FOUR PUZZLES ON ARISTOTELIAN PLEASURES AND PAINS

by
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A Dissertation Submitted to the Faculty of the
DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY
In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
For the Degree of
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY
In the Graduate College
THE UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA

2012
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Signed: Emil Salim
I can only look back at the past six years of my life in Tucson with a profound gratitude. My first thanks go to my brilliant advisors. Prof. Julia Annas has been the most influential person during my training as an ancient philosophy scholar at the University of Arizona. She has been an amazing mentor, a role model for how to be an elegant philosopher, and a friend above all. Prof. Rachana Kamtekar is another person that has inspired me so much. Her clear thinking, sharp comments, and dedication to helping me finish this project stamped their mark everywhere in the dissertation. I would also like to thank Prof. Michael White from Arizona State University, whose constant encouragement and insightful feedback from the very beginning of this project were so essential for the progress of my work. Prof. Arthur Madigan, SJ generously agreed to serve in my dissertation committee despite his recent appointment as a chair in the philosophy department at Boston College. I am particularly grateful for his very detailed and incisive comments on the content and style of my dissertation drafts. Lastly, I thank Prof. Daniel Russell who is willing to make time to give very helpful suggestions on my dissertation even though he is in Melbourne at the moment. I feel incredibly blessed and honored to work with this fantastic group of elite philosophers.

The Arizona philosophy department as a whole has been very supportive of my effort to finish my studies. As the chair of Arizona philosophy department, Prof. Chris Maloney has given me his full support since the time I arrived in Tucson in 2006 to the very end. Professors Keith Lehrer and Uriah Kriegel kindly made themselves available to talk with me about my ideas. My fellow graduate students have been the most amazing interlocutors from whom I’ve learned so much. Debbie Jackson and Sandra Kimball are the most professional office staff I’ve ever met. I am very fortunate to be a part of this philosophical community. In addition, I would like to acknowledge the generosity of the family of the late Prof. Joel Feinberg who provided a fellowship for me in Fall 2010. I feel very honored to be able to pursue my graduate studies and research in a way that pays tribute to Professor Feinberg’s lasting achievements.

A special thanks goes to Prof. Kelly Clark at the Kaufman Interfaith Institute at Grand Valley State University in Michigan. He was the one who opened the way for me to pursue a career as a professional philosopher. I am forever grateful to him. I am very thankful for the constant support from my community at the Reformed Theological Seminary, Indonesia during the entire journey of my American years since 2003. Also, my family in Indonesia never stopped supporting me even though I was so far away from home. Philip Park kindly proofread the final draft of this dissertation.

Lastly, I would like to thank Fransisca Ting who always believed in me and stayed beside me, even during my bleakest hours in the Sonoran desert. To her I dedicate this dissertation.
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(Σαπφώ, Fr. 36)
CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES ........................................... 8

ABSTRACT ..................................................... 9

CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION .............................. 11
  1.1. The First Puzzle .................................. 12
  1.2. The Second Puzzle ................................ 14
  1.3. The Third Puzzle .................................. 16
  1.4. The Fourth Puzzle ................................ 17

CHAPTER 2. ONCE MORE WITH FEELINGS: ARISTOTELIAN PLEASURES
  REVISITED .................................................. 19
  2.1. The Tetrad .......................................... 19
    2.1.1. Pleasure Qua Unimpeded Activity of Natural State (T1) ... 20
    2.1.2. Pleasure Qua That Which Supervenes on Activity (T2) .... 26
    2.1.3. Pleasure Qua Passion (T3) ............................ 30
    2.1.4. Pleasure Qua Movement (T4) ......................... 33
  2.2. The Tetrad Reconciled ............................. 33
    2.2.1. T1 and T2: The Accidental Final Cause .............. 34
    2.2.2. T1 and T2: The Diplomacy of Passion ............... 53
    2.2.3. T1 and T3: Passive Power .......................... 64
    2.2.4. T1 and T4: Movement as a Kind of Activity ......... 70
    2.2.5. A More Pleasant Tetrad ........................... 72
  2.3. Answering Criticisms ............................. 73
    2.3.1. Urmson: The Enjoyment of Feeling ................. 74
    2.3.2. Frede: The Complexity of Pleasure ................ 76
    2.3.3. Riel: Activity Without Pleasure ................... 78

CHAPTER 3. THE MOVEMENTS OF THE HEART: ARISTOTELIAN PAINS REVEALED ..................... 82
  3.1. The Tetrad .......................................... 83
    3.1.1. Pain Qua That Which Supervenes on Passions and Activities (P2) ........................................ 84
    3.1.2. Pain Qua Activity (P1) ............................ 87
    3.1.3. Pain Qua Passion (P3) ............................. 95
    3.1.4. Pain Qua Movement (P4) ........................... 97
  3.2. The Tetrad Reconciled ............................. 98
    3.2.1. P1, P2 and P3: The Perceptual Model ................ 99
CONTENTS—Continued

3.2.2. P1 and P4: Alterations ........................................ 110
3.2.3. A Less Painful Tetrad ........................................ 112
3.3. Mirroring Pleasures: A Speculative Direction ............... 114
  3.3.1. Classifying Pleasures and Pains ........................... 115
  3.3.2. Pains as the Contraries of Pleasures ...................... 121
  3.3.3. An Application ............................................. 131

Chapter 4. The Ethics of Pain ........................................ 133
  4.1. The Aporia .................................................. 133
  4.2. Disentangling the Aporia ..................................... 135
    4.2.1. Evil and Its Avoidance ................................. 136
    4.2.2. The Evil of Pain ....................................... 142
  4.3. The Avoidance of Pain ...................................... 155
  4.4. The Constitution Relation Between Pain and Virtue ......... 157
  4.5. The Two Key Endoxa on Pain Reunited ...................... 167

Chapter 5. Recapitulating Passion: The Commentators on Plea-
sures and Pains .................................................. 170
  5.1. Aristotelian Pleasures and Pains in Ancient Testimonies .... 172
    5.1.1. Pleasures and Pains as Feelings ....................... 173
    5.1.2. Books VII and X of the EN ............................. 177
    5.1.3. Perceptibility in Pleasure and Pain .................... 179
  5.2. The Aporia .................................................. 181
    5.2.1. Alienation and Pain .................................... 190
    5.2.2. Pains as the Contraries of Pleasures .................. 207

Chapter 6. Conclusion ................................................ 214
  6.1. Summary ................................................... 214
  6.2. Reflections ................................................ 220
  6.3. Limitations and Future Directions .......................... 227

References ......................................................... 229
LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 3.1. Pains in Anger ............................ 108
In this dissertation, I formulate and solve four philosophical puzzles on Aristotle’s conception of pleasures and pains by using the Aristotelian dialectical method. The first puzzle concerns the nature of pleasure. In the *Nicomachean Ethics* book VII, Aristotle describes pleasure as an unimpeded activity of our natural state. In book X, however, he states that pleasure is something that supervenes on activity. I reconcile these two descriptions of pleasure by drawing on Aristotle’s scientific works and his works in ethics. By offering this holistic view, I argue that pleasure is a passion or a way of being affected unimpededly.

The second puzzle concerns the nature of pain. I develop a perceptual model to understand Aristotle’s conception of pain. I also propose a mirroring method to understand pain by utilizing Aristotle’s theory of contrariety. I argue that (1) like pleasure, pain is a passion; but (2) unlike pleasure, pain is a way of being affected impededly.

Aristotle observed that there are two seemingly conflicting ways of thinking about the nature and significance of pain. On the one hand, perhaps all kinds of pain are evil and must be categorically avoided. On the other hand, perhaps some pains are intrinsically good and necessary in a virtuous life. In the third puzzle, I explore these apparently competing conceptions of pain. I argue that the solution to the puzzle is to affirm the common intuition that all pains are intrinsically bad, but at the same time to reject the claim that pain must always be avoided at all costs.

Finally, I formulate a puzzle that comes from the work of Alexander of Aphrodisias, who entertains two opposing ethical intuitions concerning pain. The first intuition is that not all pains are bad, while the second intuition is that all pains are intrinsically bad. To solve the puzzle, I argue that pains are good insofar as they are a type of alienation. Furthermore, using Aristotle’s theory of contrariety, I argue that even
though all pains are intrinsically bad, it is not the case that all pleasures are good.
Chapter 1

Introduction

This dissertation is about the nature of Aristotelian pleasure and pain and their place in the good life. There are four philosophical puzzles that I shall formulate and solve with respect to these moral concepts. Two puzzles concern the nature of pleasure and pain, and the other two concern more specifically the place of pain in the happy life, which is a philosophical issue that has not received a full investigation in the philosophical literature on Aristotle. In structuring the dissertation using pairs of aporia-solution, I am using the Aristotelian method of dialectical argument, which is “a general exploration of the consequences of a set of views [viz., the endoxa], with special emphasis on the detection of inconsistencies.”

In analyzing and solving an aporia, what is needed is an explanation of why there are conflicting intuitions in the first place and how the conflicts may be reconciled. Such an explanation is provided in Aristotle’s ethical framework. In the EN, he says the following concerning ethical problems (1145b2–7):


We must first set out the way things appear to people, and then, having gone through the puzzles, proceed to prove the received opinions about these ways of being affected—at best, all of them, or, failing that, most, and the most authoritative. For if the problems are resolved, and received opinions (ta endoxa) remain, we shall have offered sufficient proof (dedeigmenon).

The “proof” is not necessarily meant to be scientific. Dialectical argument is a way to persuade people to accept our view from the premises they already accept. Aristotle’s point in this passage is that we need to try to solve the existing puzzles as best as we can and retain all of the endoxa if possible, or at least the majority of and the most authoritative of them. There isn’t a clear condition given by Aristotle for what can be considered as most authoritative (kuriötata). The most authoritative endoxon may be one that is seen as indisputable and the most plausible among the others.

Two points are important to mention here. First, Aristotle is not putting forward a general condition of adequacy for all proofs, but he is rather talking about giving a proof for a specific ethical case by disentangling paradoxes that follow from acceptable premises. If this has been achieved, then such a proof should be enough (hikanös). 4 Second, the task in analyzing the aporia is not simply making a set of propositions consistent, but also showing that the “received opinions remain,” which requires that we analyze all the remaining premises even though there is no longer any inconsistency.

1.1 The First Puzzle

The first puzzle is formulated as an attempt to solve the perennial debate about the nature of pleasure in books VII and X of the Nicomachean Ethics (EN). Aristotle scholars have pondered this issue for the last few decades and have arrived at some

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proposals. I believe that the existing approaches to the issue are piecemeal and unsatisfactory because they only use the descriptions of pleasure and pain that come from books VII and X of the EN. My approach is holistic in that it takes into account not only other books of the EN but also other works of Aristotle. This project, then, is an attempt to understand Aristotelian pleasures and pains not only from the ethical and dialectical points of view, but also from the point of view of the study of nature. I do not assume that there is a grand unity in the entire Aristotelian corpus. Even so, I think the works of Aristotle inform each other in a way that can result in a coherent position. I will explain Aristotelian concepts using the various resources that are available in his works. For example, the discussion about pleasure as activity in the EN will be informed by the discussion about energeia in Metaphysics Θ. The discussion about pleasure as a kind of supervenient end in book X of the EN will be informed by the discussion of ends in the Physics and Metaphysics. The discussion about pleasure as passion will be informed by the discussion in On the Soul about the way we are being affected. I am not claiming that Aristotle is always aware of how the concepts from his various books fit together. By reconstructing his views, I hope to show that his works are very nuanced and comprehensive, and that his view on pleasure and pain is not as fragmented as once thought.

I shall start the discussion of the first puzzle in Chapter II by reformulating the debate about the nature of Aristotelian pleasures. I begin with the discussion of books VII and X of the EN but quickly move to other parts of the EN and to other works in the Aristotelian corpus. Aristotle’s view of pleasure is multifaceted, because he believes at the same time that pleasure is an activity, something that supervenes on an activity, a passion, and a movement. I shall argue that the nature of pleasure is a passion or a way of being affected unimpededly.

5. Three of them, viz., that of Owen, Frede, and Riel will be discussed in the end of the next chapter.
1.2 The Second Puzzle

The second puzzle, which is the subject of Chapter III, is about the nature of pain. Because this topic is not within the radar of many Aristotle scholars, allow me to motivate the discussion. It is true that an oversight in a particular philosophical subject is often tolerable due to the grand landscape of the search for wisdom. Yet when what has been discriminated is a phenomenon that is often intolerable in human life, such as pain, it behooves us to offer an academic reparation. This is especially true in the ancient philosophy scholarship with respect to the subject of pain in Aristotle’s ethics. Unlike the topic of Aristotelian pleasures, the discussion of Aristotelian pains is very minimal in the extant Greco-Roman philosophy literature, be that ancient or contemporary.

My discussion about the nature of pain will mirror the discussion of the nature of pleasure, which is in the form of formulating a puzzle and solving it. Hence the discussion of Aristotelian pains is not justified only by the fact that there is a lacuna in the scholarship, but also because there is a philosophical difficulty about the nature of pain that needs to be solved.

Two initial considerations for discussing pain more in depth are in order here. First, we must be careful not to conflate relative terms with independent qualities. We can surely speak of what is good and bad as relative terms, just as we can judge that a half-full glass is a half-empty glass. Goodness and badness as independent (and contrary) qualities, however, are not relative terms—at least not obviously. They have unique characteristics that are irreducible to one another. Hence the discussion of what is good does not necessarily exhaust the discussion of what is bad. The same idea can be applied, mutatis mutandis, to the concepts of pleasure and pain. For

experiencing half-pleasure is not the same, at least not intuitively, as experiencing half-pain: we don’t always feel pain when our pleasure decreases to half. It is indeed worth investigating whether there are significant metaphysical asymmetries between pleasure and pain.\(^7\)

Second, in Aristotelian ethics, virtuous people should understand and be aware of both pleasure and pain. It will not do just to say that if we’re virtuous, we would know what to do about pain just as we do about pleasure. Studying the nature of some ethical elements is necessary in order to clarify ethical concepts. This necessity is clearly shown by Aristotle himself in his discussion of the nature of pleasure in book VII of the EN. In chapter 12, he talks about the goodness of pleasure by way of clarifying the nature of pleasure as activity. It is reasonable for us to investigate the nature of pain as well to understand its moral relevance in a better way. In other words, the ethical questions with respect to pain are naturally and intricately accompanied by some questions about what pain really is.

In EN IX.9, Aristotle in fact promises to clarify what the nature of pain is (1170a24–25), but he unfortunately does not. But there must be some clarification about what pain qua the exact opposite of pleasure is. At the outset, it appears that discussing Aristotelian pains is like opening Pandora’s jar, disclosing all human ills, and sorting them one by one. Pain is a multifaceted beast. Similar to his view of pleasure, Aristotle’s account of pain in EN is complex and wide-ranging. He doesn’t explicitly offer a unified account of the nature of pain and its place in the good life. There is not much material in Aristotle about pain other than in the ethical and psychological works. Hence my investigation will revolve around these works, though it will utilize discussions from other books as well, including the logical, physical, metaphysical, and biological works.

7. I should clarify here that the word “metaphysics” or “metaphysical” that I use in this dissertation refers not to metaphysics qua first philosophy but to physics or natural philosophy as the study of nature.
Chapter III will utilize the same structure that is present in Chapter II. Aristotelian pain is also an activity, something that supervenes on an activity and on passion, a passion, and a movement. How to reconcile all these descriptions? The strategy is to utilize a perceptual model of pain. Using this model, I will argue that pain is in fact also a way of being affected, and ultimately a movement of the heart. Pain is different from pleasure as in pain there is an impediment in the activity. It is not my intention to present a full-fledged discussion of Aristotle’s theory of perception. I shall rely on a reading of Aristotle’s theory of perception that fits with my overall interpretation of Aristotelian pain as the passive counterpart of an activity. In the end of Chapter III, I suggest a mirroring method to understand the nature of pain by discussing the meaning of contrariety in relation to pleasure and pain.

1.3 The Third Puzzle

In Chapter IV, I proceed by asking an important ethical question: How should, then, we live in the labyrinth of life that is full of pain? This question will be formulated in an aporia about pain that is present in the EN. Hence the third puzzle concerns the place of pain in the good life. On the one hand, there is an endoxon which states that pain is bad and that it is to be avoided. On the other hand, there is another endoxon stating that pain is constitutive of virtue and a necessary part of the good life. To my knowledge, this aporia hasn’t been recognized or stated explicitly in this way by contemporary Aristotle scholars.

My solution to the aporia is going to be twofold. First, I reject a blanket statement that says that whatever is evil is to be avoided. Second, I also reject the claim that pain is always to be avoided in any kind of circumstance. This means that pain that is present in the exercise of some virtues should not be avoided at all costs. In solving the aporia, I also connect the issue of pain with the general notion of virtue and

8. If there is a Greek phrase for “the passive counterpart of an activity”, it would be ἡ ἐνεργεία ἡ, pathētikos (activity qua passive).
with the various virtues that are relevant to the topic. In formulating and solving the puzzle, I do not rely on my previous analyses of the nature of pleasure and pain, although my conclusions in this chapter will be compatible with the claims I make in the previous two chapters.

1.4 The Fourth Puzzle

Chapter V will present the last puzzle, which is an *aporia* that is formulated most clearly by Alexander of Aphrodisias in his *Ethical Problems*. The puzzle concerns how pleasure and pain supervene on activity, and whether they are good or bad in relation to the goodness or the badness of the activity on which they supervene. To solve the puzzle, I shall gather resources primarily from the writings of Alexander and Aspasius as the most important ancient commentators on Aristotle’s ethical works.9

In this last major chapter, I will argue that my interpretation of Aristotelian pleasures and pains as feelings echoes the readings of Alexander and Aspasius. Next, I formulate an ethical *aporia* about pain that is present in Alexander’s ethical writings. Alexander doesn’t try to solve the *aporia*, but he discusses the conflicting *endoxa* separately. The first discussion will assume that all pains are bad, and the second one assumes that not all pains are bad. I will show that Alexander entertains both possibilities and presents a coherent view about the place of pain in an Aristotelian good life. Drawing on Alexander’s own writings to solve the puzzle, I argue that pains are good insofar as they are a kind of alienation. Furthermore, using Aristotle’s theory of contrariety, I argue that although all pains are intrinsically bad, it is not the case that all pleasures are good.

With these expositions of Aristotle’s position on pleasure and pain and with the discussions of the ancient commentaries, through this dissertation I hope to offer

a fresh look at the nature and the ethics of Aristotelian pleasures and pains in a flourishing life.
Chapter 2

Once More With Feelings: Aristotelian Pleasures Revisited

Why, you might ask, did I write another treatise on the nature of Aristotelian pleasure when the debate on this issue seems to have arrived at a stalemate? Those who are familiar with Aristotle scholarship in the past few decades would agree that while the place of pleasure in the Aristotelian good life is much less controversial, the nature of Aristotelian pleasure is still buried in a conundrum. The debate on this latter issue usually assumes that there is a tension between books VII and X of the Nicomachean Ethics (EN). Such an approach is piecemeal, I would argue, because it doesn’t take into account the discussions of pleasure in the rest of the ethical works, let alone the entire Aristotelian corpus. It is my intention to discuss the nature of pleasure afresh and in a wholesale approach.

In this chapter, I shall reformulate the lingering puzzle about Aristotelian pleasures in the form of an unhappy tetrad (section I), and propose a new account of Aristotelian pleasures that will hopefully reconcile the tetrad (section II). I’m going to argue that Aristotelian pleasure is a way of being affected unimpededly. It is a pathos that we experience when we are doing an unimpeded activity. That is not the whole story, of course, but a big part of it. In the end of this chapter, I’ll discuss some criticisms of Aristotelian pleasures that are present in the secondary literature, and show how my reading might address those worries (section III).

2.1 The Tetrad

The unhappy tetrad on Aristotelian pleasures is a set of propositions that are prima facie inconsistent if held together:
T1 Pleasure is an unimpeded activity of our natural state.¹

T2 Pleasure is something that supervenes on an activity.

T3 Pleasure is a passion.

T4 Pleasure is a movement.

All these propositions are textually grounded in Aristotle’s corpus.² Let’s take a look at each element in turn to see why one might think that they constitute an inconsistent set of claims.

2.1.1 Pleasure Qua Unimpeded Activity of Natural State (T1)

Book VII of the *Nicomachean Ethics* (*EN*) is the main source of this claim. Let me quote two passages from chapter 12:

> Again, since one kind of good is an activity (*energeia*), while another is a state (*hexis*), the processes that restore a person to his natural state are only incidentally pleasant. The activity in the appetites is the activity of the state and nature that remain, since there are also pleasures that do not involve pain and appetite, such as those of contemplation, in which case one’s nature is not lacking in anything. (1152b33–1153a2)

1. T1 stands for Thesis #1.

2. One might think that these descriptions are modes of being pleasure, just as substance, quality, etc. are modes of existence (see *Metaphysics* Z VII.1). There are four reasons to refrain from adopting this suggestion. First, Aristotle’s project in the discussions of pleasures and pains in books VII (1154b33) and X (1174a13) of the *EN* is to explain what pleasure and pain are. Hence Aristotle offers an account of pleasure and pain, not just a list of different ways of speaking of pleasure. Second, if “activity” were a way of speaking of pleasure (just as “substance” is a way of speaking of or a mode of being), then Aristotle would become a hedonist. The reason is that Aristotelian happiness is a rational activity, which would have to be a kind of pleasure if activity were just a mode of being pleasure. But Aristotle never says that happiness is pleasure, although he does say that happiness is pleasant. Third, “being” is spoken of in many ways as substance, quality, etc. Properly speaking, we do say that substance is a way of being, but not the other way around: Aristotle never says that being is a substance or a quality. But in the case of pleasure, although he does say that unimpeded activity is a pleasure (*EN* 1153b13), he also says that pleasure is an activity. Fourth, there is no discussion of pleasure in the *Categories* in the way that “being” and “having” are discussed in the treatise.
For pleasures are not comings-to-be, nor do they all even involve coming-to-be, but they are activities and constitute an end; nor do they result from our coming to be something, but from our exercising our capacities. And not all pleasures have an end distinct from themselves, but only those of people who are being led to the completion of their nature. This is why it is wrong to say that pleasure is a perceived coming-to-be. What we should rather say is that it is an activity of one’s natural state, and that it is unimpeded rather than perceived. It is because it is a good in the real sense that some people think it is a coming-to-be, believing that an activity is a coming-to-be; whereas in fact they are different. (1153a9–17)

Three other relevant passages appear in chapter 13, all of which suggest that pleasure is an unimpeded activity:

And if there are unimpeded activities of each state, whether the activity of all of them or of one in particular constitutes happiness when unimpeded, that one must presumably be the most worthy of choice. But pleasure is an unimpeded activity, so the chief good might be some kind of pleasure, even if it so happens that most pleasures are bad without qualification. (1153b9–14)

And this is why everyone thinks that the happy life is pleasant, and weaves pleasure into happiness—reasonably enough, since no activity is complete when it is impeded, and happiness is something complete. (1153b14–17)

It is obvious, too, that, if pleasure—that activity—is not a good, it will not be true that the happy person has a pleasant life. (1154a1–2)

In their immediate context, these passages are a part of Aristotle’s rejoinder to those who think that pleasure can’t be a good, let alone the chief good in human life. His opponents are mistaken, according to him, because they identify pleasure too narrowly only as something remedial, viz., as a process of convalescence in the

3. I think this last sentence is elliptical and should be understood as “that it is unimpeded [activity] rather than perceived [coming-to-be].”

4. Who are these people who think that pleasure is a coming-to-be? Broadie and Rowe mention Theaetetus 152d–153d which suggests that it is motion, and not rest, that brings goodness into human life. See Aristotle, Nicomachean Ethics, trans. and comm., with an introduction by Christopher J. Rowe and Sarah Broadie (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 402. For example, it is by the motion of learning that people become smart, not by rest or idleness.

5. This sentence doesn’t suggest that a happy person has only what is good. The context of the passage is that people actually avoid pain as evil and pursue pleasure as good.
case of illness or as a process of replenishment in the case of hunger and thirst. If pleasure were a remedial process, it might be true that pleasure can’t be the chief good, for a process is always eyeing towards an end outside of itself. Aristotle instead suggests that pleasure is not a coming-to-be (genesis). In the case of replenishment, pleasure is the “activity of the state and nature that remain,” viz., it is the activity of the state and nature of the soul that remain intact, because they weren’t in need of replenishment. Pleasure does not even always involve a coming-to-be or pain, as in the case of the pleasure of contemplation. Rather, pleasures are said to be unimpeded activities of one’s natural state, which are an end in themselves. This statement is conceptually dense. Let’s unpack it.

First, pleasure is said to be an activity (energeia). *Metaphysics* Θ is the most elaborate discussion of Aristotle’s view of activity. Unfortunately, Aristotle doesn’t give any definition of activity. Instead, he suggests that we understand what activity is by means of analogy (to analogon) (1048a37–1048b6): “because as what builds is to what can build, and what is awake to what is asleep, and what is seeing to what has closed eyes but has sight, [so is] what has been separated off from the matter to the matter, and what has been finished off to what is unwrought. Of these contrasts let the actuality be defined by the one part, the potential by the other.” These are different cases of activity, but all point to a common notion that activity is either an exercise of capacity or an actualization of potentiality, or both. Whether we should translate *energeia* as “activity” or “actuality” depends on the context. For example, “what has been separated off from the matter” seems to be an actualization of a

8. One qualification needs to be made when we talk about the relation between activity and its corresponding capacity, for there is at least one instance of activity that doesn’t have a corresponding capacity. See Beere, *Doing and Being*, 316. God’s thinking, for example, is eternal and does not involve any capacity that is being exercised. In the scholastic term, God is the *Actus Purus*, i.e., the Pure Activity that is free from any capacity.
potential to be cut off from the matter. The reason is that “being separated” from the matter is not really an activity, but rather a realization of the power that lies in the matter. On the other hand, seeing seems to be an activity, i.e., an exercise of the capacity to see, instead of an actualization. In the case of seeing, however, the difference between activity and actualization is not very significant, for one can still insist that the activity of seeing is some sort of actualization of the potentiality to see. That being said, it remains that a more natural way to describe verbs such as seeing and hearing is to label them as activities, and not actualizations. In book VII, when Aristotle describes pleasure as *energeia*, he may be saying that it is not only an activity, but also an actualization of a capacity, analogous to the activity of seeing as an actualization of a capacity. This definition is consistent with what is said in 1153a10–11, that pleasures arise (*sumbainousin*) from exercising (*chrōmenōn*) capacities.

Second, pleasure is not just any activity, but it is an activity that is unimpeded. Happiness (*eudaimonia*) is also characterized by Aristotle as an unimpeded activity, for it is a condition of self-sufficiency and completeness in which a person can live without any hindrance (cf. *EN* 1099b29 and *Politics* 1295a37). People who are lacking basic necessities such as bodily and external goods can’t be happy, let alone those who are far from being fortunate, e.g., those who are lying helplessly on the rack. Given the fact that there are conditions that must be fulfilled for something to be happiness, Aristotle wants to characterize pleasure also as something that is unimpeded, so he can at least argue that pleasure satisfies the formal constraints of being a legitimate candidate for the chief end of human life, i.e., happiness: “Since every faculty has its unimpeded activity, the activity of all the faculties, or of one of them (whichever constitutes happiness), when unimpeded, must probably be the most desirable thing there is; but an unimpeded activity is a pleasure” (1153b10–13).

In what way, then, is pleasure said to be an unimpeded activity? There is no straightforward answer to this question in the ethical works. One thing to note is
that in the biological works, Aristotle emphasizes the importance of the movement of animals being unimpeded. The arrangement of the parts of the animals, he believes, can be explained in terms of their harmony in that they don’t hinder each other. For example, the bull can’t have horns on its feet or knees because that would hinder its movements. But if the horns are positioned in its head, the movements will be unimpeded by nature (*anempodista pephuken*) (*Parts of Animals* 663b11). Likewise, the uterus of a bird is better to be low down in the body to fulfill its function without hindrance, and this is because the end of its work (i.e., giving birth) is low down in the body (*Generation of Animals* 718b25, cf. *History of Animals* 636a36). When speaking of seeing, Aristotle writes that the eye must have the right amount of liquid to function properly: “for it has neither too little so as to be disturbed and hinder the movement of the colours, nor too much so as to cause difficulty of movement” (*GA* 780a23–25). The impediment to sensation can also arise from too much of body fat (*pimelē*), presumably because the blood circulation within the body is obstructed (*PA* 651a36–651b2). In the *Physics*, Aristotle talks about the impediment of movement of natural elements. For example, air naturally moves upwards, unless there is an impediment that cuts short the realization of its activity (*energeia*) (255b20). In the *Metaphysics*, necessity (*anagkē*) is said to be a hindrance to choice and is something painful (*lupēron*) (1015a28). Finally, the *Topics* mentions that disease (*nosos*) and ugliness (*aischos*) are hindrances to pleasure and being good (118b34). In all of these cases, impediment is always contrasted to the realization of a capacity. I would like to suggest that pleasure as an unimpeded activity is unimpeded insofar as there is no holding back of the realization of the activity.

Third, pleasure is an unimpeded activity of our natural state. What does “natural state” refer to? It is quite safe to assume that what is natural here is something more normative than descriptive. The natural state is the state as it is supposed to be. One indication that what is natural is normative is the fact that Aristotle identifies the natural state as the end of the process of replenishment (1152b34, 1153a3) that
is not lacking anything. In the Physics, which is a work about “nature”, one meaning of “nature” is simply the end for the sake of which a process terminates (194a28–30). Again, he says that what is natural in things that are self-movers tends to proceed to the same direction towards the same end, unless there is an impediment (199b15–17). If we look again at the biological works, it seems that what is natural in a human body is defined in terms of functionality. Hence the place of bodily organs is natural if they are arranged in a way that is optimal for a certain species to move, reproduce, and survive. In the same way, a body is supposed to be replenished so it can function properly. Colloquially, surely we can say that it is natural for us to be hungry and thirsty, but this is not the way the body is supposed to be. What is normatively natural is for the body to be lacking nothing.

Another notion of what is natural occurs in book III.1 of the EN, in relation to voluntariness. Forced actions, according to him, are painful (1110b11–13). In Rhetoric 1370a9–10, he suggests that force is something unnatural (para phusin). That’s why what is compulsory is said to be painful. If pleasure is an unimpeded activity of our natural state, it can’t be something that is forced.

Next, Aristotle says that there are unimpeded activities of each state (1153b9–10), and this is [a] pleasure (touto d’estin hêdonê) (1153b12). But pleasure can’t be identical to just any unimpeded activity. The reason is that pleasure is said to constitute an end (telos) (1153a10). If pleasure is an end, then it can’t have another end outside of itself. There are activities that are complete in themselves, such as bodily perceptions and contemplations. When one sees something, then the completeness of the activity depends on nothing else outside of the activity of seeing itself. The same is true with contemplation. When we are contemplating something, we entertain in our mind a subject-matter that is already known to us. By contrast, there are activities that are not ends in themselves, such as building. Building requires an end outside of itself, viz., for something to be built. In the same way, learning requires an end outside of itself, viz., to understand the subject-matter. Hence building and learning can’t be
pleasures because they are not ends in themselves. Accordingly, pleasures as ends in themselves might not be identical with activities that are not ends in themselves. We may exclude building, learning, and the like, but include perceiving, feeling, and thinking or contemplating, and other activities that constitute an end.\(^9\)

Let’s sum up what we have so far. T1 says that pleasure is an unimpeded activity of our natural state. On my reading, this claim says that pleasure is an actualization of a capacity that resides in our natural state. The actualization is unimpeded insofar as there is no glitch or hindrance in its realization. Furthermore, the realization must be of the natural state, i.e., the state the way it is supposed to be when it is free of any lack. There is also a hint that pleasures can’t be identical to just any activities, for pleasures are ends in themselves, and some activities like learning and building are not.

A careful reader would notice that even though I incorporated discussions from other works of Aristotle to understand the nature of pleasure as stated by T1, I did not mention book X of the \textit{EN}. There is a merit in temporarily isolating the discussion of pleasure to book VII, simply because I don’t want to assume the unity of the books in the \textit{EN}. There is no consensus, for example, about whether book X is a treatise that was meant to be a continuation of the account of happiness in book I or of the account of pleasure in book VII. Later in this chapter, however, I will argue that there is only one account of pleasure that is present both in books VII and X.

\subsection*{2.1.2 Pleasure \textit{Qua} That Which Supervenes on Activity (T2)}

The second element of the tetrad (T2) says that pleasure is something that supervenes on an activity. The most controversial bit of writing in book X is in chapter 4, where

\(^9\)My view is similar to that of Bostock, who excludes walking and building as instances of pleasure, and insists that pleasures are only to be found in the activities of perceiving and thinking. See David Bostock, “Pleasure and Activity in Aristotle’s Ethics,” \textit{Phronesis} 33, no. 3 (1988): 256ff., 271–272. But Bostock limits pleasure as something that occurs only in the mind. My account of pleasure says that bodily pleasures occur in the body, though the mental perception of such pleasures can itself be a (second-order) pleasure.
Aristotle says that pleasure completes the activity “not as the inherent state does, but as a sort of supervenient end (epiginomenon ti telos), like the bloom (hōra) on the faces of young men” (1174b33). The supervenience relation is unclear. Most conservatively, we can just say that pleasure is something that accompanies activity. In chapter 5, Aristotle goes on to say that the pleasure proper to an activity enhances the activity, “because those who engage in activity with pleasure show better and more accurate judgement” (1175a31–32). The language used here suggests that pleasure is different from the activity on which it supervenes. If pleasure were identical to the activity, it would not make much sense to say that pleasure enhances the activity proper to it.

T1 and T2 are the propositions that make up the perennial debate concerning pleasure in Aristotle’s EN, viz., the debate about the tension between the accounts of pleasure in book VII and X. In book VII, as it has been said many times, Aristotle defines pleasure as activity. Some Aristotle scholars, notably Gosling and Taylor, think that there is an identity relation between the two. However, in book X, Aristotle says that pleasure is something that supervenes on the activity, which might suggest that pleasure can’t be the activity itself, but must be an added entity to the activity. Riel takes this opposing position. Let’s see whether we can look at the debate anew.

10. I will keep using the word “supervenes” to translate epiginetai. Although this word is not ideal because it is used in contemporary philosophy of mind with different meanings, it is the word that is used in the secondary literature on Aristotelian pleasure.

11. See Gosling and Taylor, *The Greeks on Pleasure*. Furthermore, Taylor sees pleasure as encompassing a broad account of positive attitudes towards action, whether in the past, present, or future: “Pleasure in an action may consist in enjoyment of the action, or in being pleased to do it, or eager anticipation of it, or being glad to have done it, and so on.” See Taylor’s commentary of books II–IV of the EN in Aristotle, Nicomachean Ethics: Books II–IV, trans. and comm. C. C. W. Taylor, Clarendon Aristotle Series (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2006), 73. Taylor is correct to say that pleasure is instantiated in these positive motivational attitudes. What I’m proposing in this chapter is an account of pleasure that will explain all these instances of pleasure in Aristotle’s writings.


13. Warren takes a moderate position and suggests that the account of pleasure in book VII and the one in book X are two discrete accounts that sometimes overlap and repeat themselves. See James Warren, “Aristotle on Speusippus on Eudoxus on Pleasure,” *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy*
To begin with, the claim in book VII that pleasure is identical to unimpeded activity is still disputable. The reason is that in the entire EN, and even in book VII, Aristotle also uses a language which suggests that pleasure is not identical to activity, but something that arises from it.

1. In book I, Aristotle mentions pleasant things (*ta hēdea*) such as noble and virtuous actions that ultimately bring pleasure (*hēdonē*) to the virtuous person (1099a15–17). The pleasure comes from the doing of such actions itself, and not from other things such as obtaining external goods. Aristotle also says earlier in the immediate context, that a horse (a pleasant thing) gives pleasure to the horse lover, and that just actions (pleasant things) give pleasure to the lover of justice. It seems clear in this passage that the pleasant thing (e.g., an activity) is not the same as the pleasure that comes out of it.

2. In book II, he explicitly talks about pleasure that supervenes on deeds (*tēn epiginomenēn hēdonēn tois ergois*) (1104b4–5). Here pleasure and pain are said to be a sign (*sēmeion*) of a person’s states, since virtues are concerned with pleasures and pains in one person’s soul. For instance, those who are not distressed in abstaining from some bodily pleasures are seen as temperate, while those who find it distressful are intemperate. The word *epiginomenēn* appears here, and it may be understood as signifying an accompaniment relation, viz., that pleasure accompanies deeds, which might be understood as including some activities. It is most natural to read pleasure as something different from the deeds on which it supervenes.

3. Still in the same passage, Aristotle comments: “For virtue of character is concerned with pleasures and pains: it is because of pleasure that we do bad actions, and pain that we abstain from noble ones” (1104b8–9). Pleasure and pain are

stated here as the reason for actions. Furthermore, Aristotle insists that pleasure or pain comes after (hepetai) every action (praxis) (1104b14–15). Again, he thinks that we regulate our actions (kanonizomen) by pleasure and pain. But we can’t be too quick in moving from the facts that (i) pleasure can serve as a reason for action and (ii) pleasure can regulate our action, to the conclusion that (iii) pleasure is ontologically different from action. However, we can say based on these passages that there is a prima facie reason to see pleasure as different from the activity it regulates.

4. In book VII, Aristotle uses the two words “pleasures” (hai hêdonai) and “pleasant things” (ta hêdea) interchangeably as though the two were the same. Nevertheless, a careful look at some passages will prove that there is a conceptual difference between them. One passage that explicitly states such a difference is 1153a6–7, that “there is the same distinction between various pleasures (hai hêdonai) as there is between the pleasant things (ta hêdea) from which they arise.” Immediately in EN 1153a9–15, after asserting that pleasures are activities, Aristotle continues by saying that they arise (sumbainousin) from the exercise of our faculties, which again suggests that pleasures are different from activities.

5. Finally, even in book VII Aristotle says that “the pleasures arising from contemplation and learning will make us contemplate and learn all the more” (1153a22–23). Pleasure enhances the activity on which it supervenes, and doesn’t seem to be identical to the activity.

Despite these arguments, we still can’t know for sure whether pleasure is really not identical to activity. The reason is that it is still possible to say that Aristotle does not use very precise language when saying that pleasures “arise” or “follow” from activities. He might simply say that when we are doing activities and find them pleasant, we are seeing them as pleasures. The same can be said about the claim that
pleasure regulates activity. Aristotle might just mean that pleasure regulates activity in that we choose to do only activities that are pleasures. Given these possibilities, we are still stuck in the tension between book VII and X of the EN.

2.1.3 Pleasure Qua Passion (T3)

T3 adds a new zest to the debate, making it more complicated, but at the same time provides a way for a better solution. It is my conviction that Aristotle also sees pleasure as a passion (pathos). For the purpose of my conceptual analysis, let me make a clear cut distinction between passion and feeling/emotion (all of which come from the same Greek word pathos). In the following, I shall use the word “passion” to translate pathos understood broadly as a way of being affected. The word “feeling” or “emotion” will be used to refer to passion that involves rational beliefs, such as anger and joy. Hence in my language, non-human animals can have passions, but they might not have feelings or emotions. Human babies, too, can have passions, but they might not have fully formed feelings or emotions if these require high-level beliefs.

The following texts are sparse, but strong textual evidence for the claim that pleasure is a passion:

1. Pleasure is called by Aristotle as a passion (pathos) that is hard-wired in us since infancy (1105a3–4). It is described by Aristotle as a passion that is hard to rub off, if it is even possible at all. This stance is not necessarily Epicurean, because Aristotle doesn’t say that our first impulse is pleasure. Instead, he simply says that pleasure and pain have been present since childhood. This latter claim can also be made by the Stoics who believe that our first impulse is towards self-preservation, not the pursuit of pleasure. But what is more important here is the blunt assertion that pleasure is a passion.

2. In 1109b9–10, Aristotle writes that as the elders were affected by Helen, we must be affected in the same way with respect to pleasure (dei pathein kai
hemas pro tén hēdonēn). That is to say that we must not succumb to pleasure, just like the Trojan elders at the Scaean gate are not affected by Helen’s beauty. They were happy to let her go back to Menelaus.

3. In 1117b27–31, pleasure is seen as a way of being affected:

A distinction should be drawn between pleasures of the body and those of the soul. As examples of the latter, consider love of honor and love of learning, since, in each case, when the person enjoys what he loves, it is not his body so much as his mind which is at all affected (paschontos).

4. In the discussion of incontinence (1150b23–25), Aristotle says:

By noticing and seeing what is coming, and rousing themselves and their capacity for calculation, they [are not defeated by] what affects them (hupo tou pathous), whether the thing is pleasant or painful.

It is plausible to read this passage as saying that incontinent people succumb not only to pleasant or painful things, but also to pleasures and pains that arise from those pleasant things. That this is so can be seen in the beginning of chapter 7 of book VII (1150a9–13):

Earlier we defined intemperance and temperance as concerned with the pleasures and pains arising from touch and taste, and the appetites for them and aversions to them. One can be so disposed as to succumb even to those that most people rise superior to, or to master even those that most people succumb to.

5. Another indication that pleasure is a passion occurs in the book of friendship (1156a30, 1156b2). Aristotle says that young people live according to passion (kata pathos), and that’s why they pursue pleasure.

6. In the Eudemian Ethics, Aristotle explicitly says that passions are separated or distinguished by pleasure and pain (ta de pathē lupē, kai hēdonē, diōristai)
The fact that passions are divided into pleasure and pain is clear from its immediate context, because Aristotle is claiming that the powers and states in our soul are the powers and states of the passions. It is at this point that he explains that passions can be distinguished into pleasures and pains.

7. *Metaphysics* IV seems to assert that pleasure is an affection (1022b15–21):

We call an affection (*pathos*) . . . injurious alterations and movements, and above all, painful injuries; experiences pleasant or painful when on a large scale (*ta megethē tôn sumphorōn kai luperōn*) are called affections (*pathē*).

8. In *Generation of Animals*, the pleasure (*hēdonē*) of coition is called a passion (*pathos*) (721b14–17).

These passages strongly indicate that pleasure is a *pathos*, viz., a way of being affected. It is not just any way of being affected, but being affected in a way that is in accordance with nature. *History of Animals* 589a8 states that whatever is according to nature is pleasant. One instance of being in accordance to nature might be seen in *Sense and Sensibilia*, which says that the pleasure of taste comes when there is a perfect ratio of the gustatory objects (442a16–17). In general, the pleasures of the senses are present when the objects of sense organs are brought into proper ratio (*On the Soul* 426b4–8).

