism of Hedonism we bring to a conclusion the negative section of Plato's theory. The remaining chapters will deal with the discussion of the positive aspect of his treatise on pleasure.

¹⁶ Paul Shorey, "The Unity of Plato's Thought," The Dicennial Publications, First Series, VI, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1904, 148 (22).

CHAPTER III

THE ORIGIN, NATURE AND KINDS OF PLEASURE

Plato, as we have seen in the previous chapter, was decidedly an adversary of Hedonism. He sternly rejected the doctrine which identified pleasure with the good, for it reduced the ultimate end of all our actions and desires to the pleasure basis. This stand Plato maintained through all of his dialogues. He was aware, however, in his relentless warfare on Hedonism that mere refutation of an opponent's thesis will not effect a conversion, unless a positive expression of one's doctrine follows along.

Pleasure may not be the good at which all must aim as the ultimate end of life to obtain the happy life, which all men desire, but pleasure does have a part in the happy life. We have already seen that Plato in the Philebus declares a life devoid of all pleasure to be certainly not a human existence. Some pleasure is demanded by the nature of man.

Hence we find Plato in his later dialogues attempting to determine the place of pleasure in the life of man. To facilitate the proper placement of pleasure in the scheme of life we will first attend in this chapter to Plato's discussion of the origin, nature and variety of pleasure.

Plato's fullest treatment of the positive aspect, for having dismissed his negative approach to the subject in the second chapter it is to the positive expression of his doctrine we now turn, is found in the Philebus and Republic. To the Philebus we will first give our attention to

discuss the preliminaries of the question.

We must remember that the thesis of the Philebus is to determine the relative significance of pleasure and knowledge in the good life of man. It has already been seen that neither can claim the first place, for neither is sufficient in itself to make man happy. However, one may be of more importance than the other in the mixture constituting the good and happy life.

All reality must be divided into four classes, the infinite ($\alpha\pi\epsilon\lambda\epsilon\upsilon\theta\epsilon\upsilon\sigma$), the finite ($\pi\epsilon\acute{\rho}\alpha\varsigma$), the mixed ($\mu\iota\kappa\tau\acute{o}\nu$), and the cause ($\alpha\iota\tau\acute{\iota}\alpha$).¹ The infinite is described best, perhaps, by a few examples. It is that which possesses the more or less in its very nature, so that it has no definite or determined degree, like the hotter and colder, the quicker and slower, the greater and smaller. The finite, however, does possess such a limitation and to this class belong the equal and the double, or whatever is a definite number or measure. The third class is clearly understood from the explanation of the first two, for it comes into being when number or measure is introduced into the higher or lower tones, for example, so that a definite harmony is arranged. The same applies to hot and cold weather to produce the perfection of the seasons. The fourth principle, cause, follows from the proposition that everything which comes into being, must necessarily have a cause for its being. The cause is naturally distinct both from that which it produces, the generation ($\gamma\acute{\epsilon}\nu\epsilon\sigma\iota\varsigma$), and that which is used for the generation, the matter. The generation, of course, is the

¹ Philebus, 23 c ff.

third class of mixture, and the matter is the first and second class, the infinite and finite, which are brought into combination.

Since all reality falls under one of these divisions, knowledge, pleasure and the mixture of both, which has been agreed upon is the good life, must take their place. It is evident from our explanation of the three classes to which class the mixed life belongs. It is of the third class. But what of pleasure? Pleasure and pain have no limit, but admit of the more or less, that is, they have degrees. Therefore, they belong to the class of the infinite, which has neither a beginning, a middle, nor an end. To classify mind Socrates appeals to the testimony of all philosophers that "mind is the king of heaven and earth,"² and that all things in the universe are not governed by mere chance, but are ordered and directed by mind and a marvellous wisdom. Hence, it is agreed, after some little discussion that mind is certainly akin to cause and thus belongs to the fourth class.

It is here that we enter into the formal discussion most pertinent to our chapter, the origin and nature of pleasure. Socrates' words earlier in the dialogue aptly introduces our problem.

...but pleasure I know has various aspects, and... we must consider and examine what her nature is. For when you just simply hear her name, she is only one thing, but surely she takes on all sorts of shapes, which are even, in a way, unlike each other. For instance, we say that a man who lives without restraint has pleasure, that the self-restrained man takes pleasure in his very self-restraint; and again that

² Ibid., 28 c.

the fool, who is full of foolish opinions and hopes is pleased, and also that the wise man takes pleasure in his very wisdom. And would not any person, who said these two kinds of pleasure were like each other, be rightly regarded as a fool?³

Continuing with the Philebus we will first examine the origin of pleasure and through the analysis of its origin arrive at a knowledge of its nature, as far as Plato chose to define its nature.

Pleasure and pain, as we have seen, belong to the first class, that of the infinite, since neither admits a limit in its own concept. We must now, however, consider the subject of the pleasures, the receptacle of the pleasures, and examine the actual conditions of the origin of pleasure and pain. It will be noted that we discuss the question of pain along with that of pleasure, because, as Socrates asserts, pleasure cannot be successfully examined apart from pain.⁴ Actual pleasure and pain are always found or arise in certain definite degrees in a living creature. Hence, they naturally originate in the combined class of the infinite bounded by the finite, which is the third class of the mixture. The subject of the pleasures and pains possesses a definite form and at any given moment the pleasures and pains themselves are of a certain definite degree.

Pain is generated whenever the harmony of nature is disturbed, that is, whenever the proper functioning of the parts according to nature is impeded or disrupted. But when this harmony is restored to nature, then pleasure comes into being.

³ Ibid., 12 c d.