One important note is crucial here, viz., that the word “passion” as applied to pleasure and pain shouldn’t be understood as episodic emotional responses, but more as a way of being affected in general. The word *pathos* does not signify a passion whose characteristics can be known independent of any activity. In fact, pleasure is a way of being affected when one is engaged in an activity.
2.1.4 Pleasure Qua Movement (T4)

The last element of the tetrad (T4) says that pleasure is a movement. If indeed T3 is correct, that pleasure is a passion, then pleasure must be a movement, too. In *On the Soul* 417a15, experiencing passion (*paschein*) is seen as interchangeable with being moved (*kineisthai*) (see also 431a5, 434b29). The movements are also related to the heart’s being moved in one way or another (432b31–433a1). Moreover, it is clear from *Physics* 247a16–17 that bodily pleasures and pains are alterations (*alloiōseis*) of the sensitive part (*aisthētikon*).14

A more troubling account of pleasure as movement appears in the *Rhetoric*, which suggests that pleasure is the process of replenishment towards a natural state (1369b33–35). Aristotle starts the sentence in this Rhetoric passage hypothetically: “let it be assumed that so and so” (*hupokeisthō*). This suggests that he will use this definition as a working definition in the *Rhetoric*, although this definition will not be, strictly speaking, scientifically accurate. In fact, he mentions many kinds of pleasure as well in that book, e.g., the pleasure from loving and being loved, from conversations, and from remembering. These latter pleasures can’t be remedial. His discussion of pleasure in the *Rhetoric* is a broad sketch of the subject-matter, which is useful for a rhetorician to hold when he is dealing with other people’s emotions.

2.2 The Tetrad Reconciled

What is Aristotelian pleasure, then? I will argue that it is the passive counterpart of a complete activity, such as, bodily sensations, feelings, and thinking. Being a passive counterpart of an activity, pleasure is not ontologically different from activity, although it has a different account. Pleasure is a way of being affected when we are doing these activities, but only when we are affected in a way that is in accordance

14. Virtues and vices as states (*hexeis*) are not alterations. However, since they are concerned with pleasure and pain, their coming into being is “with alteration” (247a19). See Stephen Everson, *Aristotle on Perception* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), 270–271.
with nature. Pleasure is not the final end of an activity in the sense of “for the sake of which”, but it is a final end in the sense of the terminus of an activity. As I said in the beginning of the chapter, there are only three apparent conflicts in the tetrad that need to be solved, viz., between T1–T2, T1–T3, and T1–T4.

2.2.1 T1 and T2: The Accidental Final Cause

One of the issues in the debate about the different accounts of pleasure in books VII and X of the *EN* is about the identity relation between pleasure and activity. T1 seems to suggest that pleasure is identical to activity, while T2 seems to deny the identity relation because it says that pleasure supervenes on activity. The bridge between T1 and T2 has two parts. The first is an understanding of pleasure as what I shall call an accidental final cause, which will be discussed in this section.15 The second part of the bridge is T3, viz., that pleasure is a passion (*pathos*), which will be discussed in the next section.16

Owen has proposed a creative solution to solve the tension between books VII and X. In his view, we need to understand pleasure in book VII as a pleasure, viz., an enjoyed activity, such as gaming, that is seen as one pleasure among many, whereas pleasure in book X is the enjoyment of the activity.17 On his view, there is no tension between the two books, for each book deals primarily with a different conception of pleasure, viz., about what is being enjoyed (book VII) and about the characteristic of the enjoyment (book X). The characteristic of the enjoyment is that it is something

15. The term “accidental final cause” is not present in Aristotle’s works. I use this term because of the similarity between it and chance (accidental efficient cause). I will discuss this similarity shortly.
that enhances the activity on which it supervenes. In book VII, pleasure can’t be an end-directed process such as convalescence but must be an activity that constitutes an end such as the activity of a healthy body.\footnote{18. Owen, “Aristotelian Pleasures,” 140.} On Owen’s reading, the discussions of pleasure in the two books are not conflicting, but complementary. The word “pleasure” is ambiguous, but once we are clear about which sense of the word we are talking about, we can understand what pleasure is quite clearly. Owen’s proposal is undoubtedly ingenious, and what I’m going to do is to give another reading of Aristotle’s works. My reading will differ from Owen’s in that I see that there is only one account of pleasure in books VII and X. If my effort succeeds, it will revoke Owen’s declaration of independence between books VII and X.\footnote{19. Ibid., 147.}

Let me present one potential difficulty with Owen’s thesis. Suppose that book VII is mainly talking about what we enjoy, and that book X is talking about the characteristic of enjoyment. A problem here is that the reading must assume a shift of meaning in the word for “pleasure” that appears in the chapters. In book VII, Aristotle still identifies pleasure as activity in 1153a16, which means that Aristotle is talking about what we enjoy, instead of the characteristic of enjoyment. Just six lines afterwards, Aristotle says that pleasures that arise from contemplating and learning will make us do them more (1153a22–23). In Owen’s reading, the pleasures here must be understood as the characteristic of enjoyment, instead of what we enjoy. But three lines afterwards, Aristotle identifies pleasure as activity again (1153a25), which means that here now pleasure must once more be understood as what we enjoy. I found the shifting of meanings in Owen’s reading to be arbitrary. There is no indication that Aristotle is changing the meaning of pleasure at all in book VII. The sentence in 1153a22–23 proves to be a stumbling block for Owen’s strategy. Moreover, in book X, Aristotle gives an argument against the view that pleasure is a process or a coming-to-be, and he puts forward the view that pleasure is an activity (1173b3). On
Owen’s reading, this must be understood as what is enjoyed, not the characteristic of enjoyment. Based on these observations, I conclude that there is no sharp line demarcating the difference of understanding of pleasure in books VII and X.

In fact, both books VII and X are arguing that pleasure is not replenishment (1153a2ff., 1173b11), that pleasure is activity (1153a14, 1173b3), and that pleasure arising from an activity enhances the activity (1153a20–22, 1175a36), and both use the pleasure arising from contemplation as the paradigm example of pleasure (1153a1, 1175a1). These similarities are substantial, which suggests that Aristotle might not be talking about two different meanings of pleasure (i.e., what is enjoyed and the characteristic of enjoyment) in the two books. I shall argue that Aristotle identifies pleasure both as an activity (*qua* actualization of a potentiality) and as something that supervenes on activity (such as perceiving or thinking, which is also an actualization of a potentiality), and that there is only one account of pleasure that would explain both descriptions.

To begin with, recall that pleasure is an unimpeded activity of our natural state (T1). Is T1 asserting an identity claim between pleasure and activity? There is a sense in which pleasure is an activity, but it is not the case that pleasure is identical to activity in every respect. Even if there were an identity claim between pleasure and activity, pleasure wouldn’t be identical to just any activity. It would be identical only to activities that constitute an end. We may say that bodily sensations and thinking are pleasures. The reason is that the end of these activities is located in the very activity itself. The end of bodily sensation is nothing other than the sense perception itself, and the end of thinking is nothing other than the activity of contemplation itself. But we can’t say that learning and building are instances of pleasures because their end is external to the process of learning and building. In the case of learning, the end would be having learned or the possession of wisdom. In the case of building, the end is either having built the house or the house that is built. The same can be said about replenishment. Pleasure is not replenishment because replenishment
doesn’t have an end in itself. However, we can get pleasure from replenishment, viz., from the sense of taste. Such a sensation is the activity of the healthy state that remains in one’s body (1152b35–36). As Aristotle says in book VII, pleasures are not comings-to-be, and they don’t always involve comings-to-be. However, there are pleasures that are related to comings-to-be, e.g., the pleasure of taste that arises from the activity of tasting when someone is in the process of replenishment by means of eating. In the same way, we can say that there is a pleasure we get from building, viz., the pleasure that comes from bodily sensations that are involved in the process. But building is not an Aristotelian pleasure because it is not complete in itself. Teaching and learning can’t be pleasures either, because teaching and learning are processes.

That being said, one important step to reconcile books VII and X is to recognize *energeia* not only as referring to activities such as smoking and gaming, but also to the actualization of a capacity. Smoking and gaming would be instances of an actualization of a capacity. Aristotle is arguing for this fact, viz., that in general pleasure is an actualization of a capacity since it is the result of exercising a capacity (1153a11). Once he shows that pleasure is an activity in the sense of an actualization of a capacity that is complete in itself, it would seem that pleasure can be a good candidate for happiness, a conclusion that he intended to reach in the first place.

Will this put him at risk of becoming a hedonist? The answer is negative, for he hasn’t talked about whether we should engage in activities for the ultimate and exclusive sake of pleasure. However, the conclusion that pleasure can be a good candidate for happiness is exactly what Aristotle wants to present to his opponents, who are doubting that pleasure can be the chief end of human life. Remember that Aristotle is arguing against those who think that pleasure can’t be the final end. What Aristotle is doing now is showing that such a position is untenable because there is actually a reason to see pleasure as an unimpeded activity. Since an activity has an end in itself, it follows that pleasure is not a process, and pleasure can as well be happiness.

At this point, however, Aristotle will need to make a further move to show that
even though pleasure is an instance of an actualization of a capacity, it is not the right kind of actualization of a capacity that will suitably be happiness. This task is done more explicitly in book X, where he finally suggests that perceiving and thinking can’t be pleasure, for that would be odd (*atopon*) (1175b34). How exactly this task is done is something that I will show in this and the next section.

I shall begin by asking the following question: “In what way is pleasure different from perceiving or thinking, if they are both actualizations of a capacity, but pleasure is also said to supervene on activity?” One way to answer this question is to say that pleasure is an entity different from perceiving or thinking. These two different entities don’t have to be able to exist independently of each other. A proponent of this kind of view would recognize Aristotle’s insistence that pleasure can’t exist apart from activity, simply because “they are not found separately” (1175b35). Nevertheless, this view would propose that pleasure is something that is above and beyond activity, as a surplus or a by-product of an activity. Later I will give a critique of this view.

But now, I will suggest a reading of Aristotle that is ontologically parsimonious. I will argue that pleasure is different from activity, but only in its account. There is a sense in which pleasure is activity, but pleasure is different from activity because pleasure is the passive counterpart of an activity (T3), viz., its very end when the activity terminates in some sort of affection or being acted upon by something. Hence pleasure is not a by-product of an activity, but pleasure is the end of an activity. It is not, however, an end in the sense of “for the sake of which”, but rather an end in the sense of a terminus.

Hence in my view, Aristotelian pleasure in fact is something that we experience, something that happens to us. When one is eating, for example, the tongue and the throat are being affected. If the affection is agreeable to nature, e.g., neither too hot nor too cold, then the affection is found pleasant. The affection itself is pleasure.

20. Riel, “Does a Perfect Activity Necessarily Yield Pleasure?”
But this affection/pleasure is the passive counterpart (i.e., the end) of the activity of
eating, and hence it is not ontologically different from the activity of eating, but it is
different in its account.

Look again at the description of pleasure in *EN* 1152b35–36. Pleasure is said
not to be replenishment, but the activity in the appetites (*en tais epithumiais*) of
the healthy state that remains in one’s body. What exactly is this activity in the
appetites? I mentioned above that this is the activity of sense organ, viz., taste and
touch.

One justification for this suggestion comes from Aristotle’s arguments for the unity
of the soul in *On the Soul* II.3. After he mentions that there are different kinds of
psychic powers, viz., the nutritive, the appetitive, the sensitive, the locomotive, and
the intellective, he is faced with the task of explaining how these parts of the soul
are united. I will just focus on the unity between the nutritive, the appetitive, and
the sensitive. First, there is a unity between the sensitive part of the soul and the
appetitive part (414b1–6):

> If any order of living things has the sensory, it must also have the ap-
> petition; for appetite is the genus of which desire, passion, and wish are
> the species; now all animals have one sense at least, viz. touch, and what-
> ever has a sense has the capacity for pleasure and pain and therefore has
> pleasant and painful objects present to it, and wherever these are present,
> there is desire, for desire is appetition of what is pleasant.

The argument here may be laid out as follows:

1. All animals have the sense of touch.
2. All animals are sensitive.
3. Whatever is sensitive has the capacity for pleasure and pain, and has pleasant
   and painful objects present to it.
4. Whenever these are present, there is desire.
(5) But desire (epithumia) is appetition (orexis) of what is pleasant.

∴ (6) Hence whatever is sensitive is appetitive.

Second, the nutritive or digestive part is connected to the appetitive and to the perceptive (414b6–14):

Further, all animals have the sense for food (for touch is the sense for food; the food of all living things consists of what is dry, moist, hot, cold, and these are the qualities apprehended by touch) all other sensible qualities are apprehended by touch only indirectly. Sounds, colours, and odours contribute nothing to nutriment; flavours fall within the field of tangible qualities. Hunger and thirst are forms of desire, hunger a desire for what is dry and hot, thirst a desire for what is cold and moist; flavour is a sort of seasoning added to both.

The argument here is as follows:

(1) All animals have the sense of touch.

(2) Whatever has the sense of touch is nutritive (for touch is the sense for food).

(3) All animals are nutritive.

(4) Whatever is nutritive hungers for what is dry and hot, and also thirsts for what is cold and moist.

(5) Hunger and thirst are forms of desire.

(6) But desire is appetition of what is pleasant.

∴ (7) Hence whatever is sensitive is nutritive and appetitive.

Let’s limit our discussion to animals that only have these three parts or aspects of the soul (i.e., the sensitive, the nutritive, and the appetitive). Suppose we agree that in the soul of these animals, there is a unity between the sensitive, the nutritive, and the appetitive. These are the parts of the soul that are present in the animals.
Pleasure, according to Aristotle, is the activity in the appetites of the state and nature that remain. What is this activity that is pleasure? Fortunately, Aristotle gives us examples of such an activity, which is actually instances of the activity of perception: that convalescing people even enjoy sharp and bitter things ( EN 1153a5), and these are examples of the activity of taste, which is a form of the activity of touch ( On the Soul 434b18). Later on, Aspasius in his commentary on the EN will deny that pleasure is in the domain of the nutritive soul, but maintain that it must be in the perceptive soul (147, 18–23). And in both arguments above, we see that the fact that animals are appetitive is explained by the fact that animals are perceptive, and not the other way around. I suggest that the activity in the appetites that is pleasure is nothing other than the activity of perception, for perception always involves appetites for what is pleasant. In the event of perception, there is a low level evaluation of what is good and bad concerning the perceptibles, and appetite is at work at that point.

Pleasure is said to be an unimpeded activity of our natural state (T1). As I said above, activity here should be understood as the actualization of a capacity. Eating, smoking, and gaming are instances of actualization of capacity. However, being affected is also an instance of actualization of capacity, because there is a potentiality to be affected that can be actualized. Hence understanding pleasure as a being-affected in a natural way is compatible with the description that pleasure is an unimpeded actualization of our natural state.

Pleasure is also said to supervene on activity (T2). Here the explanation is more challenging. First, I should mention that the word that is translated as “supervene” is the Greek word epiginetai, which can simply means “accompany”. Hence the supervenience relation between pleasure and activity is open for analysis. Second, the supervenience relation must be understood in terms of pleasure as something that completes activity by being a supervenient end (hōs epiginomenon ti telos) (1174b33). Third, activity must have an end in itself (1153a10). Hence if pleasure is the end of activity, pleasure must not be something external to activity, but must be in the ac-
tivity itself, for an activity must be complete in itself. How do we bring these three points together?

The answer is that pleasure supervenes on activity by being the terminus of the activity. Here an entry in Aristotle’s lexicon from Metaphysics Δ 1021b12–1022a3 is most helpful. Aristotle gives three meanings of “complete”. Now I will just quote the passage on the third meaning:

We call complete . . . (3) The things which have attained a good end are called complete; for things are complete in virtue of having attained their end. Therefore, since the end is something ultimate, we transfer the word to bad things and say a thing has been completely spoilt, and completely destroyed, when it in no way falls short of destruction and badness, but is at its last point. This is why death is by a figure of speech called the end, because both are last things. The ultimate thing for the sake of which is also an end.—Things, then, that are called complete in virtue of their own nature are so called in all these senses, some because they lack nothing in respect of goodness and cannot be excelled and no part proper to them can be found outside, others in general because they cannot be exceeded in their several classes and no part proper to them is outside; the others are so called in virtue of these first two kinds, because they either make or have something of the sort or are adapted to it or in some way or other are referred to the things that are called complete in the primary sense.

There are two meanings of “end” given by Aristotle in this third meaning of “complete”. First, there is an end in the sense of a last point (epi tōi eschatōi ēi) (Metaphysics Δ 1021b28). The end is called the end simply insofar as it is the terminus. But note that the ideal terminus must be something good. Second, there is an end in the sense of “for the sake of which” (Metaphysics Δ 1021b29–30). This second sense of “end” is what is properly called the final end, although the first sense of “end” can also be called a final end in that it is the final point of the activity, but not “for the sake of which”. Pleasure is called a supervenient end by Aristotle, and it is not a final end in the sense of “for the sake of which”, but rather simply the last point of an activity, and it is a good last point, which is present in the activity itself.

There are three arguments for the claim that even though pleasure is a final end,
it is not a final end in the sense of “for the sake of which” but merely as the ultimate thing. First, in book X, pleasure can’t be the final end of activity in the sense of “for the sake of which” because after saying that pleasure completes activity as a supervenient end (1174b33), shortly afterwards in the very same chapter Aristotle is still undecided about whether we “choose life for the sake of pleasure or pleasure for the sake of life” (EN 1175a18–19). And life is a kind of activity (1175a12). Hence it can’t be the case that Aristotle is making an assertion that pleasure is that “for the sake of which”. That is actually something that he is still pondering himself.

Second, it is true that if we look at the analogy that Aristotle gives, we might think that he categorizes pleasure as a final end in the sense of “for the sake of which”, because he says pleasure is an end just like health is an end of being healthy (hugiainein) (1174b26). Now, it is true that we can understand health as the final end (that for the sake of which) for medical art (EN 1097a19) or the final end (that for the sake of which) of the actions that will make us healthy (EN 1111b27–28). However, this is not the only way to understand health in relation to one’s being healthy. In what way, then, is health the cause of one’s being healthy? Just like “end” has a twofold meaning, “health” has a twofold meaning as well. Health can be the final end in the sense of that “for the sake of which”, but health can simply be the final end in the sense of being the terminus of being healthy (hugiainein). Health can also be seen as the activity or the actualization (energeia) of that which is capable of being made healthy (On the Soul 414a9–12). On the flip side, if someone is able to do the activity of “to be healthy”, then she is already in the condition of health: “for when a man is healthy (hugiainei), then health (hugieia) also exists” (Metaphysics 1070a22–23). In this sense, health is indeed a cause (aitia) of being healthy because health produces the activity of being healthy, not in the way the doctor produces one’s being healthy. Rather, the terminus of being healthy is health, which in turn enables and enhances the activity of being healthy itself. And it is exactly in this sense that pleasure as the terminus of an activity enhances the activity, by enabling
the unimpeded activity to be engaged longer and better.

Third, the famous analogy of the bloom on the faces of young men (EN 1174b33) strengthens this reading. For the word ἡόρα can simply mean season or springtime. Just like winter will pass and springtime finally comes, young men will arrive at their primetime. But once they arrive at their primetime, they will be able to act more vigorously and unimpededly (e.g., without an arthritis). It is in this sense that pleasure relates to activity, viz., as its ultimate stop, but not as its goal. However, pleasure is a sort of condition to engage more rigorously in the activity. Rhetoric 1361b7ff. in fact brings together the idea of health and primetime beauty. Just as health is the condition for the ability to act healthily, “for a man in his prime, beauty (ακμαζόντος) is fitness for the exertion of warfare, together with a pleasant but at the same time formidable appearance.” And as health is the one that enables one to use (χρῄσιμον) the body more effectively (Rhetoric 1361b8), primetime beauty enables one to act more speedily and vigorously. In the same way, pleasure is nothing but the exercise of capacity (χρῄμενόν) (EN 1153a10), which in turn will enhance the very activity itself.

Is there a room in Aristotle’s theory of causes to insert a variation of the final end that is not that “for the sake of which”, but only a terminus? The answer is positive, because Aristotle actually has done something similar with the efficient cause. After he is done explaining that there are only four aitiai for natural objects in Physics II.3 195a15 and again in II.7 198a22, in chapters 4–6 he needs to explain how spontaneity and chance are also causes (195b31). His solution is to see chance and spontaneity as a variation of the efficient cause, in that they are accidental efficient causes (198a1–5). And what is interesting is that the difference between the proper efficient causes and the accidental efficient causes is that the latter is in some sense deprived of the full meaning of “for the sake of which”, for a form of ignorance is involved in cases of

chance.  

We see a parallel strategy here because Aristotle is saying that besides the proper final end as that “for the sake of which”, there is a variation of the final end that consists solely of being ultimate, but deprived of that “for the sake of which”. We can, then, call this final end the accidental final end. In fact, Aristotle says that health can be produced not by art, but instead spontaneously (tautomaton) (Metaphysics 1034a10). If health that is “for the sake of which” can be called an essential final end, health that comes from spontaneity or automatically can be called an accidental final end because it is not something that is aimed at “for the sake of which”. In the absolute sense, an accidental final end is not a cause at all (Metaphysics 1065a34–35), or if it were anything like a cause, it would be a very inefficient cause. And by making space for an accidental final end, Aristotle now can talk about bad things like death and corruption as something complete and also a final end, but not in the sense of that “for the sake of which”, but merely as the ultimate points.

Admittedly, my use of the term “terminus” for pleasure qua supervenient end is disadvantageous. The reason is that the term suggests that there is a sort of duration elapsed between the beginning and end of an activity. But if activity is not a process, and hence without any duration, then the term “terminus” is applicable to activity not without qualification. Moreover, the term “terminus” suggests a kind of limit

22. The example from Physics 196b33ff. is about a person A who is collecting money from another person B. When A went to a certain place for another purpose, unbeknownst to him, B was there, too, and he was able to collect the money from B that day even though he hadn’t planned it. So indeed “for the sake of which” is involved in A’s going to the place for a purpose other than to collect money from B, such as going to get some groceries. The event, however, does not involve “for the sake of which” for the collection of money.

23. There is actually “for the sake of which” involved in pleasure, but it is not for the sake of pleasure, but rather for the sake of virtue or happiness.

24. Although pleasure qua accidental final end and chance are both deprived of that “for the sake of which”, there is a difference between the two in the matter of frequency. While chance is irregular, pleasure is something that arises regularly. The point that is relevant in my discussion here, nevertheless, is about the absence of that “for the sake of which” in both cases and not about the issue of regularity or frequency.

25. I am talking here about the paradigm case of activity. The activity of seeing, for example, doesn’t have any duration in the sense that when I see an object, simultaneously I have seen the
or boundary (peras), which is a characteristic of a process. A further disadvantage in using the term is that saying that the passive counterpart of an activity is the terminus of the active counterpart of an activity is rather strange, simply because the passive and the active counterpart of activity are actually the same thing and different only in account.

Why use this term at all, then? The reason again is that pleasure is characterized as something that completes an activity. If pleasure is also said to be an end, then it must be something that completes an activity as a final end, which is the third meaning of “complete” in *Metaphysics* Δ. If pleasure qua end is not that “for the sake of which”, then it must be final in virtue of being the last thing. But activity does not contain succession. Why, then, is there a last thing or a terminus in something that doesn’t have duration or succession? Aristotle’s example for this end is not helpful either, because he likens this end to a primetime (hôra), which is a term that is laden with temporal notion or process.

My suggestion is to read Aristotle as emphasizing that pleasure is not an efficient cause of activity, but rather something that results from activity. It is something that follows or accompanies activity, rather than an existing state (hê hexis enuparchousa) that produces activity (1174b32). This claim is a repetition of the earlier claim that pleasure is the cause of activity not in the way a doctor (as the efficient cause) causes “to be healthy”, but in the way health (as the final cause) does. The fact that there is this emphasis on pleasure as a result that follows activity is shown by his repetition that pleasure “comes into being” (ginetai) from the activity of perception (and thinking) (1174b27, 1175a3). He is saying that it makes more sense to posit that pleasure is posterior to activity in the order of explanation. There is an indication, however, that Aristotle is placing pleasure not above and beyond activity, but within the activity itself. He says that if the subject and the object of perception

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object. Surely it is possible to see the object for an extended period of time, but the activity of seeing is complete (without duration) at every time-slice.
are both excellent, pleasure will be in the activity \((\text{estai en tē}, \text{energeia}, \text{hē hédonē})\) (1175a1). Moreover, Aristotle even still finds it hard to make an authoritative claim that pleasure is not identical to activity. Unlike desire, pleasure is not separate from activity in time or in nature \((\text{tois chronois kai tē}, \text{phusei})\) (1175b31–32). Pleasure doesn’t seem to be simply a by-product of an activity, but something that is actually integral to the activity, although it follows the activity by being its terminus.

Aristotle says in \textit{On the Soul} that he can’t help using the improper terms “being acted upon” and “altered” (418a3) when talking about actualizations of potentialities. In the same way, the word “terminus” is not proper to indicate that pleasure is some kind of an end that follows activity, for activity doesn’t have duration. In the next section, I will argue that pleasure is the passive counterpart of activity. It is only in a qualified sense that the passive counterpart of activity is the “result” of the active counterpart of activity. Strictly speaking, they are the same thing, but only different in their account.

If pleasure is the good ultimate end, but not the final end in the sense of “for the sake of which”, of an activity, and if the end of an activity must be in the activity itself, then what exactly is this ultimate end? A hint to answer this question is available in \textit{Metaphysics} \(\Theta\) 1048b22–26:

But that in which the end \((\text{telos})\) is present is an action \((\text{praxis})\). E.g. at the same time we are seeing and have seen, are understanding and have understood, are thinking and have thought: but it is not true that at the same time we are learning and have learnt, or are being cured and have been cured. At the same time we are living well and have lived well, and are happy and have been happy.

Aristotle gives us examples of what he calls the end of an activity. The end of seeing is having seen, and having seen is not outside of the activity of seeing, but within itself as its good terminus. The end of living well is having lived well, which is the good terminus of living well. For activities that have an end outside of itself, the end takes
the same form of “have φ-ed”. Hence the end of learning is having learned, although having learned is not constituted within the activity of learning itself. From these examples, we can abstract a rule:

For every acting (energein), the end of acting is having acted.

One might think that if pleasure is the good terminus of acting, pleasure is nothing other than having acted. But this turns out not to be the case. The reason is that seeing Aristotelian pleasure as having acted would make him a hedonist. In the passage in *Metaphysics* Θ above, Aristotle mentions the pair “is happy (eudaimonei) and has been happy (eudaimonēken)” (1048b26). If to be happy is to act in accordance with the best and most complete virtue (1098a16–17), then the completion is having acted in such a way. But the internal end is something that is aimed at by an activity that is complete in itself, as testified in 1177a19–21: “the activity of intellect ... insofar as it involves contemplation, seems superior in its seriousness, to aim (ephiesthai) at no end beyond itself, and to have its own proper pleasure, which augments (sunauxei) the activity” (1177a19–21). If “having acted” is pleasure, and if “to have been happy” is pleasure, then the aim for the activity is pleasure. But since Aristotle is not a hedonist, or at least he is still unsure about hedonism, we have to rule out identifying having acted with pleasure.

What else could be the candidate for pleasure if it is not having acted, but it is an end of an activity? I will suggest that activity is Janus-faced, because there is a passive counterpart in activity. That is why Aristotle also says that pleasure is a passion. On my reading, pleasure is a passion because there is a sense in which passion is the end of action. In the activity of seeing, for example, the end is not only having seen, but there is an end that comes along, viz., the perception of object, which is actually a way of being affected (a pathos). I will explain this proposal more fully in the next chapter. For now, what is relevant is to recognize that the final end for activity (in the sense of “for the sake of which”) is having acted, but there is a
supervenient end in activity, viz., a passion or a way of being affected.

Proleptically speaking, the pleasure of seeing is the passive counterpart of the activity of seeing, viz., the reception of form of the visibilia and a sort of affirmation (\textit{kataphasis}) that they are good (431a9),\footnote{“Affirmation” must be understood not as a propositional assertion, but simply as an awareness that something is good in the sense that it is an object to be pursued. This broad understanding of affirmation will apply to non-human animals, too, animals that can experience pleasure and pain and can accordingly pursue or avoid an object of perception.} the pleasure of contemplation is the reception of the form of the intelligibilia and the affirmation that they are good, and the pleasure of learning is the reception of the form of the objects of learning and the affirmation that they are good.\footnote{This parallel between pleasure from perception and pleasure from contemplation assumes that the workings of the mind are akin to the workings of perception (\textit{On the Soul} 427a18–19). Cf. also Aristotle’s claim in \textit{EN} book IX that the memory of noble things is pleasant (1168a17). The contemplation of noble things (e.g., God, first principles) is also pleasant.} Now, let’s look at the passage in 1153a21–23: “For the pleasures arising from (\textit{apo}) contemplation and learning will make us contemplate and learn all the more.” On my reading, this sentence is saying that being somehow affected (unimpededly) by intelligible objects, which being is something that comes from contemplating, makes us contemplate more. In the same way, being somehow affected (unimpededly) by the objects of learning, which being comes from the activity of learning, makes us learn more.

This reading can help explain the arcane passage in book X chapter 4 (\textit{EN} 1174b14ff.). Aristotle says that the activity of sense perception involves a sense organ and an object. The activity of sensation is most complete and best when the sense organ and the object are both in the best condition, so that the sense organ will pick out the best object in the best way. This activity, being complete, is also said to be most pleasant (\textit{hēdistē}) (1174b20). This is one kind of completeness that the activity of sensation has, viz., in virtue of having the sense organ in the best condition in relation to the best object of sensation.

The passage becomes more difficult because Aristotle adds that pleasure also completes the activity, but not in the same way as the sense organ and the object
complete the activity. Rather, pleasure completes the activity as its supervenient end. Then he gives an analogy that is not obviously helpful, viz., that the best sense organ and the best object complete the activity as a doctor is responsible for one’s being healthy, but pleasure completes the activity as health completes one’s being healthy ($EN \ 1174b24$–26). To understand this passage, I shall redirect our attention to the lexicon entry in Metaphysics $\Delta \ 1021b12$–1022a3 on what it means to be “complete”. I will quote the whole entry now:

We call complete (1) that outside which it is not possible to find even one of the parts proper to it, e.g. the complete time of each thing is that outside which it is not possible to find any time which is a part proper to it.—(2) That which in respect of excellence and goodness cannot be excelled in its kind, e.g. a doctor is complete and a flute-player is complete, when they lack nothing in respect of their proper kind of excellence. And thus we transfer the word to bad things, and speak of a complete scandal-monger and a complete thief; indeed we even call them good, i.e. a good thief and a good scandal-monger. And excellence is a completion; for each thing is complete and every substance is complete, when in respect of its proper kind of excellence it lacks no part of its natural magnitude.—(3) The things which have attained a good end are called complete; for things are complete in virtue of having attained their end. Therefore, since the end is something ultimate, we transfer the word to bad things and say a thing has been completely spoilt, and completely destroyed, when it in no way falls short of destruction and badness, but is at its last point. This is why death is by a figure of speech called the end, because both are last things. The ultimate thing for the sake of which is also an end.—Things, then, that are called complete in virtue of their own nature are so called in all these senses, some because they lack nothing in respect of goodness and cannot be excelled and no part proper to them can be found outside, others in general because they cannot be exceeded in their several classes and no part proper to them is outside; the others are so called in virtue of these first two kinds, because they either make or have something of the sort or are adapted to it or in some way or other are referred to the things that are called complete in the primary sense.

The description of the activity of sense perception that is complete, which is presented in the passage in $EN \ X.4 \ 1174b14ff.$, maps well with the three meanings
of “complete” in the metaphysical lexicon. First, the activity of sense perception is complete with respect to time. Take, for example, the activity of seeing. Aristotle says in the beginning of chapter 4 in book X that “seeing seems at any moment to be complete, because it does not lack anything that will come to be later and complete its form” (1174a14–15). Since the activity is complete, it is also whole or without temporal parts, unlike incomplete activities such as building (1174a19–23). The completeness in matter of time maps well with the first meaning of “complete”.

Second, the activity of sense perception is complete in the sense that it has the best condition of the sense organ and the noblest object. This completeness maps well with the second meaning of “complete”, because it is completeness with respect to the best condition that can’t be excelled. In the EN, the sense organ and the noblest object are compared to a doctor that causes one’s being healthy (EN 1174b26). In the lexicon, the example for the second meaning of “complete” is also a doctor that is excellent.

Third, pleasure completes the activity of sense perception not in the way the best sense organ and the best sense object complete the activity (which is the second meaning of “complete”), but as a supervenient end. This must be the third meaning of “complete”, viz., complete as attaining a good end. And recall that there are two meanings of “end” in the lexicon: one is the final end that is merely the ultimate point but not that “for the sake of which”, the other is the ultimate point that is also that “for the sake of which”. I argued that pleasure is simply the ultimate end, which is a final end, but not that “for the sake of which”.

Understanding pleasure as the completion of activity helps us interpret Aristotle’s contentious claim that “so long, then, as the objects of intellect or perception, and the faculties of judgement or contemplation, are as they should be, there will be pleasure in the activity. For when that which experiences and that which produces the experience remain similar, and are in the same relation to one another, the same thing naturally comes about” (1174b33–1175a3). On my reading, this claim is only a natural
consequence of what has been proposed earlier. In the event of sense perception, if the sense organ is properly functioning and unimpeded by any external hindrance, and if the object is the best for the sense organ, then there is no way that the completion of the activity would fail. Hence, pleasure would necessarily be in perfect activity.

I tried showing above that pleasure is different from activity because pleasure supervenes on activity by being the accidental final end of activity (T2). Hence, I can still say along with Aristotle that “pleasure does not seem to be thought or perception, since that would be odd” (1175b34). Rather, pleasure is the ultimate destination, although not necessarily a goal, of thought or perception. While the end of activity that is aimed at is having acted, there is a supervenient end in activity in the form of passion. Hence pleasure is, generally speaking, the same as passion or a being-affected (unimpededly). But pleasure as passion is itself an actualization of a capacity (T1), viz., the capacity to be acted upon. Such an actualization is being affected in a certain way, which is none other than the completion of an activity such as seeing or thinking. On my reading, “being affected” unimpededly as the ultimate destination, although not the goal, of an activity is the same as being pleased. That is why pleasure is an activity (an actualization of a capacity), because pleasure seems to be like the activity of seeing that is complete in itself (1174a14ff.). In the same way, being pleased is complete in itself, for simultaneously one is being pleased and having been pleased (1173a34–1173b2).

We now have a solution to the tension between T1 and T2 by proposing only one account of pleasure as the accidental final end of activity that allows pleasure to be activity and to be the thing that supervenes on activity at the same time. Pleasure supervenes on activity by being the accidental final end of the activity, and this is in the form of passivity or being affected.

Aristotle is aware that no one is continuously pleased. In EN X.4, he gives two explanations for this phenomenon. First, he says that no human is capable of continuous activity (1175a3–5). But pleasure can’t exist apart from activity. Hence it is
not possible to be continually pleased. Second, he says that the intensity of our activity influences the pleasure we experience (1175a6ff.). Less vigorous activities will bring less pleasure. Take the activity of seeing the International Klein Blue color that is pleasant to the eyes. Following Aristotle’s answer, we may imagine that at our first encounter with Klein Blue, we are pleased more intensely than after staring continuously the same monochrome abstraction for an hour.

If my reading is correct that pleasure is the accidental final end, Aristotle is facing a more difficult problem in explaining how it is the case that the intensity of pleasure can lessen along with the intensity of the activity. A more difficult problem is how to explain activities without pleasure. Also, we need to ask now why it is the case that pleasure from contemplation makes us want to contemplate more. What exactly is happening in the activity of contemplation? To address these questions, a further step is needed to explain more fully what Aristotelian pleasure really is. What I’ve discussed so far are mostly the formal characteristics of pleasure as an end. I already put forward my suggestion that Aristotelian pleasure is a \textit{pathos}. In the next section, I will try to show the plausibility of this claim.

\subsection*{2.2.2 T1 and T2: The Diplomacy of Passion}

I will argue in this section that it is the diplomacy of passion that will do the work to reconcile the discussions of pleasure in books VII and X of the \textit{EN}. Since I will try to show that pleasure is a feeling or a passion, let’s start with Owen’s rejection of the possibility that pleasure in book VII is a feeling, and this is because Aristotle indeed doesn’t mention that possibility at all.\textsuperscript{28} The dialectic in book VII, as Owen correctly points out, is between pleasure as process and pleasure as activity. Feeling doesn’t come into the equation at all. Dialectically speaking, this is definitely true, but conceptually speaking, the fact that pleasure is an activity doesn’t mute the possibility that pleasure is also a feeling. It just happens that in the dialectical move

\textsuperscript{28} Owen, “Aristotelian Pleasures,” 140.
in book VII, Aristotle doesn’t need to elaborate his conceptual analysis of pleasure that involves the analysis of pleasure *qua* feeling.

Here it is important to discuss what Aristotle says in *On the Soul* about passion in that it is a way of being affected. Interestingly, he explicitly says that bodily sensations, emotions, and thinking are ways of being affected. Here are some telling quotations:

It seems that all the affections (*pathē*) of the soul involve the body—passion (*thumos*), gentleness, fear, pity, confidence, and further, joy (*chara*) and both loving and hating; for at the same time as these the body is affected (*paschei*) in a certain way. (403a16–19)

Thinking and loving or hating are not affections (*pathē*) of [the intellect], but of the individual thing which has it, insofar as it does. (408b25–27)

First then let us speak as if being affected, being moved, and acting are the same thing; for indeed movement is a kind of activity, although an incomplete one, as has been said elsewhere. And everything is affected and moved by something which is capable of bringing this about and is in actuality. For this reason, in one way, as we said, a thing is affected by like, and in another by unlike. For it is the unlike which is affected, although when it has been affected it is like. (417a14–20)

Perceiving is a form of being affected. (424a1)

There are two distinguishing characteristics by which people mainly define the soul: motion in respect of place, and thinking, understanding, and perceiving. Thinking and understanding are thought to be like a form of perceiving (for in both of these the soul judges and recognizes some existing thing). (427a17–21)

Now, if thinking is akin to perceiving, it would be either being affected in some way by the object of thought or something else of this kind. It must then be unaffected (*apathē*), but capable of receiving the form, and potentially such as it, although not identical with it; and as that which

29. I will say more about emotions and pleasure/pain in the next chapter. When Aristotle says that emotions are accompanied by pleasure and pain, sometimes he is saying that pleasure and pain are the causes of emotion. However, there is a sense in which emotions are themselves pleasures or pains because they are ways of being affected.

is capable of perceiving is to the objects of perception, so must be the intellect similarly to its objects. (429a13–17)

These passages show that the activities of the soul involve the events of being affected. The case of bodily sensations is represented by sense perception. Here there is a transaction between the sense organs and external objects. The body is affected directly by these external objects, and the sense receives the form of the sensibilia without the matter, “as wax receives the imprint of the ring without the iron or gold” (On the Soul 424a19), while the sense organs will take the form into their matter. The activity of thinking, including understanding and belief, involves an object of thought and hence there is somehow a transaction between thought and the object of thought, even though, strictly speaking, the mind is impassible (apathes) by virtue of its being separate from the body (429a29–429b5). But the parallel between thinking and perceiving in that both involve a reception of the form of the objects (either sensibilia or intelligibilia) unmistakably confirms that thinking is akin to perception in a fundamental way.

The case of emotions is interesting. They are already called pathē, which suggests that they are ways of being affected. However, in the first quoted passage, Aristotle mentions in passing that having emotions involves the heart’s being moved, which is another way of being affected. In the Topics, pain in the belief of being slighted is actually described as the cause of anger (125b31ff.). It is possible that pleasure and pain that accompany emotions are pleasure and pain that come from a certain kind of belief. And belief is a way of being affected as well because there is an activity of thinking and an object of thought that somehow affects the impassible mind. It is unclear whether emotions themselves are pleasures or pains.31 My point here is that we can understand pleasures and pains in emotions (either as the causes of emotions or as emotions themselves) in terms of being affected. In fact, Aristotle says explicitly

31. For example, Rhetoric 1382a21–22 defines fear as a pain because of imagining a future evil, and 1385b13–16 says that pity is a pain at an apparent evil.
that all the affections of soul (e.g., passion and anger) involve the body being affected at the same time (hama paschei) in a certain way (On the Soul 403a16–19). In these three cases of bodily sensations, emotions, and thinking, then, there is a passive counterpart for each because there is a sense in which we are in some way affected in doing them. Consistent with the idea that sensation, emotion, and thinking are ways of being affected and that the heart is moved accordingly, in Parts of Animals, Aristotle explicitly says that what is pleasant and painful, as well as sensations in general, start and end at the heart (666a11–12).

We can also point out that there is an affection in memory and recollection. Memory is not a perception, but it is called an affection by Aristotle: “Memory is, therefore, neither perception or conception, but a state or affection (pathos) of one of these, conditioned by lapse of time” (On Memory 449b24). It is because of thought or sense perception that we can have memory of the past. And memory requires the use of imagination and image (phantasma), which is described by Aristotle as the “affection (pathos) of the common sense” (450a13). In the same way, pleasure from expectation or hope, which is discussed simultaneously with memory, can also be seen as a way of being affected because there is an anticipation of future benefits, and this anticipation is in the form of belief (EN 1168a10ff.). Next, sleep is called an affection by Aristotle as well: “For sleep is an affection (pathos) of the perceptive part—a sort of bond or motionlessness—so that every creature that sleeps must have a perceptive part” (On Sleep 454b9). Animals that are sleeping are susceptible to being awake, and this is because in sleeping there is perception and affection that comes from sense perceptions. Aristotle explains that “sleep is not any impotence of the perceptive faculty, but this affection is one which arises from the exhalation attendant upon the process of nutrition” (456b17). The same is with waking, for sleep is contrary to waking, and they are both affections (pathè) (453b25). Waking is presumably an affection in that it is a state in which sense organs are functioning. In waking, one always perceives either some external movement or a movement within
herself (454a3–4). What I’m trying to show here is that all activities in animals can be seen in terms of passion or affection.