⁴ Ibid., 31 b.

To illustrate we may use Plato's own examples. Hunger is pain, because it is a dissolution or breaking down process, while eating, which is the restoration or filling-up process, is pleasure.

Thirst again is a destruction and a pain, but the filling with moisture of that which was dried up is a pleasure. Then, too, the unnatural dissolution and disintegration we experience through heat are a pain, but the natural restoration and cooling are a pleasure.⁵

Therefore, we see that we have not only explained the origin, but defined the nature of pleasure. For

whenever in the class of living beings, which ... arises out of the natural union of the infinite and finite, that union is destroyed, the destruction is pain, and the passage and return of all things to their own nature is pleasure.⁶

In the ninth book of the Republic, also, we find a rather lengthy disquisition on pleasure, which gives us some insight on the nature of pleasure as Plato considers it. The discussion is important both for the new ideas, which it introduces to the theory being expounded, and because it corroborates the definition of pleasure already considered in the Philebus.

Socrates sets himself to the problem of the nature of pleasure itself after he has conducted a consideration of the three parts of the soul and the three kinds of pleasure proper to each part. This section of the discourse we shall take up later in the fourth chapter.

⁵ Ibid., 32 a.

⁶ Ibid., 32 b.

Pleasure is opposed to pain and there is a neutral state, which is neither pleasure nor pain. This neutral state is a sort of repose of the soul. People who are sick consider this mere rest and cessation from pain as the greatest pleasure. Yet, when these same people are in good health and without real pleasure this neutral state seems painful. But, pleasure and pain are really active states, movements, κινήσεις. Therefore, the mere absence of pain is not pleasure, neither is the mere absence of pleasure pain. The state of rest, which is said to be most pleasant or painful, is merely an appearance and not a reality, for it is but a matter of comparison with a previous state of acute pleasure or pain. Moreover, we have confirmation that pleasure is not cessation from pain, and the opposite, from the fact that there are some pleasures, which are not preceded by pain, for example, the pleasures of smell.

There is, then, let us say, an upper, a middle and a lower region. A person ascending from the lower region to the middle region, through ignorance, might believe that he has reached the upper region, and, conversely, a man descending from the upper region to the middle region might think that he has fallen to the lower region. This is the case of people who are inexperienced with the truth and have a wrong estimate of pleasure and pain, so that very often they consider the neutral state of rest as either pleasant or painful, when it is merely a cessation from one or the other. It is like making a comparison of black with gray because, through ignorance of color, the gray is considered white.

There follows then an argument to prove that the pleasures of the mind are more real and true, and thus superior to the pleasures of the body. At the moment we are not so much interested in the process of the argument and its conclusion, as in the ideas contained therein, which support our view of what Plato considered the nature of pleasure.

Which has more real being, that which is concerned with the invariable, the immortal, the true, and is found in the invariable, immortal, true; or that which is concerned with the variable and mortal and is found in the variable and mortal?⁷

Clearly, that which is connected with the invariable, for the invariable partakes of knowledge, truth and essential being in the same degree.

And if there be a pleasure in being filled with that which agrees with nature, that which is more really filled with more real being, will have more real and true joy and pleasure; whereas that which participates in less real being will be less truly and surely satisfied, and will participate in a less true and real pleasure.⁸

Therefore we have the conclusion that

Those who know not wisdom and virtue, and are always busy with gluttony and sensuality, go down and up again as far as the middle region; and in this space they move at random throughout life, but they never pass into the true upper world; thither they neither look, nor do they ever find their way, neither are they truly filled with true being, nor do they taste of true and abiding pleasure.⁹

⁷ Plato, The Dialogues of Plato, III, translated by B. Jowett. Oxford University Press, Humphrey Milford, 1924, 585 c.
⁸ Ibid. . . , 585 e.
⁹ Ibid. . . , 586 a.

The Republic thus adds a new note to the analysis of the nature of pleasure. Pleasure is a movement. But what sort of a movement? This is a rather general term, vague enough, which needs to be clarified. From Plato's argument in favor of the pleasures of the mind we find that pleasure is a movement, which is connected with a filling-up of that which agrees with nature. There is a familiar echo in these words of the explanation of pleasure in the Philebus. Moreover, the pleasures of the mind, which are the pleasures of the philosopher, are the real and true pleasures. But, in the philosopher's soul every part finds its own pleasure and its own satisfaction in perfect harmony. The definition of the Republic, then, seems to embrace and is clarified by the definition found in the Philebus. Pleasure is a movement which consists in the restoration of the harmony of any faculty according to its own nature.

That such was the belief of Plato we have confirmation from a passage in the Timaeus. Since it but repeats what we have already discussed we will quote only a brief part of it, more to strengthen the doctrine already expounded than to elucidate our position.

Now, we must conceive of pleasure and pain in this way. An impression produced in us contrary to nature and violent, if sudden is painful; and again, the sudden return to nature is pleasant, and that which is gentle and gradual is imperceptible...¹⁰

The notions of a sudden return and of the imperceptibility of certain pleasures will become clear from a later explanation of the kinds of

¹⁰ Plato, The Dialogues of Plato, III, translated by B. Jowett. Oxford University Press, Humphrey Milford, 1924, 64 c.

pleasure. What is to be noted especially, here, is the repetition of the ideas defining the nature of pleasure and pain. Pain is a dissolution of the parts of an organism contrary to nature but pleasure is the restoration of the harmonious functioning of the parts according to nature.

In determining the nature of pleasure only examples of the clearly physical pleasures were used to illustrate. Pleasure, it would seem, however, admits of a greater variety than the mere physical. The reality of the various kinds of pleasure, then, we must now study.

The first classification is a distinction between pleasures of the body and pleasures of the soul. The matter for our discussion of the kinds of pleasure will be taken from the Philebus, unless otherwise stated.

The satisfaction of hunger and the quenching of thirst are clearly physical pleasures, but "there is another kind of pleasure and pain, which belongs to the soul herself, apart from the body, and arises through expectation."¹¹ The pleasure of the soul is a mental anticipation of a restoration and has its origin in memory. Because of this connection with memory, Plato diverts from the main point for a moment to explain just what is meant by memory and recollection, but for our purpose it is not necessary to relate this whole discussion.

A man who is hungry or thirsty desires food or drink, or more precisely, being filled with food or drink. It cannot be the body that desires such repletion, for the body is at the moment undergoing depletion and it cannot be passing through two antithetic processes at the same time.

¹¹ Philebus, 32 c.

Hence, it is the soul, which desires the repletion and the soul does so in virtue of the memory of the opposite of the actual conditions of the body. One in such a state experiences both pain and pleasure at the same time, pain, because he is actually in a state of dissolution of thirst or hunger, pleasure, because he anticipates restoration or the filling-up of his hunger or thirst.

The force of the argument is this. Since the desire of repletion by means of the memory belongs to the soul, then also, the accompanying pleasure must belong to the soul. And, therefore, the classification of pleasures into those of the body and those of the soul is legitimate.

There is a further point to be noted here. Because of memory, a person is subject to the feeling of both pleasure and pain at the same time. There is pain by reason of the bodily sensation of hunger and thirst, but, since there is also an anticipation of being filled, there is, too, the pleasure of memory, which belongs to the soul. Plato wishes to emphasize that the pleasures we are speaking of are a mixed pleasure, that is, they are accompanied by pain of the body, and thus he paves the way for a distinction between the mixed and the pure pleasures. There is also another obvious reason for establishing this pleasure of the soul, namely, to smooth the path for an introduction of the pure pleasures of the soul, which have no connection with the body.

Before we arrive at the divisions of the pure pleasures, however, we are first led to consider the true and false pleasures, which are immediately suggested by the pleasures dependent on mental anticipation.

Plato wishes to establish that just as there are true and false opinions, true and false fears, true and false expectations, so there can be true and false pleasures, because they are based upon true and false hopes and opinions.¹²

Not for a minute does Plato believe that the feeling of pleasure, though false, is not real; no more than he believes a judgment ceases to be a fact, because it is false. Such an objection cannot be leveled at him.

There is such a process as judging and such a process as feeling pleased. For each, then, there is an object, for we always judge something or are pleased with something. In the case of judging, whether the judgment be true or false, it does not cease to be a real judgment. The same should apply to pleasure. A false feeling of pleasure, though false, would not cease to be a real feeling of pleasure.¹³

Protarchus, the antagonist in the Philebus, is however, unwilling to concede that pleasure may be false, though he willingly grants that pleasure admits the qualifications, "great," "small," "intense" and even "right or wrong." Pleasure, if it arises through a connection with false belief, is not in itself false, but the judgment only is false. He will grant nothing further.

We must consider, then, from the beginning that there is such a thing as true and false opinion, and that pleasure and pain very often follow them. The power of forming opinion comes from perception and memory. Our perceptions are like a writer, who writes the things perceived as words in our souls, and according as truth or falsity is written in us our opinions and statements concerning the things perceived will be true or false.

¹² Ibid., 36 c.

¹³ Taylor, Plato the Man and His Work, 421, Cf. Philebus, 37 a - c.

Then, we might regard memory as a painter, who paints images to picture the words written in our souls, and again true or false opinions will result according as the images illustrate true or false words.

Restricting ourselves to the pleasures and pains of the soul, we have seen that they are based on the anticipation of a future condition. The images, which we have just considered, relate to the past and the present, but especially to the future, "for we are always filled with hopes all our lives."¹⁴

Often a man sees an abundance of gold coming into his possession, and in its train many pleasures; and he even sees a picture of himself enjoying himself immensely. Shall we or shall we not say that of these pictures those are for the most part true which are presented to the good men, because they are friends of the gods, whereas those presented to the bad are for the most part false.¹⁵

The point Socrates is driving home he further clarifies. Opinions or judgments are true or false if they are, or are not, based upon reality. The same applies to pleasure. Although one may really feel pleasure, yet, if it is not based upon reality, either past, or present, or future, it is false. The good man generally has true pleasures because he has hopes of things consonant with the wishes of the gods, but the bad man generally has false pleasures because he desires in a day-dreaming sort of fashion things which are not pleasing to the gods, and are impossible of fulfillment, such as massive wealth. Fear, anger, or any of the other passions might be called true or false in a similar manner. It would seem, also, though Protarchus

¹⁴ Philebus, 39 e.

¹⁵ Ibid., 40 a b.

refuses to allow it, that pleasures are bad only when they are false and deceptive.

Socrates, however, defers the dispute on the matter of good and bad pleasure, interesting though it be, to insist on another argument in proof of the falsity of some pleasures.

It has been determined already that pleasure and pain may exist side by side when the body is feeling pain but the soul is experiencing pleasure through the anticipation of the opposite condition. Pleasure and pain have also been classified as infinite, admitting of degrees. In each case it is judgment which determines whether an anticipated pain or pleasure is greater or smaller or more intense when compared with its opposite or one another. But, we saw in the Protagoras that sight is very often deceived in noting the sizes of things because of distance, so that we often make false judgments. The same can happen in the case of pleasure and pain:

because they are seen at various and changing distances and are compared with one another, the pleasures themselves appear greater and more intense by comparison with the pains, and the pains, in turn, through comparison with the pleasures vary inversely as they.¹⁶

Therefore the pains and pleasures do not conform to reality in such cases and are false.