Let me point out an important difference between the *EN* and *On the Soul* with respect to Aristotle’s description of activity and passivity. In the *EN*, seeing is given as an example of a complete activity. There is no mention of feeling or being affected at all. In *On the Soul*, on the other hand, seeing is described as a perception, which is a way of being affected. Why is there a difference like this? Let’s talk about *On the Soul* first. Aristotle treats this book as a part of his study of nature. Because the soul is the principle of living natural objects, the study of nature will not be complete without the study of physics. In *On the Soul* I.3, Aristotle argues vehemently that it is impossible for the soul to be in movement (406a2). But he also recognizes an *endoxon* in II.5 that perception is a way of being affected and a kind of movement (416b33–35), and this must be connected somehow to the perceptive soul that is responsible for the event of perception.

More troubling is the fact that in *Physics* III.3, Aristotle believes that the actuality of movement is actually in the movable (202a13–14). If in the perception the mover is the perceptible object and the movable is the soul, then it would seem that the soul is in movement, which contradicts the claim of the impossibility of the movement of the soul in *On the Soul* I.3. Yet because the study of the soul is an integral part of the study of nature, Aristotle can’t dismiss the claim about movement in the *Physics*, and he seems to be compelled to say that the soul undergoes some kind of alteration. Hence he keeps saying that perception is a way of being affected or a way of being moved, although strictly speaking he believes that the soul is not moved.32 His strategy to explain this possible inconsistency is by saying that there is a standard alteration in which a thing is moved, but there is also “an alteration in a quite different sense” (417b7) that Aristotle reserves for the “alteration” that takes place when there is an

32. Or, the soul is in a sense moved only insofar as it is embodied.
actualization of a potentiality, which is something that also happens in the case of perception. When one is seeing, for example, one is actualizing the capacity to see, but this is not a standard alteration like what we have in the case of water becoming hot when it is boiled, or in other cases in which there is a movement between contraries under one genus (e.g., from white to black, from sweet to spicy). Whether this strategy of distinguishing two kinds of alteration succeeds, however, is beyond the scope of my inquiry. My point now is that Aristotle’s language of perception as a passion or a way of being affected in On the Soul is probably motivated by his desire to be faithful to the language of the Physics.\textsuperscript{33} Hence he is careful not to depict perception as an activity, because that would make his task of explaining perception and motion more difficult.

The EN, by contrast, is not a study of nature, and hence Aristotle doesn’t have to follow the language in the Physics so closely. In the debate about pleasure, Aristotle says explicitly that seeing is an activity that is complete in itself (1174a14–15). He is careful here not to use the language of passion at all because he is arguing against people who believe that pleasure is a process or a movement. But as I said above, understanding pleasure as an activity or actuality isn’t necessarily excluding the possibility that pleasure is also a way of being affected, for pleasure can just be exactly the actualization of the potentiality to be affected. I will develop this idea in the next section.

The purpose of the current discussion is still to understand what pleasure is. We’ve seen above that pleasure is an end of an activity. Since an activity is complete in itself, its end must be in itself. Now, the internal end of “to act” is “having acted”. But I argued above that pleasure can’t be the same as “having acted” or “having been happy”, for that would make Aristotle a hedonist. What is a possible candidate, then, if pleasure is an end of an activity, but it is not the same as “having acted”? Based

\textsuperscript{33}I adopted this suggestion from Ronald Polansky, Aristotle’s De Anima (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 230.
on these textual observations above, which suggest that every activity also involves an affection, I would like to propose that Aristotelian pleasure is a way we are being affected when we are doing activities such as sensing, experiencing emotions, thinking, recollecting, sleeping, and waking.\textsuperscript{34}

In the next chapter, I will suggest a perceptual model to explain pleasure and pain. In this chapter, what I’m doing is just pointing out that there is a conceptual space to understand Aristotelian pleasure as the passive counterpart of activity. If pleasure is a

\textsuperscript{34} Konstan insists that pleasure is a perception or a sensation (\textit{aisthésis}), and not a \textit{pathos}. On his reading, pleasure is instead a necessary component of \textit{pathé}. See David Konstan, \textit{The Emotions of the Ancient Greek: Studies in Aristotle and Classical Literature} (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2006), 212. On my reading, we are still allowed to say that there is a sense in which pleasure is a sensation or perception. But to be more precise, it is the passive counterpart of perception. One thing that should be mentioned here, however, is that even if pleasure is a sensation, it doesn’t exclude its being a \textit{pathos} as well, for sensation is a way of being affected. Sorabji also thinks that pleasure (and pain) is a perception. See Richard Sorabji, “Body and Soul in Aristotle,” \textit{Philosophy} 49, no. 187 (1974): 68.

Fortenbaugh is wavering between several descriptions of pleasure and pain. First, he mentions that pleasure and pain are simply necessary features of emotional responses. See W. Fortenbaugh, \textit{Aristotle on Emotion: A Contribution to Philosophical Psychology, Rhetoric, Poetics, Politics and Ethics}, 2nd ed. (London: Duckworth, 2002), 106. He also says that pain and pleasure of emotions are kinds of sensation (ibid., 111). Yet he is still open to the possibility that pleasure is just a feeling of delight or elation and that pain is a feeling like distress (ibid., 110).

Rorty thinks that an incontinent person should not take pleasure as a \textit{pathos}, but as an \textit{energeia}. Hence, according to Rorty, for the incontinent, “Pleasures that are \textit{energeiai kata phusin hexeis} (1153a14–15) become \textit{pathe}; he reacts to such pleasures in ways that lead him to forget what he knows.” See Amélie Oksenberg Rorty, “Akrasia and Pleasure: Nicomachean Ethics Book 7,” in Essays on Aristotle’s Ethics, ed. Amélie Oksenberg Rorty, Philosophical Traditions (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980), 279. Rorty’s point, I take it, is that the problem with incontinence is that there is a detachment between pleasure that accompanies an action and the right intention for that action. The incontinent wrongly pursues pleasure as the end of action. This last bit of claim is surely true. However, saying that pleasure is a \textit{pathos} doesn’t necessarily entail that pleasure should become the intention of an action. We can just understand \textit{pathos} in general as a way of being affected, regardless of the intention for doing the action related to the pleasure. There are of course irrational passions, but not all passions need to be irrational. To see a fuller treatment of Rorty’s notion of Aristotelian \textit{pathos}, see Amélie Oksenberg Rorty, “Aristotle on the Metaphysical Status of \textit{Pathe},” \textit{The Review of Metaphysics} 37, no. 3 (1984): 524. Again, Rorty thinks that an activity can become a \textit{pathos} if the action is done not from a voluntary (and right) intention. This negative reading of \textit{pathos} seems to be more Stoic than Aristotelian. Curiously, Rorty also seems to say that proper pleasure and pain are instances of \textit{pathé}: “The virtuous person is by no means without \textit{pathe}; on the contrary he has, in Aristotle’s characteristically informative formula, the right passions in the right way at the right time for the right ends; and we might add, filling in another detail on his behalf, under the right description. The virtuous person is not only disposed to react properly, but is also disposed to take his pleasures and pains in the right way at the right aspect of the right thing.” See ibid., 539.
way of being affected, we can now explain Aristotle’s claim in book III of the EN that what animals enjoy is the pleasures of food, drink and sex through touch (1118a31–32). These pleasures are passive counterparts of the activities of eating, drinking, and having sex. The book of Problems also says that what’s pleasant in eating and drinking is in the tongue and the throat (hence Philoxenus prays for a throat of a crane) (950a2–4). And in the EN 1118a33–1118b1, Aristotle explicitly says that the gourmand’s pleasure is in the contact (tēi haphēi) that occurs in his throat.36 In this instance, when people are pursuing the pleasure of food and drink, they are pursuing a way of being affected in their tongue and throat, which is something that is agreeable to them. It is in this way that the pleasure from eating enhances the activity of eating.

In the same way, pleasure from contemplation enhances contemplation. If pleasure from contemplation is a way of being affected, probably because of the phantasma that is needed in the activity of contemplation, then it is because of this affection that pleasure makes the activity more sustainable and can be engaged longer and more vigorously. I shall say more about the role of phantasia in perception and contemplation in the next chapter. My goal here is to show the plausibility of the claim that pleasure from the activity α enhances α because pleasure is a way of being affected.

Now, if pleasure is an affection, how does one explain God’s pleasure, since God is pure activity? One answer to this question is that God’s pleasure comes from his activity of contemplation, viz., the contemplation of himself.37 That is because

35. The book of Problems in its final form was produced by a compiler who incorporated not only Aristotle’s own writings, but also Hippocratean and other sources. See E. S. Forster, “The Pseudo-Aristotelian Problems: Their Nature and Composition,” The Classical Quarterly 22, nos. 3/4 (1928): 163–165. This claim about Philoxenus, however, is similar to the one in the EN 1118a33–1118b1.

36. Johansen has an interesting comment on this issue: “[The gourmand] enjoys the feeling of the food passing down his throat but he does not enjoy the flavour of the food. He enjoys his food insofar as it is an object of touch, not insofar as it has flavour. The implication is that it is brutish to enjoy food simply as an object of touch because the proper way for a human being to enjoy food is as an object of taste.” T. K. Johansen, Aristotle on the Sense-Organs (Cambridge: Cambridge, 1998), 221–222.

37. Macfarlane and Polansky have an interesting suggestion that Aristotle’s God is not unlike that
Aristotle’s God is thought and contemplation himself and can only think of himself as the best kind of object. The following passage from *Metaphysics* Α is worth quoting in its entirety (1072b14–31):

On such a principle, then, depend the heavens and the world of nature. And its life is such as the best which we enjoy, and enjoy for but a short time. For it is ever in this state (which we cannot be), since its actuality is also pleasure. (And therefore waking, perception, and thinking are most pleasant, and hopes and memories are so because of their reference to these.) And thought (*noēsis*) in itself deals with that which is best in itself, and that which is thought in the fullest sense with that which is best in the fullest sense. And thought thinks itself because it shares the nature of the object of thought; for it becomes an object of thought in coming into contact with and thinking its objects, so that thought and object of thought are the same. For that which is capable of receiving the object of thought, i.e. the substance, is thought. And it is active when it possesses this object. Therefore the latter rather than the former is the divine element which thought seems to contain, and the act of contemplation (*thêoria*) is what is most pleasant and best. If, then, God is always in that good state in which we sometimes are, this compels our wonder; and if in a better this compels it yet more. And God is in a better state. And life also belongs to God; for the actuality of thought is life, and God is that actuality; and God’s essential actuality is life most good and eternal. We say therefore that God is a living being, eternal, most good, so that life and duration continuous and eternal belong to God; for this is God.

The discussion of God’s pleasure in the end of book VII of the *EN* emphasizes the resting character of God, which suggests completeness (1154b26–28). Pleasure that comes from rest is preferable. The reason is that we can obtain pleasure from replenishment or other processes, but such pleasure is caused by a lack of some kind. When there is no more movement or process, everything is complete. The pleasure that comes from such actualization is superior because it is purer without the involvement of any imperfection.

of Xenophanes, that all of God sees, thinks and hears. See Patrick Macfarlane and Ronald Polansky, “God, the Divine, and ΝΟΤΣ in Relation to the *De Anima*,” in *Ancient Perspectives on Aristotle’s De Anima*, De Wulf-Manson Centre (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2009), 123.
Nevertheless, God’s pleasure can’t be the same kind as human pleasure. Human pleasure is a working of the soul insofar as the soul is embodied. Human pleasure, as I argued above, is an affection of the body or of the mind. God, on the other hand, is completely disembodied. Moreover, God is pure activity and his nature is simple. Hence God’s pleasure can’t be any form of affection whatsoever. The phrase “God’s pleasure” reveals the way in which God exists. God is nothing other than unimpeded activity. This way of being is readily identified in human life as something good, and it is something that humans judge as pleasant. But I don’t think Aristotle can literally say that there is such a thing as God’s pleasure. For if God’s nature is simple, and if there is such thing as God’s pleasure, then God’s pleasure is nothing other than the eternal pure activity itself. But then, if that were the case, God would be identical to pleasure. This claim can’t be made by the anti-hedonist Aristotle because he believes that God is our final end that moves everything by being loved. The phrase “God’s pleasure” seems to be a projection of what humans think pleasure is into the divine realm. That is to say, because humans think that an unimpeded activity of our natural state is pleasant, then that must be the same way for God if his activity is unimpeded. The talk of God’s pleasure is anthropomorphic at best.

As a last note in this section, if pleasure is a *pathos*, there is still a further question whether this is a definitional claim or simply a claim about the genus of pleasure. Perhaps the essence of pleasure is not simply *pathos*, but *pathos* plus some appropriate differentia. To this question, I can clarify that pleasure is an instance of *pathos*. The other instance of *pathos* is pain. Again, let me quote from the Eudemian Ethics that passions are divided into pleasure and pain (*ta de pathē lupē, kai hēdonē, diōristai*) (1221b36–37). Indeed, *pathos* is the genus of pleasure. At the very least, pleasure is a *pathos* with the following differentia, viz., that it is a *pathos* that at the same time is also an unimpeded activity of our natural state. It is a way of being affected that is free from the hindrance in actualizing our natural state.

Let’s reread the passages in book X of the *EN* in light of this interpretation. When
Aristotle says that pleasure completes the activity “not as the inherent state does, but as a sort of supervenient end (*epiginomenon ti telos*), like the bloom (*h¯ora*) on the faces of young men” (1174b33), he is saying that pleasure is the end of an activity in that it is a way of being affected when one is doing an activity. It is like the bloom on the faces of young men in that it is the moment when the activity is complete. In book X of the *EN*, Aristotle mentions seeing as an activity that is complete (1174a14–15). So the pleasure of seeing is nothing other than the affection that the visual organs experience when they interact with the visual objects. The pleasure is the affection that happens in the activity of seeing that is complete in itself. Pleasure always comes about when the sense organs and their objects are in the best condition (1174b28–31), simply because such situation will make the affection to be the best kind of affection as well.

Thus, pleasure is the end of an activity as a final end. This is because pleasure is the completion of the activity, when someone or something is being affected as a result of the activity. In saying that pleasure is the final end of activity, however, I’m not saying that pleasure is always that for the sake of which we are engaged in activities. What I mean is simply that in doing activities, there will be a way of being affected as the result of doing the activities. This way of being affected doesn’t always function as a motivation for acting, though it can certainly be so if one wants to be a hedonist.

The bridge between T1 (pleasure is an activity) and T2 (pleasure is something that supervenes on activity) is the claim that pleasure is an activity or an actualization of being affected unimpededly. This affection is the supervenient end of activity that will enhance the activity.

My project to reconcile T1 and T2 uses the common strategy that philosophers utilize in resolving two seemingly contradictory claims A and B. To show that A

38. In the next chapter, I shall show how *phantasia* is a necessary condition for pleasure.
and B are consistent with each other, one can appeal to another claim C that is consistent with A and entails B. In this discussion, that claim C is the claim that pleasure is a *pathos*. There is no better candidate for claim C than this claim about pleasure being a *pathos* to reconcile claims A (pleasure is an activity) and B (pleasure is something that supervenes on an activity). First, the claim that pleasure is an activity is consistent with the claim that pleasure is a *pathos* because *pathos* is an actualization of a (passive) potentiality. Second, the claim that pleasure is a *pathos* entails the claim that pleasure supervenes on an activity if *pathos* here is understood as the passive counterpart of an activity, and if the word “supervene” is understood in a weak way as “accompany”. In engaging in an activity such as perceiving or thinking, the passive counterpart of the activity (viz., the being-affected that is involved in the activity) “supervenes” on the active counterpart of the activity. The fact that the debate about the two accounts of pleasure has become an impasse shows that it is time to bring in a new claim such as C to break the impasse.

### 2.2.3 T1 and T3: Passive Power

If pleasure is an activity (T1), how can it be a passion (T3) as well? Activity implies a doing, but passion implies a being-affected. The key to answering this question is in the idea of passive power, which is nothing but the capacity for being a patient or for suffering something. Let’s take a look first at *Metaphysics Θ1* for Aristotle’s discussion of power (*dunamis*) (1046a19–29):

> For one is the capacity to be acted on, the origin in what is itself affected of being changed and acted on by something else or by itself *qua* something else.

> It is plain then that there is in a way one capacity of acting (*poiein*) and being affected (*paschein*) (for something is capable both in that it has a capacity of being acted upon and in that something else can be acted on by it), but in another way they are different. For the one is in the thing affected…; the other in contrast is in what acts…. That is why,
*qua* naturally unified, nothing is affected by itself; for it is one and not something else.

The added phrase “by itself *qua* something else” in the first passage refers to a reflexive affection where a thing is being affected by itself as though it is something other than itself. The same language is also present in *Metaphysics* E12 that the passive power is the capacity for being moved by something else or by itself *qua* other (1019a20–23). One note is important here, which appears at the very end of the second passage, viz., *qua* naturally unified, nothing is affected by itself. Aristotle is saying that a simple thing without parts whatsoever can’t affect itself, because affection needs at least two parties, viz., the agent and the patient of the affection.

For Aristotle, a thing has passive power in the sense that it is able to be affected, e.g., wood has the passive power of being burnable. The active potentiality resides in the things that cause the effect, e.g., in the fire. But passive potentiality can’t be separated from active potentiality. Hence in the second passage, we see that correlative active and passive powers are in a way one and the same, but in a way they are also different. When there is a transaction between a sense organ and sensibilia, there is a convergence between the passive power of the sense organ and the active power of the sensibilia that affect the sense organ. It is in this sense that the passive and the active powers are one and the same. But the passive and the active powers are said to be different from one another, too, and that is because the function is different, viz., one is a patient (for passive power), and the other is an agent (for active power). In the *Metaphysics*, then, the correlative active and passive powers are the powers that reside in the agent and the patient of a single action.

Let’s take a look at the case of pleasure now. Since pleasure is a way of being affected, it must be a realization of a passive power, which is nothing other than the passive powers of the bodily senses or emotions or thinking. Using the language of *Metaphysics* Θ, the correlative active powers for such passive powers will be the active powers of the pleasant objects.
However, there are active powers that are responsible for the transaction of pleasure other than the active powers of the pleasant objects. I’m thinking of the active powers of the bodily senses or emotions or thinking themselves. Note, though, that *Metaphysics* Θ doesn’t talk about the correlation between the passive powers of bodily senses and the active powers of the same bodily senses. Recall that I’d like to suggest that pleasure is a passion, and that it is in a way identical to the activity of sensations (or emotions or thinking), for it is the passive counterpart of those activities. But in doing so, I am not able to use the language of unity of the passive and active powers that is present in *Metaphysics* Θ, for *Metaphysics* Θ only talks about correlative powers in two different things (viz., the agent and the patient). My account of pleasure, on the other hand, converges the passive power and the active power of one thing only, viz., of either bodily sensations or emotions or thinking.

Departing from *Metaphysics* Θ, we can still say that the passive and active powers of bodily sensations, etc., are in a way one and the same thing, and in another way different. They are one and the same thing in that they converge in one event. For example, in the activity of seeing, the active power is the power to glide our eyes to a certain direction. The passive power is in the visual organs, too, i.e., the capacity of the eyes to be acted upon by the visual objects in their interaction with the visual organs. Furthermore, the passive power of the visual organs is a power only insofar as it is connected with their active power, whose actualization—when unimpeded—realizes the passive power as well. But they are different from one another in their function. The passive power of the eyes enables them to receive the sensory objects, while the active power enables them to reach out to the visual objects. This distinction is not unlike the Heraclitean road up and down. It is the same stretch of road, but different in account. For example, there is a sense in which seeing is something active, but we understand that when we see something, something passive is happening when there is a transaction between visual objects and our eyes. Perhaps the sense of touch will serve as a better example: when I touch something, I am being touched by that thing.
as well (cf. *Physics* 212b31–3: “things that touch are able to act on and be acted on by another”). Clearly in the case of touch, the difference between the agent and the patient of the touch is blurred.

My proposal to reconcile T1 and T3, then, is to see pleasure as both an activity *qua* actualization of a passive power and a passion. It is an activity insofar as it is an actualization of the passive powers of bodily organs, emotions, and thinking. It is a passion insofar as bodily sensations, emotions, and thinking are ways of being affected. The illustration from the sense of touch should help: when we are touching something, the pleasure is the passive counterpart of this activity, viz., the being affected by the object of touch unimpededly.

One immediate worry arises here about how plausible it is to see the pleasure in book VII of the *EN* as an actualization of a passive power. It seems that the dialectic in book VII doesn’t allow us to read pleasure as an actualization of a passive power, and that is for the following reason: if pleasure is suggested to be a good candidate for the final end, then how come it is an actualization of a passivity? Mustn’t a final end be something that is up to me, and not simply something that is happening to me? A final end is an activity that we aim at, and this is not the same as arriving passively at a certain state. It seems that in book VII of the *EN*, Aristotle wants to connect the final end with activities such as just or courageous activities. But, the objector might ask, how is it the case that just and other virtuous activities are actualizations of a passive power?

This objection is powerful, but not without an adequate response. Let’s take a look first at the dialectic that is present in book VII of the *EN*. In chapter 11, Aristotle is aware that some people reject pleasure as the chief good or the final end. Even if pleasure is good, thus they contend, it can’t be the chief good in human life. They believe that this is the case, according to Aristotle, because they think that pleasures are comings-into-being.
Aristotle’s strategy to answer this objection is threefold. First, in chapter 12, he reminds us that one kind of good is an activity, and the other is a state. Pleasure is in fact an activity in the appetites (en tais epithumiais), viz., the activity of the state and nature that remain (1152b35–36). Without a context about what kind of state and nature that Aristotle has in mind, this sentence is not at all clear. We are told that this pleasure involves the work of an appetite (1152b36). Presumably this is bodily pleasure. In eating, for example, pleasure is not the replenishment, but rather the activity of the appetitive faculty. The activity of the appetitive faculty is probably the activity in the sense of taste, which obtains when the food touches the tongue and throat. At any rate, Aristotle wants to say that pleasure is neither a replenishment nor a coming-into-being, but an activity. Second, Aristotle argues that because pleasure is an activity, it constitutes an end in itself (1153a10). In the process of replenishment there is pleasure, but pleasure is not the process of replenishment itself, but rather the appetitive activity. As such, pleasure is complete in itself because the activity of the sense of taste is complete in its every moment. There are also pleasures that do not involve appetite like pleasures that come from contemplation. These pleasures are more clearly to be an end in themselves because there is no coming-into-being (e.g., replenishment) involved. Third, pleasure is described more completely in chapter 12 by Aristotle, not just as an activity, but as an unimpeded activity of our natural state (1153a15). He then he points out in chapter 13 that this is why people weave pleasure into happiness (1153b15), for people’s idea of a final end is of a complete (teleios) life without impediment. These three points basically destroy his opponents’ claim that pleasure is a coming-into-being.

On my reading, Aristotelian pleasures are actualizations of a passive power, and they manifest the three characteristics of pleasure described above. First, an actualization of passive power is an activity, not a coming-into-being. It is an exercise of a capacity. Second, an actualization of passive power is complete in itself at every moment, and it is not a process. Third, pleasure is an actualization of passive power
that is unimpeded.

But what about the idea that a final end must be something that we choose, or something for which we make an effort to achieve, and not simply a state at which we arrive at passively? My account can incorporate this as well, for I see that the actualization of a passive power as something that we can choose. This is possible because Aristotelian actions are Janus-faced. Even though Aristotle labels actions such as seeing and hearing in the EN X as activities, in On the Soul chapter 5 onward, seeing and hearing are seen also as perceptions and ways of being affected. In the same way, thinking in On the Soul is also described as something that’s akin to perception. Pleasure might be the chief good because people (and brutes) pursue it (1153b25–26), although they pursue pleasure by way of aiming at activities that have pleasure as their passive counterpart. It is no wonder that in book X of the EN, Aristotle argues against the view that we should choose activities for the sake of pleasure. While in book VII Aristotle argues that pleasure can still be the chief good, in book X he rejects that possibility, because there are things that we should choose even though they do not bring pleasure, such as seeing, remembering, knowing and possessing virtues (1174a5–6). Viewed in this way, book X is a continuation of the dialectic in book VII.

The model for pleasure as the actualization of passive power, then, is as follows. First, we have the actualization of passive power in the event of sense perceptions, emotions, and thinking. Second, there is also the idea that the heart, as the seat of sense perceptions, emotions, and thinking, is moved accordingly. Hence these two points complement each other to explain the concept of pleasure as the actualization of passive power. There is only one event in the occurrence of pleasure because when the passive power is actualized, at the same time the heart is being moved. Third, virtuous activities are probably complex and composite activities. Take, for example,

39. I will give a fuller discussion of the movements of the heart in the next chapter.
just action. This action is probably composed of several actions (e.g., perception and thought) combined into an action. Pleasures or the actualizations of the passive power in this event would also be complex, but they are ultimately explainable in terms of perceptions or ways of being affected.

\subsection*{2.2.4 T1 and T4: Movement as a Kind of Activity}

Here comes the last apparent inconsistency: if activity is complete (T1), how can it be a movement (T4) as well, for movement is not complete in itself? Again, \textit{Metaphysics} \(\Theta\) is very enlightening on this subject-matter (1047a30–1047b1):

\begin{quote}
The term ‘actuality’, the term connected with fulfillment, has also been extended to other cases from applying most of all to change. For it seems that actuality most of all has its being \textit{qua} change which is why in addition people do not assign change to non-beings, though some other predicates, such as being thought about and being desired, are predicated of non-beings, but not being changed, and this is because while not being actually they will be actually.
\end{quote}

What is most interesting here is Aristotle’s contention that activity (\textit{energeia}) is movement (\textit{kinēsis}) above all, though there are activities that are not changes. Looking at the concept in this way, the difference between \textit{energeia} and \textit{kinēsis} is that the latter is a kind of the former. Aristotle doesn’t explicitly say that activity is the genus and motion is the species, but the relation between the two must be similar to a genus-species relation. This sort of relation between activity and change holds in the realm of beings, where change is the paradigm mode of being: most beings simply change over time, though God is immutable while still being in \textit{energeia}.

Having this information about such a relation between activity and change is important when reading passages where Aristotle appears to make a sharp distinction between the two, especially in \textit{Metaphysics} \(\Theta\)6. In the passage, Aristotle is giving us the “tense-test” to decide whether something is an \textit{energeia} or a \textit{kinēsis}. The test in the simple form shows us that if an action upon being performed can be understood
as complete in itself without a further end, as indicated in the perfect tense of the verb, then it must be an *energeia*. On the contrary, an action that is incomplete, i.e., that requires a further end, is a *kinēsis*. The activity of seeing, for example, is an *energeia* because seeing *x* (in the present tense) implies having seen *x* (in the perfect tense). The activity of learning, on the other hand, is a *kinēsis* because learning *x* doesn’t necessarily imply having learned *x*.

So we see that there is a tension in Aristotle’s uses of the word *energeia*. First, in *Metaphysics* Θ3, Aristotle wants to say that change (*kinēsis*) is a form of activity. Second, in *Metaphysics* Θ6, he wants to reserve the word *energeia* only for performances that pass the tense-test, and he explicitly denies that changes can be activities. The tension appears probably because Aristotle’s theory of *energeia* is revisionary in that he revises the common opinion which says that *energeia* is always a change, and suggests instead that there is at least a case of *energeia* that’s complete in itself and constitutes an end, just as explicitly shown in the case of seeing and having seen. Then he decides to save the word *energeia* only for the action that constitutes an end. This is how he characterizes pleasure, as an activity that constitutes an end. Accordingly, the notion of activity that is applied to the issue of pleasure is the revisionary one. Pleasure as an activity *qua* a fulfilled state in an agent contains an end in itself that is complete at every moment of its time slices (*EN* 1174b7–9). Pleasure, then, passes the tense-test smoothly. Yet, strictly speaking Aristotle never denies that movement is a kind of activity. He only thinks that activities that pass the tense-test are more

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41. Michael White observes that the notion of *energeia* in Aristotle’s ethics is better not understood as activity in the contemporary sense of ongoing performance, but rather as a state of fulfillments in the agent. See Michael J. White, “Aristotle’s Concept of Θεωρία and the Ἐνέργεια-Κίνησις Distinction,” *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 18, no. 3 (1980): 253–263. The concept of *to theōrein*, on White’s reading, should be understood as the state of having seen or having understood, rather than as an ongoing activity of understanding or seeing something. Hence in general any verb that is in the perfect tense (i.e., in the form of “having *φ*-ed”), read aspectually instead of temporally, can be an activity, though the same verb in the present tense can be a motion (*kinēsis*). White’s observation reinforces the fact that the semantic range of *energeia* is rich.
perfect than those that don’t.

The case of pleasure is rather curious. First, we are told that pleasure is an activity and that it passes the tense-test, for when we are being pleased, at that very slice of time, we have been pleased as well. Second, we are also told that pleasure is movement because it is a way of being affected. I am forced now to say that movement-qua-being-affected passes the tense-test. I think this is unavoidable, for Aristotle is making this same move himself. Recall that in book X of the EN, he uses seeing as an example of an activity that is complete. However, in On the Soul he states that seeing is a perception, and hence it is a movement and a way of being affected. But as I also mentioned above, this movement or alteration is not a standard alteration, but rather an alteration of a strange kind because it only involves an actualization of a potentiality.

2.2.5 A More Pleasant Tetrad

At this point, I hope to have given an adequate analysis of Aristotelian pleasure as a kind of passion and also a fresh solution to the so-called perennial debate on Aristotelian pleasures. Here’s a brief summary of the above discussions:

1. I started with a set of propositions about Aristotelian pleasure that prima facie is inconsistent. The propositions are as follows:

   T1 Pleasure is an unimpeded activity of our natural state.

   T2 Pleasure is something that supervenes on an activity.

   T3 Pleasure is a passion.

   T4 Pleasure is a movement.

42. I was pleasantly surprised to find out that Peter Martyr Vermigli came to a similar conclusion. According to him, Aristotelian pleasure is “an emotion [and a pathos] by which we are pleasantly affected through some action executed without impediment by a well-organized nature or a natural habit”. See Peter Martyr Vermigli, Commentary on Aristotle’s Nicomachean Ethics, ed. Emidio Campi and Joseph C. McEland, vol. 9, The Peter Martyr Library (Kirksville, MO: Sixteenth Century Essays & Studies, 2006), 102.
2. There are three tensions that need treatment: (a) between T1 and T2, (b) between T1 and T3, and (c) between T1 and T4.

3. To solve the tensions, we need to give a conceptual analysis for each of the element of the tetrad.

   (a) Pleasure is an activity insofar as it is an actualization of a power. The power is a passive power of the capacity to be affected in a certain way.

   (b) Pleasure is something that supervenes on an activity in that it is the passive counterpart of an activity, and it is the accidental final end of an activity.

   (c) Pleasure is a passion because it is a way of being affected.

   (d) Pleasure is a movement because it is a passion.

4. The three tensions are solved in the following way:

   (a) Pleasure is an activity (T1) but also supervenes on an activity (T2), and this is because pleasure is a passion (T3).

   (b) Pleasure is an activity (T1) but it is also a passion (T3). This is possible because pleasure is an actualization of a passive power.

   (c) Pleasure is an activity (T1) but it is also a movement (T4). This is not a problem because movement is a kind of activity, and pleasure *qua* movement would not be a standard alteration, but an alteration of a different kind that only involves an actualization of a potentiality.

2.3 Answering Criticisms

In this section, I’ll discuss some powerful criticisms launched against Aristotelian pleasures, and show how my reading might provide some resources to answer those objections.
2.3.1 Urmson: The Enjoyment of Feeling

In a classic article on pleasure, Urmson states his worry that Aristotle has failed to distinguish between enjoyment of activities and enjoyment of feelings by collapsing the latter into the former.\textsuperscript{43} Urmson in fact rejects that we can ever enjoy activities. What we can enjoy, according to him, is instead the sensations that accompany activities.

Taylor tries to show why Urmson is mistaken here: though enjoyment of activities is distinct from enjoyment of sensations, we can’t really separate them.\textsuperscript{44} Taylor insists that we can still enjoy the activity of eating, for example, and not only the sensations that come from the taste. I think this is not a solution that is faithful to Aristotle’s texts, and that is because Aristotle himself says that what we are enjoying is indeed not the active aspect of an activity (e.g., the act of swallowing food), but the sensation that comes with the activity. The example of the gourmand in book III of the \textit{EN} and of Philoxenus in \textit{Problems} 950a2–4 should suffice to make this point. They both long to have a throat as long as a crane’s. It is not the activity of eating or drinking \textit{per se} that we enjoy, according to Aristotle, but the taste and the sensation that comes from the activity of eating and drinking, i.e., the sensation that happens when the food touches the tongue and slides into the throat. Furthermore, remember that for Aristotle, pleasure must be something complete in itself. The activity of eating is not complete in itself because it involves a starting and an ending point that are separated by time.

Can Aristotle incorporate the enjoyment of feeling in his account of pleasure? In 1170a10, Aristotle mentions that one is pleased by beautiful tunes: \textit{ho mousikos tois kalois melesin hédetai}. If the musical finds a beautiful song pleasant, then a pleasant feeling in relation to listening to music must be present in her. But this pleasant


feeling is just the passive counterpart of the activity of listening to music, which is
present when the music is heard by the ears. It is not the activity of hearing itself
that we enjoy, but the transaction between the audible with the auditory organs. The
pleasure from listening to music may not be only bodily pleasure, but it may also
involve a rational appreciation of the structure and harmony of the music.\footnote{45}

Now, Urmson might give a rejoinder to this response, saying that pleasure is not
the passive counterpart of an activity, but the enjoyment of this passive counterpart,
viz., the enjoyment of the way we are being affected. Take the example of listening
to music again. My suggestion is that pleasure is nothing other than the way our ears
and heart are struck by music. Urmson is still dissatisfied. He wants to say that it’s
the enjoyment of the way we are being struck that is pleasure. Hence, it seems that
my reading still can’t incorporate Urmson’s intuition about pleasure.

Let me try one more time. On my reading, in the experience of listening to
the music, when my ears and my heart are struck by the music, the strikes themselves
are the pleasures. When I find the strikes pleasant, the finding itself is an immediate
awareness of the goodness of the sensibilia that is integral to the perception itself.\footnote{46}
Suppose that in addition to the basic perceptual awareness of the goodness of the
sensibilia, there is also a rational awareness involved in the event that utilizes proposi-
tional thinking. I can still say that the rational awareness is a pleasure, too. Thinking
is an activity, but it is also akin to a perception in which an object of thought somehow
affects us as the thinkers, and there is a awareness that such an affection is good in
the very activity of thought itself. This pleasure is, then, a second-order pleasure, for
it is a (mental) pleasure with respect to another pleasure (cf. \textit{On the Soul} 431a8–14
and 431b2–9). This is probably the best I can do to address Urmson’s worry, viz.,
by pointing out that what Urmson calls the enjoyment of feeling is nothing but the

\footnote{45}{As a comparison, Aristotle says that the virtue of temperance concerns only the sense of touch
and taste. See \textit{Eudemian Ethics} 1230b21–1231a26.}

\footnote{46}{In the next chapter I shall talk more about the role of \textit{phantasia} in making a sort of affirmation
about the goodness or the badness of sensibilia and intelligibilia.}
being affected unimpededly, which would involve an immediate awareness that such perceptibilia are good, and might involve a second-order (mental) awareness as well of the goodness of the perceptibilia.

2.3.2 Frede: The Complexity of Pleasure

Dorothea Frede imagines that if there were a Nobel prize for philosophers, Aristotle should get one just for his theory of pleasure. That is because Aristotle has given us a theory of pleasure that fits well with morality without falling into hedonism. But Frede’s article is not a eulogy to Aristotle. It is instead an honest assessment of the theory’s strengths and weaknesses. Her criticisms basically suggest that Aristotle’s theory is not complex enough to be able to incorporate some aspects of pleasure that are philosophically intuitive. On her reading, Aristotelian pleasure is nothing other than a performative activity, identical to the activity of eating, drinking, etc. Based on this reading, she puts together four criticisms of Aristotelian pleasures.

One criticism that Frede puts forward in her article is as follows:

When eating, drinking, or touching something that gives us pain or nausea, it is not the act that is either unnatural or impeded, but it is the immediate “feel” or sensation that is at stake.

This is indeed correct. But as I showed above, Aristotle is perfectly aware of this issue. Strictly speaking, he is not saying that it’s the activity of eating, drinking, or touching that are pleasures, but rather the sensations that come from them.

Frede’s other criticism is that Aristotle can’t incorporate the idea of process in his account of pleasure, because pleasure is said always to be a complete activity. She insists that sometimes we enjoy things that have ends outside themselves, like

48. Ibid., 265.
49. Ibid., 266.
when we are listening to a Beethoven sonata. This is a legitimate worry if we see Aristotle’s pleasure as a performative activity like eating or drinking. But once we see pleasure as a passion, i.e., the passive counterpart of such activities, then the problem immediately disappears. Take the case of listening to the Moonlight Sonata. On my reading, the pleasure is always complete because it is the transaction that happens between the sound and the ears at every time-slice. We can take pleasure in the sonata even though the sonata is a process. Perhaps three kinds of pleasure are involved here:

1. Auditory pleasure. This is the pleasure that we experience when the music strikes the ears.

2. Emotional pleasure. Perhaps we feel joy or calm when we listen to the sonata. The joyful feeling is the pleasure itself.50

3. Mental pleasure. We get pleasure from understanding the harmonic structures of the melody and the musical piece as a whole. We also get pleasure from anticipating the coming of the second and the third movements of the sonata.

In all of these instances, pleasure as a way of being affected physically, emotionally, and mentally is complete in itself, even though it comes from listening to a three-movement sonata, which is a process.

Frede’s third critique is that Aristotle’s theory of pleasure can’t incorporate the pleasure of the recipient of an activity.51 Indeed, if we understand Aristotelian pleasure merely as a performative activity, there is no room for passive pleasures that come from “being acted on”. However, on my reading, pleasure is primarily a way of being acted on. Accordingly, there shouldn’t be any problem to explain pleasures in the case of being acted on. This point, for example, is consistent with Aristotle’s own

50. If we instead feel angry when we listen to the sonata (which is entirely possible), that would be an instance of pain.
statement about the exchange of pleasure between the lovers in 1157a7–9, where the beloved finds pleasure in receiving attention (therapeuomenos) from the lover.

The last worry advanced by Frede is that Aristotle’s theory of pleasure is not broad enough to incorporate the two functions of pleasure as (a) something integral in moral actions, viz., to act in a pleasant way, and as (b) an object of moral actions that can serve as an object of pursuit. On Frede’s reading of Aristotelian pleasure, Aristotle seems to have a problem explaining in what way pleasure is an object of moral actions. On my reading of Aristotelian pleasure as a passion, however, both (a) and (b) can be incorporated easily. First, pleasure is something integral in moral actions in that a virtuous person acts morally in a pleasant way when she is being affected properly. Take, for example, a temperate action of eating moderately. Here the activity of eating gives rise to pleasure when the amount and the kind of the food being eaten are proper. The temperate action is done pleasantly because the virtuous person finds enjoyment in the affection caused by the food. In turn, the pleasure will enhance the virtuous activity. Second, the pleasure from the food itself can, in a way, be seen as the object of the activity of eating, although this is a hedonist position that Aristotle will question. Some people indeed eat to pursue a certain way of being affected through the sense of taste.

2.3.3 Riel: Activity Without Pleasure

Riel’s reading of Aristotelian pleasure is different from Frede’s. If Frede sees Aristotelian pleasure as a performative activity, Riel thinks that pleasure is something that supervenes on an activity, a by-product above and beyond the activity, a sort of supplementary perfection.52 Since on Riel’s reading pleasure is not identical to activity, he is questioning the passages from book X of the *EN* that suggest that pleasure must necessarily come from perfect activities. For example, Aristotle writes, “When both object and subject of perception are at their best, there will always be pleasure,

since what will produce it and what will experience it are both present” (1174b29–31). Riel’s critique of Aristotle’s pleasure is that sometimes, even though we perform unimpeded activity, there is no pleasure. On the other hand, sometimes, even if the performative activity is not optimal, there is still pleasure. Is there a way to respond to Riel’s worries?

Well, one way is to point out that elsewhere Aristotle recognizes that pleasure doesn’t always come with an activity. For example, in *Problems* 956a15-27, he says that we feel no pleasure in the contemplation of geometrical truths, e.g., of the fact that the interior angles of a triangle are equal to two right angles. Even though we contemplate geometrical truths without any impediment, no pleasure will come out of it. What we enjoy is rather the speculation, he says. Now, the sayings in the book of *Problems* might not be significant enough to make a point in the argument. We should, then, look at book X of the *EN* itself, where Aristotle admits that no one can be continuously pleased (1175a3–4). Sometimes we lose interest in our activities and the pleasure is diminished as well. Aristotle acknowledges that even though our sight is perfect and the object is perfect, we might lose interest over time. The end of book VII explains why this is so (1154b20–25):

The reason why the same one thing cannot always be pleasant is that our nature is not simple. There is another element in us, which makes us perishable, so that if one of these elements is acting, this is contrary to nature for the other nature within us; and when the two are balanced, what is done seems neither painful nor pleasant. If anything had a simple nature, the same action would always be the most pleasant.

This passage echoes Aristotle’s claim in book X that we can’t continually be pleased, and that is because our nature is complex, both physically and psychically. When doing an action like seeing, presumably it’s not only our body that is affected, but the action incites emotions and mental affections as well. It is the combination of these affections in a person’s being that is responsible for the total experience of
pleasure (or pain). That is why in book X chapter 5 of the *EN*, Aristotle talks about foreign pleasures destroying the pleasures of an activity. For example, the pleasure of listening to flute-playing may destroy the activity and the pleasure of discussion. We can imagine that in seeing a painting, for example, the pleasures that arise from our sense organs, from our emotions, and from our mental perceptions may balance or conflict with each other, and hence creating different ways of being affected. We may call this view The Balancing View of Pleasure (BVP). On the other hand, it is completely possible to get pleasure even when doing activity not in an optimal way. The reason is that pleasures admit of degrees, as is apparent from this passage: “When we enjoy something a great deal (*sphodra*), we do not really do anything else, and when we are only mildly (*ērema*) pleased by something, we do other things” (1175b10–11).