For the opponents of the thorough Anti-Hedonists there is also one last argument in defense of the division of pleasure into true and false. The term "thorough Anti-Hedonist" is not used by Plato himself, but by it is meant the school of thought, which spurns entirely the life of pleasure and

¹⁶ Ibid., 42 b.

thus seeks to reduce pleasure to a mere negation, the neutral state mentioned above. Plato, although an adversary of Hedonism, did not deny a certain positive value to pleasure as we shall see more clearly in our final chapter.

There are three types of life, one pleasant, one painful, and one neither of the two, so that mere freedom from pain or pleasure is not identical with pleasure and pain. A man, the thorough Anti-Hedonist, who says that to live all one's life without pain is the pleasantest of all things errs, for supposing that we have three things, one gold, one silver and one neither of the two, certainly that which is neither cannot become either one or the other. Therefore, those who think they feel pleasure when there is really a mere absence of pain, experience a false pleasure.

The point of view of the thorough Anti-Hedonist may be made use of in another way, namely, to classify pleasures according to their intensity. We have found that pleasure and pain are movements or changes, of which the dissolution of our natural state is pain and its restoration is pleasure. Certain philosophers inform us that there is always some change taking place in our bodies, for everything is in motion. But, just as we are not conscious of all the changes in us, for example, of growth and the like, so we are not conscious of every fluctuation and change causing pleasure and pain in us. It is more true to say, that

the great changes cause pains and pleasures in us, but
the moderate and small ones cause no pains or
pleasures at all.¹⁷

Thus we may assume that there are three states of life, one of pleasure,

¹⁷ Ibid., 43 c.

another of pain, and the last, the state of neither pleasure nor pain, the neutral state. The thorough Anti-Hedonist would have us believe that all pleasure is identified with this neutral state and this outlook on the life of pleasure is caused by his examination of the nature of pleasure. Although Plato does not agree with the conclusion of the Anti-Hedonist, in fact, vigorously rejects it, still the probing of the Anti-Hedonist into the problem of pleasure enables Plato to rank pleasures in the order of intensity.

The commonest and most intense pleasures are without doubt the physical pleasures, and, moreover, not the physical pleasures connected with health and moderation, but those found in disease. People, who are ill, experience great pain and suffering, and as a consequence, when pleasure does follow it is felt to be more intense and greater. For example, one who is suffering from a violent fever, experiences an intense thirst, and feels the most intense pleasure from a cooling drink. It is true of course that the diseased do not experience greater pleasure in the sense of a greater number of pleasures. We are speaking only of the degree of intensity.

If we consider further we shall observe that not only in a diseased body, but also in a diseased soul is the life of pleasure most intense. The self-restrained and virtuous, because they follow the principle, "μὴδὲν ἄγαν," avoid the extremely pleasant and seek only the more moderate, but the unrestrained and dissolute revel in riotous living and pursue only the greatest pleasure. Hence, we find that in the order of intensity the physical pleasure rank highest and of these, not those, which

exist in virtue, but those which exist in some depravity of soul or body, are the most intense.

It was precisely because of this result of the examination of pleasure that the thorough Anti-Hedonist refrained from attributing the name of pleasure to such depraved conditions and defined pleasure as a mere absence of pain. Plato, however, while admitting the truth of their examination, rejected their fastidious conclusion and doctrine. Plato's conclusion will be seen in the fourth chapter.

We have arrived now at the final analysis and classification of pleasures, that of the mixed and pure pleasures. All of the pleasures we have treated to this point of our thesis have been mixed with some pain, but now we shall find that the highest and truest pleasure is the pure pleasure, free from all pain. Let us first dismiss the mixed pleasures.

Some mixtures are concerned with the body only, and some belong only to the soul and are in the soul, and we shall also find some mingled pains and pleasures belonging both to the soul and to the body, and these are sometimes called pleasures, sometimes pains.¹⁸

Short work is made of the mixed pleasures of the body and of the body and soul together, for we have seen examples of these pleasures in our previous classifications. The mixed pleasures of the body occur,

whenever ... anyone has two opposite feelings, as we are sometimes cold, but growing warm, or are hot, but are growing cold.¹⁹

¹⁸ Ibid., 46 c.

¹⁹ Ibid., 46 c.

The mixed pleasures of the body and soul occur, when the body feels some such want as thirst or hunger, but the soul experiences the joys of anticipation.

The final mixture, that which pertains to the soul alone, though it requires slightly more ample explanation, since we have not discussed it hitherto, is likewise easily disposed of.

Anger, fear, yearning, mourning, love, jealousy, envy are generally reckoned to be pains of the soul. But, do we not find that they are also joined with great pleasures? Our reactions to the performance of tragedies and comedies furnish us with the best examples. It is a well-known fact that we enjoy the tragedy, though we weep in sympathy for the characters. Our souls experience pleasure and pain simultaneously. The case of the comedy is not so evident, but from a brief analysis we will observe that it also exemplifies the mixed pleasure of the soul.

Envy, we have admitted, is a pain of the soul, but there is pleasure mixed with it, because we see the envious man rejoicing in the misfortune of his neighbors. Ignorance, we also agree, is an evil. Now comedy is involved with ignorance and envy. There are three ways in which one may not know himself: first, in regard to wealth, he thinks himself richer than he is; second, in regard to physical qualities, he thinks himself handsomer or taller than he is; third, in regard to qualities of the soul, he thinks that he excels in virtue and wisdom, when he does not. All who place themselves into one of these foolish classes of conceit are either powerful or weak. If they are weak and unable to revenge themselves, their self-ignorance is ridiculous and they are laughed at. Hence we laugh at the

false conceits of our friends in regard to their strength, wisdom and so forth. But, ignorance is a misfortune, so we are laughing at the misfortunes of friends, and pleasure in the misfortune of friends is caused by the feeling of envy, which is a pain of the soul.