Finally, understanding pleasure simultaneously as an activity and also a passion is more advantageous than seeing it merely as an activity (like Gosling and Taylor) or merely as a by-product addition to an activity (like Riel). If pleasure were simply identical to activity, then there can’t be an explanation about how it is possible that sometimes we do an activity without experiencing pleasure even though the activity is perfect. Next, if we see pleasure as a by-product of an activity, it seems that the presence of pleasure is too arbitrary and mysterious. As Riel says in his article, “There is no direct access to pleasure.”53 On my reading, accordingly, a space is then open for understanding what’s happening in the body when we are doing an activity, and the language of Aristotelian pleasure can still be incorporated. Aristotle talks about the heart’s being moved when we are feeling or thinking. Now that we are equipped with the language of the nervous system and a high-tech tool such as fMRI, there is a hope to track what’s happening in the brain when we are doing an activity that is associated with pleasure or pain. The balancing of affections is what explains the

total experience of pleasure.
The aim of this chapter is to understand the nature of Aristotelian pains. In the final sentence of book VII of the *Nicomachean Ethics* (*EN*), Aristotle states that he has discussed what pleasure and pain are. Unfortunately, this statement is just half-true. He does provide an elaborate account of pleasure, viz., that it is an unimpeded activity of our natural state. However, he hasn’t described explicitly what pain is. In IX.9 he promises to clarify what the nature of pain is (1170a25–26). But again, there is no explicit account of pain in book IX or X of the *EN*.

There must be a reason for this absence of conceptual analysis of pain. One dull possibility is just that the manuscripts we have are not complete. A more interesting possibility is entertained by Frede, who explains that this condition obtains due to Aristotle’s focus on the positive, which partly causes him not to elaborate discussions on pain other than treating it as the “mirror image of pleasure. . . . This neglect of pain as the counterpart of pleasure is in part due to the topic: Aristotle is not concerned with the bad, but rather with the good life.”¹ Frede’s suggestion might be that in order to understand φ, it is best to understand it in its prime and natural condition. Hence, to understand how the human body works, we ought to focus on understanding a healthy human body instead of an ill one. The same goes with pleasure and pain: in order to understand how a human acts, it is best to focus on the unimpeded activity of our natural state that corresponds to pleasure, rather than on pain. This explanation is plausible, but it assumes that there is a symmetry between pleasure and pain, which is something that needs to be explicated.

¹ Frede, “Pleasure and Pain in Aristotle’s *Ethics*,” 263.
My investigation of the nature of Aristotelian pains will use both a direct and an indirect strategy. The direct strategy is done by reconstructing an account of Aristotelian pain from the available textual evidence. I will formulate a puzzle concerning the nature of pain that is present in Aristotle’s corpus and propose a solution to it. I intend to isolate the discussion of Aristotelian pains as much as possible from the voices of Aristotelian pleasures. Afterwards, I follow the second and indirect strategy to investigate pain, viz., by analyzing pain as the contrary of pleasure.

I shall argue that Aristotle views pain as a passion in that it is the passive counterpart of perception (or thinking, in the case of mental pain) that involves an awareness that something is bad and is sensible to avoid. There is only one event here that is constituted by the affection and the awareness. Moreover, since for Aristotle the heart is the seat of perception, Aristotelian pains are ultimately nothing other than the movements of the heart.

### 3.1 The Tetrad

There are four claims about the nature of pain that are present in Aristotle’s writings:

- **P1** Pain is an activity.\(^3\)
- **P2** Pain is something which supervenes on activities and passions.
- **P3** Pain is a passion.
- **P4** Pain is a movement.

The task of the first part of this chapter is to explain and reconcile these claims, which *prima facie* seem to be inconsistent if held together. P1 is inconsistent with P2 if the word “activity” in both propositions refer to the same thing. Just as x can’t

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2. For example, when I touch fire, there is only one event involved, viz., the physical affection caused by the fire, which involves an awareness that the object is too hot and ought to be avoided.
3. P1 stands for Proposition #1.
be identical to something that supervenes on $x$, in the same way activity can’t be identical to something that supervenes on activity. A similar worry arises concerning holding P2 and P3 together. If pain is a passion, it can’t be at the same time something that supervenes on passion. P1 is also inconsistent with P3 because P1 suggests that pain is a doing, while P3 suggests that pain is a being affected. To hold P1 and P3 at the same time suggests that pain is both an activity and a passivity. P1 is inconsistent with P4 if one takes the notion of activity in EN book VII seriously, viz., that activity is not a movement, but something that is at rest and complete in itself. Before I suggest ways to reconcile the tetrad, I shall now explain why I think Aristotle holds P1–P4.

3.1.1 Pain Qua That Which Supervenes on Passions and Activities (P2)

Since I am ultimately interested not only in the nature of pain simpliciter, but also in how the nature of pain relates to the place of pain in the Aristotelian good life, I shall start my investigation of the nature of pain from the ethical works, before moving onto his other works. In the ethical writings, the discussions of pain are intricately related to the discussion of happiness and virtue. Here I will focus only on one claim that is directly related to the issue of the nature of pain, viz., that pain is something that supervenes on activities and passions (P2).

First, Aristotle states in the EN that pain is something that supervenes on (epigenomenēn) activities (1104b4). In the context, he is referring to the fact that pleasure and pain are the signs of virtues and vices. Some actions are supervened on by pleasures. A temperate person is one who is not saddened by his abstinence from certain bodily pleasures, while a self-indulgent person is annoyed and pained by such an abstinence. “Activities” here refer to those that might be called virtuous or vicious, such as courageous or cowardly actions. The supervenience relation is reaffirmed in 1104b13–16: “Again if the virtues are to do with actions and situations of being affected, and pleasure and pain follow from (hepetai) every action and situation of being affected,
then this is another reason why virtue will be concerned with pleasure and pain.” The supervenience relation between pain and activity is also present in book X of the *EN*, especially in chapter 5, where Aristotle says that there are pains proper (*oikeios*) to an activity. Interestingly, he also says that pains proper to an activity actually ruin the activity (1175b16–20). This remark may simply mean that the pain that results from activity makes the person refrain from continually doing the activity.

What does Aristotle mean by pain that is proper to an activity? I suggest that proper pain should be understood simply as pain that follows a certain activity. The propriety is not something normative in accordance with what a virtuous person would view as proper. That the propriety is not something normative is shown from Aristotle’s own example in 1175b19–20. After saying that the pains proper to activities ruin the activities, he says “for example, someone finds writing or calculating unpleasant and painful, he does not write or calculate, since the activity is painful.” A virtuous person would find writing or calculating (deliberating) pleasant. Yet, here pain is said to be proper to these activities, and this is not because it is appropriately so, but simply because pain follows or accompanies these activities, even though ideally it should be pleasure that follows them. Compatible to the idea that pain ruins the activity on which it supervenes, pain is also said to upset and ruin the natural state of the person experiencing it (1119a23–24). These passages suggest that pain is something conceptually different from activity, but it might still be ontologically inseparable from the latter.

The supervenience relation that obtains between pain and activity is still open for analysis. Two Greek words are used to describe this relation, viz., *epiginetai* and *hepetai*. However, these two words are not very informative, for they only allow us to say that pain is something that accompanies activities, without giving us more details about the accompaniment relation. Another piece of information that is important

4. Proper pain can also arise from the exercise of a skill if it is done by one that is unskilled in it.
about the propriety of pain to a certain activity is that pain is not a very nice companion: it accompanies activities by ruining them.

Second, pain also follows from the situation of being affected. Aristotle describes pain as something that accompanies feelings: “By feelings (pathē), I mean appetite, anger, fear, confidence, envy, joy, love, hate, longing, emulation, pity, and in general things on which there follows (hepetai) pleasure or pain” (1105b21–23). Pain, then, supervenes on or follows or accompanies not only an activity, but also a being affected (a pathos). At this point, although we are told that pleasure and pain accompany pathē, it isn’t clear yet whether pleasure or pain is a passion as well. In this passage, what Aristotle calls pathē are what we understand as emotions. The word pathē, however, can be understood in a broader sense as affections. For example, to perceive is also called to be affected (paschein) by Aristotle (On the Soul 416b33). Emotions are passions understood in a narrower sense, viz., passions that involve some sort of cognition or belief. For example, anger is a passion that involves a belief that one has been slighted unjustly. Babies and non-human animals can have passions in the broad sense of the experiences of being affected, but they may not have fully formed emotions if emotions require high-level cognition and propositional beliefs.

In the ethical works, there is no explicit discussion about the nature of pain that supervenes on activities and passions. In the Eudemian Ethics, Aristotle says that passions are distinguished by pleasure and pain (ta de pathē lupē, kai hēdonē, diōrístai) (1221b36–37). This passage is a clear indication that Aristotelian pain is a kind of passion. One might object to this by pointing out that the passage might only say that in order to divide passions, we can use pleasure and pain as some.

5. Leighton suggests that in Aristotle’s Rhetoric, the accompaniment relation is an inclusion relation: anger is called to be accompanied by pain because the definition of anger includes the accompanying pain. See Stephen R. Leighton, “Aristotle and the Emotions,” in Essays on Aristotle’s De Anima, ed. Martha Craven Nussbaum and Amélie Oksenberg Rorty (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 217–219. I do not think Leighton’s point is solid here. The reason is that the definition of anger also involves a belief that one is being slighted, but Aristotle never says that belief accompanies anger.
sort of markers. It does not follow from this consideration that pleasure and pain are themselves passions. But if we look at the immediate context of the passage, it is quite clear that Aristotle is distinguishing passions into pleasures and pains. The passage occurs right after Aristotle states that there are divisions (diaireses) in the soul made of capacities, states, and passions. He naturally goes on to talk about passions, which he believes are divided into (diöristai) pleasure and pain. Although in general we are left without a clear exposition of the nature of pain in the ethical works, at least we know from the Eudemian Ethics that pain is a kind of passion.

### 3.1.2 Pain Qua Activity (P1)

In *On the Soul*, we make progress because we know for sure that pains are either passions (ta pathê) or activities (ta erga) (409b15–17). I will first discuss bodily pleasures and pains, and then will extend the finding towards mental pleasures and pains. Emotional pains will be discussed in section 3.2.1 below.

Pain can be understood as an activity if we take the passage in 431a10–11 literally, that being pleased or being pained is to act (to energein) with the perceptive mean towards (pros) the good or the bad as such.\(^6\) I take it that pain is the activity with the perceptive means towards good and the bad.\(^7\) Here the notion of “activity” should be understood in the broad sense as a realization of a capacity to perceive, as the phrase “with a perceptive mean” suggests. It isn’t clear whether being pained is to

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6. Here Sherman reminds us that pain doesn’t simply accompany some kind of awareness about what is bad but that it is intentionally focused or directed towards what is bad: “Pity is a painful feeling directed at, or toward (ἐπί) the appearance of someone suffering (Rh. 1385b12), indignation is pain at (ἐπί) unmerited good fortune (1386b16–17).” See Nancy Sherman, “The Role of Emotions in Aristotelian Virtues,” in *Aristotle: Critical Assessments*, ed. Lloyd Gerson, vol. 3 (New York: Routledge, 1999), 323.

7. I need to make a clarification about the word “towards” that is translated from the Greek word “pros”. Being pleased or pained involves an awareness of what is good or bad. But awareness of what is good or bad is different from an actualization of the perceptive mean towards what is good or bad. In the latter, I suggest that the use of the word “towards” implies the workings of the appetite whose object is what is good or bad. This assumes that there is already an awareness of what is good or bad in the activity of the appetite.
act with the perceptive mean towards both the good and the bad or only towards the bad. Presumably, pain is a response towards the bad, and it is manifested in the act of avoidance towards what is bad. This is consistent with EN 1153b1–3, which says that pain is bad and makes sense to avoid. The phrase ἡ τοιαύτα means that the perceptive mean is directed towards what is good or bad insofar as it is good or bad. Hence the perceptive mean is not necessarily directed only towards goodness or badness as such, but also to objects of perception insofar as they are good or bad.

Since being pained is to act with the perceptive mean (τῇ αἰσθητικῇ μεσοτητί), it is either a kind of perception or involves a perception. I see that “to act with the perceptive mean” entails at least an actualization of perception, although pain may be more than simply an awareness of perceptual objects. But let’s talk about sensory perception first. Perception in its basic meaning is the registration of the form of sensibilia without their matter on the sense organs, “as wax receives the imprint of the ring without the iron or gold” (On the Soul 424a19). The phrase “perceptive mean” indicates the starting condition of a perceptive organ. As such, the organ is ready to receive perceptual inputs that will disrupt the mean. In fact, the mean must be disrupted if there is to be perception at all, because we do not perceive anything that is of equal quality (424a2ff.). For example, if the temperature of our hand is the same as the temperature of a hot surface, the sense of touch cannot sense the hotness of the surface, although it may be able to sense the texture. Hence the sense of touch must be neither hot nor cold if it is to be able of sensing hotness or coldness. In the same way, sight must be neither white nor black if it is to be able to perceive colors.

When the inputs are within the acceptable range of disruption, pleasure follows. When there is a violent disruption, there is pain. In sense perceptions, extreme inputs from sensibilia will impair the ability of the sense organs to function. If the movement from the perceptual objects is excessive like a very light bright or a very loud sound, the

logos of the sense organs is destroyed (424a30–31). The sense organs would no longer be functioning as they should.

Being pained is not only to act with the perceptive mean, but it is to act accordingly towards what is good or bad. Hence there is more than just an awareness of sensibilia in the event of being pained, because it also involves awareness about what is good or bad. I will show later that in fact Aristotle’s understanding of perception is richer than an understanding of perception simply as an awareness of perceptual objects. But what we need to note now is the reference to what is good and bad in perception, which might compel Aristotle to say that even babies and non-human animals that experience pain also have some sort of intentional attitudes and awareness of what is good or bad. Is this possible?

One route that Aristotle can take to maintain this view is to admit that pain involves a non-rational awareness of what is good or bad. Babies do avoid pains, and even though they can’t make rational or propositional judgments about what is good or bad, the very act of perception itself is sufficient to allow them to have an awareness that a sensory input is good or bad. What is needed is a simple perceptive evaluation of whether an object is agreeable or disagreeable. This perceptive evaluation would be present in the perceptual content, but it doesn’t have to translate into a propositional belief. In Aristotle’s theory of perception, common acts of perception such as seeing or hearing can be themselves forms of pleasures or pains, depending on whether the subjects and the objects of perception are excellent or not, and on whether the whole event is seen as good or bad. Yet the awareness of good or bad doesn’t have to be separated from the act of the perception itself, for when we are experiencing pleasure or pain, this simply means that there is an actualization of the soul’s capacity to perceive an object with an evaluation about whether the object is good or bad. If the object is deemed good, the object is seen as pleasant. If the object is deemed bad, it

9. The action would involve the workings of the appetite.
is seen as unpleasant or painful.

This understanding of pain is warranted by the discussion of the perceptual system in *On the Soul*. The question at hand is as follows: “If being pained is some sort of perception, how is it the case that perception can also be aware of what is good or bad?” The key to answering this question is in the concept of *phantasia*, which is loosely translated as the faculty of “imagination”. Aristotle, as we shall see shortly, insists that we can’t have perception without the workings of *phantasia*. It is through *phantasia* that the soul can make a sort of affirmation of what is good and bad in the event of sense perception. This last claim needs to be explicated.

In *On the Soul* III.3, *phantasia* is described as a faculty of the soul in virtue of which an image (*phantasma*) arises for us. Aristotle then gives a discussion about the difference between *phantasia* and other faculties of the soul, including perception (428a5ff.). There are four main differences between perception and *phantasia*. First, perception is either a potentiality like sight or an actuality like seeing. But an image that is produced by *phantasia* can be present when there is no immediate perception of objects. Here *phantasma* is seen as an after-image. Second, all beasts have perception, but not all have *phantasia*. Ants, bees, and grubs are the animals that are lacking *phantasia*. Third, perceptions are always true, while the imaginations from *phantasia* are mostly false. The claim is that perceptions are incorrigible and perceptual beliefs, if they are indeed believed, can’t be wrong. This must be contrasted with imaginations from *phantasia* that can take form in daydreaming or hallucinations. As a matter of fact, this claim is too strong because Aristotle later will say that perception is not incorrigible (428b17):

1. Perception of the special objects (e.g., white) is true or is the least likely to err as long as perception is present. Special objects are objects that can be perceived only by a unique organ. For example, colors can be perceived only by the eyes, and sounds can only be perceived by the ears. (418a7–16)
2. Perception of the incidental objects (i.e., physical objects) is possible in error (e.g., not about white, but about whether the white is in this physical object or that physical object). (418a20–25)

3. Perception of the common objects (e.g., movement and magnitude) is most subject to error. Common objects are objects that can be perceived by several perceptions. Magnitude, for example, can be sensed by the eyes and the sense of touch. (418a17–19)

The fourth difference between perception and phantasias is that non-perceptual sightings from phantasias appear to us even while we are not perceiving. The sightings might be dream-images. These are Aristotle’s arguments for his claim that phantasias and perception are different.

From the above considerations, it seems as though perception is completely different from phantasias. Nevertheless, distinguishing perception from phantasias without any conceptual overlap proves to be difficult. The reason is that when Aristotle talks about the origin of movement in III.10, he says that phantasias are necessary for the movement in animals, alongside with orexis (desire). Although he finally concludes that the only source of animal movement is orexis, he still thinks that without phantasy animals can’t act or move (433b27–30):

In general, therefore, as we have said, insofar as the animal is capable of desire so far is it capable of moving itself; and it is not capable of desire without imagination. And all imagination is either concerned with reasoning or perception. In the latter then the other animals share also.

But the claim that phantasias is necessary for any motion is problematic because not all animals have phantasias, and yet they move and slide. Can this tension be solved?

Given the fact that a handful of locomotive animals are without phantasias, if one still wants to maintain that phantasias is necessary for movements, then one way
to do it is to see sense-perception as a species of *phantasia*. But if this is true, perception must also be a faculty of the soul in virtue of which image arises for us, because this is how *phantasia* was described. Indeed there are several places where Aristotle explicitly says that perception can give rise to image, such as in *On the Soul* 428a12–15, *On Dreams* 460b22-25, and *Metaphysics* 1010b1–8. If the account of imagination is simply “that in virtue of which image arises for us”, then perception already accomplishes this task to be considered as *phantasia*.

Accordingly, Aristotle’s distinction between perception and *phantasia* in *On the Soul* III.3 must be seen in a different way. Even though it looks as if there is a sharp line between perception and *phantasia, phantasia* in that chapter should be understood in a narrower sense, viz., as *phantasia* other than perceptual *phantasia*.

10. My discussions of *phantasia* follow Everson’s view closely. See Everson, *Aristotle on Perception*, 178ff. Frede also takes a similar position, that sense perceptions can be understood as *phantasmata*. See Dorothea Frede, “The Cognitive Role of *Phantasia* in Aristotle,” in *Essays on Aristotle’s De Anima*, ed. Martha Craven Nussbaum and Amélie Oksenberg Rorty (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 289. For an opposing view, see Hendrik Lorenz, *The Brute Within: Appetitive Desire in Plato and Aristotle* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 125. Lorenz thinks that Aristotle makes a distinction between perception and perceptual *phantasia* in imperfect animals (e.g., those that only have the sense of touch) because Aristotle is questioning whether those animals have *phantasia* or not. I do not want to get caught in this debate because my initial motivation in introducing the discussion of the *phantasia* is to explain how non-rational perceptions can be directed towards what is good or bad. Lorenz disagrees that all animals have *phantasia* (ibid., 139). Accordingly, he has to confine the explanation of pleasure and pain in some animals in terms of perception and desire. My point is just that there must be a faculty of the soul that is responsible for the awareness of what is good and bad.

11. “Once more, we do not, when sense functions precisely with regard to its object, say that we imagine (*phainetai*) it to be a man, but rather when there is some failure of accuracy in its exercise—then it is either true or false.”

12. “The ground of such false judgments is that any images whatever present (*phainetai*) themselves, not only when its object moves a sense, but also when the sense by itself alone is moved, provided only it be moved in the same manner as it is by the object.”

13. “Regarding the nature of truth, we must maintain that not everything which appears (*phainomenon*) is true. Firstly, even if sensation—at least of the object special to the sense in question—is not false; still image is not the same as sensation.—Again, it is fair to express surprise at our opponents for raising the question whether magnitudes are as great, and colours are of such a nature, as they appear (*phainetai*) to people at a distance, or as they appear to those close at hand, and whether they are such as they appear to the sick or to the healthy, and whether those things are heavy which appear so to the weak or those which appear so to the strong, and whether truth is what appears to the sleeping or to the waking.”
In fact, the discussion in III.3 is about perception of the special objects (i.e., objects that are specific for a particular sense organ) (427b12). This is the kind of perception that is compared to *phantasia*. The *phantasia* in *On the Soul* III.3 is then compared to perception of special objects, which is actually a perceptual *phantasia*.

If it is true that perception is a kind of *phantasia* (a perceptual *phantasia*) because it is also “that in virtue of which an image arises for us”, and if the working of *phantasia* is responsible for awareness of good and bad, then the awareness of good and bad turns out to be present already in the act of perceiving itself. Again, what is perceived is not necessarily only goodness or badness as such, but also the object seen as good or bad. For example, pain might be both the perception of a harmful object (e.g., a sound that’s too loud) and the perception of the badness of the object.

Besides a discussion of *phantasia* insofar as it is a faculty, of equal importance is a discussion of the images (*phantasmata*) that arise due to *phantasia*. *On Dreams* 459a14–22 reports that the soul not only has the capacity of *phantasia* (viz., *phantastikon*), but also the capacity of perception (viz., *aisthētikon*). While *phantasia* is described as the cause for *phantasmata*, perception causes the presence of *aisthēmata*, which are perceptual affections that are produced by the perception of external objects (460a32–b3). It is possible that the word “*phantasmata*” is reserved by Aristotle for affections in the soul that remain even after the sense perceptions cease operation, and “*aisthēmata*” is for images that arise from sense perceptions while the sense perceptions are still present. In *On the Soul* III.3, then, it isn’t a surprise that Aristotle makes a sharp distinction between *phantasia* and perception. The reason is that *phantasma* in that chapter doesn’t encompass *aisthēma*, and *phantasma* doesn’t play a role in perception by the five senses.\(^\text{14}\)

My motivation for talking about *phantasia* was to explain how being pained is to act with the perceptive mean towards what is good or bad. By seeing perception as

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a kind of *phantasia*, the very act of perception itself already includes an awareness of what is good and bad. In order to understand the nature of pain more precisely, however, we need to look at the workings of sense perception more closely and determine which aspects of sense perception can be identified as pain.

A single act of sense perception can be conceptually broken down into multiple steps, although these steps are not prior or posterior in time. Suppose I see an appalling object:

1. My eyes glide towards that object.

2. The form of that object without its matter is registered on my visual organ (i.e., perception in its basic meaning). (*On the Soul* 425b23–24)

3. An *aisthēma* is produced, which includes an awareness that the object is bad. (*On Dreams* 460b2–3)

4. I see the object because I am aware of the *aisthēma*, for *aisthēma* is indeed the object of perception as it appears to me. (*On Dreams* 460b2–3)

Being pained would be a description of either one of these steps or some steps taken together.  

It is also important to notice that in *On the Soul* 431b2ff., Aristotle talks not only about bodily pleasure and pain, but also about mental pleasure and pain. The

15. “Even when the external object of perception has departed, the impressions (*aisthēmata*) it has made persist, and are themselves objects of perception.”

16. Achtenberg says that being pleased and being pained are perceptions of an object as good or bad, and she distinguishes between these perceptions and the perceptions by the five sense organs. The perceptions of pleasure and pain are the common perceptions done by the soul as a whole, and not special perceptions by the sense organs. See Deborah Achtenberg, *Cognition of Value in Aristotle’s Ethics: Promise of Enrichment, Threat of Destruction* (Albany, NY: State University of New York, 2002), 159ff. Achtenberg’s view is unattractive for two reasons. First, the very act of perception by the five senses actually already includes an awareness of good or bad because it is a perceptual *phantasia*. Achtenberg’s distinction between primary perceptions (by the five senses) and secondary perceptions (perception of good or bad) is unnecessary. Second, in *On the Soul*, the so-called common sense or common perception has as its object not what is good or bad, but what is common to some or all perceptions. For example, common sensibilia would include movement and magnitude (425a14–27).
reason is that he talks about thinking (dianoia) and how images have similar functions to those of the sense-perceptions (aisthēmata) that arise in the soul. In fact, Aristotle makes a strong statement that the soul “thinks the forms in images (en tois phantasmasi)” (431b2). There is an assertion or a denial of what is good and bad in the activity of thinking, which makes it some sort of perception: “when one says as, there, that something is pleasant or painful, so here [i.e., in the activity of thinking] one avoids or pursues” (431b8–9).

3.1.3 Pain Qua Passion (P3)

As I mentioned in the previous chapter, the Eudemian Ethics explicitly says that passions are distinguished by pleasures and pains (ta de pathē lupē, kai hēdonē, diōristai) (1221b36–37). There are several other considerations to accept the thesis that pain is a passion. “Passion” here is understood broadly as the noun for paschein (to be affected). Pain is a passion in that it is a movement of being affected in a particular way. One relevant passage is worthy of discussion here:17

Even if it is indeed the case that being grieved (to lupeisthai), rejoicing, and thinking are movements, that each of them consists in being moved, and that the movement is due to the soul, e.g. that being angry and being afraid consist in the heart’s being moved in a particular way and that thinking is a movement either of this perhaps or of some other part, and that some of these happen because of movements in place and others because of movements constituting alteration . . .—then to say that the soul is angry is as if one were to say that the soul weaves or builds. For it is surely better not to say that the soul pities, learns, or thinks, but that the man does these with his soul; and this not because the movement takes place in it, but because sometimes it reaches as far as it or at other times comes from it. (408b5–15)

This passage clarifies the way we talk about agency. It would be wrong to say that it is the soul that is being pained. Rather, what is being pained is the person.

17. The translations are taken from Aristotle, Aristotle’s De Anima.
the discussion, Aristotle has no reservations about granting that being pained is a
movement of being affected. The heart is also being affected when one is having
emotions and being pained (and also when one is thinking), and the movement of the
heart may be one seamless event with the event of having emotions or being pained.

For Aristotle, the heart is a physical entity that is located in the middle-upper
body, more in the front than in the back (Parts of Animals 656b23–26, 665b18–21).
It is the primary seat of perceptions and emotions like fear (see Parts of Animals
650b27–29, 656a27–33, 665b27). In the Movement of Animals, he says that just a
very small change in the heart produces bodily and emotional reactions such as
blushing and trembling (701b28–32). The motions of the heart are involuntary, as
involuntary as the motions of the penis (703b6). However, it seems to be the portal of
all movements of the soul, from and through which perceptions, emotions, and even
thinking pass (see the very end of the Movement of Animals). Hence even though
we can choose voluntarily to engage in sense perception or in thinking, there is an
involuntary passive counterpart of these activities in the heart.

Going back to the claim that pain is a passion, an additional support for it can
be found in the biological works. Here, too, Aristotle doesn’t tell us what pain is
conclusively. What we have, however, is an indication that pain is a way of being
affected when something is not functioning properly. In explaining the working of the
womb, Aristotle writes:

Now in the case of any other part, it is plain that it is healthy if it performs
its function satisfactorily and gives no pain and is not exhausted after
functioning: e.g. an eye is healthy when it does not produce pus and
can see and after seeing is not disturbed and incapable of seeing again.
Thus the womb too is healthy if it does not cause pain and performs its
proper function satisfactorily and after functioning is not incapacitated
or exhausted. It is said that even a womb not in good condition may
nevertheless be able to perform its function well and painlessly, if it is not
impaired in respect of its function—just as nothing prevents an eye from
seeing accurately even when not all its parts are in a good condition or
there is a stye in it. Similarly, if a womb is in good condition in its essential region, it will not be harmed with regard to its function. Now if the womb is to be in good condition, it must, first of all, not move from place to place but be in a uniform position; but it must be able to move further away without being affected or giving pain (aneu pathous kai lupēs), and not be too insensitive to the touch. (History of Animals 633b16–634a4)

Two points are important to note here. First, Aristotle mentions that when the characteristic activity (to ergon) of a womb is properly at work, there should be no pain. There is an interesting general question about the relation between the idea of proper function and pain. In the case of the characteristic activity of a womb, it seems as though the proper functioning of the womb is sufficient to eliminate pain. But this is not always the case with other bodily organs. A properly functioning sense of touch would feel pain if it touched too hot an object. In a reversal, people who suffer from congenital insensitivity to pain would not be able to feel pain, exactly because their body is not functioning properly. What Aristotle wants to say in the HA passage is that the presence of pain can be explained in terms of a dysfunction of an organ, although dysfunctionality is not necessarily a condition for the presence or absence of pain. Second, in the last sentence of the passage, passions are again connected to pain in such a way that either passions are the causes of pain or pain itself is a passion. These two points can be combined in an idea that pain is closely connected to passion that reflects an unwanted affection in the form of a hindrance, obstruction, or excessive impressions.

3.1.4 Pain Qua Movement (P4)

The claim that pain is a movement appears in On the Soul 417a15, where experiencing passion (paschein) is seen as interchangeable with being moved (kineisthai) (see also 431a5, 434b29). The movement is related to the heart’s being moved in one way or

18. Surely this isn’t strictly speaking true, given the fact that women experience the pain of giving birth and often times the pain of monthly menstruation, exactly when the womb is working properly.
another (432b31–433a1). The claim also appears in *Metaphysics* Γ, which indicates that pain is an affection and a movement (1022b15–21): “We call an affection (*pathos*) . . . (2) The already actualized alterations.—(3) Especially, injurious alterations and movements, and above all, painful injuries.—(4) Experiences pleasant or painful when on a large scale are called affections (*pathē*).” *Physics* 247a16–17 is more explicit in saying that bodily pleasures and pains are alterations (*alloiōseis*) of the sensitive part (*aisthētikon*). The alterations are caused by sensible objects. This description complements the discussions of pain in *On the Soul* that didn’t speak of bodily pains as alterations. Yet bodily pain is a passion, too, in that it is a movement of being affected in the sensitive part of the soul. When one eats something that is too hot, for example, pain is involved in the event. Pain is the alteration that occurs in the organs related to taste (i.e., tongue and throat) because of the transaction between the sensible object that is too hot and the bodily organs.

### 3.2 The Tetrad Reconciled

The puzzle about Aristotelian pains can again be described briefly as follows:

1. P1 and P2: If pain is an activity, it can’t be something that supervenes on an activity or a passion.

2. P1 and P3: If pain is an activity, it can’t be a passion.

3. P1 and P4: If pain is an activity, it can’t be a movement.

4. P2 and P3: If pain is something that supervenes on an activity and a passion, it can’t be a passion.

In the following, I shall try to reconcile P1–P4.
3.2.1 P1, P2 and P3: The Perceptual Model

In this section, I offer a model for understanding Aristotelian pleasures and pains using the perceptual model. The model says that pleasure and pain are the passive counterparts of perception (or thinking) that involve an awareness of the goodness and badness of the perceptible objects. This awareness is not something that is separate from the pleasure and pain \textit{qua} passive counterpart of perception, but instead is an integral feature of it. Because the model is a perceptual model, an explanation of Aristotle’s view of the perceptual system is needed. Nevertheless, I do not intend or attempt to give a full account of the perceptual system in Aristotle’s psychology. Instead, I will show that my position that Aristotelian pain is a kind of \textit{pathos} and a perception is compatible with one interpretation of Aristotle’s theory of perception.

P1 says that pain is an activity with the perceptive mean towards the good or bad. P2 is different because it says that pain is instead something that supervenes on or follows upon passions and activities. As in the debate about Aristotelian pleasures, the question arises as to whether pain can be itself an activity if it is something that supervenes on an activity. For the purpose of clarity, it is better to divide P2 into the following:

P2a Pain is something that supervenes on activities.

P2b Pain is something that supervenes on passions.

Let’s first look at P1 and P2a. Suppose that pain is an activity of the perceptive mean towards what is good or bad (P1). As I said above, P1 can be understood as saying that pain is a perception of an object seen as bad or as a perception of the badness of an object. It is crucial now to see how this claim can be squared with P2a. One question to ask is about what kind of “activities” Aristotle means when he says that pain is something that supervenes on activities. In the context of the passage in \textit{On the Soul}, “activities” picks out activities such as eating, drinking, and perceiving.
These activities in themselves are actualizations of human capacities.

That being said, one way to reconcile P1 and P2a is by understanding how perception (to act with the perceptive mean) supervenes on activities such as eating and drinking. One can start by recognizing that activities are Janus-faced. Sometimes Aristotle calls instances of actions such as seeing and thinking activities, but he also sees these actions as perceptions or something very similar to perceptions.

My suggestion is to understand the supervenience relation here in a very weak way. Take, for example, the activity of seeing:

1. Seeing is an instance of activity.
2. Seeing is an instance of perception.
3. When one is engaged in seeing, seeing *qua* perception supervenes on seeing *qua* activity.

Admittedly, the difference between seeing *qua* the activity of perception and seeing *qua* an activity is hard to distinguish clearly. However, suppose that we have a model of vision in which there is a visible object that serves as an input for the eyes so that vision happens. Perception is the being affected of the eyes upon receiving inputs from the visibilia. This is seeing *qua* perception. Seeing *qua* activity is surely not separated from the transaction between the visibilia and the eyes, but perhaps we may say that seeing *qua* activity consists of opening our eyes, directing our eyes to look at a certain direction using our eyes, etc. and these are not conceptually identical to undergoing the transaction between the visibilia and the eyes. Hence the passive aspect of seeing, viz., receiving inputs from the visibilia supervenes on the active aspect of seeing, e.g., opening our eyes and directing them at a certain direction.

The same thing can be said with respect to thinking, viz., that thinking is an instance of activity that is akin to perception. Thinking is akin to perception because it is done by intellect as something that is potential and capable of receiving the
forms of intelligibilia, just as sense organs are potentials and capable of receiving the forms of sensibilia. Both sense organs and intellect are strictly speaking unaffected or impassible, but they can register the forms of their proper objects. Thinking *qua* activity perhaps consists of focusing attention, choosing the objects of thought, etc. When one is engaged in the activity of thinking, thinking *qua* the activity of (mental) perception supervenes on thinking *qua* the activity of focusing attention, etc. Thinking *qua* the activity of perception would primarily be the reception of the forms of intelligibilia.

This supervenience relation between perception and activity is similar to the model of movement that Aristotle gives in *Physics* III.3. In the *Physics*, he believes that when there is a mover and a movable, the motion is in the patient, viz., in the movable. But it seems that there are two actualities involved here, viz., the actuality of the mover and the actuality of the movable. Is there only one actuality or are there actually two actualities involved in the event? There is a difficulty here (202a22–28):

> Perhaps it is necessary that there should be an actuality of the agent and of the patient. The one is agency and the other patiency; and the outcome (*ergon*) and end (*telos*) of the one is a [product] (*poiēma*), that of the other a passion (*pathos*). Since then they are both motions, we may ask: in what are they, if they are different? Either both are in what is acted on and moved, or the agency is in the agent and the patiency in the patient. (If we ought to call the latter also ‘agency’, the word would be used in two senses.)

Aristotle’s answer is that there is only one motion and one actuality, and the actuality is in the patient. He believes that the actualization of the motion by the mover and of the motion in the movable is one and the same. How is this possible? His answer is Heraclitean, because he says that the actualization of A and the actualization of B are the same actualization in the sense that they are of the same substratum, though they differ in definition, just as the road up and the road down are the same stretch of road, though they differ in definition.
Another thing that is important in the passage above is that there would be two ends involved in one motion, viz., the end of the agency and the end of the patiency. The end of the agency is action, and the end of the patiency is passion. Yet somehow these two ends are realized in the same motion and event. If there is only one actualization in the one motion, then that actualization can be seen from the perspective of the agency or the patiency. In one stroke of motion, the actualization becomes Janus-faced because it is at the same time a passion and an action. But there is a priority in action so that it would be appropriate to say that in one sense passion follows or accompanies or supervenes on action.

Analogously, in perception there is agency in the sensibilia and there is patiency in the sense organs, but there is only one movement, viz., in the patient (sense organs), in that they receive the form of the sensibilia. In fact, Aristotle uses the same model in On the Soul 426a2ff.: “If then movement, i.e. acting [and being affected], is in that which is acted upon, both the sound and hearing as actual must be in that which is potentially hearing; for the activity of that which can act and produce movement takes place in that which is affected.” In the same way, intelligibilia are the agents in thinking, and the intellect is the patient. When the intellect thinks, the form of the intelligibilia is registered in the intellect in one motion and actuality.

Nevertheless, this purely physical model isn’t complete yet for understanding pain because it hasn’t incorporated the idea in P1 of pain being the act of a perceptive mean towards what is good or bad. The five senses can discern whether an object is sensible or not. For example, the eyes will pick up the visibilia, and the ears will pick up the audibilia. This is a smart discernment that the sense organs have. However, the five senses must also decide whether an object is good or not, and whether it should be pursued or avoided. For that, we also need phantasia, which is the necessary condition for animals to be able to have appetite (On the Soul 433b28–29). This is exactly the message of On the Soul III.10–11, viz., that it is imagination that unifies perceptions, originates movement, and is responsible for awareness of what is good or bad. But as
I tried to show above, perception itself turns out to be perceptual *phantasia*.

Aristotle wants to say that in experiencing bodily pain, there is a perceptual *phantasia* about what is bad and a further awareness to avoid what is bad. *On the Soul* 434a10–11 is open to the possibility that a low-level belief (*doxa*) is involved in perceptual *phantasia*, because it only says that there is no inferential (*ek sullogismou*) opinion, and leaves it open whether an immediate, i.e., non-inferential, opinion is involved in perceptual *phantasia*. Take again the case of seeing:

1. There is a visible object that is too bright.

2. I open my eyes and direct them to the object.

3. The form of that object without its matter is registered on my visual organ (i.e., perception in its basic meaning).

4. An *aisthēma* is produced, which includes an awareness that the object is bad and makes sense to avoid.

5. I see the object because I am aware of the *aisthēma*.

If this story of perception is complete, there is no need for the awareness that the object is bad to be something ontologically separate from the act of the perception itself. When one sees something that is aesthetically painful, the very act of seeing itself is the perceptual *phantasia* that brings an awareness that the visual object is bad and makes sense to shun. Bodily pain is nothing other than the steps beginning with the impression of form on the sense organs, to the awareness of the *aisthēma*, and to the evaluation of the goodness or badness of an object. Bodily pain just is the passive aspect of perception, which also includes the awareness of what is good or bad.

What about mental pain? With respect to practical reasoning and the awareness of good or bad, Aristotle says in *On the Soul* that practical thinking requires images
that include an awareness of what is good and bad, and these images are phantasmata that function just like the aisthêmata (431a14–15). Even theoretical reasoning needs images (431b2; 432a3ff.). One of the applications of the use of images in theoretical reasoning is as a bridge for the inductive move from the particulars to the universal in Analytics II.19. 19 There must be the use of images because the move from the particulars needs memory and experience before arriving at universals. Yet memory requires phantasia (On Memory 449b30ff.), for memory is a collection of after-images that can only be gathered and united by phantasia. Discrete sense perceptions need a unifier, and it is phantasia that acts as the unifier by producing images. Presumably, there is also an awareness of good and bad in the phantasmata of theoretical reasoning. Hence in EN VII, Aristotle says that there can be pleasure coming from contemplation. Thinking in the form of both practical and theoretical reasoning, then, needs phantasia, which is also capable of bringing an awareness about the goodness and the badness of the intelligibilia.

Consequently, the occurrence of pain is explainable in two layers. The first layer is perceptive. In the case of visual pain, for example, pain is a physical perception when the eyes receive disagreeable input from the visible object. In the language of On the Soul, the eyes take the form of the visible object, but the perceptive mean is disrupted excessively (or perhaps deficiently, as in seeing objects in a dark cave). A similar thing happens in the case of thinking when thought receives the form of the bad intelligibilia. Pain from calculation (logismou lupê) (Eudemian Ethics 1232a18) might create excessive inputs, and too little inputs might bring confusion in the mind. Second, pain is not only an instance of being affected, but also a perceptual act towards what is good or bad. The second layer of the pain explanation is, then, evaluative. There is an awareness of the good or bad in the occurrence of pain qua being affected, and this is made possible by the fact that perception is a perceptual

phantasia. Hence in the case of visual pain, not only do the eyes receive disagreeable input from the visible object, but an aisthēma is also produced, and the aisthēma is perceived as something bad. In the same way, when thought receives intelligibilia that are bad (such as in a convoluted calculus proof), not only does it receive the form of the intelligibilia, but a phantasma is produced, and an awareness that the intelligibilia are bad ensues.

Let’s look at P1 and P2b now. P2b says that pain supervenes on passions or emotions. With respect to emotions, they are activities of the soul in that they are the actualizations of the capacity in the soul, but they are also ways of being affected in the body, as stated in On the Soul 403a16–19: “It seems that all the affections of the soul involve the body—passion, gentleness, fear, pity, confidence, and, further, joy and both loving and hating; for at the same time as these the body is affected in a certain way.” If pain is not identical to emotions such as joy and anger, then pain must be some sort of perception of the good or the bad that is different from these emotions. Another possibility is that pain is the movement of the heart that occurs in the event of one’s having a negative emotion.

One way to explain what’s happening in the occurrence of emotions is to invoke the different domains in which emotion and pain each takes place. The Topics is enlightening on this point. Aristotle mentions that pain and anger are not found in the same thing. While pain is found in the faculty of desire (en tō, epithumētikōi), anger is found in the spirited faculty (en tō, thumoeidei) (see 126a3–16). But earlier Aristotle explicitly says that it is not anger that is the cause (aitia) of pain but that pain is the one that causes anger (125b31ff.), for when people are angry, the pain is already there. This is Aristotle’s argument that anger is not the same as pain.

20. This referential direction towards what is good or bad can be explained in the naturalistic terms, i.e., within the framework of what is natural for a species. As an example, for a human being, touching fire is painful and bad, because that is what is natural for her to experience.

21. Just as the musical is pained by bad tunes (EN 1170a11), the intellectual is pained by objects of thought (e.g., a proof that is excessively complicated, or a puzzle) that are improper and can be judged as bad.
In the case of anger, it is the perception that one is being slighted that is actually the pain that causes anger. This perception in turn will produce a belief that one is being slighted.\textsuperscript{22} The perceptual content may not be the same as the belief content in the belief that is produced by the perception. The perceptual content may be more primitive and non-propositional. The perception, however, involves a \textit{phantasma} and an awareness that being slighted is something bad and makes sense to avoid.

One way pain accompanies (\textit{epiginetai}) emotions, then, is by being the cause of some of the emotions (such as anger, pity, and fear). The claim that anger and pain are seated in different domains might simply mean that they have different psychological functions in relation to the different parts of the soul. Because pain resides in a domain different from that of emotions, the capacity to feel pain is different, although perhaps inseparable, from the capacity in our soul that is responsible for producing emotions such as envy and joy. The emotion of anger, for example, consists of the reaction in the spirited faculty as a result of one’s being slighted. This reaction is in itself a passion because having emotion is a way of being affected. However, what is happening in the spirited faculty has a prior counterpart in the desiderative faculty. The counterpart is pain, understood as a perception towards what is good or bad. This is a perception of the bad situation, which is integrated already in the belief relevant to the situation, viz., that one is being slighted. In the event of anger, then, one is being slighted, but there is also a perception that what is occurring is bad, which is integral to the belief that evokes the emotion of anger.

The way to reconcile P1 (pain is an activity) and P2 (pain supervenes on activities and passions), then, is to use the perceptual model to explain pain in sense perceptions, emotions, and thinking. The model says that pain comprises two aspects. The

\textsuperscript{22} For example, in \textit{On Dreams}, Aristotle writes: “Accordingly, just as if a finger be pressed under the eyeball without being observed, one object will not only present (\textit{phainetai}) two visual images, but will create an opinion (\textit{doxei}) of its being two objects; while if it be observed, the presentation (\textit{phainetai}) will be the same, but the same opinion (\textit{doxei}) will not be formed of it” (461b31–462a2). See Everson, \textit{Aristotle on Perception}, 210ff.
first is that pain is a perception in that it is an instance where the soul receives disagreeable input from objects of perception or thoughts. Second, pain can also be seen as a perception towards what is good or bad, by the evaluative work of *phantasia* (the presentation of *phantasma* or *aisthēma*). These two aspects that constitute pain are inseparable, but they are not conceptually identical. In fact, there is only one event of pain that manifests these two aspects contemporaneously. In all cases of sense perceptions, emotions, and thinking, pain as a perception towards what is good or bad can be their passive counterpart, just as in one same motion there is passion and action at the same time. Pain understood as perception *qua* passion (which involves an awareness of what is bad or good) supervenes on perception *qua* action.

The relation between pain and emotions as explained by Aristotle in the *Topics* is different from the relation between pain and sense perceptions or thinking. In the case of sense organs and thought, pain is the excessive or deficient reception of the forms of sensibilia or intelligibilia, the production of images by *phantasia*, and the awareness of those images. In the case of emotions, pain is the passive counterpart of negative emotions not only because it is the excessive or deficient reception of the form, etc. in the perception of something bad (e.g., being slighted), but also because it is the cause of the belief that is necessary for the production of emotions. Hence, in this case we can’t say that pain supervenes on emotions, but rather that pain accompanies some emotions as their cause.

That being said, in the *Rhetoric* (1378a30–1387b23), Aristotle sometimes identifies some emotions as pain, but sometimes as something that’s accompanied by pain. Anger is defined not as pain there, but as a desire accompanied by pain. Fear, shame, pity, indignation, and envy are identified as pain. It is plausible to say that there are two kinds of pain involved in the event of negative emotion. One kind of pain is the cause of some emotions, and the other kind of pain is the pain that constitutes those emotions. For example, one is angry because there is a prior pain₁ due to being slighted. Pain₁ is integral in the belief of one’s being slighted. Pain₁ also has a
counterpart in the movement of the heart. Suppose that anger is caused by pain$_1$. But we can understand anger as also a kind of pain. In this sense, anger itself is constituted by pain$_2$ that is emotional in its domain, and this emotional pain$_2$ is different from pain$_1$ that causes the anger. It remains difficult to explain how pain supervenes on anger, which is pain$_2$. But as *On The Soul* mentions, being angry has its counterpart in the movement of the heart (408b8). The movements of the heart are the ultimate events that supervene on both pain$_1$ (i.e., being slighted) and pain$_2$ (i.e., anger) since these movements occur seamlessly in one event with pain$_1$ and pain$_2$. In this case, the movements of the heart are not different from the pains on which they supervene.

Being angry itself is an affection, and the corresponding movement of the heart is also an affection that occurs in the one and same event when one is being angry. I do think that it would be consistent for Aristotle to divide emotions into pain (e.g., fear and anger) and pleasure (e.g., joy), but he never explicitly says so. At any rate, the supervenience relation between pleasure/pain and emotions is different from the one between pleasure/pain and perception or thinking. If emotion and pain are the same thing but different in account, then I should like to suggest that pain is ultimately the movement of the heart that is the passive counterpart of emotion, which is itself an affection. In the case of anger, then, pain accompanies it in two ways:

1. By being its cause (pain$_1$).
2. By being pain\textsubscript{2} that has its passive counterpart in heart-movement\textsubscript{2}. In other words, when Aristotle says that pain accompanies emotions, he is simply saying that emotions are a kind of pain.

The perceptual model also reconciles P1 and P3, as well as P2 and P3. Let’s start with P1 and P3. P1 says that pain is an activity with the perceptive mean towards what is good or bad as such. P3 says that pain is a passion. In the perceptual model, P1 suggests that pain is a perception that is directed towards an object and also towards the badness or goodness of an object. Furthermore, in the model, a perception is an activity in the sense that it is an actualization of a capacity in the soul. However, as discussed above, perception is at the same time a passion in that it is a way of being affected by the perceptible objects.

The case of P2 and P3 is handled in the same way as the case of P1 and P2a, because these two cases are actually identical once we see P1 as saying that pain is an activity of perception, which is a form of passion. If pain is a passion (P3), how can it be the case that it supervenes on activities (P2a) and on passions (P2b)? First, recall that “activities” in P2a, such as eating, drinking, and perceiving, can be seen as perceptions in the broad sense that they are ways of being affected. The activities of the sense organs, such as seeing, hearing, and touching, are perceptions and ways of being affected. Other activities such as running and gaming involve bodily, emotional, and mental perceptions and hence may be accompanied by pain. We can say the same thing about memory and recollection. Memory is not a perception, but it is called by Aristotle an affection: “Memory is, therefore, neither perception or conception, but a state or affection (pathos) of one of these, conditioned by lapse of time” (On Memory 449b24). Immediately, Aristotle mentions that memory involves phantasia as well. In all these cases, I use the Janus-faced character of activities again to explain that pain as a way of being affected (i.e., a passion) supervenes on the activities that are themselves understood as perceptions or involving perceptions.
Second, the way to reconcile P2b and P3 is to assert that in experiencing feelings or emotions, pleasure or pain as a being affected is also present as their cause. P2b says that pain is something that accompanies emotions such as anger. P3 says that pain is a passion. Emotions are themselves instances of being affected. As I mentioned above, Aristotle wants to differentiate between anger and pain in the *Topics* by distinguishing the different domains in which they occur. Anger occurs in the spirited domain, while pain occurs in the desiderative domain. It turns out that pain is actually the cause of anger. Hence the supervenience relation between pain and emotions (anger, envy, etc.) is different from the supervenience relation between pain and activities such as sense perceptions and thinking. In the case of pain and emotions, the supervenience relation is actually a causal relation. Hence it would be better to call this relation “the accompaniment relation” instead of “the supervenience relation”. However, I mentioned above that we can probably see anger as a kind of pain as well, although Aristotle never explicitly says so.

Finally, it is important to point out that in *On the Soul* 408b5–15, Aristotle explicitly says that in being pleased and pained, one is being moved in the heart. But if pain is a kind of perception, and if the heart is the seat of all perceptions, then pain would be one of the affections of the heart as well.

### 3.2.2 P1 and P4: Alterations

P1 says that pain is an activity with the perceptive mean towards what is good or bad. P4 says that pain is a movement. In *Physics* 247a16-17, Aristotle explicitly says that pleasures and pains are alterations of the *aisthētikon*. If acting with the perceptive mean is nothing other than a kind of perception, then the task now is to explain how perception is indeed a movement or an alteration.

There are two kinds of alterations that Aristotle discusses in *On the Soul* 417b14–16, viz., “one a change to conditions of privation, the other to a thing’s disposition and nature.” The first alteration is an alteration that takes place when there is a
transaction between an object and some sort of an input. In the event of a transaction, the object undergoes a change that is comparable to first experiencing a privation (e.g., losing one quality) before moving to the end of the change process (e.g., taking on a new quality). The second alteration is an actualization of one’s potentiality, which may involve a transaction between an object and a subject as well (e.g., in the case of perception). According to Aristotle, this latter alteration is either not a real alteration or an alteration of another kind.

One crucial point to clarify is about what kind of alteration takes place in the event of sense perception, emotions, and thinking. In the case of thinking, Aristotle wants to maintain that the mind is impassible and that the thing that understands is not altered when it understands. However, he also wants to maintain that thinking is a form of affection because it takes the form of the intelligibilia. It seems there is a conundrum here that Anaxagoras also recognizes (On the Soul 429b22–29). For sense perception, there is also a sense in which there is an alteration, in that the sense organs takes the form of the sensibilia. Whether the sense organs undergo a real change while taking the form is also a question that is not settled in On the Soul. In the case of emotion, there is a movement in the heart, which is caused by a pain that is itself another kind of movement in the heart. If there is a commonality between sense perception, emotions, and thinking, it is the fact that all of them are accompanied by alterations that have their source in the heart, which is the the primary seat of any perception.

23. In fact, a war between what Caston calls literalism and spiritualism has been going on for a while. On this issue, I think Caston is correct that a middle ground must exist between the two positions, that in perceiving, there must be a physiological change in the relevant organ of perception, though the predicate of the perceived object is not necessarily applied univocally to the sense organ. See Victor Caston, “The Spirit and the Letter: Aristotle on Perception,” in Metaphysics, Soul, and Ethics in Ancient Thought: Themes from the Work of Richard Sorabji, ed. Ricardo Salles (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2005), 245–320.
3.2.3 A Less Painful Tetrad

The following is a brief summary of my discussions above:

1. Recall that the tetrad on Aristotelian pains is as follows:

   P1 Pain is an activity.
   P2 Pain is something which supervenes on activities and passions.
   P3 Pain is a passion.
   P4 Pain is a movement.

2. P1–P3 are in tension with each other. In addition, P1 and P4 are also in need of reconciliation.

3. Before solving the tension in the tetrad, I gave a conceptual analysis for each of the statement:

   (a) Pain is an activity insofar as it is an action being done with the perceptive mean towards what is good or bad. The awareness of what is good or bad arises because of the work of *phantasia*, which is an integral part of the activity of perceiving. I suggest that the activity here is an actualization of a capacity to perceive an object as bad or to perceive badness in a perceiving experience. The phrase “perceptive mean” was coined by Aristotle for the five senses. However, emotional pain and mental pain are perceptions as well.

   (b) Pain is something that supervenes on an activity in that it is the passive counterpart of an activity such as perceiving or thinking. Pain is something that accompanies a passion (emotion) in that it is the desiderative counterpart of an emotion, though an emotion takes place in the spirited part of the soul. Pain is the cause (*aitia*) of some negative emotions.
(c) Pain is a passion because it is a twofold way of being affected. First, it is the affection that occurs when one is doing an activity. Second, it is a movement of the heart, which occurs in one event when one is engaged in activities or experiencing emotions.

(d) Pain is a movement because it is a passion.

4. Using the perceptual model of pain, I propose the following way to solve the tension in the tetrad:

(a) Pain is an activity (P1) with the perceptive mean towards what is good or bad, but also supervenes on an activity (P2a) and passions (P2b), and this is because pain is an activity *qua* perception, which is at the same time a way of being affected (P3) ultimately in the heart. The reference of the activity of perceptive mean towards what is good or bad can be understood within the ethical and naturalist framework, viz., when an affection occurs, the affection is considered pain if it is natural to determine it in that way.24

(b) Pain is an activity (P1), but it is also a passion (P3). This is possible, again, because Aristotle sees activity also as a perception, which is a form of passion understood in the broad sense as being affected.

(c) Pain is something that supervenes on activity and passion (P2), but it is also a passion (P3). The tension can be solved again by pointing out that pain is a perception, which is a form of passion, and that an activity has passion as its passive counterpart. With respect to pain that supervenes on passions in the narrow sense (emotions), pain can be seen as the desiderative counterpart of emotions, which occur in the spirited part of the soul. Pain
1
 is the cause of some negative emotions such as envy and anger, although emotions themselves can be seen as a kind of pain
2.

24. One can feel pain naturally when the sense organ is functioning properly. For example, a person whose sense of touch is natural will feel pain if she touches fire too long.
(d) Pain is an activity (P1), but it is also a movement (P4). This is not a problem because different sorts of activities involve transactions with sensibilia or intelligibilia, and in the end they involve the movements of the heart.

My investigation of the nature of pain arrives at the unpleasant truth that there is no clear statement of what pain is in Aristotle’s corpus. If there is a focal concept in the discussion of Aristotle’s view of pain, it is the concept of pain as a kind of affection or passion that naturally involves obstruction, hindrance, excess, deficiency, or disfunctionality. First, some pains are ways of being affected when one is doing activities such as eating, drinking, and even thinking. Here pain is an activity qua being affected. Second, pain is some kind of awareness of what is good or bad. I suggested that this awareness might not be different from the affection itself, because phantasia is at work. The affection that is evaluated as bad is probably an affection that is caused by or manifests a hindrance, an obstruction, or an excess. Third, the uniting concept of pain is best referenced to the heart that is being moved when one is engaged in sense perception, in feeling, and in thinking (On the Soul 408b5–15).

### 3.3 Mirroring Pleasures: A Speculative Direction

One different direction is still available to pursue in order to better understand Aristotelian pains. This method is inspired by Frede’s claim that pain is a mirror image of pleasure. It utilizes an indirect strategy by acknowledging that a kind of speculum (mirror) called contrariety both differentiates and connects pains and pleasures. Aristotle indeed explicitly says that pain is the contrary of pleasure (e.g., EN 1153b3, 1154a11, 11154a18, 1172b19). The focus of my discussion will be on the mirroring method, and I will only apply the method briefly at the end. The mirroring method requires an analysis of contrariety, but I shall start with a discussion of the categories of being.
3.3.1 Classifying Pleasures and Pains

When investigating the nature of a thing within the Aristotelian framework, the *Categories* is usually the natural place to start. In *Categories* 4, Aristotle lists the ways of being: substance, quality, quantity, relative, where, when, position, having, doing, and being affected. Since “being” is said in many ways, we need to ask where should we put pleasure and pain in the categories of being. One negative answer is that they cannot be substances, since substance admits of neither contrariety (3b24) nor a more and a less (3b33–34), but pleasure and pain admit both contrariety and a more and a less. In *EN* 1104b30–32, Aristotle writes: “There are three objects of choice—the noble, the useful, and the pleasant—and three of avoidance—their contraries, the shameful, the harmful, and the painful.” Also in the *EN*, Aristotle says that one can inflict only a small pain (*mikran lupēn*) (1126b35). One can also experience moderate pains (*metrias lupas*) (1148a19) or serious pain (*lupē ischura*) (1148a22). Pleasure and pain are contraries to one another and that there are degrees of pleasure and pain.

Quality seems to be a good candidate as a category for pleasure and pain. One kind of quality is called states (*hexeis*) and condition (*diatheseis*) (8b28). The difference between states and conditions is that the former is much more stable than the latter. Virtue and knowledge are example of states, while being healthy and being cold are examples of dispositions. One can easily be in the fluctuating conditions of pleasure and pain.

Another kind of quality is affective qualities (*pathētikai poiotētes*) and affections (*pathē*) (9a28–29). These affective qualities are called qualities because things that possess them are said to be qualified in virtue of having them. Honey is called sweet because it possesses sweetness. Moreover, Aristotle says these qualities are called affective not because the things that possess them have been affected, but because they produce an affection of the senses. Hence, sweetness is not a quality because
honey is affected, but because one’s sense of touch is affected. Aristotle further distinguishes affective qualities from affections. The latter came and went quickly, while the former are more stable. Hence when one is frightened and becomes pale, the paleness is not an affective quality but simply an affection. Both affective qualities and affections, however, are categorized as qualities in a broader sense, i.e., as one mode of being among substance, quantity, etc.

Five things can be said about pleasure in relation to quality. First, if pleasure is a quality and we can call an action such as seeing pleasant, pleasure is a quality not because the action of seeing is itself being affected, but because there is an affection of the visual organ. Second, one can call an action or an emotion pleasant when it is followed by pleasure. Third, pleasure and pain are better described as affections instead of affective qualities for the reason that pleasure and pain in actions can easily subside and be disrupted. Fourth, pleasure and pain fulfill the necessary conditions for being qualities also by admitting of contrariety and a more and a less, just as qualities in general do. Fifth, if pleasure is a quality and pleasure is contrary to pain, then pain must be a quality as well (10b17–18). Pleasure and pain as contraries can also occur alternately in the thing which is capable of receiving them, viz., the soul. It is not that pleasure itself becomes pain, but the soul can at one time experience pleasure and at another time pain. Similarly, a bad person can become a good person over time, though bad itself doesn’t become good.

Next, quantity can be eliminated as a candidate because a quantity has no contrary (5b11). Definite quantities such as six inches long or a foot long don’t have contraries. There is a contrariety between long and short, but these are relatives instead of quantities. But even some relatives such as long and short or greater and less can’t admit of contraries. For if \(x\) is long in comparison to \(y\), but short in comparison to \(z\), and if long and short are contraries, then \(x\) would be long and short at the same time, which is absurd. Moreover, quantity doesn’t admit of a more or a less. For example, one is not more one to a two or a three. Also, a six-inch is not less six-inch than a
footlong, although a footlong is of course a six-inch doubled.

Moving to the subsequent mode of being, pleasure and pain are indeed instances of relatives. In Categories 7, some relatives are said to admit of contrariety. Aristotle mentions that virtue and vice are relatives, and that they are contrary to one another. In this case, however, we can’t say that virtue is of a vice. Virtue and vice are contrary relatives, but they are relatives not by virtue of being relative to each other, but by virtue of something else, i.e., of character and intellect. Hence we say that there is a virtue of character or a virtue of intellect. In other words, though virtue and vice are contrary relatives, they do not correlate to one another. Pleasure and pain are relatives in the same way as virtue and vice are. We don’t say that pleasure is a pleasure of a pain, but a pleasure of an activity or of a feeling. It is in doing activity or in having feelings that pleasure and pain arise. Each pleasure or pain is always related to a specific activity or feeling in that pleasure or pain accompanies the activity or feeling.

Moreover, some relatives admit of a more and a less (6b19–20). A thing is called more similar or less similar in relation to something, and more equal or less equal in relation to something. In the same way, if pleasure is the same as being pleased, one can be more pleased or less pleased in relation to something. Pleasure, then, also admits of a more and a less.

The most important consideration in favor of treating pleasure and pain as relatives, though, is that they are always of, or in relation to, an activity. This sense of relatives is different from the one in pairs of relatives such as long-short or greater-less, which don’t admit of contrariety. In Sedley’s reading of Aristotelian relativities, pleasure and pain would be categorized as “soft relatives” for they are always of another thing and the principle of cognitive symmetry is not applicable.²⁵ The principle says that one can know what a relative item is only if one knows what its correlative

is. In hard relatives, this principle is at work. For example, in the slave-master pair, one can know what slave is only if one knows what master is. In hard relatives, then, the principle of cognitive symmetry is at work. As a concept, being a slave or a master consists purely in the slave-master relation. But it is not so in soft relatives such as in the pair of understanding (epistēmē) and the object of understanding. Since understanding must be understanding of something (6b3), it is a relative item. Its correlative is the object of understanding. However, it is not the case that we can only know what understanding is if we know what the object of understanding is. Being an understanding does not consist solely in the relation between understanding and a specific object of understanding (e.g., figures). The conceptual description of understanding is broader than such a relation. For example, understanding or knowledge is described by Aristotle as a kind of apprehension or judgment about the first principles of objects (Physics 227b14).

In the case of pleasure and pain, they are soft relatives because they are always related to something else, viz., an activity. But this alone is not enough to categorize them as soft relatives. In addition, the principle of cognitive symmetry must not be active, which is exactly what obtains in the case of pleasure. The reason is that it is not the case that one can know what pleasure is only if one knows what its definite correlative is. We know that pleasure is of an activity, but the activity is still undetermined and being spoken as a general term, as opposed to a definite activity A or activity B. The crucial point here is that being a pleasure doesn’t consist solely in the relation between pleasure and a specific activity. Conceptually, pleasure is broader than such a relation. Furthermore, the concept of pleasure has as its correlative something that is indefinite, viz., an unspecified activity. The claim that pleasure is a soft relative is not only based on the idea that one can know what pleasure is without knowing what its correlative is, but also on the fact that one is actually not capable of knowing definitely what the correlative of pleasure is. We do know that pleasure is related to activity, but this activity is still indefinite. Once pleasure
is indexed or bound with a specific activity, such as pleasure-from-seeing, then it is not a relative anymore because pleasure-from-seeing is not of anything anymore. This reasoning is analogous with understanding and its correlative. Once understanding is indexed to an object such as mathematical shapes and sizes, understanding becomes geometry. Nevertheless, while understanding is a relative because it is always an understanding of something, geometry is not relative anymore, and that is because we don’t speak of geometry as geometry of anything.

Aristotle also says that both pleasure and pain are instances of either a doing or a being affected, or both. In *Categories* 9, he writes:

> Doing and being affected (*to poiein kai paschein*) admit of contrariety and of a more and a less. For heating is contrary to cooling, and being heated to being cooled, and being pleased to being pained (*to hêdesthai tôi, lupeisthai*); so they admit of contrariety. And of a more and a less also. For it is possible to heat more and less, and to be heated more and less, and to be pained more and less; hence doing and being affected admit of a more and a less.

The possibility that being pleased and being pained are instances of being affected is indicated by the use of the passive voice for these terms. It seems unlikely that being pleased and being pained are instances of a doing or a making, although they can be instances of activities if activities are understood as actualizations of a capacity in the soul. If being affected is nothing other than an instance of a sort of change in a thing, it is also an instance of an activity. When one is being affected, there is an actualization of a capacity in her that enables her to undergo the change. This is what is happening in the event of pleasure and pain.

The other two categories, viz., position and having, deserve a brief mention here. First, pleasure and pain are not things that occupy any exact location in the body or in the soul. One can point to the location of their causes, e.g., in relation to a specific organ or to the heart, but where pleasure and pain exactly are cannot be determined
unless one can also determine the location of activities. Hence pleasure and pain don’t seem to be positions. Second, with respect to having, pleasure and pain can be classified as having if one understands having pleasure or pain as being pleased or being pained. This reading of having is plausible given that in the last chapter of the *Categories*, Aristotle says that one sense of having is actually having as a state or condition or some other quality (15b17–18). The language here is exactly similar to Aristotle’s description of quality as a mode of being. In this sense, if pleasure and pain are qualities, then they are also havings when having is understood as a state or a condition or a quality.

I have finished surveying the ways of being in the *Categories* and considered how pleasure and pain map onto the classifications. My findings are as follows:

1. Pleasures and pains can’t be substances because pleasures and pains admit of contrariety and a more and a less, but substances don’t.

2. Pleasures and pains don’t seem to be positions because they do not seem to be things that occupy a certain location.

3. Pleasures and pains are unlikely to be doings because there is no production or a making in the event of pleasures and pains.

4. Pleasures and pains are probably qualities, relatives, and beings-affected.

5. Pleasures and pains are havings if having is understood as a state or condition.

26. In general, there is a problem about the location of non-bodily beings in Aristotle. For example, does a quality like the color white have a location? White as a quality in general doesn’t seem to occupy any location, although there can’t be just whiteness floating around without any substratum underlying it. However, when we talk about individual white, then it seems that we can point to its residence. The individual white in a white chair seems to reside in the chair. Perhaps it is the same with pleasure and pain that supervene on a certain activity. Pleasure and pain that supervene on perception may be said to reside in the activity of perception, which involves some bodily organs. It would be more difficult to point out the location of mental pleasure and pain. Nevertheless, Aristotle speaks of the heart being moved when one is thinking. Hence if there’s a location for mental pleasure and pain, the heart can be one point of reference.
It is time to investigate Aristotle’s theory of contrariety more in depth to understand further the nature of pleasure and pain.

### 3.3.2 Pains as the Contraries of Pleasures

Recall that in *EN* 1104b30–32, Aristotle writes: “There are three objects of choice—the noble, the useful, and the pleasant—and three of avoidance—their contraries, the shameful, the harmful, and the painful.” What we are interested in here is to understand the nature of contraries (*enantia*), which will help us understand the nature of pleasure and pain.

In *Categories* 10, Aristotle mentions ways that things can be opposed (*antikeisthai*) to one another: as relatives, as contraries, as privation and possession, or as affirmation and negation. With respect to contraries, he writes:

> Things opposed as contraries, however, are never called just what they are, in relation to one another, though they are called contraries of one another. For the good is not called good of the bad, but the contrary of it; and the white not the white of the black, but its contrary. (11b33–37)

Since pleasure and pain are opposed to one another as contraries, pleasure is not called pleasure of the pain or vice versa.

There are two main kinds of contraries that Aristotle discusses in chapter 10. First, he mentions contraries that are without an intermediate. Contraries of this type have one or the other of its elements necessarily belong to a thing τ, which is something the contraries naturally occur in or predicated of. Sickness and health, to use Aristotle’s example, naturally belong to a body. There can’t be a body that is neither sick nor healthy, though there are degrees of health and sickness. Is it true that there is no such thing as a body that is neither healthy nor sick? A dead body seems to be neither healthy nor sick. Hence Aristotle can’t be talking about dead bodies. His example of health and sickness that naturally belong to a body seems to apply only to a living body, for a dead body can’t be accurately described as healthy
or sick. Accordingly, when he suggests that there is no intermediate between health and sickness, he still allows for the possibility that there is something other than a living body that is neither sick nor healthy. His claim is simply that with respect to a specific thing (e.g., a living body), some contraries (e.g., health-sickness) don’t have an intermediate. Another example is a pair of contraries odd-even, which naturally belongs to a number. Moreover, there can’t be a number that is neither odd nor even.²⁷

Second, for contraries that have an intermediate between them, their elements don’t necessarily belong to something that is capable of receiving them. Examples of these contraries are black and white. They don’t necessarily belong to any one thing that is capable of receiving them. For a human is not necessarily black or white, but there are humans that are neither black nor white. Aristotle observes that there is an intermediate between black and white, viz., grey. The same thing applies to the good and the bad. There is an intermediate between them, viz., the neither good nor bad.²⁸ They don’t necessarily belong to a thing that is capable of receiving them.

One might think—mistakenly, I shall argue—that pleasure and pain are contraries of the former type. One support for this position can be seen from the following remark in book II of the \textit{EN}: “Again, if the virtues are to do with actions and situations of being affected, and pleasure and pain follow from every action and situation of being affected, then this is another reason why virtue will be concerned with pleasures and pains” (1104b13–18). Aristotle’s blanket statement that every action and every affection is followed by pleasure and pain seems to leave no room for action or affection that is neither pleasant nor painful. Furthermore, pleasure and pain belong properly only to action and affection. Based on this consideration, one might conclude that

²⁷. This assumes that zero is not a number because it represents an absence of quantity. A number, by contrast, is an arithmetical value that represents a quantity.

²⁸. Strictly speaking, the neither good nor bad is not the middle point of the good and the bad. The word \textit{mesos}, which is translated as “intermediate” here, refers to an alternative quality (e.g., the neither good nor bad) other than the extremes (e.g., the good and the bad) in the contrariety that can reside in a thing.
there can’t be an intermediate between pleasure and pain when one is doing an activity or being affected.

However, in the EN, Aristotle admits that no one can be continuously pleased (1175a3–4). Also, pleasures do not always follow an activity, as explained in 1154b20–25:

The reason why the same one thing cannot always be pleasant is that our nature is not simple. There is another element in us, which makes us perishable, so that if one of these elements is acting, this is contrary to nature for the other nature within us; and when the two are balanced, what is done seems neither painful nor pleasant. If anything had a simple nature, the same action would always be the most pleasant.

This passage explicitly says that pleasures (and presumably pains as well) do not always come from an activity or an affection. The reason is that our nature is complex and the experience of pleasures and pains results from the balancing of different psychic aspects in human life. When one listens to music unimpededly, but one’s mind has been strained from reading too much Gödel, for example, the action of listening to music might be neither painful nor pleasant. Hence pleasures and pains are contraries that do have an intermediate, viz., the neither pleasure nor pain. Let me give a further explanation for this claim.

Pleasure and pain are the passive counterparts of activities. If the affection that occurs in an activity is unimpeded, that affection is pleasure. If the affection that occurs in an activity is impeded, that affection is pain. Is there a case in which an affection is neither unimpeded nor impeded so that it doesn’t constitute pleasure or pain? The answer seems to be negative. An affection is always either impeded or unimpeded. Hence, how is it possible that some activities are neither pleasant nor painful. Two explanations are possible to give here. First, there are affections that do not constitute perceptions. In order for a perception to occur, the perceptive mean in the subject must be stimulated by an external object so that there is a disturbance
in the perceptive mean. The perception that occurs is the perception of the different quality between the subject and the object of perception. For example, an object that is warm can be sensed by a cool hand because there is a difference between the temperature of the hand and that of the object. Now, think of an object that is exactly as cool as the hand. When the hand touches the object, there is an affection occurring, but there is no perception of warmth. Perhaps there is a perception of roughness or smoothness, but not of warmth. In this case, there would not be any pleasure or pain with respect to the quality of warmth, although there is still affection caused by the object. Second, it is possible that perception does occur, but the perception is unnoticed or that one perception is balanced by another. For example, one can hear a sound without being aware of it because the sound is too tiny or one is simultaneously preoccupied with another activity such as engaging in a conversation. In this example, the activity of hearing a sound is neither pleasant nor painful, although the passive counterpart of the activity of hearing is either pleasure or pain.

Let us move now to the discussion of contraries in relation to genus and species. In *Categories* 11, Aristotle speaks of the nature of contraries (14a15–25):

> It is clearly the nature of contraries to belong to the same thing (the same either in species or in genus)—sickness and health in an animal’s body, but whiteness and blackness in a body simply, and justice and injustice in a soul. All contraries must either be in the same genus or in contrary genera, or be themselves genera. For white and black are in the same genus (since colour is their genus), but justice and injustice are in contrary genera (since the genus of one is virtue, of the other vice), while good and bad are not in a genus but are themselves actually genera of certain things).

Here Aristotle mentions that contraries can be (a) in the same genus or in the contrary genera, or (b) genera themselves. But even in the latter case in which contraries are themselves genera, they must be also subject to a higher genus. Hence there is no inconsistency in holding both (a) and (b).

We don’t know yet whether pleasure and pain are in the same genus or in the
contrary genera, or whether they are genera themselves. If we can accept the claim in
*Categories* 9 that both pleasure and pain are instances of being affected, then they
are in the same genus, viz., being affected. As beings-affected, pleasure and pain are
also activities in that they are actualizations of a capacity to feel pleasure and pain.
Hence activity can also be called the genus of pleasure and pain.

That contraries must be in the same genus, and in fact must be held by the same
underlying thing, is reaffirmed by Aristotle’s explicit statement in *Posterior Analytics*
73b16–21:

\[\text{Thus in the case of what is understandable } \textit{simpliciter}, \text{ whatever is said to}
\text{hold of things in themselves in the sense of inhering in what is predicated}
of or of being inhaled in, holds of them both because of themselves and from
necessity. For it is not possible for them not to hold, either } \textit{simpliciter} \text{ or}
as regards the opposites—e.g. straight or curved of line, and odd or even
of number. For a contrary or privation is contradictory in the same kind:
e.g. even is what is not odd among numbers, insofar as it follows.}\textsuperscript{29}

Contraries must be in the same genus, since they belong to the same thing. The
examples of contraries given by Aristotle bolster this idea that contraries must be in
the same category of being: sickness and health in an animal’s body, whiteness and
blackness in a body, and justice and injustice in a soul. Now, it is true that justice
is actually a virtue and injustice a vice. But both virtue and vice are dispositions of
the soul, which can be the genus for justice and injustice. Contraries then must at
least be under the same genus, though they can be genera themselves of other things.
Even in the latter case, there would be a higher genus that includes them. But if
they are under the same genus, then they must share the same nature. Since pleasure
is an activity, and since pain is the contrary of pleasure, then pain must also be an
activity. They are contraries to one another, and both reside in the soul, which is the
substratum that experiences pleasure and pain.

\textsuperscript{29} The translation is taken from Aristotle, *Posterior Analytics*, trans. and comm. Jonathan Barnes,
Aristotelian pleasures and pains, however, don’t seem to be genera of emotions. In the logical works, the discussions of pain in the *Topics* and *Rhetoric* generate a question about whether pain is a genus of some emotions. The *Rhetoric* seems to suggest that pain is a genus of negative emotions. The following passages are important to note:30

Anger may be defined as a desire accompanied by pain, for a conspicuous revenge for a conspicuous slight at the hands of men who have no call to slight oneself or one’s friends. (1378a30–32)

Fear may be defined as a pain or disturbance due to imagining some destructive or painful evil in the future. (1382a21–22)

Shame may be defined as pain or disturbance in regard to bad things, whether present, past, or future, which seem likely to involve us in discredit; and shamelessness as contempt or indifference in regard to these same bad things. (1383b10–15)

Pity may be defined as a feeling of pain at an apparent evil, destructive or painful, which befalls one who does not deserve it, and which we might expect to befall ourselves or some friend of ours, and moreover to befall us soon. (1385b13–16)

Indignation is pain (*lupeisthai*) caused by the sight of undeserved good fortune. (1387a8–9)

Envy is pain at the sight of such good fortune as consists of the good things already mentioned. (1387b23)

Emulation is pain caused by seeing the presence, in persons whose nature is like our own, of good things that are highly valued and are possible for ourselves to acquire. (1388a32–35)

With the exception of anger and indignation, the other emotions listed above are identified by Aristotle explicitly as pains (*lupai*). One quick reading of this evidence is just to say that pain is a genus of emotions. This interpretation is not outrageous because there is indeed a weak indication in the ethical works that pain and pleasure are the genera for emotions. A passage might serve as a textual evidence for

this: “Fear, confidence, [to desire] (epithumēsai), anger, pity, and in general (holōs) pleasure and pain can be experienced too much or too little” (1106b18–21). Another passage might be revealing, for he says that being injured (to plēgēnai) and being frightened (to phobeisthai) are instances of being pained (1116b32–33). In the Eudemian Ethics, pain seems to be also treated as a genus of emotions. Envy is said to be an instance of being pained (1233b19–20). Moreover, it is not foreign to the ancients to treat pleasure and pain as the genera for emotions, as the Stoics famously see them that way as well.

That being said, there is still a possibility that Aristotle is not using exact language when he writes that fear is a pain, etc. He doesn’t explicitly say that anger is a pain, but only something that is accompanied by pain. We need to look at the Topics that gives three arguments for why we should not see pain as a genus of anger. First, the rejection is stated explicitly in 125b29–30. In the case of anger, he writes, anger is not the cause of one’s pain, but it is pain that causes one’s anger. Hence anger is straightforwardly differentiated from pain in a cause-effect relation. Anger is neither a species of pain nor identical to it. Rather, anger is the result of one’s being pained, for example by the thought or belief of being slighted. If this is the argument for the claim that pain is not a genus of anger, then the argument is weak. The reason is that even if it is true that anger is caused by a pain due to being slighted, there is still a possibility that anger itself is a kind of pain. Hence perhaps in the event of anger, there are two pains involved: the pain that causes anger, and the anger itself that is a kind of pain.

Second, pain and anger are not found in the same thing. But a genus and a species must be found in the same thing. While pain is found in the faculty of desire (en tōi epithumētikōi),31 anger is found in the spirited faculty (en tōi thumoeidei) (see 126a3–16). Therefore, pain can’t be the genus of anger. This argument presupposes

31. That is, pain due to being slighted.
that there is a sharp distinction between the desiderative part and the spirited part of the soul. The claim that pain is found in the desiderative part of the soul echoes Aristotle’s statement in *On the Soul*, that whenever there is pleasure or pain, there must necessarily be appetite (*ex anagkêς kai epithumia*) as well (413b23–25, 434a3). Appetite is also described as a desire for pleasure (*tou hédeos orexis hautê*) (414b5–6).

Perhaps Aristotle’s point in saying that pain is found in the faculty of desire is simply that we usually explain the presence of pain in terms of (the frustration of) desire. He is not claiming that all pains must be desiderative. Anger, on the other hand, is not directly connected to the frustration of desire. Being presented as such, this argument as a whole is weak because one can surely explain the occurrence of anger in terms of a frustration of desire, e.g., a desire to be honored properly, which in turn blurs the boundary between the function of the faculty of desire and that of the spirited faculty in the production of anger.

Third, Aristotle points out that anger involves not only pain, but also a belief that one is being slighted (127b26–35). It is not clear, then, whether anger is a species of pain or a species of belief (*hupolêpsis*). The fact that pain and belief can be predicated of anger suggests that neither is the genus of anger.\(^{32}\) The genus of anger must be something more general than both pain and belief. With this last argument, Aristotle is not only denying that pain is a genus of anger, but also that pain is a genus of emotions in general. The reason is that even emotions that are identified explicitly by Aristotle as pains, such as fear and pity, can also be predicated of beliefs. Fear involves a belief that some evil in the future will obtain, while pity involves a belief that an evil has struck someone who doesn’t deserve it. Aristotle, then, sees pleasure and pain mainly as ethical concepts. As ethical concepts, pain and pleasure have a reference towards what is bad or good, which must involve some sort of ethical belief, as is

\(^{32}\) Alexander only affirms what Aristotle says here in his commentary on the fourth book of the *Topics* (182.10). His other example is that *hémerotês* and *enkrateia* can’t be the genus of *praotês*, because the first two are predicated of the latter (182.30–31).
stated time and again in the *EN* and even in *On the Soul*. The argument, however, is rather weak because Aristotle doesn’t even entertain the possibility that pain itself is a kind of low-level belief. I have tried to show this possibility above when I explained the workings of *phantasia* in the awareness of what is bad or good. Another point that should be mentioned here is that not all sorts of pain involve *hupolēpsis*. Pains that non-human animals suffer do not involve rational beliefs. Hence the discussion in the *Topics* about pain is very limited in its application and can’t be a conclusive argument.

Based on these three arguments and on the fact that Aristotle never identifies pain and pleasure as genera for emotions, it seems that Aristotle doesn’t see pain as a genus of emotions. However, I’ve tried to show that all of these arguments have weaknesses.

Another nice discussion of contraries appears in *Metaphysics Δ* 1018a25–27:

We call contraries both those among the things that differ in respect of genus which are not capable of being present simultaneously in the same thing; and the things that differ most among those in the same genus; and the things that differ most among those in the same recipient; and the things that differ most among those under the same capacity; and the things whose difference is greatest either baldly or in respect of genus or in respect of form.

This passage confirms and complements the discussions of contrarieties in the *Categories*. The first two meanings of contraries in this passage also occur in the *Categories*, viz., contraries between genera and contraries under the same genus. The third meaning mentions the idea of matter that is receptive (*dektikos*). This can mean simply the underlying thing that bridges the contraries. In the case of pleasure and pain, the underlying thing must be the subject or the person that experiences pleasure and pain. The fourth meaning says that contraries stem from the same capacity (*dunamis*). Pleasure and pain, if they are activities or feelings, fall under the same capacity, viz., the capacity to act with a perceptive mean towards what is good.
The main points in this section can be summed up in the following:

1. Pleasures and pains are contraries that have an intermediate, viz., that which is neither pleasure nor pain. The reason is that activities are not always followed by pleasure or pain insofar as activities are not always pleasant or painful. Obviously, if pleasure and pain are the passive counterparts of activities, then activities must be followed by pleasure or pain. However, Aristotle mentions that our nature is complex. That is why an activity sometimes is neither pleasant nor painful.

2. Pleasure and pain as beings-affected are in the same genus, viz., activity.

3. Pleasure and pain don’t seem to be genera of emotions. Two considerations are given for this claim. First, Aristotle is reluctant to see anger (and other emotions) solely as pain because there is a belief component in anger (and other emotions) as well. Second, Aristotle gives a causal argument, viz., that because anger is caused by pain, then it is unlikely that pain is the genus of anger. As I mentioned above, Aristotle’s arguments for rejecting pain as the genus of anger are weak. The fact that pain causes anger doesn’t exclude seeing that anger is itself a kind of pain, which is a different pain from the one that causes the anger.

4. With respect to Aristotle’s insistence that pain and anger are found in different domains, viz., in the desiderative and the spirited faculties, I suggested that the two are interrelated in such a way that the one may explain the other. Although the two are conceptually and functionally different, they may point to the same psychological event.

33. Although pleasure and pain are genera for physical, emotional, and mental pleasures and pains.
5. With respect to Aristotle’s view that pain and belief are exclusive to one another, I suggested that Aristotle has resources from his own works to see pains as low-level beliefs.

3.3.3 An Application

The above discussions suggest that there is a mirror that can be used to investigate the nature of pleasure and pain in Aristotle’s works. The mirror is Aristotle’s theory of contrariety, which is useful to fill the gap in our understanding about pleasure and pain. For example, Aristotle explicitly says in the *EN* that pleasure is an unimpeded activity of our natural state. However, he never says anything about pain, whether pain is an unimpeded activity or something else. The mirror of contrariety might help us understand what pain is as the contrary of pleasure. Let us follow this path now.

There are two arguments for the claim that pain is an activity. First, in *Categories* 9, pain is said to be a being affected, which is an actualization of the soul to be affected. Second, from the fact that pain and pleasures are contraries, we can infer that they must be the same in kind. In *Posterior Analytics* and the *Categories*, we are told that contraries must be the same in kind. Hence if pleasure is an activity, pain must also be an activity.

Is activity (*energeia*) something that can be a genus? The answer is positive. Beere, for example, gives a survey of different distinctions of activities in Aristotle’s works: activities that are themselves ends and activities that serve a further end (*EN* 1094a16–17). Another distinction is between activity that is complete and incomplete (i.e., change) (*Physics* 201b31–33). Beere concludes, “all these passages strongly suggest that *energeia* standardly designates the genus of which changes are a species.”

With respect to pleasure and pain, I already suggested that they are the species of the same genus, viz., activity. In *Topics* I.5, Aristotle gives us a description of “genus” and “accident”:

34. Beere, *Doing and Being*, 229.
A *genus* is what is predicated in the what-it-is of many things which are different in species.

An *accident* is something which is none of these—not a definition, a unique property, or a genus—but yet belongs to the subject; or, what can possibly belong and not belong to one and the same thing, whatever it may be.