Then our argument declares that when we laugh at the ridiculous qualities of our friends, we mix pleasure with pain, since we mix it with envy; for we have agreed all along that envy is a pain of the soul, and that laughter is a pleasure, yet these two are present at the same time on such occasions.²⁰

There are also unmixed pleasures and these are the pure pleasures towards which the whole discussion of the classification of pleasures has been pointing as a climax. They are defined as

those arising from what are called beautiful colors or from forms, most of those that arise from odors and sounds, in short, all those the want of which is unfelt and painless, whereas the satisfaction furnished by them is felt by the senses, pleasant and unmixed with pain.²¹

Plato continues on to express a little more clearly and definitely that he does not mean by beauty of form such things as defined pictures of animals and paintings, but the pure geometrical forms, which are absolutely beautiful by nature and have no likeness to such pleasures as the scratching of an itch or the more vulgar pleasures.

I mean that those sounds which are smooth and clear and send forth a single pure note are beautiful, not relatively, but absolutely, and that there are pleasures, which pertain to these by nature and result from them.²²

20 Ibid., 50 a.

21 Ibid., 51 b.

22 Ibid., 51 d.

The pleasures of smell, though they are not of an exalted rank, truly belong to this class, because they are not conditioned by a previous state of pain.

To these pleasures of color, sound and smell, must finally be added the pleasures of knowledge, for they are not preceded by pain, since neither a lack of knowledge is painful like the pain of hunger, nor is the condition of having forgotten something that we would like to know on a particular occasion, a painful feeling in itself like the process of growing hungry after we have eaten.

Such are the pure pleasures. In them we have reached the crowning point of our whole analysis and classification of pleasure. They differ from all preceding types of pleasure in that they are entirely free from any antecedent pain and are not caused by contrast with any pain, but are always pleasant by their own nature. In their highest degree they consist in a contemplation of the pure colors, pure mathematical forms, in the contemplation of beauty and truth. They fulfil the conditions of our definition most perfectly for they bring our nature into the fullest harmony with all that is beautiful and true absolutely. Although they overflow upon the senses and by necessity use bodily functions as instruments, primarily they are pleasures of the soul. Unlike the mixed pleasures, which are very often characterized by violence and intensity, they are well-ordered and moderate. Finally, they are the truest pleasures, for just as we could say

that a little pure white is whiter and more beautiful and truer than a great deal of mixed white,²³

²³ Ibid., 53 b.

so we may say

that any pleasure, however small or infrequent, if uncontaminated with pain, is pleasanter and more beautiful and more true than a great or often repeated pleasure without purity.²⁴

²⁴ Ibid., 53 b c.

CHAPTER IV

THE ETHICAL VALUE OF PLEASURE IN PLATO'S THEORY

Having dismissed Plato's adversaries and defined the nature of pleasure, as Plato conceived it, we come now to the most important task of assigning the proper place to pleasure in Plato's scheme of life.

That the question of the moral force and value of pleasure was important to Plato we have no doubt when we consider that it was a problem, which occupied him, at least indirectly, from the very first of his dialogues to the latest. Moreover, in his two most important dialogues, the Republic and the Laws, it is connected with the major issues and Plato shows his concern for the problem of pleasure by his careful treatment of the question.

The purpose of this chapter will be to trace the progression of Plato's thoughts through the various dialogues in which he chose to treat of pleasure in regard to the conduct of one's life. It must be remembered that it is not within the scope of this thesis to criticize or evaluate, but merely to record Plato's theory of pleasure. There is sufficient difficulty in this task in itself, for as has been mentioned before, Plato showed no interest in the formation of theories and systems on each question and he did not make the systematizing of his thought easy for the student of his writings. Each dialogue is a unit in itself and, though there is a main idea or theme to each, yet the pursuit of the truth on each point is carried on in such fashion that a variety of topics are touched

upon. It is natural, furthermore, to expect changes of opinion and emphasis in writings, which extend over a long span of years and in which the mind of a man is depicted groping for truth. Truth, clear and defined, is not likely to have been grasped in the first attempts. Certainly, the later and more mature works of Plato give us a clearer and more balanced concept of the ethical value of pleasure.

It is debatable, therefore, because of the difficulties we have mentioned, whether an attempt to carve any theory from Plato's dialogues by comparing and weighing carefully the ideas contained therein can be completely satisfactory. But the difficulties that beset our present task do not make it an impossibility and prevent us from the attempt. Certainly, we believe, the general lines of his theory of pleasure, especially in its connection with the important moral issue of the right direction of conduct, are clear enough.

We begin, then, with the Gorgias. Since we have treated it rather fully in the second chapter we are interested now in the general conspectus rather than in its details. The dialogue is wholly taken up in combating the hedonistic doctrine, that pleasure and the good are identified, and that true happiness consists in the development and satisfaction of the appetite for the pleasures of sense and ambition. Some have been led by Plato's stern rejection of the life of pleasure to conclude that he contradicts or changes his opinion in later dialogues. The dialogue is likely to leave such an impression, but a little digging below the surface reveals the difficulty as but apparent. It is natural that Plato would vigorously

withstand the assaults of so open and frank an adversary as we meet in Callicles. Complete self-indulgence is the point of Callicles' arguments, and consequently the dialogue is concerned entirely with the pleasures of the body. The higher pleasures are dismissed with barely a mention. Plato's attitude to such a life is ever hostile. His strong defense of the life of a philosopher by contrast creates in us the impression that Plato is the stern defender of a life devoid of all pleasure. The truth of the matter is, however, that he is a staunch upholder of the life devoid of such pleasures as Callicles advocates. And this is consonant with his later views.