The genus is the “what-it-is” (*ti esti*) of a thing, while the accident (or the differentia) is a certain quality (*poion ti*) of the thing. The what-it-is of pleasure and pain is nothing other than activity. The accident differentiates one species from another within the same genus. Since pleasure is an unimpeded activity, the genus of pleasure is activity and its quality is “unimpeded”. Since pain is also an activity, and it is a contrary to pleasure, the quality of pain must be “impeded”. If pleasure is an unimpeded activity of our natural state, pain must be an impeded activity of our natural state, which actually ruins the natural state (*EN 1119a23–24*). The adjectives “impeded” and the “unimpeded” are the differentiae for activity.

The nature of the impediment is another matter. In the *Topics*, he rejects the idea that pain is a violent disruption of parts that are naturally conjoined (145a33–145b20). Pain, he insists, is instead something that is caused by the violent disruption of parts. In other words, pain can’t simply be a condition of brokenness. If that were the case, then broken inanimate objects (*ta apsucha*) would feel pain as well, which is absurd (145b6–7). Accordingly, even though pain involves some sort of impediment or disruption, it can’t be reducible solely to the occurrence of impediment or disruption. There must also be a working of an anima that is aware of what is good or bad.

This claim is what we get in *On the Soul* with the discussion of *phantasia* (see 3.1.2). Again, in 431a10–11 Aristotle mentions that being pleased or being pained is to act (*to energein*) with the perceptive mean towards the good or the bad as such.

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Alexander of Aphrodisias writes in his commentary on the *Topics* that knowing the answer to the question “whether or not pleasure is a smooth motion?” does not contribute to knowing whether we need to choose or avoid it (95, 1). The same thing can be said about pain. After asking what pleasure and pain are in the previous chapters, this chapter primarily intends to formulate a philosophical puzzle about the place of pain in Aristotle’s ethics and to provide a solution to the puzzle. Here I shall present and analyze the ethical *aporia* that has not been stated explicitly in the contemporary Aristotelian scholarship, although it was already formulated in a different way by Alexander of Aphrodisias.

### 4.1 The *Aporia*

In the *Nicomachean Ethics* (*EN*), Aristotle struggles with the issue of pain, asking—*inter alia*—whether it is to be avoided at all cost, whether it is categorically evil (i.e., bad), and whether a life of pain can constitute a happy life. The answers to these questions are not simple. We see a tension between two key *endoxa* in relation to pain that are present in the *EN*. First, in chapter 13 of book VII, Aristotle reminds us that “it is also agreed that pain is an evil (*kakon*), and to be avoided (*pheukton*); for one type of pain is unqualifiedly (*hapl¯os*) bad, while another is bad in a particular way, through its tendency to impede” (1153b1–3).\(^1\) This idea that pain is bad and to be avoided by all is also proposed by Eudoxus (X.2).\(^2\) Second, however, Aristotle

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2. I take it that both Aristotle and Eudoxus speak of pain as bad in the sense that the value of pain is bad. I will argue that Aristotelian pain is intrinsically bad, although sometimes it can be
mentions that Plato promotes and stresses the importance of early education because we need to be brought up in such a way that we “might find enjoyment (chairein) or pain (lupeisthai) in the right things” (1104b12–14). This remark is related to Aristotle’s affirmation that moral excellence is concerned with pleasure and pain, which is an idea that is discussed repeatedly throughout the EN, for a virtuous person shouldn’t be insensitive to pain (1104b16–17, 1106b17–23). The passage in 1121a4–5 is telling: “It is a characteristic of virtue to be pleased and to be pained (lupeisthai), at the right objects and in the right way.” Notice that the word used here by Aristotle is the passive *lupeisthai*. He is saying that sometimes in the virtuous life, the good person needs to be pained in the right way. Aristotle explicitly says also that some pains (and pleasures) are necessary (*anagkaios*) in the virtuous life (1150a16–21):

Some pleasures are necessary, while others are not. The necessary ones (*anagkaiai*) are necessary only up to a point (*mechri tinos*), while their excesses and deficiencies are not; and this is equally true of appetites and pains.

This claim shows that Aristotle is devising his ethical theory not for a utopian life without pain, but for a mundane life as we know it, which is too familiar with war, illness, and death. The necessary pains are necessary insofar as they are in the right amount. Pains actually admit of a mean. Once they are too much or too little, then they are to be avoided. If some pains are indeed necessary when they are not excessive or deficient, then a moral person cannot, and perhaps should not, avoid all sorts of pain, for one cannot be morally sensible without feeling a certain pain at vicious actions. A life of extreme pain, however, can’t be a happy life. It is simply nonsensical to say that a person on the rack or a person in extreme calamity is happy (1153b19–22). This very simplified discussion is a foretaste of a tension that will be discussed elaborately in this chapter, viz., between the intuitions that pain must be avoided altogether because it is evil and the view that not all pains can or should be instrumentally good.
avoided, because some are necessary for the moral life and may not be evil without qualification.

One way to formulate the *aporia* is in the form of a *reductio ad absurdum* argument:

(1) Whatever is bad is always to be avoided.

(2) Pain is bad.

(3) Pain is always to be avoided. (1, 2)

(4) No exercise of virtue is to be avoided.

(5) The exercise of some virtues has pain as a necessary ingredient.

(6) No exercise of virtue that has pain as a necessary ingredient is to be avoided. (4, 5)

(7) The pain that is a necessary ingredient of an exercise of virtue is not to be avoided. (6)

(8) Pain is always to be avoided and the pain that is a necessary ingredient of an exercise of virtue is not to be avoided. (3, 7)

\[\therefore (9) \text{ Some pains are to be avoided and not to be avoided.} \]  

4.2 Disentangling the *Aporia*

There are only four premises in the argument, viz., (1) “Whatever is bad is always to be avoided”, (2) “Pain is bad”, (4) “No virtue is to be avoided”, and (5) “Some virtues have pain as a necessary ingredient”. Since Aristotle views virtue as unqualifiedly good, (4) is uncontroversial. To solve the contradiction, we can either deny (1), or (2), or even (5). Let’s now explore these possible strategies, beginning with the analysis of (1).

3. I would like to thank Keith Lehrer for helping me to formulate this paradox.
4.2.1 Evil and Its Avoidance

Premise (1) “Whatever is bad is always to be avoided” is grounded on Aristotle’s explicit statement that there are three objects of choice—the noble, the useful, and the pleasant—and three objects of avoidance—the shameful, the harmful, and the painful (1104b30–31). Since choice (prohairesis) is always deliberative and involves reason (logos) and thought (dianoia) (1112a15–17), this distinction between the objects of choice and of avoidance pertains only to the objects of human choices. In the same line of thought, the Eudemian Ethics says that what is not good without qualification, but perchance bad without qualification, ought to be avoided (1236b37). More importantly, the premise is also grounded on EN 1173a6–12:

They say that if pain is an evil, it does not follow that pleasure is a good, because evil is also opposed to evil, and both are opposed to what is neither good nor evil. This is fair enough, but is not true in the case we are discussing. For if both were evils, they ought both to be things to be avoided (phemukta edei amph¯ o einai), and if neither is an evil, neither ought to be something to be avoided, or they should be so to the same extent. But people manifestly avoid the one as an evil, and choose the other as a good; so this is the way they are opposed to one another.

There is an ongoing dialectic in this passage about the goodness of pleasure. Aristotle starts from one common assumption that pain is evil. If pleasure is contrary to pain, and if pain is evil, then pleasure must be good. Some opponents of this reasoning point out, however, that even if pain is evil, it doesn’t follow from this that pleasure is good. The reason is that evil is also a contrary to what is evil, and both good and evil are contraries to the neither good nor evil. Aristotle concedes that the response is adequate enough up to this point, but it doesn’t take into account why pleasure and pain are contraries to one another in the first place. His explanation is that the two are contraries to each other because people think that pain must be avoided, while pleasure must be chosen. At this point, Aristotle then claims that “if \( x \) is evil or bad, then \( x \) must be avoided”. It is not implausible to read this sentence as premise (1)
“Whatever is bad is to be avoided”.

Immediately, one can challenge this claim, considering that there are evils that either (a) cannot be avoided or (b) can be avoided but shouldn’t be. There are evils such as loss, death, old age illness, and separation that will ultimately prevail in human life and can’t be avoided. These evils are judged as bad not only because of the consequences they bring, but also because of themselves. Some evils are not instrumentally good, but merely the necessary byproducts of some necessary actions. Classic cases that exemplify the doctrine of double effect are useful here. Evils that come about unintentionally, which may also include death and loss of relationships, are necessary byproducts of some actions. A military general may argue that a civilian unfortunately dies due to the necessary attack against a terrorist group. Death in this situation is an evil, and serves no purpose for any goodness because it was not intended in the first place. It is simply an inevitable or necessary byproduct of an action. It is true that even death can be an inspiration for beautiful literature like that of the fourth book of St. Augustine’s *Confessions*, but this is something that is accidental and in a sense also an unintentional byproduct of the death. Because life is not ideal, and we are naturally deteriorating physically and mentally, and because sometimes we are faced with bad options (including tragic dilemmas), there are evil things in life that are unavoidable.

Some evils might be avoidable but should not be avoided. For this kind of evil, let’s look at evils that are instrumentally good. For example, a certain medical practice such as amputation is bad, but necessary for saving a person’s life. In this case, the evil can be avoided in the sense that one can choose not to be amputated. Nevertheless, the evil should not be avoided, and that is because in general living with only one leg is better than being dead with both legs. This kind of evil is a necessary means for a better end. We can also talk about this issue in Aristotelian terms. The virtue of

courage is a good example to illustrate the matter. A courageous person sometimes has
to avoid what is disgraceful only by way of not avoiding what is painful. Assuming that
what is painful is bad, one shouldn’t avoid it if she doesn’t want what is disgraceful
(1116a27–32).

I’ve used the terms “necessary byproducts” and “necessary means” in the above
paragraphs. One might think that these two instances of necessities somehow map
onto the two kinds of necessities that Aristotle speaks of in Physics II.9, where he
distinguishes between absolute (haplōs) necessity and hypothetical (ex hupotheseōs)
necessity. The suggestion is that the necessity in “necessary byproducts” is an instance
of absolute necessity, and that the necessity in “necessary means” is an instance of
hypothetical necessity. Absolute necessity is simply necessity without qualification
(perhaps by virtue of the nature of a thing), unlike the latter necessity, which is ne-
cessity in relation to the notion of “for the sake of”. An example of absolute necessity
is the necessity in heavy things that by their very nature tend to go downward, while
lighter things go upward. An example of hypothetical necessity can be seen in the
necessity of a certain arrangement of animal organs that most of the time, if not
always, aims at something good for each species. Another example of hypothetical
necessity is what can be called “material necessity”: a saw is what it is in the sense
that its material must necessarily be hard iron for the sake of its characteristic activity
(ergon), i.e., for cutting. But absolute necessity seems to be reserved by Aristotle for
eternal entities (e.g., for celestial bodies and the way they are in motion), and only
hypothetical necessity applies to things that come into being.\textsuperscript{5} Hence it seems that
the pair of “necessary byproducts” and “necessary means” does not map onto the
pair of absolute necessity and hypothetical necessity in Physics II.9. Now, if hypo-
thetical necessity is the only kind of necessity that applies in the realm of things that

\textsuperscript{5} De Partibus Animalium I.1 and Generatione et Corruptione II.11. See David Bostock, Space,
65–66.
come to be, including the realm of human beings, then all necessary evils (including the ones that are necessary byproducts of an action) must be explained in terms of hypothetical necessity. There is indeed an indirect way in which we can understand the necessity in the occurrence of evils that are the necessary byproducts of an action as a hypothetical necessity. For example, we may say that some evils are necessitated by the attack against terrorism, which is an action that is done for the sake of peace, though the evils *per se* do not contribute to or do not occur for the sake of peace.

We’ve seen so far necessary evils that are either a byproduct of an activity or something that is instrumentally good. These examples of necessary evils show that they cannot or should not be avoided, even though they are bad in themselves. Now premise (1) “Whatever is bad is always to be avoided” looks weak because it is simply impossible to avoid just any thing that is bad in life as we know it. How to fix the premise?

One way to do it is to read (1) conditionally. Surely that in this life, there are pains that seem to be necessary given our humanity. One might try to revise (1) with the addition of a proviso clause concerning the possibility to avoid what is bad.

\[(1') \text{ Whatever is bad is always to be avoided if (i.e., provided that) it is possible to do so.}\]

Indeed, if the proviso clause is inserted only in (1), then the contradiction cannot remain. Let’s take a look:

\[(1') \text{ If it is possible to do so, then whatever is bad is always to be avoided.}\]

\[(2) \text{ Pain is bad.}\]

\[(3') \text{ If it is possible to do so, then pain is always to be avoided. (1', 2)}\]

\[(4) \text{ No exercise of virtue is to be avoided.}\]

\[(5) \text{ The exercise of some virtues has pain as a necessary ingredient.}\]

6. And also, provided that it is to be avoided without getting something worse.
(6) No exercise of virtue that has pain as a necessary ingredient is to be avoided. 
   (4, 5)

(7) The pain that is a necessary ingredient of an exercise of virtue is not to be 
   avoided. (6)

(8') If it is possible to do so, pain is always to be avoided and the pain that is a 
   necessary ingredient of an exercise of virtue is not to be avoided. (3', 7)

Notice that there is no flat contradiction in (8') anymore. So it seems that the proviso 
clause nicely staves off the *aporia*. However, the right reading of (6) and (7) is as 
follows:

(6') No exercise of virtue that has pain as a necessary ingredient is to be avoided, 
   although it is possible to do so.

(7') The pain that is a necessary ingredient of an exercise of virtue is not to be 
   avoided, although it is possible to do so.

The proviso clause here is put here as a conjunct because it is a statement of fact, viz., 
that it is possible to avoid pain that is a necessary ingredient of virtue. For example, 
it is possible to avoid pain by leaving one’s post in the ranks, which is a cowardly 
action. If this revision is acceptable, when (3') is put side by side with (7'), we will 
have a flat contradiction again:

(8'') If it is possible to do so, pain is always to be avoided and although it is possible 
   to do so, the pain that is a necessary ingredient of an exercise virtue is not to 
   be avoided. 7

Hence, if the proviso clause is inserted in (1) and (7), supposing that other premises 
are kept, then the contradiction remains.

It is yet to be determined more conclusively whether (1') is reasonable enough 
given its additional proviso clause, for it is still questionable whether any sort of pain

7. The logical form of this conjunctive sentence is as follows: \((p \rightarrow q) \& (p \& \sim q)\).
is always to be avoided even though it is possible to do so. There is textual evidence which shows that Aristotle may not accept (1′):

1. He says that at least moderate pains should not be avoided:

   That is why, if a person has no appetite or only mild appetite for excesses, but still pursues them and avoids even moderate pains (*me-trias lupas*), we should describe him as more intemperate than the person who does so on account of his strong appetite. (1148a18–20)

2. The effeminate person is one who is deficient in resisting what most people resist. He avoids pain when he shouldn’t. (1150b4)

3. A brave man would not seek death to avoid trouble (to *ponein*). (EE 1229b39)

In all of these cases, Aristotle is not advocating that we avoid what is evil at all cost. After all, he is not a hedonist, but someone who values virtue above pleasure. It seems that Aristotle’s own ethical system requires him to reject this blanket prescription to avoid what is bad whenever possible, because that would not always be the virtuous thing to do.⁸

At this point, if we reject (1′), then the puzzle is completely solved because (3′) “If it is possible to do so, pain is always to be avoided” can also be rejected, for (3′) comes from (1′) and (2) “Pain is bad”. And if (3′) is rejected, there will be no more contradiction regarding whether pain should be avoided or not. However, the matter is not so simple, and this is because Aristotle affirms both (2) and (3′) in 1153b1–2 independently of (1′). Hence even if we reject (1′), the puzzle remains.

I shall now move on to discussing (2) “Pain is bad”.

⁸For the same reason (viz., that it would not always be the virtuous thing to do), one must reject the claim that what is worse is always to be avoided.
4.2.2 The Evil of Pain

Since the premise states that pain is bad, it is worth pondering about the nature of pain briefly. Aristotle doesn’t give an explicit account of the nature of pain in any of his works. We are given two famous characterizations of pleasure in the EN. In book VII, pleasure is said to be an unimpeded activity of our natural state. In book X, pleasure is described as something that supervenes on an activity and perfects it. Pain is the contrary of pleasure, and contraries share the same genus (Categories 14a15–25). If pleasure is an unimpeded activity of our natural state, pain is probably an impeded activity of our natural state. If pleasure is something that supervenes on an activity and perfects it, pain is probably something that supervenes on an activity and ruins it. My discussion in this chapter, nevertheless, will not depend on a particular interpretation of the nature of Aristotelian pain.

Now, recall that the first endoxon asserts that all pains are evil and makes sense to avoid. The second endoxon insists that there must be an education so that we may feel pain properly, but it is actually silent about the evil of pain, though it seems to say that not all pains can or should be avoided. In this section, I want to show that Aristotle holds the first endoxon firmly. He claims that one type of pain is unqualifiedly bad, and another type is bad because it is a sort of impediment (1153b2–3). There is no other alternative. This remark suggests that Aristotle wants to secure premise (2) “Pain is bad”. In what follows, I give a conceptual analysis of pain that is bad without qualification and pain that is bad only insofar as it is an impediment.

An unqualifiedly bad pain is nothing other than the pain that is felt by the virtuous person. This reading fits with the context well. In the beginning of chapter 12 of book VII, Aristotle mentions that things are called good in two senses: good without qualification, and good for somebody (1152b26–27). Then the ensuing discus-

9. An enkratic person may also feel pain for the same reason as the virtuous person does, e.g., due to unfavorable circumstances. However, it is the virtuous person that serves as the canon for determining pain that is bad without qualification.
sion applies this distinction to the distinction between pleasure that is good without qualification and pleasure that is good only for some people, but not good without qualification. Pleasure that is not good without qualification is pleasure that is felt by people who are not in their natural state. For example, people who are convalescing might feel pleasure from sharp and bitter things. Pleasure that is good without qualification, by contrast, is an unimpeded activity of our natural state. This is the kind of pleasure that a virtuous person has in his natural state (cf. 1153a35).

This discussion immediately precedes the claim that some pains are bad without qualification, and some are bad only as a sort of impediment. Pain that is bad without qualification is pain that is bad not only for some people, but bad in the normative sense of the word because the virtuous person judges it to be bad. The notion of what is good or bad in Aristotle’s ethics is not subjective, but it is objective in the sense that the virtuous person, as the one who has and exercises virtues, is the one that has the final authority in determining what is good or bad in the context of a happy life as a whole.10 The same thing can be said about what should be pursued or avoided, that it is the virtuous person who will determine the matter. Book X chapter 5 is most instructive about this point: “In all such things, it seems that what is so is what appears (eинai тο phainomenon) so to the good person. If this view is right, as it seems to be, and virtue—that is, the good person insofar as he is good—is the measure of each thing, then pleasures will be what appear so to him, and pleasant things will be what he enjoys. And if things that he finds disagreeable appear pleasant to someone, that is not surprising, since there are many ways for people to become ruined and perverted. The things are not pleasant, except to these people, with this disposition” (1176a15–22). Although these remarks are about pleasure, Aristotle says that the good person is the measure (метрон) of each thing. Hence it is the good person that also determines whether something is really a pain or not. People who

are ruined or perverted, by contrast, can’t make the correct judgment about pleasure and pain. Hence they might take pleasure and pain in the wrong things. Such pleasure and pain are not really pleasant or painful except to them. Pains that are bad without qualification, then, are those that are judged to be bad by the virtuous person.

Among pains that are bad without qualification, some are instrumentally good, but some are useless. One example of the useless pains is the muscle pain that we get from weightlifting for the sake of bodily fitness. In Aristotle’s ethics, bodily fitness is seen as one of the goods of the body and it is assumed as the end of physical training (1138a31). Hence we can assert that bodily fitness is good in itself, which goodness is seen as basic and unquestionable. Weightlifting or other equivalent activities to it seems to be necessary to obtain healthier and stronger muscles, though it might not be good in itself, just as walking or running is neither good nor bad in itself. But pains that come from weightlifting don’t contribute to the attainment of better muscles. Instead, muscle pains due to weightlifting are inevitable byproducts that must be experienced by weightlifters.

Some pains are bad without qualification but are useful in life. Aristotle allows poverty and illness to have some usefulness (EE 1238b2–3). Also, many physical pains serve as necessary signals that something in our body is wrong. Here we see pains that are not only the necessary byproducts of activities we do, but they are necessary means for our survival. For instance, those who believe that while running there should not be any pain whatsoever would interpret any pain we experience while jogging as a sign that we’ve done something wrong. Perhaps we’ve run too long or we’re not properly warmed up. Congenital insensitivity to pain is the extreme case that shows why pain is necessary for a good life. People who suffer from this disorder cannot feel pain and many times hurt themselves ignorantly. It does not follow from this, however, that the pain that serves as a signal is good in itself, though it is a good and necessary instrument to tell that we need to stop or reduce our activities.

What about pain that is not bad without qualification, but bad only insofar as it
is an impediment? To answer this question, we need to look at Aristotle’s explanation about pleasure that’s good not without qualification but good only for someone in particular. It turns out that this claim is ambiguous. The ambiguity lies in the phrase “to somebody” (τινὶ). If the “somebody” is virtuous, it might be the case that the virtuous person is not in a completely healthy condition. In that condition, the virtuous person’s judgment about what is really pleasant can be temporarily distorted. For example, a convalescing virtuous person may taste sweet things as bitter, too. Aristotle makes a strong claim that pleasures in convalescence or replenishment “are not even pleasures”, but only appear to be (1152b31–32). What about the case in which two virtuous persons differ in their musical taste? Aristotle doesn’t seem to be concerned about this scenario because his main focus is on the difference of judgment between the virtuous and the vicious people, and not between the virtuous people themselves. But if we want to entertain this question, an example would help. Suppose that two virtuous persons A and B like music, but A finds Beethoven pleasant and Bach painful, and B has the exact opposite taste. In this case, we can say that what is good without qualification is the type of activity involved, viz., listening to music. The pleasure-tokens, both A’s pleasure and B’s pleasure, are good only for A and B respectively. Still, the pleasure-type (viz., listening to music) is good without qualification, assuming that listening to good music would be judged as good by a virtuous person. If the “somebody” is not virtuous, pleasure for that somebody seems also to refer to pleasure that might not be real pleasure but simply appear to be, such as the pleasure a cruel person gets from bullying.

The distinction that exists between pleasure that is bad without qualification and pleasure that is good for somebody can be applied to pain as well. Pain (as a type) is bad without qualification if it is considered bad by the virtuous person being in a natural state. Pain that is bad only in a particular way, viz., in bringing impediment, is the pain that is felt by a vicious person or by a virtuous person that is physically sick. Think of a glutton who finds it painful to eat healthy food. This pain is an
impediment to this kind of person because it will hinder him from eating healthily, but it is not pain that is bad without qualification, for pain that is bad without qualification is one that is felt by the virtuous person in his natural state.

St. Thomas in his commentary gives an interesting example for the passage in 1153b2–3 about pain that is bad absolutely:

For one kind of pain is evil simply, e.g., sadness about good; the other kind is evil in a limited way, as a hindrance to good, since even sadness (tristitia) about evil hinders the soul from doing the good readily and quickly.

According to St. Thomas, sadness about evil is not bad without qualification, but only bad in a limited way. Maybe St. Thomas thinks that sadness about evil is something that is actually good, but it is still an impediment in some way because it makes us slow in doing what is good. One can imagine the sadness that paralyzes someone after witnessing a brutal murder.

But St. Thomas might be mistaken here in saying that sadness about evil is only bad in a limited way, but not bad without qualification. The reason is that, as I showed above, when Aristotle talks about pleasure in book VII chapter 12, he reserves “pleasure that is good without qualification” only for pleasure that is felt in the natural state by the virtuous person. And if the good person is the measure of each thing, including pain, then the good person who sees sadness or pain about evil as bad would judge it as something that is bad without qualification. A virtuous person would find sadness at evil to be a pain that is bad. And if this is so, then this pain is bad without qualification. It is not the case, then, that sadness for evil is only

11. I need to make one qualification here. There are times in which a virtuous person is sick, and therefore his judgment of pain or pleasure is distorted. For example, he might taste sweet things as bitter. Hence the claim that the virtuous person is the standard of real pain should be restricted only for the virtuous person who is completely in his natural state and healthy. It is not true that in all cases only virtuous people can make a judgment about the real pain or pleasure. Think of a vicious person who can feel the pain from a paper cut. My point is that being virtuous is not necessary to be able to make the right judgment about pain or pleasure, although when we are to think ethically, it is the (healthy) virtuous person who is the standard for making judgments about pain.
bad in a limited way, for when Aristotle is saying that some pains are bad insofar as they are a sort of impediment, he is talking instead about pains that are felt only by some people (including vicious people).

On my reading, Aristotle doesn’t question premise (2) “Pain is bad” at all. But if we want to challenge Aristotle, we can try to refute this premise simply by showing that its negation is true. One negation of premise (2) is “Pain is neither bad nor good”. The other negation is “Pain is good.” Let’s look first at the claim that pain is neither bad nor good.

Is it possible that pain is neither good nor evil? Aristotle himself sometimes says that one who cannot manage pain and pleasure properly will become bad (kakos) (1105a13). Here pain doesn’t look to be bad in itself, but only bad insofar as it is mismanaged. Earlier in the passage, Aristotle suggests that we can feel pleasure or pain in a good way or in a bad way (eu ê kakōs) (1105a7). Again, this doesn’t seem to state that pain is bad or good in itself, but it is bad only if it is felt inappropriately. Analogously, the activity of walking is neither good or bad in itself, but good only insofar as it is done well (e.g., in a moderate manner or towards a good destination) and bad only insofar as it is done badly.

But does Aristotle really believe that pain is neither good nor bad just as the activity of walking is neither good nor bad? I don’t think so, and this is because Aristotle provides an argument to reject the claim that pain is neither good nor bad. His argument is observational: the fact that people avoid pain suggests that pain is bad to them. If pain were neither good nor bad, why would they avoid it (1154a5)? With the same strategy, he writes:

If neither [pleasure nor pain] is an evil, neither ought to be something to be avoided, or they should be so to the same extent. But people manifestly avoid the one as an evil, and choose the other as a good (1173a10–13).

This, again, is an observational argument, one that questions the consistency of peo-
ple’s behavior and belief. Because they in fact avoid pain, they must think that pain is evil. Furthermore, there is a contrast between people’s attitudes towards pleasure and pain, because they pursue the former as something good but avoid the latter as something bad. These claims indicate clearly that Aristotle does not see pain as either good or bad.

At this point, it seems that the argument already excludes the second possibility that pain is good. But the matter is not that simple. Even with the considerations above, we still need to see whether it is conceptually possible in the Aristotelian framework to say that there are pains that are intrinsically good, and not just instrumentally so. The reason is that there are candidates for pains that are good in themselves, which are connected to the exercise of virtue. This fact would be compatible with the second *endoxon*, which says that we can and should feel pain properly, and must be educated to be able to feel pain in the right way. As I will show in the next section, the exercise of some virtues such as temperance and appropriate indignation involves being pained in the right way. In general, pains directed at wickedness or at evil actions seem to be compatible with goodness, if not good in themselves. This intuition is captured in Aristotle’s *Rhetoric*. For example, pity is defined as “a feeling of pain at an apparent evil, destructive or painful, which befalls one who does not deserve it, and which we might expect to befall ourselves or some friend of ours, and moreover to befall us soon” (*Rhetoric* 1385b13–16). A virtuous person should be sensitive enough to feel pity when he encounters a condition that calls for such emotion. Proper indignation also seems to be good in itself, as it is embodied in the virtue of right indignation. Indignation is said in *Rhetoric* 1378a30–32 to be identical to being pained (*lupeisthai*). Are these pains intrinsically good?

There is an issue here about what intrinsic value means in Aristotle’s ethics. In the *EN*, Aristotle talks about things like virtue and pleasure that we choose for themselves and also for the sake of happiness. Honor, pleasure and intellect are also things we choose for themselves, and that is because we choose them even if they
don’t bring any good consequences (1097b3–4). Medicine and money, by contrast, are instances of things that don’t have intrinsic value because they are just a means to an end. We don’t love medicine and money for their own sake, but only insofar as they can get us to the end. If we can get the end without medicine and money, we wouldn’t mind abandoning them.\(^{12}\)

In the *Eudemian Ethics*, Aristotle thinks that what is bad can be good only conditionally and instrumentally. In the discussion of friendship, for example, he believes that the good can be friends to the bad, but only insofar as “the bad [is] of use to the good in relation to the good man’s existing choice” (1238b2–3). Immediately afterwards, he speaks of poverty or illness as conditional (*ex hupotheseōs*) goods. They are good only insofar as they are of advantage to good people. But something that is instrumentally good can be bad in itself. In the same way, pain can be instrumentally good but also at the same time bad in itself.

Based on this understanding of intrinsic value, if pain were intrinsically valuable and good, then pain would have to be something we chose for its own sake regardless of its consequence. Furthermore, pain must be something that we wouldn’t abandon if something good that comes through pain (e.g., victory in war) can be obtained without pain. These two conditions are hard to meet, and it is unlikely that pain is intrinsically good.

So far, premise (2) “Pain is bad” (i.e., intrinsically bad) still stands. Furthermore, we’ve only seen that pain can be instrumentally good, but not necessarily good without qualification. But let’s ask now what is really bad: is it the capacity to feel pain or the actual pain, or both? This question is important to answer to avoid the fallacy of equivocation in the *aporia*, for premise (5) also contains the word “pain”.

If the capacity to feel pain does exist, we need to ask whether we can make a sharp value distinction between the capacity to feel pain and the actual pain itself.

The idea is that perhaps only the actual pain is bad and makes sense to avoid, but
the capacity to feel pain seems to be crucial in a virtuous life. Pain is a necessity with
the qualification that—given our humanity—pain is inevitable in our moral life. But
still, what is good in the event of the occurrence of an actual pain is not the actual
pain itself, but the capacity to experience such pain, assuming that this is pain that
is directed or caused by the right sort of objects that should properly cause pain.

Suppose we want to entertain the suggestion that the capacity to feel pain is good,
but the actuality of pain is bad. But maybe the picture is more complicated because
there might be a middle process between the capacity to feel pain and the actuality
of pain. For the sake of argument, suppose there is indeed a middle step between
the capacity to feel pain and the actual pain, viz., a process or a movement from
the capacity to the actuality. Call this process “actualization”. This is a process that
is opposed to the end of the process, which is the “actuality” of the pain. Should
we complicate the picture by adding the process of actualization into the discussion?
There is a good reason to reject this suggestion, for in both book VII and X of the
EN, Aristotle insists that pleasure is something complete in itself and that it is not a
process. If pain is the contrary of pleasure, it would seem that pain is also something
that is complete in itself, although pain would involve some sort of impediment.
But something that’s complete in itself does not involve a process of actualization
like building a house does. Pain is complete in itself, without any process in the
actualizing of the capacity to experience pain. Hence it is enough to talk about the
capacity to feel pain and the actuality of pain. Because pain is complete in itself, the
actualization of the capacity to feel pain is nothing other than the actual pain itself.

Again, let’s suppose that the capacity to feel pain is good, but the actuality of pain
is bad. But isn’t it suspicious that the actualization of a good capacity is bad? For
comparison, take another (presumptively) good capacity, e.g., the capacity to become
virtuous (1103a24–28). This seems to be an uncontroversially good capacity, not only
instrumentally, but also intrinsically. Is there any instance in which the actualization
of this capacity is something bad? It is hard to think of even one. There are of course instances in which virtuous people, when exercising their virtue, must encounter a trolley-case-type tragic dilemma. It is true that in such cases, the exercise of virtue would seem to end up inevitably in a tragedy. Yet the goodness of the virtuous exercise remains unscathed regardless of the consequences. Here I do not speak from a consequentialist point of view, but from a point of view of ethics that grounds the goodness and rightness of an action on its corresponding virtue. Another case that might make someone think that the actualization of a good capacity can be something bad is the fact that a virtuous person may also make decisions with respect to future plans that turn out to be non-ideal. For a virtuous statesman might make a carefully thought out law that ends up not working and being dangerous to the polis. Yet, the virtuous exercise of responsibly making a certain law is always good, though the results might not always be the most ideal due to external factors beyond an agent’s power.

Perhaps when people say that an actualization of a good capacity can be bad, they are thinking of those who abuse such a capacity for a malevolent purpose. Terrorists, for example, surely have the capacity of knowing, which should be good. We can quibble about whether knowing all sorts of things (including how to torture people effectively) is good, but in general, it is safe to say that knowledge is generally something good. Alas, the terrorists utilize their knowledge for condemnable purposes. Doesn’t this show that a good capacity can be actualized into something bad? Well, the answer is negative. First, there is a distinction between the capacity to know and the capacity to use knowledge. The actualization of the capacity to know is the activity of knowing, and not the activity of using the knowledge for another purpose. So if the terrorist example is to help at all, the comparison analyzed must be between the capacity to use knowledge and the activity of using knowledge. The former seems to be good, and the latter might be bad or good. Second, the fact that sometimes knowledge is used for bad purposes doesn’t by itself show that the capacity to use
knowledge is bad or good. In fact, there is a reason to say that the capacity to use knowledge is neither bad nor good (or in some sense both bad and good), for it can be actualized into an activity that is either bad or good. It would make more sense to say that the capacity to use knowledge is good provided that the use is for a good purpose, and the capacity to use knowledge is bad provided that the use is for a bad purpose. In other words, if we were to insist on attributing goodness or badness to a capacity, we cannot make a claim about the goodness of a capacity apart from the goodness of the actualization.\(^\text{13}\)

It won’t be a problem to say that the actualization of a neutral capacity might be bad. Take, for example, the capacity to walk, which seems to be something neutral because there is a possibility for one to walk to either the right places or the wrong places. If walking to the wrong places is bad, then actualization of a neutral capacity to walk is bad. We should be able to speak of proper pain as being good and improper pain as being bad, just like proper walking is good, but improper walking is not. Yet the capacities of both pain and walking are themselves neither good nor bad.

But do we really have the capacity to feel pain? I think the answer is positive. If pain is either an activity or a being-affected, then there would be a capacity for it (Metaphysics Θ 1046a20). Metaphysics Θ9 mentions several important points about actuality and capacity that illuminate the discussion about the value of the capacity and the actuality of pain.

1. The actuality is better than the good potentiality (\(tēs\ spoudaias\ dunameōs\)) (1051a4).

2. One same thing is capable of opposites, e.g., being healthy and being diseased (1051a6–7).

3. The capacity for the opposites is only one capacity, not two different capacities

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13. This principle would apply to the case of sadness towards evil. If sadness towards evil is something that is intrinsically bad, then the capacity to be sad towards evil is also intrinsically bad.
4. The actuality of bad things is worse than the potentiality (1051a15–16).

First, Aristotle mentions that the actuality of good potentiality is better than the good potentiality. This claim rules out the case in which the actuality of good potentiality is worse than the potentiality. He might be saying that the potentiality is good conditionally, viz., it is good only if it results in the actuality of good things. Second, one same thing is capable of being a substratum of contraries. This is not a controversial claim, and perfectly compatible with Physics I.7, which asserts that contraries need a third thing that underlies them. Third, there is only one capacity for opposites. The capacity, then, must be somewhat constitutionally complex and contain the seeds of the opposites. Finally, he says that there is an inverse value relation that occurs because of the actuality of bad things. According to him, the actuality of bad things is worse than the potentiality. But he says that the actuality of good things is better than the potentiality. But there is only one potentiality. Is the potentiality bad or good or neutral? I suggested already that strictly speaking, the potentiality is neither bad nor good, but there is a sense in which the goodness or the badness of the potentiality depends on the goodness or the badness of the corresponding actuality. We do have the capacity to feel pain,14 and this capacity is neither good nor bad, but because the actual pain is bad, there is a sense in which the capacity to feel pain is bad.

Aristotle seems to have a different strategy for viewing this issue about the capacity to experience the “negatives” in life, such as the capacity to feel pain, to fall into poverty, to be ill, and to die. The strategy is asserting that there is no such thing as the capacity to be ill or to die. Instead, there is a lack of capacity, just as Metaphysics Δ 1019a26–30 says:

14. Because the capacity for the opposites is only one capacity, not two different capacities, then the capacity to feel pain is the same as the capacity to feel pleasure.
The states in virtue of which things are absolutely impassive or unchangeable, or not easily changed for the worse, are called capacities; for things are broken and crushed and bent and in general destroyed not by having a capacity but by not having one and by lacking something.

Hence one doesn’t need to say that there is a capacity to die, but instead that when a person dies, there is a lack of capacity to live (e.g., to be nourished). Instead of saying that one has the capacity to be diseased, one can say that there is only the capacity to be healthy, but when a person is diseased, she is lacking the capacity to be healthy, or at least lacking the capacity to act in a way she would be able to if she were healthy (for, strictly speaking, a sick person’s capacity to be healthy is not diminished because she is sick). In the same way, Aristotle can say that we don’t have the capacity to experience pain, but only the capacity to experience pleasure.

Suppose we use the account of pleasure in book VII of the EN that pleasure is the unimpeded activity of our natural state. On this account, when we are experiencing pain, what happens is that there is a lack of capacity to act unimpededly because the presence of a certain kind of impediment.

Aristotle, however, doesn’t choose this route, and this is because we have the capacities to act and to feel in many ways. Pleasure and pain are positively stated as either activities or passions or both. Hence there must be a capacity for each (EN 1105b22), just as there is a capacity to love and to hate, even though hatred is a negative emotion in life. Furthermore, there is one big problem for understanding pain as the lack of pleasure, viz., that the lack of pleasure can simply be neither pleasure nor pain, and not necessarily pain. Hence it would be better to embrace the statements in Metaphysics Θ 1051a15–16 that there are capacities for the negatives in life, including death and illness and poverty, and presumably pain as well, for pain is treated in the same category as poverty (1116a12–13).

Where are we in the argument now? The discussion about the capacity to feel pain began with my question about premise (2) “Pain is bad”. I asked whether it is
the capacity to feel pain or the actual pain that is bad. This clarification is important to avoid the fallacy of equivocation in the *aporia* because premise (5) “The exercise of some virtues has pain as a necessary ingredient” also mentions pain. My conclusion is that the goodness or the badness of the capacity to feel pain is not independent of the goodness or the badness of the actualization of the capacity. Once this is acknowledged, it seems that the capacity to feel pain (and pleasure) can’t be always good, but strictly speaking it is neither good nor bad. Only the actual pain is bad. Accordingly, the occurrence of the word “pain” in the entire *aporia* must be confined exclusively to actual pain, because this must be the sense that Aristotle utilizes when he says that pain is bad.

In conclusion, premise (2) is not a problem and should be kept. We will need to talk now about (3′) “If it is possible to do so, then pain is always to be avoided.”

### 4.3 The Avoidance of Pain

Does Aristotle accept (3′)? I argue that he cannot accept (3′) for the same reason that he cannot accept (1′). The reason was simply that moderate pains should not be avoided by the virtuous person. An intemperate person avoids moderate pains (*metrias lupas*) (1148a18–20), and a person that is effeminate is one that avoids pain when he shouldn’t (1150b4). Furthermore, a brave person would not seek death to avoid trouble (*to ponein*) (*EE* 1229b39). Hence if (3′) simply says that pain is to be avoided whenever it is possible, then it must be rejected.

Another reason to reject (3′) is that Aristotle is not a hedonist, and he will not agree that the consideration about pursuing pleasure and avoiding pain should be the ultimate guide for actions. While he accepts Eudoxus’s conclusion that every

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15. This would apply to other capacities as well, e.g., the capacity to see, feel, and think (deliberation). Nevertheless, the activity of contemplation is the most pleasant and the best (*Metaphysics* 1072b24), then its capacity would be good.

16. It is true that accepting (3′) doesn’t make one a hedonist. However, a hedonist would accept (3′).
animal pursues good as a pleasure, he disagrees with Eudoxus that pleasure is the final good. The *endoxon* that pain is bad and must be avoided (i.e., premises (2) and (3')) is something that Eudoxus agrees to because of his view of the natural pursuit of pleasure by animals. Aristotle can accept the fact that we naturally value at least some pleasures as something good, but his agreement with Eudoxus ends there. In book X chapter 2, he rejects Eudoxus’s view that pleasure is the final good, quoting Plato’s argument in the *Philebus* that pleasure must have intelligence added to it to be more worthy. With respect to whether the pursuit of pleasure can be the ultimate motivation for action, Aristotle shows a reluctance to agree that activity is done for the sake of pleasure (*EN* 1175a15–16). But if we go back to his definition of happiness in book I, that it is rational activity in accordance with virtue (1102a5–6), it is clear that activity must be done not for the sake of pleasure, but in accordance with virtue. The final end is nothing but the life of virtuous action. Living a virtuous life is something that we pursue for its own sake, while everything else—including the pursuit of pleasure and the avoidance of pain—is done for the sake of the final end.

Once we recognize Aristotle’s anti-hedonist stance, (3’) remains only as an *endoxon* that is reputable, for it is advanced by the pious Eudoxus. However, it is not good enough to be maintained, and must ultimately be rejected. What Aristotle would accept, instead, is

(3'') If it is virtuous to do so, pain is to be avoided. With (3') being rejected, the *aporia* is solved. But as I said above, our task is not only to solve the contradiction in the *aporia*, but also to see which *endoxa* are the most authoritative. There is one premise left to be analyzed, viz. (5), to which we turn now.


18. To make this principle more practical, one can refer to specific virtues in a certain circumstance. For example, one can say that if it is courageous (or wise, etc.) to do so, then pain is to be avoided.
4.4 The Constitution Relation Between Pain and Virtue

Premise (5) says that some pains are necessary ingredients of an exercise of virtue. It does not say that some pains are necessary ingredients of virtue *qua* state (*hexis*). Aristotle defines virtue as:

A state involving rational choice, consisting in a mean relative to us and determined by reason—the reason, that is, by reference to which the practically wise person would determine it. It is a mean between two vices, one of excess, the other of deficiency. It is a mean also in that some vices fall short of what is right in feelings and actions, and others exceed it, while virtue both attains and chooses the mean. (1107a1–6)

A virtue is a state or a stable disposition, according to Aristotle, as opposed to a feeling (*pathos*) or a capacity (*dunamis*). Virtue can’t be a feeling or a capacity to feel because we are called good or bad and praised or blamed because of virtue or vice, and not because of our feelings or capacities to feel. As a state, virtue is something that is stable. People don’t become virtuous easily or naturally, but through habituation and persistent learning by doing. Once they are virtuous, however, it would be hard to disturb the stable state.