The latter part of the Gorgias could easily be included in any of the dialogues pertinent to our thesis. Plato proclaims that a man, who wants to be happy and guide his life in friendship with both God and man, should be temperate and control his violent desires in order to be just and brave and pious. Harmony or order is the source of goodness. If the soul is well-ordered it will be good and consequently happy. To be well-ordered the soul must be temperate and wise, just, pious and courageous. The life, which makes pleasure its guiding-star, will never reach this goal, but the life of philosophy, which fights against pleasure and pursues righteousness and virtue, will attain the good and happy life, here and hereafter.

The connection of the Gorgias and Protagoras has already been touched upon in our explanation of the opposite stand which the Protagoras seems to take to the identification of pleasure and the good. Convinced as we are that there is no contradiction involved in the doctrine of the

Protagoras, it must be admitted, nevertheless, that the tone of the Protagoras is more lenient. For the average man, it is accepted, pleasure and pain are the only norms of the good and the bad. But even thus considered, being overcome by pleasure, which is recognized as bad, is but a miscalculation and wrong choice of an immediate pleasure, because it appears greater at the moment than the pain to which it leads.

For the common mass of people, then, a science of measurement is required to correct their calculations. Thus knowledge, which may be equated with the life of philosophy, again becomes our aim.

Plato is less stern in that he grants that pleasure and pain must be the norm of conduct for the average man, because the ordinary people are, perhaps, incapable of anything higher, but Plato is consistent with his doctrine by maintaining that the average man must be instructed and trained in his calculations, so that he chooses the truest and lasting pleasures.

Turning to the Phaedo we find a very definite and emphatic separation of the soul and the body, and, consequently, of their respective pleasures. The spirit of the Phaedo seems to be even more antagonistic than the Gorgias in its outlook upon the pleasure-principle in man.

Socrates is on the point of death, and, as we might expect, the topic of the soul and its immortality is uppermost in his mind. Death is just what the philosopher seeks all his life, for death delivers the soul from the body. The true philosopher ought to reckon the body of no account first, because the pleasures of the body distract him from the pursuit of knowledge, secondly, because the bodily organs are not dependable witnesses of the truth.

The body is the source of endless troubles -- disease, fears, lusts, and is even the cause of wars and factions. The organs of the body, even the keenest of sight and hearing, are of no avail in grasping absolute beauty or goodness or justice. Only the mind can attain them. Hence, anyone who desires pure knowledge and its goal, truth, must separate himself as far as possible from the body.

The release of the soul from the body is the striving of the philosopher throughout life, so that he should have no fear of death, which completes the work for him. Whoever grieves at the approach of death proves that he is not a lover of wisdom, but a lover of the body, or a lover of money and power.

Courage and temperance, and by temperance we mean the calm control of the passions of the body, will be the distinguishing marks of the true philosopher. Most men are courageous only through fear, and temperate because they refrain from certain pleasures through a fear of losing others. But true virtue does not consist in an exchange of pleasures and pains. Wisdom is the true coin of exchange, and when fears or pleasures or similar goods are unaccompanied by wisdom there is no real virtue.

The value of this reasoning, of course, rests upon proof of the immortality of the soul, that the soul will have a future existence in which to use and perfect its intelligence. Therefore, we find the main theme of the immortality of the soul introduced here in the dialogue. At the conclusion of the first proofs for immortality the discussion of the soul of the philosopher is resumed.

The soul which has all its life long been given to the satisfaction of the bodily desires and the pursuit of the pleasures of the body will be drawn down to the earth and will wander about haunting tombs, until it is fettered to another body. The nature of the body into which the soul is re-born will be determined by the condition of its wrong-doing. Those given to the sensual pleasures of excessive eating and drinking will be given the bodies of asses or like animals. Those hardened in violence and injustice will return into wolves and hawks and such like beasts of prey. Those, too, who have practiced temperance and injustice without any intelligence or knowledge of the good will receive some more gentle social nature, as the body of bees or ants, or may even receive the body of man and give birth to moderate men like themselves.

Only the soul of the philosopher will return to the gods, because he has surrendered the delights and lusts of the body, not like the lovers of money from a fear of poverty, nor like the lovers of power and honor from a fear of ill-repute, but because philosophy has taught him the worthlessness of the senses and that a soul imprisoned in the body can never have communion with the pure and divine. Socrates, thus, declares at the conclusion of the remaining discussion on the soul,

Wherefore, let a man be of good cheer about his soul, who has cast away the pleasures and ornaments of the body as alien to him, and rather hurtful in their effects, and followed after the pleasures of knowledge in this life; who has adorned the soul in her own proper jewels, which are temperance and justice and courage and nobility and truth ... ¹

¹ Plato, The Dialogues of Plato, II, translated by B. Jowett. Oxford University Press, Humphrey Milford, 1924, 114 e.

A sterner rejection of pleasure and a more complete defense of the worth of the soul and of true knowledge will scarcely be found elsewhere in Plato's works. Are we to admit a contradiction then between the doctrine of the Phaedo and the doctrine of the Gorgias and Protagoras, as we interpreted it?

The dramatic setting is, we believe, important for the understanding of the Phaedo. Plato is rendering an account of the last hours of Socrates upon earth. The thoughts expressed are just what we might expect to come from Socrates on the occasion. Poised on the brink of death, Socrates would naturally underrate the value of pleasure and would enhance the value of the soul and its activities. Note well, also, that it is the pleasures of the body and those in excess that he especially berates. To conduct one's life under the guidance of knowledge, and in so far as possible, a knowledge of absolute values and the Supreme Good, is his ideal. In the other-worldly atmosphere of the dialogue it ought not to be wondered at, that he extends this ideal to its furthest limits.

Finally, all pleasure is not even here excluded from the highest type of life. There are higher pleasures, though they are mentioned but once, which accompany the life of the true philosopher and make it an object of desire. Plato does not choose to elaborate the point here, however, and if we wish to fill out and complete our picture we must look to other dialogues.

In the down-to-earth spirit of the Symposium we certainly find a more balanced concept of the companionship of soul and body. "The philoso-

pher's goal is no longer to cut himself off from all pleasure and desire but to rise by means of desire and love from the slavish infatuation for an individual to the adoring contemplation of supreme beauty."² However, aside from this justification of the emotions, the Symposium is not essential to our progression of Plato's thoughts on pleasure and we shall not spend further time here.

In the Republic, one of Plato's most renowned works, we find a very definite philosophy of pleasure to which very little new is added by Plato in the remaining dialogues. The ideas contained in the first book have already been treated in a special chapter devoted to the rejection of Hedonism. It is in the ninth book that the discussion most in line with the special problem now before us is taken up, the relation of pleasure to the conduct of life. However, before we proceed to this discussion, let us dispose of brief sections connected with our thesis in the sixth and eighth books.

In the beginning of the sixth book the qualities of the true philosopher are described. It is clearly stated that a true philosopher is certain to be temperate, because immersed in the pleasures of the soul he will scarcely feel bodily pleasure. It will be a sign, moreover, of his genuine philosophical nature that he does experience pleasure in learning, for it is accented as a fact that no one will love that which gives him pain.

This passage is remarkable as the first clear and definite statement that the life of a philosopher is not only the best life, but that it is not devoid of pleasure, in fact its pleasures are sweet enough to draw us away from bodily pleasures, which Plato in the Philebus admits are the

² Grube, 130.

the highest in point of intensity. This is but a preparation for further proof in the ninth book that the philosopher not only experiences pleasure, the truest and highest, but the most pleasure.

In the eighth book a distinction is made between the necessary and unnecessary pleasures. The necessary pleasures are the simple desires, which demand satisfaction by our nature, cannot be put aside and when satisfied confer some benefit upon us. The unnecessary pleasures are entirely the opposite. They can be repressed and should be, for they are contrary to our nature and when indulged do us harm. Let us make the distinction clear by using Plato's examples. A necessary pleasure is the eating of simple food, which produces health and strength in our bodies and without which we could scarcely carry on our work. The unnecessary pleasures of eating are those which go beyond the ordinary fare and not only cause harm to the body, but also distract the soul in its pursuit of knowledge and virtue.

The distinction is noteworthy for its more moderate view of the physical pleasures. Plato acknowledges that some physical pleasures are demanded by our nature and are, therefore, good for us. The necessary pleasures, then, are to be considered a part of the good life, which is the goal of all men's desires.

We approach now the more lengthy discussion of pleasure in the ninth book. The question broached in the first book is again taken up. Who is the happier, the good man or the bad? To decide the question properly we must consider that there are three parts in the soul and a pleasure proper to each. Corresponding to each of these three parts and their distinctive

pleasures there are three types of life, that of the lover of wisdom, which has its origin in the rational part of the soul, the love of honor, which belongs to the spirited or passionate part, and the lover of money, which finds its source in the appetitive part of the soul. The three lives are meant to characterize men by the principle or part which prevails in the soul.

If we were to put each of these three lives to the test and ask the votaries of each which life is the most pleasant, we would find each vouching for his own. The lover of money would extol the pleasures and advantages of wealth, which enables him to gratify his physical desires. The lover of honor and the lover of wisdom would do the same for the pleasures which are the proper objects of their life. How, then, are we to know the truth?

Three things according to Plato are necessary for a good judgment: experience, knowledge and the ability to express it. In the matter of experience the philosopher is surely the most able to judge, for he has necessarily, even as a youth, experienced the pleasures reaped from money and the gratification of the senses, and has also tasted the joys of success and honor. The lover of money and the lover of honor, however, have learned nothing of the delights, which spring from the search for the nature of things and for truth. As regards knowledge and the use of it through discussion, the philosopher is clearly supreme. Since then the lover of wisdom has the three requisites in the highest degree for forming a correct comparison and judgment we must bide by his decision.

There being, then, three kinds of pleasure, the pleasure of that part of the soul whereby we learn is the sweetest, and the life of the man in whom that part dominates is the most pleasurable.³

The second place falls to the lover of honor and to the lover of money and the physical pleasures is allotted the last place.

There follows then a discussion of the trueness of the pleasures of each life, but since it adds nothing to what we have already considered we shall omit it. Plato's final words on the question are, however, an important completion of our problem:

Then may we not confidently declare that in both the gain-loving and the contentious part of our nature all the desires that wait upon knowledge and reason, and, pursuing their pleasures in conjunction with them, take only those pleasures which reason approves, will, since they follow truth, enjoy the truest pleasures, so far as that is possible for them, and also the pleasures that are proper to them and their own, if for everything that which is best may be said to be most its own.⁴

In the Philebus we find much the same doctrine as has been expressed in the Republic. Although it may seem repetitious, a summation of the contents of the Philebus will be of confirmatory value.