Virtue also involves rational choice that requires clear thinking and sensitivity to one’s own conditions and needs. A virtuous person would know what actions to take in a certain situation because he is skillful in navigating his life in many settings. Such high level rationality is not possessed by animals or children. That is why we do not call children happy, if happiness is a rational activity in accordance with virtue. The emphasis on choice is important because even though virtue is a stable disposition that tends to make the virtuous person act in a certain way, the virtuous person does so only through a rational choice that is up to him. The virtuous person can be praised for his action because he is morally responsible in acting through his own choices.
Virtue, moreover, has an affective aspect because it also involves proper feelings (pathé). A virtuous person must not only act rightly, but also with a proper emotional response. A virtuous person would feel anger, joy, and pity in the right way, at the right time, and as he ought to. Furthermore, pleasure and pain are said to be the signs of virtue or vice. A person who does a virtuous action not with enjoyment is still not fully virtuous. For example, a moral learner might not enjoy giving alms since he is unaccustomed to being generous. Sometimes the learner might find himself struggling about whether or not to cheat on his taxes. These struggles are signs that the learner still needs to tune his emotions to the right channel. Only when he does an action from a virtuous stable disposition, with the right reasons and feelings, is he acting qua a virtuous agent.

What I’m concerned about in this section is not so much virtue as a stable disposition, but the exercise of virtue. It is in the exercise of virtue that pain is sometimes involved. I used a loose language in premise (5) in stating that pain is a necessary “ingredient” of an exercise of virtue. Notice that (5) doesn’t assume that pain is actually bad or good. It just says that the exercise of some virtues, e.g., the virtue of righteous indignation (nemesis), has pain as a necessary ingredient. What we need to clarify is the relation between pain and virtue. One initial thing to be said now is that there seems to be a constitution relation between some sort of pains and the exercise of virtues in that the former is constitutive of the latter. For example, in 1106b22–23, Aristotle states that to feel pain or pleasure properly is the very characteristic of virtue (hoper esti tês aretês). How this constitution relation works is not yet clear even if we can isolate which pains are suitable candidates to be constitutive of the exercise of virtues. And there is still a possibility that the word “constitution” is too strong to describe the relation between pain and the exercise of virtue, though we know from the second endoxon that virtues involve pain (e.g., EN 1104b12–17).

Premise (5) cannot be dismissed right away given the fact that there are good candidates for pains that are constitutive of the exercise of some virtues. The follow-
ing observation is evidence for this claim. To begin with, in the *EN* Aristotle does sporadically explain the place of pain in the good life. Pain is an activity or a feeling that is usually a hindrance to a happy life. Aristotle also has a particular account of pain that seems to be a part of moral excellence. It is not obvious that this kind of pain is a hindrance to a happy life.

In book I, Aristotle suggests that the final end of human life be happiness. A happy life is the one that is virtuous and equipped with some external goods, such as sufficient wealth and friends, for one to function properly in life. Unfortunately, a happy life is not always defensible against the unexpected calamities that may fall upon people. The case of old Priam who was deprived of many of his sons and was finally butchered is a forceful illustration of the vulnerability of a happy life (1100a5–9). Aristotle follows the common intuition that misfortunes often bring pain and hinder many activities (1100b29–30). This is the first indication in the *EN* that pain might be some kind of a hindrance to a happy life.

The hindrance that Aristotle speaks of might simply be the deprivation of opportunities to do certain things. For example, the loss of wealth is a hindrance to doing generous actions. The loss of friends is sometimes also the loss of opportunity to manifest just character. There is no clarity about what pain really is. What we get from book I of the *EN* is that an impediment to virtuous actions is closely related to pain: pain is either the impediment itself or something that the impediment brings about. What is very interesting, however, is that Aristotle asks us to avoid insensitivity (*analgēsia*) towards pain (1100b32). In the face of a great misfortune, we are to face life boldly through nobility and greatness of soul.

The account of pain in book II of the *EN* is much clearer and more revealing. In speaking about character formation in chapter 3 of book II, Aristotle believes that pleasures and pains are closely related to virtues. We shall focus our attention on the pain that is involved in the exercise of virtue, instead of on the pain that is needed as a part of the education to become virtuous. Four points are present for considering
how pleasures and pains are connected to the exercise of virtue.

The first point is about attitudes towards pains and pleasures. Aristotle hints that pain is something that supervenes on actions (tēn epiginomenēn hēdonēn ē lupēn tois ergois) (1104b4–5). Moral excellence or virtue is closely related to pleasures and pains. Virtuous people would have the right attitudes and feelings towards them. The virtue of temperance, for example, is the virtue of being able to refrain from excessive food or sex or other bodily enjoyments. The virtue of courage, as another instance, is the stable disposition of the soul for not being pained easily at the prospect of being hurt by an unjust enemy. Aristotle seals these remarks with the opinion of Plato that we need to be educated in such a way that we would find enjoyment and pain in the right things (1104b12–14).

The second point is about the supervenience of pleasure and pain on actions. The relation between virtue and pleasures or pains is explained further by Aristotle, that “if the virtues [have] to do with actions and situations of being affected, and pleasure and pain follow (hepetai) from every action and situation of being affected, then this is another reason why virtue will be concerned with pleasures and pains” (1104b14–17). This passage is a strong statement about the connection between actions/feelings and pleasures/pains. It is as though Aristotle is ready to put a universal quantifier in front of every action or feeling, that if either one or both of them obtains, then either pleasures or pains would follow them. What is important to note now is that being pained at certain things is an integral part in the exercise of several virtues of character:

1. The virtue of appropriate indignation (nemesis) is not discussed in depth by Aristotle, but it is important to take a look at it for it is highly relevant to showing that pain is a part of the exercise of virtue.

   Appropriate indignation is a mean between envy and spite; these three are concerned with pain and pleasure felt at the fortunes of those
around us. The sort of person to experience appropriate indignation is pained (lupeitai) by those who do well undeservedly; the envious person goes beyond him and is pained (lupeitai) by anybody’s doing well; while the spiteful person, far from being pained at the misfortunes of others, actually feels enjoyment. (1108a35–1108b6)

The emotional reaction that must be present in right indignation is being pained by people who don’t deserve to do well, perhaps because they are being unjust. One indispensable aspect of the exercise of this virtue is the affective aspect of being pained. Interestingly, indignation is categorized as an emotion in the Rhetoric, but with a similar positive outlook. Even in the Rhetoric, appropriate indignation qua feeling is something good, and this feeling is described in 1386b11-12 as coming from a good disposition (ēthous chrēstou).

2. The virtue of generosity is also concerned with pain and pleasure.

If it should so happen that the generous person spends more or less than is right and noble, he will be pained, but only in a moderate way, as one ought. For it is a characteristic of virtue to be pleased and to be pained, at the right objects and in the right way. (1121a1–4)
The wasteful person misses the mark . . . since he is neither pleased nor pained at the right things. (1121a8–10)

There is a question about what kind of pain is involved here. It seems that this virtue is not concerned with being pained by the existence of poor or needy people per se. That is to say, it is not being pained by the presence of people who need financial assistance that defines generosity, but rather by not giving money to such people. Aristotle emphasizes again that to be pleased and to be pained is essential to virtue (tēs aretēs). The genitive might suggest a constitutive relation between pain and the exercise of virtue in the sense that pain must be

present as a necessary condition for some exercises of virtue. That being said, it is possible that the exercise of the virtue of generosity at times doesn’t involve pain. One can be generous, for example, when seeing that a noble cause such as the expansion of a public library needs to be supported.

3. It is important to understand how the magnanimous person will handle pain in his life, for magnanimity is “the crown of the virtues”.

The great-souled person will be concerned with honours, but he will also take a moderate view of wealth, power, and all kinds of good and bad fortune, whatever happens, in the sense that he will neither be excessively happy at good fortune nor excessively distressed at bad fortune. (1124a13–16)

Magnanimity consists of having what is great in every virtue (1123b30). Such greatness is shown by not being very sad (perilupos) at bad fortune, but being sad in moderation is not excluded from the virtue, especially if magnanimity is not present without the presence of other virtues. However, it is to be noted that in the ordinary exercise of this virtue, pain is not involved. Only when bad fortune comes, the magnanimous person will be distressed, although only moderately.

4. The virtue of even temper (praoṭēs) is related to pain because it is a virtue that is concerned with anger, which is an emotion that is painful.

The deficiency, whether it is a kind of non-irascibility or whatever, is blamed, because people who do not get angry at things that they ought to get angry at are thought to be foolish, as are those who do so in the wrong way, at the wrong time, and with the wrong people. Such a person seems to be insensible and to feel no pain, and, because he does not get angry, not the sort to stick up for himself; and it is slavish to put up with being insulted oneself or to overlook insults to those close to one. (1126a3–8)
An even-tempered person is one that will be pained when she should be so at things that are appropriate, such as belittlement and injustice. Here again the presence of pain is an integral part of the exercise of virtue.

5. Pain is also intertwined in the exercise of the virtue of courage. Aristotle discusses this virtue quite elaborately in book III chapters 6–9. He writes that “To commit suicide as a way of escaping poverty or love or anything painful is not characteristic of a courageous person, but rather of a coward; for it is softness to run away from problems, and such a person endures death not because it is noble, but to escape an evil” (1116a12–15). Again, “People are called courageous for enduring what is painful; so courage involves pain, and is justly praised; since it is more difficult to endure what is painful than to abstain from what is pleasant” (1117a32–34). However, it seems that pain is not an integral part of the account of courage. People are called courageous because they are ready to endure pain, but this kind of pain is different from the kind of pain that is a part of the virtue of righteous indignation. With the virtue of righteous indignation, the kind of pain that is involved in it is unique to and defines the virtue. With the virtue of courage, the pain it endures is accidental and external to its account.

What is common in all these instances is the fact that the exercise of these virtues requires that the person in action is pained in some ways. It is in this sense that pain is constitutive or an ingredient of the exercise of some virtues.

Third, Aristotle talks about the development of virtue. He points out that the practice of punishment is based on inflicting pain on someone. In character formation, “punishment is a kind of cure, and cures by their nature are effected by contraries” (1104b17–19). The idea here is that punishment is quite essential in developing moral

20. The exercise of justice seems to involve not only an ability to discern what is just or unjust (cf. 1134a31), but also a feeling of pain at what is unjust when it occurs.
virtues, as we are not by nature virtuous. We make mistakes and sometimes rebel against our tutors, and punishment is necessary to help us get back on track again. One might ask whether it is possible to be virtuous without having to be punished. Surely there is always a logical possibility for that situation to obtain. But given our humanity, punishment seems to be inevitable in our early life, and even in our adult life, as a means to become more virtuous. This third point is more about becoming virtuous than about exercising virtue. Hence it is not very relevant in our discussion.

The fourth consideration for the claim that virtues are concerned with pleasures and pains comes from the discussion of motivation. Aristotle observes that “every state of the soul is naturally related to, and concerned with, the kind of things by which it is naturally made better or worse” (1104b19–21). The direction of the soul seems to be steered very much by anticipated pleasures and pains. It is a common experience that people fall into various temptations and vices due to the desire for pleasure. But it doesn’t follow from this that a virtuous life is one that is insensitive to either pleasure or pain. Aristotle insists that we still need to be pleased and pained in the right way and at the right time. This fourth consideration is a repetition of what has been said earlier about the importance of early education with respect to one’s attitudes towards pleasure and pain. The point is restated again here to argue against those who think that we should be analgesic towards pleasures and pains without qualification. Aristotle rejects this view in congruence with his own conviction that a virtuous person must be able to respond appropriately to pleasures and pains.

Four more points are given in the same chapter to support the intimate relation between moral virtues and pleasures or pains. First, Aristotle lists the three objects of choice (eis tas haireseis)—the noble, the useful, and the pleasant—and of avoidance (eis tas phugas)—the shameful, the harmful, and the painful (1104b30–31). His point is that pleasure accompanies all objects of choice, simply because the noble and the useful appear pleasant as well. This—mutatis mutandis—applies to the objects of
avoidance: we avoid the shameful and the harmful, and they appear painful as well. We need to be careful here not to make too quick a conclusion that every action is motivated by considerations of pleasure and pain. What Aristotle seems to be saying is that we can explain why we choose the noble and the useful while making references to pleasure. This, however, is not the same as saying that we choose the noble and the useful because we want to have pleasure. Rather, we choose them for what they are *qua* being noble and useful, and it turns out that they appear pleasant to us. The point about what is painful is telling here because a virtuous person would avoid what is shameful and harmful precisely because it is shameful and harmful. But at the same time it appears to be painful as well. One of the marks of the virtuous person, then, is the ability to see what is shameful and harmful as painful. Or rather, he or she is being appeared to what is painful upon encountering what is shameful or harmful.

Second, Aristotle suggests that pleasure is a feeling (*pathos*) that has been with us since we were in the cradle (1105a3–4), and it is a feeling that is attached to our humanity in such a way that doesn’t seem to be detachable. Because Aristotle always talks about pleasures and pains as a pair in the same category of being, pain as the opposite of pleasure is presumably a feeling as well. The important thing to note is that Aristotle is making a descriptive point here: moral virtues are connected to pleasures (and pains) because these feelings are present with us from infancy and won’t brush away very easily. Still, because this is what’s natural in human life, a proper feeling of pleasures (and pains) is necessary if one desires to act virtuously, for being virtuous involves a pursuit of what is naturally good to human life and an avoidance of what is naturally bad.

Third, Aristotle speaks about how “to a greater or lesser extent, we regulate (*kanonizomen*) our actions by pleasure and pain” (1105a3–5). It is no secret that our actions are more or less influenced by the presence or absence of pleasures and pains, although pleasures and pains don’t have to be the primary motivations for our actions.
At least common sense dictates that if pleasures come along with actions, then those actions are more preferable to the ones accompanied by pain. One important thing to note in this passage is that Aristotle suggests that we can feel enjoyment and pain “in a good or bad way” (εὐ ἐκ κακὸς).

Lastly, Heraclitus is quoted for he says that “it is harder to fight against pleasure than against spirit (θυμοὶ)”. But both skill and virtue are always concerned with what is harder, because success in what is harder is superior” (1105a7–9). The conclusion is that virtue must be concerned with pleasures and pains because the person who can manage them well will be good, but he or she who cannot will be bad. The point here is not that θυμος is not important in moral virtues, but rather that pleasures and pains play a more significant role in some ethical decisions.

Chapter 3 of book II closes with a firm assertion that “virtue [has] to do with pleasures and pains; that the actions which produce it also increase it, or if they assume a different character, corrupt it; and that the sphere of its activity is the actions that themselves gave rise to it” (1105a13–17). Here we get a triangular relation between virtues, activities, and pleasures/pains. The virtuous person will see what is noble and advantageous as pleasant (1104b33–35). The presence of pleasure often misleads people into taking something as good when in fact it is not (1113a35–1113b2).

The above discussions invite us to acknowledge that pleasure and pain are given in human life. They are feelings that are difficult to eliminate from human experience. Aristotle says in book II that “our whole inquiry, then, must be concerned with [pleasure and pain], because whether we feel enjoyment and pain in a good or bad way has great influence on our actions” (1105a5–7). Yet it takes a deliberate stance to have the correct attitudes towards pleasure and pain. In the beginning of book X, Aristotle again emphasizes the importance of educating the young by steering them in the right direction with respect to pleasure and pain. This concern echoes Plato’s prescription in the Republic that the right education must regulate one’s disposition towards pain and pleasure, which in turn will incorporate pains and pleasures in the
exercises of virtues. Premise (5), then, seems to be solid.

Let me pause to take stock of what we have so far in the effort to solve the *aporia*. The *aporia* is now as follows:

(1') If it is possible to do so, then whatever is bad is always to be avoided.

(2) Pain is bad.

(3') If it is possible to do so, then pain is always to be avoided. (1', 2)

(4) No exercise of virtue is to be avoided.

(5) The exercise of some virtues has pain as a necessary ingredient.

(6') No exercise of virtue that has pain as a necessary ingredient is to be avoided, although it is possible to do so. (4, 5)

(7') The pain that is a necessary ingredient of an exercise of virtue is not to be avoided, although it is possible to do so. (6')

(8') If it is possible to do so, pain is always to be avoided, and the pain that is a necessary ingredient of an exercise of virtue is not to be avoided. (3', 7) ■

Even though (1') should be rejected, this premise is not needed for the *aporia* to remain a puzzle. The reason is that Aristotle seems to hold both (2) and (3') independently of (1'). I gave an analysis of (2) and (5), and suggested that both are solid premises. I also suggested that the way to solve the inconsistency in the *aporia* is to reject (3'). As a note, the rejection of (3') is also consistent with (7') “The pain that is a necessary ingredient of an exercise of virtue is not to be avoided, although it is possible to do so.”

### 4.5 The Two Key *Endoxa* on Pain Reunited

Let us go back to the puzzle concerning the place of pain in the good life. Remember that the tension is between Aristotle’s contention that pain is evil and hence to be avoided altogether and that pain is an integral part of the moral life. Let me reproduce the *aporia* one last time here:
(1') If it is possible to do so, then whatever is bad is always to be avoided.

(2) Pain is bad.

(3') If it is possible to do so, then pain is always to be avoided. (1', 2)

(4) No exercise of virtue is to be avoided.

(5) The exercise of some virtues has pain as a necessary ingredient.

(6') No exercise of virtue that has pain as a necessary ingredient is to be avoided, although it is possible to do so. (4, 5)

(7') The pain that is a necessary ingredient of an exercise of virtue is not to be avoided, although it is possible to do so. (6')

(8') If it is possible to do so, pain is always to be avoided and the pain that is a necessary ingredient of an exercise of virtue is not to be avoided. (3', 7)

The following is how I solved the puzzle:

1. Premise (1) should be rejected because it is false that whatever is bad is always to be avoided. In Aristotelian ethics, things that are bad cannot and should not always be avoided because some of them are necessary in the exercise of virtues. But Aristotle recognizes (2) and (3') independently of (1).

2. Premise (2) should be kept because Aristotle says explicitly that pain is bad. He further states that some pains are bad without qualification, and some are bad because they are some sort of impediment. Pains that are bad without qualification are those that are felt by the virtuous person. If a virtuous person feels pain when exercising a virtue that involves pain, such as appropriate indignation, then this pain is bad without qualification. We are talking specifically here about actual pains, as opposed to the capacity to feel pain.

3. Premise (4) is not a problem at all and can be considered here as the most authoritative endoxon.
4. Premise (5) should be understood simply as saying that in doing some virtuous actions, one is inevitably pained. I've shown that the exercise of several virtues involves actual pain. This premise, accordingly, must be kept.

5. What we ultimately need to reject is premise (3'). Premise (3') must be rejected because in Aristotle’s eudaimonist ethics, which puts a virtuous life as the final end, there is no place for a blanket statement that pain must always be avoided. Instead, pain must be avoided insofar as such an avoidance is a manifestation of a virtuous life.

Recall that our task was set in *EN* 1145b2–7:

We must first set out the way things appear to people, and then, having gone through the puzzles, proceed to prove the received opinions about these ways of being affected—at best, all of them, or, failing that, most, and the most authoritative. For if the problems are resolved, and received opinions (*ta endoxa*) remain, we shall have offered sufficient proof.

Because we have kept (2), (4), (5), we have retained the most plausible premises. Furthermore, by rejecting (1) and (3'), we have resolved the *aporia*. Our task is done.
CHAPTER 5

RECAPITULATING PASSION: THE COMMENTATORS ON PLEASURES AND PAINS

Among ancient commentaries on Aristotle, Aspasius’ work on the EN stands out for being the earliest surviving commentary on an Aristotelian text.¹ Jonathan Barnes says that Aspasius’ “commentary on the Ethics regularly presents Aristotle’s views as though they were true”, which is a trademark of a Peripatetic.² In an effort to understand Aristotelian pleasures and pains, it is compulsory to look at his writings on the issue. Alexander of Aphrodisias is another commentator of Aristotle who discusses some of the ethical issues at length.³ In his Ethical Problems, there are substantial discussions about pleasure and distress that will be of interest to us, although it is to be noted that his ethical writings are minor in comparison to his writings on Aristotle’s natural philosophy.⁴ Also, it is important to point out that Alexander’s discussion of pleasure is not motivated specifically by an anti-Epicurean stance, but by a desire to explicate Aristotle’s doctrine.⁵

Alexander was regarded the authority in Aristotelian philosophy sometime between 198 and 208 AD, which was apparent from his employment by the emperors to teach Aristotle to the public.⁶ His Ethical Problems is important not only because

2. Ibid., 5.
ancient treatises on Aristotle’s ethical works are rare, but also because it is engaged with “the solution of difficulties in the application of logical distinctions to ethical subject-matter (for example, the way in which pleasure and distress are opposites) and in topics (such as responsibility for actions) which Alexander dealt with in independent treatises.” Methodologically speaking, then, an investigation of Alexander is also an effort to understand the relationships between Aristotle’s *Organon* and his ethics.

Since the *Ethical Problems* seems to be a collection of short essays on many topics, there is no organized unity to the book. Questions about pleasure and distress are discussed dispersedly, notably in Problems 2, 5–7, 13–14, 16–19, 23, 25–26, which sum up to a total of 13 problems (out of the total 30 problems in the book) dedicated to the discussion of pleasure and pain. This suggests that questions about pleasure and pain in Aristotle’s ethics are far from being trivial in Alexander’s mind.

I will do two things in this chapter. First, I shall show that my interpretations of the nature of Aristotelian pleasures and pains are compatible with the views of Aspasius and Alexander of Aphrodisias. Both Aspasius and Alexander see pleasures and pains as feelings, and Alexander denies that there is a tension between the discussions of pleasure in book VII and X of the *EN*. Moreover, there is a weak indication that Aspasius sees pleasures and pains to be in the perceptive soul. Second, I will show that Alexander of Aphrodisias recognizes the *aporia* that I formulated in the previous chapter about the ethics of pain. Rather than trying to solve the *aporia*, Alexander

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8. Problem 26 is almost verbally identical to Problem 23.

9. I need to make a note on the use of terms now. In Problem 6, Alexander surprisingly reduces *ponos* (translated as “pain” by Sharples) only for the bodily realm, while *lupē* (translated as “distress” by Sharples) is a “contraction of the soul” that is across the body/soul boundaries: some distress can be bodily and some others psychologically. But pain is only an affliction in the body. In my discussion that follows, I will keep using “pain” as a translation of *lupē* and will use “bodily pain” when referring to *ponos*. 
instead entertains two conflicting intuitions separately. The first intuition is that not all pains are evil. Some pains are good, and this claim is explained by Alexander using the Stoic language of alienation. In solving the problem, he assumes an interesting notion of value supervenience between ethical concepts. The second intuition is that all pains are evil. This intuition creates a problem with respect to the goodness or the badness of pleasures as the contrary of pains. The problem is made more complicated by Alexander because of the infusion of the Stoic language of indifference. In the end, however, Aristotle’s notion of contrariety is enough to make this route equally desirable.

5.1 Aristotelian Pleasures and Pains in Ancient Testimonies

My goal in this section is to show that my reading of Aristotelian pleasures and pains echoes the works of Aspasius and Alexander. There are three issues that I will discuss in this section. First, I have argued in the previous chapters that Aristotelian pleasures and pains must be understood as feelings. This reading will be at odds with that of contemporary Anglo-American Aristotle scholars, who overemphasize that Aristotelian pleasures are activities. By contrast, both Aspasius and Alexander state explicitly that pleasures and pains are feelings as well as activities. Second, Alexander believes that the accounts of pleasure in books VII and book X of the EN are not different. I will show how my interpretation is compatible with Alexander’s view. Third, there is a question about whether awareness of pleasure/pain is necessary for the experience of pleasure/pain. There is a passage in Aspasius’ work that might be seen as an affirmative answer to this question. I argued in the previous chapters that the answer to this question is negative. I will show that the passage can’t be used to answer this question but that it is instead claiming that pleasures and pains reside in the perceptive soul.

10. The idea of alienation is not a part of the nature of pain. Rather, pain is described as a kind of alienation in order to show that pain can be instrumentally good in a happy life.
5.1.1 Pleasures and Pains as Feelings

I shall mention first that Aspasius questions how exactly pleasure or pain is said to accompany (hepesthai) every emotion (42, 27–28). I have suggested one model for this accompaniment relation, viz., that pain is the passive counterpart of emotion that is present in the faculty of desire, while emotion is present in the spirited faculty. Pain is actually the cause of at least some of emotions like anger.\(^{11}\) It is because of the pain of being slighted that one is angry. I also argued that pleasure or pain ultimately is explainable as a passion of the heart.

In the present discussion, I would like to establish the reading that both Aspasius and Alexander see Aristotelian pleasures and pains as feelings. Let’s begin with Aspasius. According to Aspasius, some people believe that Aristotle divides emotion into pain and pleasure, and the other emotions are referred to either pain or pleasure. For Aspasius, however, understanding pleasure and pain as genera for emotions is potentially problematic, although he is not rejecting the idea altogether:

If there is the same account of every pleasure, namely that pleasure is the unimpeded activity of what is in accord with nature, then it [is] impossible to say that there are two pleasures—one the genus, the other the species—since they have the same name and the same account, and there is not some individual definition of particular pleasure beyond the one mentioned. (43, 6–10)

This passage is saying that if Aristotle only mentions one definition of pleasure, viz., the unimpeded activity of the natural state, then understanding pleasure as both species and genus would deny the synonymy of these pleasures, which is suggested by Aristotle’s own writings which only give us one name and one account for pleasure. Pleasure \textit{qua} genus and pleasure \textit{qua} species would have different accounts and could only be homonymous. It is not difficult to see why this would be the case. Since

\(^{11}\) As I said in the previous chapter, Aristotle’s arguments to reject anger as a kind of pain are weak.
pleasure *qua* genus would be a part of the account of pleasure *qua* species, the two can’t have the same account. In the *Categories*, two homonymous things are said to share the same name, but each has a different account. If pleasure *qua* genus and pleasure *qua* species are homonymous things, they must be homonymous not in the sense that there are no overlaps at all between their accounts. Some overlaps in their accounts must obtain, and this is because a genus is a part of the account of a species. The homonymous relation that obtains in the case of pleasure would be a homonymy between two things that are associated with one (*pros hen*) focal meaning of pleasure, just as the word “healthy” in “healthy complexion” and “healthy food” is associated with one focal meaning of healthy.

The use of the same name to label a genus and a species is apparently common among the old Stoics. Inwood observes that there is one strategy that they use “to transfer the label for the genus to one of its species when it would not produce misunderstanding.” One example is the use of *orexis* and *hormē*. The latter is the more general term that encompasses the former. Sometimes *hormē* (impulse) is used for labeling a species even though it is also used as a label for a genus. For the old Stoics, *hormē* concerns what is appropriate, while *orexis* concerns what is good. However, the old Stoics also believe that there is an overlap between the two in that *hormē*, insofar as it is an impulse to what is appropriate, is also an impulse to what is good. The term *orexis*, on the other hand, concerns only what is good. The label *hormē*, nevertheless, is maintained as the label for the genus of both impulses that are directed towards what is good and those directed towards what is appropriate.

By contrast, the late Stoic Epictetus doesn’t use *hormē* anymore for labeling the genus, and he uses it only for labeling the species *hormē*, which is impulse that is directed at the appropriate. The other coordinate species is *orexis*, which is an impulse

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that is directed at the good. The label for the genus is left empty.\textsuperscript{13}

Although Aspasius warns us that pleasure \textit{qua} genus and pleasure \textit{qua} species are only homonymous, his openness to using “pleasure” and “pain” as the labels both for the genera and for the species of emotions might have a similar motivation to that of the old Stoics. Perhaps Aspasius simply takes as evident that the feelings of pain and pleasure \textit{qua} species are distinct from other emotions such as joy and anger. It’s possible that he finally agrees that pleasure and pain are the genera for emotions:

Perhaps it is not unreasonable to say that pleasure and pain are the most generic—with pleasure being the unimpeded activity of what is in accord with nature, while pain occurs when being active in accord with nature is impeded—and to make the emotions have reference to these. What is called particular pleasure and particular pain are the species of these, which are homonymous with the genera: the one is a cheer at pleasing things that are present, while pain is a confusion at painful things that are present. (46, 12–17)

This passage is a part of Aspasius’ commentary on \textit{EN} II.3, where Aristotle explicitly says that pleasure is a feeling (\textit{pathos}). It is true that the context of the immediate passage in Aspasius’ commentary is a discussion of the Platonic view of emotions. Aspasius, however, adds the judgment that it’s not unreasonable to hold the view that pleasure and pain are genera of emotions. More likely, Aspasius himself sees that this view is acceptable. At one point, he even says explicitly that pleasure and pain are the most general (\textit{ta anēlatō}) emotions (118, 23).

Aspasius, then, mentions that there are two species of emotion (\textit{pathē}): pleasure and pain, just like anger and fear are called emotions (43, 14–15). Some pleasures are physical and some are psychical. Pain, interestingly, is understood as a lack or deficiency (\textit{endeia}) in the activity of what is in accord with nature. The use of the term \textit{endeia} is quite striking because this reminds us of Plato’s understanding of pain as a lack, for example, of replenishment. Aspasius’ use of the term here, nevertheless,

\textsuperscript{13} Inwood, \textit{Ethics and Human Action in Early Stoicism}, 118.
is different. The reason is that he believes that Aristotelian pain is an activity of our
natural state even though it might involve some kind of a lack. My suggestion is to
understand pain as an impeded activity of our natural state. The lack in pain can be
understood as the lack of uninterrupted flow in the activity. Aspasius has the same
intuition: “For how is it possible for someone who is in great pains and impeded in
respect to important activities to be happy?” (30, 9–11).

Looking at the examples of pain that Aspasius discusses will give us more infor-
mation. He believes that anger and fear are instances of pain (43, 14–15). Later in
the discussion of courage, Aspasius also writes:

A person who exceeds in fearing and is deficient in being confident is a
coward. Aristotle says that he is more manifest ‘in exceeding in pains’,
that is in fear, for fear is a kind of pain. For not being confident and
fearing are not said in the same way: for being confident is said of daring
with respect to dangers, and further of being disdainful of enemies, but
feeling pain indicates a person who is downcast in his soul and who is
despairing and expect great evils. (83, 16–22)

The language is unambiguous here when Aspasius says explicitly that fear is a kind
of pain. Here the issue of whether pain is a genus for other emotions arises again,
which suggests that Aspasius probably settles for the view that even though pleasure
and pain are species of emotion, we can understand pleasure and pain as genera of
emotion if we adopt the view that pleasure/pain qua genus and pleasure/pain qua
species are homonymous things.

If pleasure and pain are genera for emotions, then the definitions of pleasure and
pain would be said of the emotions as well. While pleasure is an activity of our natural
state that is without a lack (presumably unimpeded), pain is an activity of our natural
state that is a kind of lack. In that case, emotions are activities of our natural state. In
fact, in his commentary Aspasius moves freely between characterizing pleasure/pain
as species of emotion and defining pleasure/pain as activities of our natural state. For
Aspasius, there is no conflict between the two. Pleasure can be understood both as
feeling and as activity.

My reading of the *EN* definitely agrees with Aspasius’ suggestion that pleasure and pain are species of emotions, just as fear and boldness are. My suggestion is that it would be best to be silent about whether pleasure and pain are the genera of emotions, and this is because in the *Topics*, Aristotle rejects the possibility that pain is a genus for anger.\(^{14}\)

Alexander of Aphrodisias only gives a couple of indications that pleasures and pains are also feelings. In Problem 24 of the *Ethical Problems*, he writes:

> How indeed could someone say that the virtues, and [virtuous] activities, are worthy to be chosen on their own account, if they are worthy to be chosen by us on account of [their] removal of immoderate feelings (*pathē*)? For indeed we choose courage so that we may be able to moderate fears and boldness, and temperance [so that we may be able to moderate] distress and pleasures [that arise] through touch. (146, 14–18; also in 147, 9–10)

In this passage, pain and pleasure are explicitly mentioned as *pathē* along with fear and boldness.\(^ {15} \) Although Alexander also quotes Aristotle’s description of pleasure as unimpeded activity, for example, in Problem 23, the fact that he recognizes pain and pleasure as feelings suggests that this description does not necessarily contradict the claim that pleasure is an unimpeded activity.

### 5.1.2 Books VII and X of the *EN*

In Problem 5 of the *Ethical Problems*, Alexander doesn’t find it problematic simply to define pleasure and pain as things that supervene on activities, without mentioning that pleasure is an unimpeded activity of our natural state. Such a confidence is virtually absent among the contemporary readers of Aristotle, who are familiar enough with the seemingly perennial debate about the tension between the accounts of plea-

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\(^{14}\) See a discussion of this issue in Chapter 3 above.

\(^{15}\) In addition to this, in his supplements to *De Anima*, again Alexander says that pleasure and pain are being affected (*pathos*) or disposition (*diathesis*) (104, 25).

Alexander, however, doesn’t see any conflict at all between the two. Instead, he is sure that we need to understand the account of pleasure in book VII in the light of book X. In *Problem* 23, he writes,

> Pleasure is an activity because it accompanies activity which comes about in this way, as [Aristotle] showed in the last book of the *Ethics*, and pleasure, accompanying activity which comes about in this way, will be a sign that happiness is present for those who are active in this way, rather than [itself being] happiness. Pleasure is said to be an activity by Aristotle not as being an activity according to its own proper account, but as having its being in relation to activity and not being able to occur without it. And for this reason, being happiness will apply to [pleasure] in the same way as does being an unimpeded activity. [Pleasure] is unimpeded activity because it accompanies such activity, and it is happiness because it accompanies happiness and is a sign of its presence. The extent to which we fall short of unimpeded activity in respect of the virtues in accordance with which such activities <ought> to be performed, is the extent to which virtuous activity, too, fails to have perfection in itself. (143, 25–144, 4)

He explains that it is in virtue of being the accompaniment of activity that pleasure is denominated activity (*energeia*). This is so because pleasure can’t exist without its corresponding proper activity: pleasure is always of an activity. In a way, pleasure is not an activity in its own right because it is always accompanying an activity, and the presence of an activity such as seeing or gaming is necessary for there to be pleasure. Understanding Aristotle in this way is at odds with contemporary Aristotle scholarship. Dorothea Frede, for example, says that in book X “Aristotle, somewhat misleadingly, depicts pleasure as if it were an additional end of a perfect natural
activity."^{16}

My interpretation of pleasure is that it is an activity in the broad sense of the word, as an actualization of a power, and this power is a passive power in perception or thinking. When the actualization is unimpeded and in accord with what is natural, then it is pleasure. I can also say that this actualization is not an actualization in its own term, because it is a passive counterpart of the activity on which it supervenes. In this way, just like Alexander, I can endorse reading the account of pleasure in book VII in the light of the account of pleasure in book X.

5.1.3 Perceptibility in Pleasure and Pain

This subsection is not an effort to show that my interpretation of pleasure and pain in relation to the issue of perceptibility is echoing that of Aspasius. Instead, here I just want to anticipate an objection by anyone who thinks that Aspasius is saying that pleasure or pain exists only if there is a subject experiencing them and is aware of them.

The following passage might be thought to be evidence that Aspasius holds a position that is different from mine:

If, then, in saying ‘unimpeded’, ‘perceptible’ were also implied, then the definition of pleasure would be sufficient. But if it is not implied, one must certainly add ‘perceptible’. For if it is the activity of a natural state, but it is not perceptible, it will not be pleasure. For example, the digestion of food is the activity of a natural state, but it is not indeed perceptible, and therefore it is not a pleasure. (147, 18–23)

The objection would point out that “perceptible” is identical to awareness of pleasure, and hence it seems as though one can only have pleasure if one is aware or perceiving that he or she is experiencing pleasure.

I argued in the previous chapters that pleasure and pain are the passive counterparts of the activity perception. Additionally, I suggest that pleasure and pain might

not always be noticed by the one experiencing them. My basic assumption is that one can experience $x$ without being aware of $x$.

One might point out that this position is in conflict with Aspasius’ view, because he suggests that although Aristotle views pleasure as unimpeded activity of our natural state, perceptibility seems to be a necessary condition for pleasure.

Regarding this line of reasoning, we need to ask what the passage actually means by “perceptible”. The words that Aspasius uses are $\text{aisthēton}$ and $\text{aisthētē}$, which can simply mean “perceptive”. In other words, Aspasius here is not saying that in order for an unimpeded activity to be pleasure, it must be perceived. Rather, what he is saying is that pleasure must be some kind of perception. The example from digestion is telling because Aristotle is saying that pleasure and pain are the domain not of the nutritive soul but of the perceptive soul.

My interpretation of pleasure and pain is compatible with this way of reading Aspasius. Since pleasure and pain are perceptions, they are perceptive, just as seeing and hearing, being perceptions, are perceptive. These perceptions are in the domain of the perceptive soul. Similarly, just as one can be aware of one’s seeing, one can also be aware of one’s having the experience of pleasure, but not necessarily so. Sometimes we perceive things without being aware of doing so. One example is the common experience of hearing a very low humming sound without realizing it until the humming sound stops and there is complete silence. I suggest that one can experience pleasure without being aware of pleasure, just as one can hear something without being aware of hearing something or of the auditory object. The above passage is inconclusive about whether or not one needs awareness in order to have pleasure, and this is because it doesn’t talk about the issue of awareness. Rather, it is just stating that pleasure is in the domain of the perceptive soul.

In this first part of the chapter, I argued that my account of Aristotelian pleasures and pains is compatible with the ancient commentaries by Aspasius and Alexander:
1. Both Aspasius and Alexander agree that pleasure and pain are feelings. Aspasius explicitly says that pleasure and pain are species of emotions, and he finally seems to accept that pleasure and pain are also the genera of emotions. Alexander is silent on the issue of whether pleasure/pain is only a species of emotion or also a genus. I suggest that Aristotelian pleasures and pains are simply species of emotions.

2. Alexander doesn’t see a tension between books VII and X of the EN. I have tried to show that my account allows me to say that the account of pleasure in book VII can be understood in terms of book X if we see activity in the broad sense of the word as the actualization of a capacity.

3. There is no evidence in Aspasius’ writings that one needs to have awareness or perceptibility in order to have pleasure or pain. Rather, Aspasius is saying that pleasure and pain are in the domain of the perceptive soul.

If my investigation of Aristotle’s corpus and of the ancient commentators is reasonable enough, then my proposed account of Aristotelian pleasures and pains echoes a stereo philosophical sound, viz., from Aristotle’s texts and from the ancient testimonies.

It is time now to move on to Alexander’s formulation of Aristotle’s ethical puzzles.

5.2 The Aporia

In the previous chapter, I formulated the puzzle in Aristotelian ethics about pain. The formulation is as follows:

(1) Whatever is bad is always to be avoided.

(2) Pain is bad.

(3) Pain is always to be avoided. (1, 2)

(4) No virtue is to be avoided.

(5) Some virtues have pain as a necessary ingredient.
(6) No virtue that has pain as a necessary ingredient is to be avoided. (4, 5)
(7) The pain that is a necessary ingredient of a virtue is not to be avoided. (6)
(8) Pain is always to be avoided and the pain that is a necessary ingredient of a virtue is not to be avoided. (3, 7)

∴ (9) Some pains are to be avoided and not to be avoided. (8)

My conclusion was that we should reject (1). It is apparent from reading Alexander, however, that such a solution is not final. Two issues remain to be explored. First, Alexander wants to say that even if we have rejected (1), a task still remains, viz., how to accept (2) but think that not all pleasures are good. If (2) says that all pains are bad, and if we also accept that pleasure is the contrary of pain, why is it not the case that all pleasures are good? Second, rejecting (1) is not the only possible solution to the puzzle. We might as well question (2), according to Alexander, and maintain that some pains are good, although not without qualification. This strategy is possible if we understand the goodness of pain through the Stoic language of alienation. These two issues will be the main agenda of this second part of the chapter.

Now, let us look at Alexander’s own formulation of these two ethical problems. In Problem 5, Alexander starts with the question about whether pleasure qua genus is good or bad or indifferent, given the fact that there are instances of pleasure that are good, bad, and indifferent (124, 1–11). The answer is straightforwardly negative: a genus is not the kind of thing that admits goodness or badness or indifference (124, 16–18). This would be the case even if all the members of the genus were bad or good, lest one fall into the fallacy of composition.

Alexander then moves to the issue of the goodness of some pains. In his hands, the problems concerning pain start with the assumption that pleasure and pain supervene on activities. What’s interesting is that it is not only the existence of pleasure and pain that supervenes on activities, but the value of pleasure and pain supervenes on the value of activities as well. The value supervenience between pleasure and activity
is parallel: if the activity is good, the supervening pleasure is good. In the same way, if the activity is bad, then the supervening pleasure is bad, and if the activity is indifferent, then the supervening pleasure is indifferent (124, 18–21).

One clarification is needed for the word “supervenience”, for it seems that there are two senses of the word that are at work here. First, when Aristotle says that pleasure supervenes on activity, he uses the word *epiginetai*, which simply means “follows” or “accompanies”. This is also the word that Alexander utilizes. Second, when I talk about value supervenience between pleasure and activity, what I mean is not only that the value of pleasure follows the value of activity but also that the the former copies the latter.

There is an immediate complication when this idea of value supervenience is applied to pain. Alexander ponders (124, 24–36):

Shall we say that [instances of distress] that supervene on good activities are evil, that those that supervene on bad [activities] are good, and that those that supervene on indifferent ones are indifferent? Or is it absurd to say that what is distressed at the bad activities that it performs is in a good [state]? For the person who is like this is in an evil [state]; how is he not in an evil [state] when he is [engaged] in such activities [i.e. bad ones]? And then, it seemed reasonable for pleasure to be differentiated in [a way] that corresponds to the activities that come about before it. For it comes about by its affinity to them, as being a sort of end for them; but distress is a sign of alienation from the things on which it supervenes.

Or rather: [distress] which supervenes on good activities is evil because it is [a sign of] alienation from what is good. Because of this it is reasonable that [distress] which supervenes on evil [activities] should be good, because it is some alienation from what is evil, and because the person who says that such distress is good is not supposing that it is the activities on which it supervenes that are good, but that [what is good is] the alienation from such activities or circumstances and chances.