The mixture of knowledge and pleasure was determined as the good life for men. Each were then considered separately and in detail. The dialogue concludes with a final discussion of the mixture.

The good and perfect life demands a mixture of pleasure and knowledge, because either by itself would be acceptable to no one. Three

³ Plato, Republic, II, translated by Paul Shorey. Loeb Classical Library, Wm. Heineman, London, 1935, 583 a.

⁴ Ibid., 586 d.

things must be added to make this mixture perfect, namely, truth, measure and proportion, and beauty, since beauty is an offspring of measure and proportion. All three might well be considered the cause of the goodness of the mixture, and hence are to be rated first in the scale of the good. Knowledge, since it is most akin to measure and proportion, beauty and truth, must follow after in the next place. The last place falls to the pure pleasures along with the necessary pleasures joined to health and self-restraint and without which our nature is unable to exist. The intense and greatest pleasures, which are the excessive physical enjoyments, are accounted of no value, because they create hindrances and disturbances to the good and happiest life. Hence they are excluded.

Our steps lead us finally to the Laws. This is the mature product of Plato's old age, rich with experience and a lifetime of thought. Here, if anywhere, we should expect to find a definite, sane and well-balanced philosophy of life. It is noteworthy, then, to discover the Laws in accordance with the doctrine we have seen expressed in Plato's earlier dialogues. If there is anything new, it is

an even fuller reconciliation to pleasure and a fuller incorporation of it as a necessary and valuable ingredient of the good life.⁵

The subject of pleasure is especially connected with the regulation of education. It is important to train the youth in the proper choice of pleasures, for whoever is brought up

⁵ Grube, 82.

unacquainted with the greatest pleasure and unused to endure amid the temptations of pleasure and is not disciplined to refrain from all things evil, the sweet feeling of pleasure will overcome ...⁶

Education must begin with the proper training of the pleasure-instinct, for virtue and vice manifest themselves to children under the guise of pleasure and pain. If the young are taught to love the proper pleasures consonant with virtue, when they do attain knowledge, they will find their souls in harmony with reason, and this harmony is virtue.

It should, moreover, be an offense worthy of the severest punishment to assert that wicked men lead pleasant lives. We must not admit that there are two separate lives, the righteous and the pleasant, for no one would choose any life devoid of pleasure. According to the judgment of the just man the righteous life is the most pleasant. Justice and pleasure are inseparable companions and form the happiest and holiest life. This judgment coming from a better soul must be true.

There remains but one section in the fifth book to be considered. It is important in so far as it recalls again the use of the calculus already noted in the Protagoras.

Pleasures and pains and desires are a part of human nature, and on them every mortal being must of necessity hang and depend with the most eager interest. And therefore, we must praise the noblest life, not only as the fairest in appearance, but, if a man will only taste and not as in the days of youth run away to

⁶ Plato, The Dialogues of Plato, V, translated by B. Jowett. Oxford University Press, Humphrey Milford, 1924, 114 e.

another, he will find that this nobler life surpasses also in the very thing which all of us desire, I mean in having the greatest pleasure and the least of pain during the whole of life.⁷

We must balance pleasure with pleasure and pain with pain in the comparison of lives, for all the lives of men are chosen by reason of pleasure and pain. If we find a man choosing a life, which is less pleasant than another we can say only that the choice is made through ignorance and inexperience.

We may say that there are four lives, the temperate, the rational, the courageous and the healthful to which are opposed the intemperate, the foolish, the cowardly and the diseased lives. Judging the one class against the other merely on the basis of pleasure we are forced to admit that the temperate, wise, courageous and healthy are far superior to their opposites.

And thus we must conclude that

generally speaking, that which has any virtue, whether of body or soul, is pleasanter than the vicious life and far superior in beauty, rectitude, excellence, goodness and reputation, and causes him who lives accordingly to be infinitely happier than the opposite.⁸

From beginning to end Plato was ever opposed to a life dominated by pleasure, a life which has no other goal but pleasure. The Gorgias and Phaedo are stern outbursts of his righteous indignation and well represent his fervid opposition to the doctrine which reduced our life to a mere grovelling for the intense physical pleasures.

⁷ Ibid., 732 e.
⁸ Ibid., 734 e.

Plato's severity, however, did not prevent him from seeing the fundamental truth which Hedonism exaggerated. Pleasure we must have in our lives, for it is rooted in our very nature to strive for happiness, and pleasure is a part of happiness. Our mistake lies in this, that we wrongly invert the proposition that the good life is always pleasant into the dogma that pleasure is the good, which should permeate and guide our life. It is the duty of education to correct our false opinion and show us in what the good life consists.

The well-ordered life of the philosopher, guided by reason and knowledge, is the noblest life. The philosopher reaches up into the absolute and studies the nature of things, because our nature will be developed and perfected only when we live in conformity with the absolute values of truth, beauty and goodness.

Everyone, however, cannot be expected to have the mind of the philosopher, and the young must reach the philosopher's perfection by slow stages. For these people pleasure may be assumed as the standard of conduct, but they must be made to realize that even then their choice of pleasures should be based upon knowledge. To live a life of riotous pleasure-seeking is wrong, because it is chosen in ignorance of the truest and lasting pleasures. Their choice of pleasures is a short-sighted calculation, and they never attain the happy life for which they are seeking. They must be instructed and trained to make the proper calculations for themselves, or failing that, to trust the calculations of the philosopher, who bases his life upon a genuine knowledge of the good. Following the footsteps of the

philosopher they will lead the good life and will come to taste its true pleasures, so that the false and deceitful pleasures can never tempt them to turn aside.

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