The problem is simply that the value supervenience works in an opposite manner for pain. Where does Alexander get this idea? It might be from Aristotle’s discussion in *EN* X.5, where he suggests that while pleasure enhances activity, pain ruins it.
Aristotle then says, “So an activity is affected in contrary ways by the pleasures and pains proper to it, those occurring in relation to the activity itself” (1175b20–21). Three things need to be said now about this sentence. First, the word “proper” means simply “occurring in relation to the activity itself.” It is not propriety in the normative sense. The propriety is not in accordance with what a virtuous person would view as proper, but propriety only in the sense that the pain follows the activity. The fact that propriety is something subjective is evident from the immediate sentence before it: “For foreign pleasures do almost what the pains proper to an activity do; the pains proper to activities ruin them, so that if, for example, someone finds writing or calculating unpleasant and painful, he does not write or calculate, since the activity is painful” (1175b16–20). Presumably, one can say that a virtuous person would not find writing to be painful. Hence the example shows that propriety here is not propriety in the eyes of the virtuous person. Second, the sentence in 1175b20–21 doesn’t speak of value supervenience. It is only saying that while pleasure enhances activity, pain acts in a contrary manner by ruining activity on which it supervenes. Third, value supervenience is evident in the next sentence: “since activities differ in their goodness and badness, and some are worthy of choice, some to be avoided, others neither, the same goes for pleasures, each activity’s having its own proper pleasure” (1175b24–26). Unfortunately, Aristotle doesn’t talk about value supervenience between pain and activity. But we can imagine that Alexander, upon reading these passages from Aristotle, infers that value supervenience between pain and activity must obtain in a manner contrary to the value supervenience between pleasure and activity. He then asks whether the value of pain that supervenes on bad activity is good, and whether the value of pain that supervenes on good activity is bad.

How are we supposed to explain value supervenience between pain/pleasure and activity? One way to understand this relation is by positing a rule:

**Definition 5.2.1.** The Contrariety Rule (CR): For all $x$ and $y$, if $x$ supervenes on $y$,
and $x$ is contrary to $y$, then the value of $x$ is contrary to the value of $y$.

This rule is in accordance with what Alexander himself says in Problem 7:

Similarly it is reasonable to suppose that distresses, too, supervening on certain activities, themselves derive from these their worthiness to be chosen or avoided, in the opposite way to the pleasures. (127, 13–15)

Suppose that for pain, the value supervenience follows CR: the value of an activity is contrary to the value of the supervening pain. We already know that the contrary of good is bad and vice versa. Hence, by CR, pain is good if it supervenes on bad activity, and pain is bad if it supervenes on good activity. In Problem 7, Alexander indeed explicitly ponders the possibility that some pains are good:

Not even all distress is an evil, if at any rate in these [cases] too virtue aims at the mean, and there are certain [types of] distress and pain that are proper to the good man. (127, 8–9)

Does Alexander adopt CR? There is a reason to give a negative answer to this question, and that is because CR has one fatal limitation, viz., that it is inadequate to explain why Alexander insists that pain that supervenes on indifferent activity is also indifferent. In *EN* X.2 1173a7–8 Aristotle seems to believe that evil can be opposed to the neither good nor bad. If CR is true, then pain that supervenes on indifferent activity can’t be indifferent. The reason is that the contrary of what is indifferent can’t be indifferent, but something else, for there is no indifferent counterpart to indifference. Evil can be opposed to evil because excess is opposed to deficiency. However, indifference doesn’t have any indifferent counterpart. The contrary of indifference in this context is either good or bad. Hence if activity is indifferent, the supervening pain must be either bad or good. Accordingly, CR cannot explain the supervening relation between pain and activity as Alexander intends it to be.

What does “indifferent” (*adiaphora*) actually mean in the propositions that pleasure is indifferent if it supervenes on indifferent activity (*Ethical Problems* 124, 6–7
9, 17, 21, 25, 31–32)? One understanding of *adiaphora* that Alexander utilizes in his writings is *adiaphora* as “undifferentiated”. For example, in his supplement to the *On the Soul*, Alexander speaks of what is noble as undifferentiated *qua* noble (154, 36). Nobility that resides in courage and in justice is undifferentiated *qua* noble as it is noble. There is really no difference between the nobility that is in courage and the nobility that is in justice. Let’s try to apply this way of understanding *adiaphora* to pleasure and activity. In this reading, pleasure is said to be indifferent because pleasure remains a pleasure whether it is something bad or something good. The same is true regarding activity: activity is still activity, no matter whether the activity is bad or good. This reading, nevertheless, doesn’t capture Alexander’s questions well enough. In Problem 5 (124, 18ff.), he explicitly says that pleasures are differentiated in three ways: good, bad, and indifferent. Hence in saying that pleasure is indifferent, Alexander is not saying that whether the pleasure is good or bad, the pleasure is still a pleasure. Rather, he is saying that besides pleasures that are good and bad, there are also pleasures that are indifferent. Because of this differentiation, we also can’t say that pleasures that are indifferent can become good or bad, as though indifferent pleasures were potentially good or bad. Alexander is clear that indifferent pleasures are already present in addition to good and bad pleasures.

The language of indifference is not present in Aristotle’s ethics. Aristotle instead talks about the neither good nor bad as the intermediate between the good and the bad. Aristotle doesn’t even mention that there are indifferent pleasures, only pleasures that are good or bad. It is clear that Alexander borrows the term from the Stoics’ language of indifferents. The indifferents for the Stoics can be understood as the neither bad nor good, and the neither to be chosen nor to be rejected. For the Stoics, the domain of good and bad only encompasses matters of virtue and vice. The indifferents are only to be selected or not to be selected, but their value doesn’t define a happy life. We prefer some indifferents to others because these indifferents are consistent with a virtuous life. According to the Stoics, “some indifferent things
are in accordance with nature, others are contrary to nature, and others are neither of these” (Stobaeus 2.79,18–80,13; 82,20–21). Nevertheless, the indifferents themselves can never be good or bad.

Is Alexander only borrowing the Stoic term “indifferent” or is he actually adopting the Stoic doctrine as well when using the term? There is no indication in Alexander’s writings that he is using the Stoic concept of indifference. It is more likely that he is just borrowing the Stoic language of indifference to label what Aristotle marks the neither good nor bad. But there is a strange passage that needs to be explained:

What should one say about the [pleasure] that is indifferent? It supervened on activities that were indifferent; and if this is opposite to distress, not only good and evil but also what is indifferent will be opposed to evil, which does not seem right. (125, 6–9)

The passage is strange because Alexander doesn’t agree that what is indifferent can be opposed to evil. This is in contrast with Aristotle’s own thought in EN X.2 1173a7–8 that actually says that evil can be opposed to the neither good nor bad. How to explain this fact? Perhaps what Alexander is saying is that strictly speaking, an intermediate is not an opposite to its extremes. In the end of Problem 5, indeed Alexander will insist that the genuine opposites are only between pain that is bad without qualification and pleasure that is good without qualification (125, 29–34).

If this is true, Alexander must modify CR and limit its applications to the domain of good and bad. The reason is that intermediates are not really opposed to the contraries. Only a contrary (e.g., bad) is opposed to another contrary (e.g., good). The modification of CR might be the following:

**Definition 5.2.2.** The Contrariety Rule* (CR*): For all x and y, if x and y are in the domain of good and bad, and x supervenes on y, and x is contrary to y, then the value of x is contrary to the value of y.
CR* doesn’t range over the indifferents because the language of contrarieties is not applicable to talk about what is neither good nor bad, although one can surely talk about the negation or the contradiction of what is neither good nor bad (viz., both good and bad).

At any rate, we will see that the two opposing intuitions about the evil of pain in Aristotle reappear strongly in Alexander’s ethical puzzle, viz. between the intuition that pain is completely evil (125, 1; 127, 32), and that there are pains that seem to be necessary and might be good in the virtuous life (127, 8). It would be interesting to see whether Alexander gives us more insights on how to reconcile the two intuitions about the place of pain in the good life.

Let us now formulate the puzzle:

(10) Pleasure and pain supervene on activities.

(11) Pleasure and pain derive their goodness or badness from the goodness or badness of the activities on which they supervene.

(12) Pleasure is good if it supervenes on good activity.

(13) Pleasure is bad if it supervenes on bad activity.

(14) Pleasure is indifferent if it supervenes on indifferent activity.

(15) Pain is bad if it supervenes on good activity.

(16) Pain is good if it supervenes on bad activity.

(17) Pain is indifferent if it supervenes on indifferent activity.

(18) Something that supervenes on bad activity cannot be good.

(19) Some pains supervene on bad activity.

\[ \therefore (20) \text{ Some pains are good and not good.} \]
There are superfluous premises in the argument, viz., (12)–(15) and (17), but I put them there so that we can see the complete set of claims that engender the puzzle. Premises (12)–(17) assume value supervenience between moral concepts, viz., between pleasure/pain and activity. Again, what is interesting about the supervenience relation between pain and activity is the inversion of the relation between pleasure and activity. If pleasure supervenes on a good activity, then the pleasure is good. Presumably, this is because such pleasure enhances the activity. If pain supervenes on a good activity, however, such pain would hinder the good activity. This hindrance is what makes pain bad. I have already tried to explain this relationship using \( \text{CR}^* \).

The puzzle can be solved in two ways. First, one can reject (18) by proposing that there is a way in which something that supervenes on bad activity is actually good. Alexander’s value supervenience actually allows that something good (viz., pain) can supervene on a bad activity. The rejection of (18) requires Alexander to propose an account of pain as a kind of alienation. This is Alexander’s first proposal. But the rejection of (18) is actually a rejection of

(18') Something that supervenes on bad activity cannot be instrumentally good.

Alexander’s second proposal is to reject (16) because the endoxon that all pains are intrinsically bad must be upheld. The rejection of (16) doesn’t exclude the possibility that pain is instrumentally good. Hence the rejection is of (16) is actually the rejection of

(16') Pain is intrinsically good if it supervenes on bad activity

But then there is a problem still, viz., if pains are all bad, why is it the case that not all pleasures are good? This question is handled well by Aristotle’s theory of opposites and contrariety in the *Categories*.

In the following sections, I will consider the two proposals in turn.

5.2.1 Alienation and Pain

The idea of pain as a kind of alienation is present explicitly in Alexander’s writings. In general, the concept of alienation is built upon the idea of what is unfitting, foreign, improper for an object. For example, in his commentary on the *Topics*, Alexander suggests that being envious is something that is foreign (*allotrion*) to a good person: he shouldn’t be pained by the good work of another good man (141, 33). In the *Ethical Problems*, he is questioning whether shame (*aidos*) would be alien (*allotrion*) to those who are already virtuous (141, 20) or whether shame is actually not alien to them, given the fact that they can sometimes still be subject to ill repute albeit not out of their own fault. These examples from the *Topics* and the *Ethical Problems* suggest that what is alien is what is unfitting or foreign to an object.

What is more relevant to our discussion is the idea of alienation (both *allotria* and *allotriotēs*) that is present in Problem 5, which consistently suggests that it is a pushing away of something that is foreign or inappropriate (124, 30–35). The source of this idea of alienation comes from Aristotle’s own writings. Recall that one of the *endoxa* in the *EN* concerning pleasure and pain follows Plato’s suggestion that one must be educated to be able to feel pleasure and pain properly in the right things (1104b12–14). Again, in 1121a4–5 Aristotle says that “it is a characteristic of virtue to be pleased and to be pained (*lupeisthai*), at the right objects and in the right way.” Pain that supervenes on an activity is a sort of alienation in that it puts off or stops the activity. When one is eating too hot a meal, for example, the pain that arises puts off or pushes away the activity of eating. Alienation also occurs in the instance of pain that supervenes on the seeing of injustice. Although this kind of pain is useful in that it triggers an emotion that will motivate a virtuous person to alleviate the unjust situation, this pain is a kind of alienation because it makes the person experiencing it want to stop seeing the injustice.

This *endoxon* is echoed by Aspasius, who affirms that pleasures and pains that
supervene on activities are a sign (*sêmeion*) of virtues and vices (41, 28). Moreover, he thinks that pleasure and pain are the subject-matters (*hupokeimena*) of virtue, “just as melodies are to the musical art; for virtue produces activity concerning emotions, actions, and the equilibrium among them, just as the musical art does in relation to melodies” (42, 20–23). The use of the word *hupokeimena* is indicative of the presence of both pleasure and pain in the virtuous life. One good example for such presence can be seen in his discussion of indignation. He echoes Aristotle’s view and says that “indignation is an emotional mean, being a kind of pain at the good fortunes of wicked people” (55, 13–14). The excess of this virtue is envy, which is a pain directed at those who do well. But Aspasius doesn’t add anything new to Aristotle’s discussion of pleasure and pain.

By contrast, Alexander’s discussions of pleasure and pain are refreshing in many ways. Recall that the task here is to show how he rejects premise (18) in the *aporia* above, i.e., “Something that supervenes on bad activity cannot be good”. Where does the idea for (18) come from? The following passage in Problem 5 might seems to be the basis for (18):

Shall we say that [instances of distress] that supervene on good activities are evil, that those that supervene on bad [activities] are good, and that those that supervene on indifferent ones are indifferent? Or is it absurd to say that what is distressed at the bad activities that it performs is in a good [state]? For the person who is like this is in an evil [state]; how is he not in an evil [state] when he is [engaged] in such activities [i.e. bad ones]? (124, 24–28)

The passage begins by listing the possibilities about value supervenience between pain and activity. Let’s focus on the second possibility: “that those that supervene on bad activities are good”. This possibility is immediately commented in the next question about whether it would be absurd to say that what is distressed in the bad activities that it performs is in a good state. Unfortunately, this comment actually doesn’t hit the target because it is not saying anything about whether something good can
supervene on a bad activity. The passage is only questioning why being distressed at an evil action is being in a good state if doing an evil action is already being in a bad state. First, this last question is answerable. We can say that indeed doing a bad activity is already being in an evil state. However, being distressed at the bad activity can be seen as being in a good state, but not without qualification. Rather, it is in a good state only insofar as the distress will stop the bad activity and insofar as it is an actualization of a virtuous disposition. Second, the question or worry is irrelevant because it is not about value supervenience at all. Hence Alexander’s immediate comment is inadequate to reject (18).

But Alexander has a better instrument to reject (18), viz., by understanding pain as a kind of alienation. If pain is a kind of alienation, then pain that supervenes on bad activity might be good, because it hinders the bad activity. Since premise (18) mentions value supervenience and bad activity, we need to discuss these issues in addition to the discussion about pleasure and pain.

I will discuss four sections that appear in Alexander’s Ethical Problems. These sections establish the following claims:

1. Problem 2 and 13: Pleasures are different in kind, and their differences are based on the differences of activities on which they supervene.

2. Problem 17: There is a value supervenience between pleasure and activity.

3. Problem 5: There is a value supervenience between pain and activity.

By understanding these claims, later in this section we shall be prepared to discuss alienation and pain.

In Problem 2, Alexander differentiates kinds of pleasure by means of reference to desires or activities. First, he writes,

<That pleasures are not the same in kind> may be shown first of all from desire (epithumia). If every desire is an appetition (orexis) for what is
pleasant, and it is in this that its being consists, and it is agreed that
some desires are to be chosen and others avoided, it is clear that this
difference in them does not come from anything other than the pleasures
on account of which they exist (*di hê eisi*), because of [the fact] that some
of these [pleasures] are to be chosen and others avoided. So pleasures too
will differ from each other in the same way as desires, if it is from the
former that the differences in the latter, too, [arise]. And indeed it is not
possible for things which differ in their own nature to be the same in kind
as one another. (120, 4–11)

Alexander points out that a desire is an appetition for something pleasant and that
desires are differentiated in kind according to the pleasant things they aim at. The
differences in desires are explained by the differences in the pleasant things, but not
the other way around. Some pleasures are choiceworthy, but some must be avoided.
Correspondingly, some desires are choiceworthy if they are for the sake of choiceworthy
pleasures, but some must be avoided if they are for the sake of pleasures that must
be avoided.

The argument in the above passage has two steps in establishing the claim that
pleasures are not the same in kind. The first step is showing that desires (*epithumiai*)
are different in kind.

(21) Every desire is an appetition of what is pleasant.

(22) Some desires are to be chosen and others avoided.

(23) If (21) and (22), then desires are different in kind.

∴(24) Desires are different in kind.

The fact that Aristotle here defines *epithumia* as an *orexis* for what is pleasant sug-
gests that the application of the argument is limited to bodily pleasures. Contempla-
tion or the pleasures of the mind indeed involve *orexis*. However, *Metaphysics* Alpha
981b21–22 suggests the *orexis* that occurs in the mind, which is connected to the
science of first principles, does not aim at pleasure or utility, but at knowledge for its
own sake. Although contemplation can be pleasant, it is not the case that pleasures are the objects of contemplative orexis. Accordingly, this argument only establishes the claim that some desires (i.e., non-contemplative desires) are different in kind.

Look at (23) now. I see that this is an implied premise because Aristotle says in the end of the quoted passage above that the differences in desire arise from the differences in pleasure. If the entire passage is an argument for the claim that pleasures are different in kind, then there must be an implicit premise in the argument stating the hypothetical sentence that leads to the conclusion that desires are different in kind, too.

Formulated as such, this argument is weak. The reason is that (23) is dubious at best. The only reason given here for the claim that desires are different in kind is (22), viz., that some desires are choiceworthy, while others must be avoided. But choiceworthiness doesn’t seem to be a sufficient condition for making a distinction in kind.

One way to question this assumption is to find a counterexample that would show two things that are the same in kind, but only one is choiceworthy and the other must be avoided. Take, for example, two books: one has an appalling content, the other is noble and choiceworthy. But both are books and must be the same in kind. Hence choiceworthiness is not a sufficient condition for differentiating kinds of things.

One possibility to salvage the argument is to define the word “kind” only in terms of choiceworthiness. Hence in the discussion, one kind of ethical entity is the choiceworthy kind, and another kind is the kind that registers avoidance. This move is appealing because it resonates with Aristotle’s own emphasis on the choiceworthiness of a happy life in book I of the EN. One can recall that in the discussion in I.7 about whether external goods will add anything to a happy life, Aristotle discusses the question in terms of whether the addition of external goods would make life more choiceworthy or not. Also, given the fact that what is good is choiceworthy and what is bad must be avoided, this distinction in kind is simply a distinction between the
good kind and the bad kind of ethical entities.

If the above reasoning is correct, then what Alexander is saying in the passage is simply that desires are different in kind in the sense that some are good and some are bad. The good ones are choiceworthy, and the bad ones must be avoided.

The second step of the argument aims to show that pleasures are different in kind:

(24) Desires are different in kind.

(25) Desires exist for the sake of pleasures.

(26) Some pleasures are choiceworthy, and others are to be avoided.

(22) In the same way, some desires are choiceworthy, and others are to be avoided.

(27) The only plausible explanation for such differences in desire is that the pleasures on account of which they exist are different in the same manner.

∴ (28) Pleasures are different in kind.

This argument is making two different claims. First, pleasures are different in kind because their choiceworthiness is different. It seems that this alone is enough to show that pleasures are different in kind. If two pleasures are different with respect to choiceworthiness, then they are different in kind. This view implies that two pleasures that are both choiceworthy, but only different in degree, would still be in the same kind. Two pleasures, then, are different in kind only when one is choiceworthy and the other must be avoided. 18 Second, because pleasures are the objects of desires and desires are different in kind, pleasures are also different in kind. This view is plausible because the activity of desiring per se is not bad or good. Depending on the object, a desire can be good or bad. In the Aristotelian categories of being, desire would be a

18. Along the same line, in his commentary on the Topics, Alexander writes that the inquiry about whether pleasure is good or not is an inquiry about what must be chosen and what must be avoided (74, 20).
relative because it is always of something, viz., the object. The value of desire, then, is also relative to the value of the object.

Next, Alexander gives a second explanation that can actually account for the differences in pleasure. That pleasures are not the same in kind can be shown from activities (energeiai). For since every pleasure supervenes (epi . . . ginetai) on some activity, and there is an affinity (oikeiotês) between pleasures and the activities on which they supervene—for they are in a way their ends—it is clear that in this way [the pleasures] too themselves would be differentiated in [a way] corresponding to the activities. But of the activities, on which pleasures supervene, some are to be chosen and others to be avoided; so the pleasures, too, will have the same difference from one another. But if so, they are not the same in kind. (120, 11–16)

The explanation for the differences in pleasures, according to Alexander, can also be found in the differences between the activities on which they supervene. The argument is more or less the same as what we’ve seen earlier in the case of desires and pleasures. Because activities differ from each other in their choiceworthiness, in the same way pleasures differ from one another in their choiceworthiness. But the difference in choiceworthiness is sufficient to establish the difference in kind. Hence because activities are different in kind, in the same way pleasures are different in kind.19

The argument as a whole doesn’t work because it depends on a questionable account of “kind”. First, it doesn’t fit with our intuition that a choiceworthy book and appalling book are the same in kind, viz., book. If this response is seen to be begging the question because it is assuming a standard notion of kind, there is a more important justification to reject this account of kind. The justification is Aristotle’s own argument that pleasures are different in kind because they can destroy each other. His example in book X.5 is that the pleasure from listening to flute-playing

19. Notice that what is pleasant is the object of desire, and that pleasure is in some sense the end of an activity. The language of object and end may suggest that pleasure is the final end of both desires and activities.
can destroy the pleasure from discussion. But these pleasures are both choiceworthy. Hence this account of kind must be rejected. Alexander’s arguments simply don’t work.

Two further arguments are provided by Alexander (and Aristotle) in Problem 2 for the claim that pleasures are different in kind. First, as hinted just now, because one pleasure can destroy another pleasure, then pleasures must be different in kind, for things of the same kind do not destroy each other. This idea is also present in Problem 19 and in Aristotle’s own writings, but it is questionable. How do pleasures destroy each other? In *EN* X.5, Aristotle says that the pleasure from listening to flute-playing can destroy the pleasure from the activity of discussion. But the circumstance is that the pleasure from listening to flute-playing is found to be more enjoyable than the pleasure from discussion:

This same thing happens in other cases as well, when a person engages in activity in two spheres at the same time; the more pleasant activity pushes aside the other, the more so if the difference in pleasure is a large one, even to the point where the other activity ceases. (1175b6–10)

By this principle, the activity of listening to flute-playing eventually pushes aside the activity of discussion. Hence the former is not only distracting from the latter, but it is also stopping (and hence destroying) the latter.

There is a slight difference between Aristotle’s description of cases like this and Alexander’s. In the *EN*, Aristotle talks about either pleasure destroying an activity or activity destroying another activity (like the example above). However, in Problem 2, Alexander is instead talking about pleasure destroying pleasure. These different ways of describing the situation actually point out different scenarios:

1. The pleasure of listening to flute-playing destroys the activity of discussion. Because of this, there will be no pleasure from the activity of discussion anymore, since pleasure supervenes on activity. But what is responsible for the destruction
of the activity of discussion is not the activity of listening to flute-playing, but rather pleasure that comes from listening to flute-playing.

2. The activity of listening to flute-playing, which is more pleasant, destroys the activity of discussion, which is less pleasant. Here it is not the pleasure from listening to flute-playing that is responsible for the destruction of the activity of discussion, but the activity of listening to flute-playing. The consequence is that the pleasure from discussion is also destroyed, because it can only be present when the activity is ongoing.

3. The pleasure from listening to flute-playing destroys the pleasure from discussion. The difference here is that there is no mention that the activity of discussion is actually stopped or destroyed.

One difference between the first two scenarios and the third is that in the third scenario, the activity whose pleasure is destroyed might still continue, but with less pleasure or without pleasure at all. There is also a possibility that Alexander is actually shortcutting his description. When he says that pleasure can destroy pleasure, he might mean the same thing as the first scenario, that a pleasure can destroy another activity, which implies that the pleasure from that activity is also destroyed. If this is the case, then Aristotle and Alexander are saying the same thing because the third scenario is just a truncated version of the first scenario.

The claim that both Alexander and Aristotle make is that because pleasure can destroy another pleasure, then pleasures are different in kind. However, this is not obviously true. Consider the activity of listening to music. If a person S listens to classical music at time T and at the same time listens to jazz, the pleasures from these two activities will destroy each other. Does it follow from this, however, that the activity of listening to classical music is different in kind from the activity of listening to jazz? The answer must be negative.
The second argument says that pleasure that supervenes on an activity cannot supervene on another activity. This is the reason why pleasures are different in kind. Pleasure P that supervenes on activity A1 can’t supervene on activity A2. It isn’t clear in Problem 2 whether A1 and A2 are the same in kind or not (e.g., sewing and knitting). Problem 19 discusses pleasures that are different in kind because they supervene on activities that differ in kind.

Let’s analyze the second argument further. Paying attention again to Problem 19, suppose that the claim in the second argument is that pleasure P1 is different in kind from pleasure P2 only if the activities on which P1 and P2 respectively supervene are different in kind. This claim is affirmed in Problem 13, which is a discussion about whether all pleasures are the same or different in kind. Here Alexander follows Aristotle in saying that (134, 10–20):

And yet, if all pleasures were the same in kind, and we chose activities for the sake of pleasures, the activities most deserving to be chosen would be those most productive of pleasures. But if it is not from the pleasure produced that we judge the activities that produce it, but conversely we judge the pleasures by the activities, activities will not deserve to be chosen on account of the pleasures [they produce], nor will they be the same in kind as each other.

Further, we do what we do in the case of the activities that cause us distress—[namely], we stop performing them—[also] in the case of [the activities that cause us pleasure], when we experience pleasure in some other activities. So it is clear that the pleasures that supervene on activities are proper to them.

The first passage is truncated from its immediate context. Alexander insists that we judge pleasures by the activities on which they supervene, and not the other way around. Because of this, he says, activities are chosen not for the sake of pleasures. Alexander also says that activities are not the same in kind, and the reason for this is given in the beginning of problem 13, viz., that pleasures are different in kind correspondingly to the activities on which they supervene. Pleasure from an activity
A differs in kind from pleasure that supervenes on another activity B, on the condition that activity A differs in kind from activity B. This is an affirmation of what Aristotle says in book X of the *EN*.

The second passage is a repetition of the idea that because pleasure P that supervenes on activity A1 can’t supervene on activity A2, then there must be a difference in kind between pleasure that supervenes on A1 and pleasure that supervenes on A2. Pleasures that supervene on shameful things, for example, can’t supervene on noble things, and *vice versa*.

One worry that can be raised here is about this principle which says that if P1 that supervenes on A1 can’t supervene on A2, but only P2 can supervene on A2, then P1 is different in kind from P2. This way of thinking is questionable. Think about a quality, such as the color white. The individual white W1 in chalk C1 cannot be in the body of a rabbit. Suppose what is in the body of the rabbit is the individual white W2. It doesn’t follow from this that W1 and W2 are different in kind from each other.

The second problem with Aristotle’s account of individual proper pleasures is that one would not be able to speak of non-substances as having the same kind. For, again, if W1 and W2 are different because W1 is a non-transferable individual color of chalk C1 and W2 is a non-transferable individual color of chalk C2, then according to Aristotle’s argument, W1 and W2 are not the same in kind. This reasoning applies to other categories of being as well. With respect to individual quantities, for example, this individual five feet tall is not the same as that individual five feet tall. In other words, the second problem with Aristotle’s argument is that he actually sacrifices kinds for the sake of individuals, though he uses the word “kinds” to refer to individuals.

It is puzzling that Aristotle takes this strong position on individuation without kinds. This position is different from the one in the *Categories*. In *Categories* 2, he allows for individuation of non-substances, for he says that A is in a subject B if and only if:
1. We can say that A is in B.

2. A is not a part of B.

3. A can’t exist separately from B.

Because of the inseparability condition (that A can’t exist separately from B), it seems that only individuals in non-substance categories can be in a subject. It is not general whiteness that is in a certain chalk, but it is this individual whiteness that is in this individual chalk. But he doesn’t deny there is such thing as whiteness *qua* species even though an individual white W1 in chalk C1 cannot be in chalk C2.

Now, one might object that there is a difference between whiteness and pleasure in that the former is a quality and the latter is a relative. But a relative seems to behave similarly in predication to a quality. We say that this pleasure is of that activity, but we also say this pleasure is in that activity, or this pleasure belongs to that activity. My point still remains, viz., that individuation of a non-substance category is insufficient to exclude sameness in kind among the relevant individuals.

In the end, Aristotle’s arguments that pleasures are different in kind from one another are not strong, except for his general claim that pleasures differ in kind in the same manner as the activities on which they supervene differ in kind. But let’s grant for the sake of argument that pleasures are different in kind. There is still the question about what makes one activity different in kind from another activity. As we’ve seen above, the only relevant distinction here is between activity that is choiceworthy and activity that must be avoided.

In Problem 17, Alexander asks a different but relevant question: given the fact that pleasures are different in kind correspondingly to the activities on which they supervene, are we supposed to classify all pleasures under any class of goods? If the answer is positive, which class? Would it be the honourable, the praiseworthy, or the beneficial? Again, he suggests that the way we classify pleasures would be corresponding to the activities on which they supervene:
If the activities are among that are praiseworthy—and among these are virtuous [activities]—[the pleasures] too will be like this; if [the activities] are those of things that are good as faculties, as are those concerned with nourishment and sex, [the pleasures] too will fall in this region of good things. (138, 2–5)

Here an ethical concept that I already called “value supervenience” is at work. Simple enough, with respect to pleasure and activity we see a parallel of values. If the activity is good, then pleasure that supervenes on the activity is good. If the activity is bad, then pleasure that supervenes on the activity is bad. The two following claims are accordingly implied: (1) there can’t be a bad pleasure that supervenes on a good activity, (2) there can’t be a good pleasure that supervenes on a bad activity. Perhaps these two possibilities can be made plausible if we add “except accidentally” to them.

What is interesting now is that even though there can’t be a good pleasure that supervenes on a bad activity, it might not be the case that nothing good can supervene on something that is bad (this is premise (18) in the aporia).

In fact, Problem 5 of Alexander entertains the possibility that pain is good if it supervenes on bad activity because pain is a kind of alienation. The idea of alienation is borrowed from Stoicism. It should be noted that the Stoics would not characterize pain as an alienation. For the Stoics, pain is a pathos that involves false judgment, and it is a contraction of the soul. Alexander is only borrowing the Stoic idea of alienation and applying it to the issue of pain. Although the notion of alienation can be applied to social relations in that one is pushed away from one’s family or community, alienation can be something personal as well. Since animals have a natural impulse to self-preservation, such an impulse implies the avoidance or alienation of what is harmful.20

The Stoics differ from the Epicureans in that they disagree that our first impulse is to pursue pleasure and to avoid pain. Diogenes Laertius 7.85-6 (SVF 3.178) testifies about this:

They hold it false to say, as some people do, that pleasure is the object of animals’ first impulse. For pleasure, they say, if it does occur, is a by-product which arises only when nature all by itself has searched out and adopted the proper requirements for a creature’s constitution, just as animals [then] frolic and plants bloom.

The first impulse of animals, according to the Stoics, is instead for self-preservation, and this impulse is compatible with the avoidance of what is harmful. In *De Finibus* 3.62–68, Cicero mentions that we naturally shrink from pain, just as it’s obvious that nature makes us love our children. However, the avoidance of pain is not our first motivation to act. Rather, our first motivation comes from the impulse to live in accordance with nature. Seneca in his *Letters* 121.6–15 gives two illustrations for this point. The first one is about a baby who strives to walk even though it is painful. The reason is that the baby’s impulse is to do what nature demands. The second illustration depicts a tortoise lying on its back in the state of painlessness. But the tortoise’s first impulse is not towards pleasure, but rather towards self-preservation and living in accordance with nature. Hence it doesn’t stop struggling and shaking itself until it can walk the earth with its feet again.

What is appropriate for animals is to pursue self-preservation in the awareness of their bodily constitution and how it works for living a life that is properly functioning. A properly functioning life is a life that is in accordance with nature (Stobaeus 2.85.13–86.4 (*SVF* 3.494). In human beings, a properly functioning life is a virtuous life (including exercising the right actions) that can be justified rationally. The idea of appropriation (*oikeiōsis*) is similar to the idea of fittingness or suitability. It is fitting or appropriate for animals to act in a way that contributes to their survival. On the other hand, alienation (*allotriōsis*) suggests a separation or a distance between two things, that one thing does not appropriately belong to another thing.

An alienation or a mismatch occurs, according Alexander, in the event of pain.

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21. The notion of shrinking from pain is related to the Stoics’ understanding of pain as an irrational contraction of the soul at what is thought to be something to avoid.
supervening on activity. Pain is sometimes described by Alexander as a sign (sēmeion) of alienation, but sometimes pain itself is called an alienation. However, in Alexander’s use of the term, it is possible that pain is an alienation not only in the sense that it is something that does not appropriately belong to activity, but also in the sense that it goes against the continuation of the activity. This interpretation is grounded on Aristotle’s description of pain as something that ruins the activity on which it supervenes (EN 1175b23–24). If Alexander thinks that pain might be good because it is an alienation, perhaps he is thinking that pain is good because it alienates the moral agent from the activity. It is pain that creates a rift between the agent and the activity. If the activity is bad, then the moral agent is kept away by pain from continuously doing something that is bad.

For human beings, since they have both bodily and rational constitution, they are familiarized with both what is beneficial for their body and what is rational. Human beings ideally will become virtuous and grasp the right reasons for acting from a virtuous disposition. In this way, they are familiarized with their own nature, and will alienate themselves from what is not in accordance with nature.

The personal alienation in relation to pain is basically an avoidance of what is harmful to self-preservation and to one’s true nature as a rational being. The explanation for personal alienation can be given in a developmental story. First, there is an avoidance of harms that are basic, such as the avoidance of bodily pains that even animals and babies can feel, and such an avoidance is grounded in the first impulse for self-preservation. This avoidance doesn’t require full-fledged rationality. Second, the avoidance of what is harmful is engaged in from a virtuous disposition and involves giving reasons for the action of avoidance itself. At this stage, the list of what is harmful includes actions that are vicious.

Again, the idea of personal alienation as the natural avoidance of harm (and pain) is present in Alexander’s commentary on the Topics. In one passage, he writes that it is alien (allotrion) from the good person to be pained (to lupeisthai) by the success
of good people (141, 33–34). Also, the good person is said to be alien to hastiness and impulse (156, 31–33). These seem to be the common opinions that are used in the study of *topoi*.

The use of the word “alienation” in our present discourse is understood by Alexander rather broadly. Pain is some kind of an alienation because being pained involves an aversion, away from either what is good or what is bad. Such an aversion is seen as something good if it is an aversion away from something bad.

Accordingly, we need to ask what is good when we talk about pain. There are two candidates:

1. Pain or being pained.
2. Alienation.

The concept of alienation doesn’t seem to map onto the concept of pain or the concept of being pained, but onto the concept of avoiding pain or the bad activity on which pain supervenes.

Here I would like to suggest that Alexander doesn’t have to ground his exposition of pain on value supervenience because of one unattractive consequence. Recall that pleasure that supervenes on good activity is good, and the one that supervenes on bad activity is bad. However, there is an inverse relation in the case of pain. In turn, relying on inverse supervenience will commit Alexander to the notion that some pains are good in themselves. Recall again CR*: “For all $x$ and $y$, if $x$ and $y$ are in the same ethical category, and $x$ supervenes on $y$, and $x$ is contrary to $y$, then the value of $x$ is contrary to the value of $y$.” The problem with its application is apparent when pain supervenes on an activity that is bad in itself. It seems that by CR*, pain must be good in itself. But this consequence Alexander dismisses immediately after pondering the possibility: “It is altogether absurd to differentiate distress in this way. For distress seems by its own nature to be an evil for those that have it.” My point is that even if Alexander lets go of CR*, he still has a tool to explain why pain seems
to be good when it supervenes on a bad activity. The reason is that it is some kind of alienation because it hinders the continuation of a vicious action.

If alienation is good, it is because it is a part of the virtuous life. So we arrive at an orthodox interpretation of Aristotelian pain, viz., that there is no pain that is good in itself. We simply don’t pursue pain for pain’s sake. There are pains that are necessary in life, but they are good only instrumentally and accidentally, not in themselves. There is even a sense in which pains that are instrumentally good are still a hindrance in a good life. In his commentary on 11531b1–1154b31 of the EN, Aspasius suggests that Aristotle wants to maintain that pain is evil, as opposed to those who think that pain is neither good nor evil. Then he gives an interesting suggestion that pain is always an evil, even though it is directed at evil actions. Aristotle, on his reading, claims:

For that which is simply pain is an evil, namely, that of wicked people, for example the pain of an unjust person which he feels when he cannot do a wrong, and that of a dissolute person when he is distressed by being prevented from enjoying his dissoluteness. But there is a pain that is not simply an evil, which a decent person feels because it does not come from a wicked habitual state; but this too is nevertheless an evil, because it is impeding of noble activities. For when he is feeling pain a good person is greatly impeded in respect to noble activities.

How does pain impede the noble activities of a decent person? Isn’t it the case that proper pain is constitutive of some virtuous feelings and activities? Probably the idea is that a person might be stricken by a proper pain that she sees more challenge to act nobly, even though a spoudaios will in fact overcome the challenge.

For Alexander, what is good is in fact the alienation, which is a manifestation of a virtuous disposition in the soul. Accordingly, to solve the aporia, we can reject (18), which says that “Something that supervenes on bad activity cannot be good”. We can reject this premise because the concept of alienation allows for something that supervenes on bad activity to be good, though not without qualification.
The rejection of (18) is consistent with maintaining (16), which says that pain is good if it supervenes on bad activity. However, the goodness of pain in (16) must be understood with qualification, viz., it is good insofar as it is some kind of alienation.

5.2.2 Pains as the Contraries of Pleasures

The other plausible route to solve the aporia is to reject (16), which says that “Pain is good if it supervenes on bad activity” because Alexander believes that all pains are bad (regardless whether some are instrumentally good). Even in Problem 7, where Alexander is explicitly open to the possibility that some pains are good, he finally says that “it is accepted that all distress is an evil” (127, 32). We come now to the last question in this dissertation, namely, if all pains are bad, and if pains are the contraries of pleasures, why is it the case that not all pleasures are good? To this problem we now turn.

In Problem 5, after going through several problems about the relation between pleasure/pain and activity, Alexander comes to the conclusion that all pains are bad. But this view is prima facie worrisome because of the contrary relation between pleasure and pain:

Or rather: it is altogether absurd to differentiate distress in this way. For distress seems by its own nature to be an evil for those that have it. But if distress is an evil, and the opposite of what is evil is [either] good or evil, it will be necessary for pleasure, which is opposite to distress, to be a good or an evil. But it was found that it was neither all a good nor all an evil, and there was also some that was indifferent. So will that [pleasure] which is good be opposite to distress in the way that a good is opposite to an evil, and [will pleasure] which is bad [be opposite to distress] in the way that an evil [is opposite to] an evil? (124, 36–125, 6)

In this way distress, which is an evil, will have as its opposite pleasure in the proper and unqualified sense, which is all a good, even if not in the same way; and the [pleasures] which are contrary to nature [will be] neither pleasures without qualification nor good. And there will be [pleasures] like this supervening on things that are indifferent, too, for indifferent things also are not among those in accordance with nature. (125, 29–32)
Simply put, the worry is that if pleasure is the contrary of pain, and if all pains are bad, why is it not the case that all pleasures are good? It is a common opinion that some pleasures are bad (e.g., pleasure from torturing people) and there are pleasures that are indifferent.

It would be worth talking briefly about indifferent pleasures and pains. Even though Aristotle talks about pleasures that are neither good nor bad (EN 1175b26), if Alexander has Stoic ethics in mind when discussing this issue, his examples of indifferent pleasures might be the pleasures from talking, asking, answering questions, walking about, and leaving town (Stobaeus 2.96,18–97,5 (SVF 3.501)). In general, the notion of indifferent activities is difficult to incorporate into Stoic ethics because the Stoics categorize actions only into right actions (if done by the wise) and wrong actions (if done by the fool). Hence Alexander’s discussion of indifferent activities and indifferent pleasures might not be a strict adoption from Stoic doctrines. It is also possible that what Alexander has in mind when he talks about indifferent pleasures are the ones that Diogenes Laertius describes as pleasures that neither benefit nor harm (7.101–103). This kind of pleasure, which is neither natural nor valuable, must be distinguished from pleasure *qua* irrational impulse, which is harmful. Indifferent pleasures that are mentioned by Diogenes would include perceptual pleasures that are the involuntary by-products of human actions. These pleasures are not pleasures *qua* passions, which involve an assent to false judgments. The corresponding indifferent pains would include involuntary by-products of human actions such as the impression of excessive perceptions from a very loud noise, a very bright light, or something of similar kind. In Stoic ethics, then, bodily pain (*ponos*) might be an indifferent pain, but *lupē* is always a harmful pain. This is probably why Alexander makes a sharp distinction between *ponos* and *lupē* in Problem 6.

I tend to believe that Alexander is only using the language of the Stoics for indifference, but not really adopting the Stoic concept. However, whichever indifferent pleasures Alexander has in mind, these pleasures are indifferent because they are
neither to be chosen nor to be avoided. It is worth noting that an indifferent pleasure is not a conditional pleasure. It is not the case that if the walking is towards a good deed, then the indifferent pleasure becomes a good pleasure. Indifferent pleasure can’t ever become a good or a bad pleasure, and that is because it is in a different ethical category from what is good or bad. Enough has been said about indifferent pleasures and pains. Let’s now go back to the problem of contrariety.

Aristotle unequivocally believes that pains are the contraries of pleasures (e.g., EN 1153b3, 1154a20). The claim becomes more interesting when we turn to Aristotle’s Organon and analyze the concept of contrariety. In Categories 11b1–9, he writes:

Doing and being-affected admit of contrariety and of a more and a less. For heating is contrary to cooling, and being heated to being cooled, and being pleased to being pained; so they admit of contrariety. And of a more and a less also. For it is possible to heat more and less, and to be heated more and less, and to be pained more and less; hence doing and being-affected admit of a more and a less.

Although in Categories 10 Aristotle says that there is a difference between possession and having a possession, and between privation and being deprived, there is no difference between pain and being pained, because pain is an activity. It remains to be seen what kind of contraries pleasure and pain are.

In the Categories, Aristotle says the following about contraries:

1. One contrary is not called the contrary of the other contrary, for good is not called the good of the bad, but the contrary of the bad.

2. Some contraries don’t have an intermediate. This is the case if one of the contraries necessarily belong to the things they naturally are in or are said of (e.g., health-sickness in an animal’s body, odd-even in numbers).

3. If one of the contraries don’t necessarily belong to something, there will be an intermediate between them (e.g., white-black belong only to some bodies, bad-good and just-unjust belong only to some actions).
There is actually a third kind of contrary, which is a variation of the contraries that
don’t have intermediates. This contrary obtains in the case of a thing that necessarily
and naturally has a contrary all the time, such as fire that is always hot.

With the mention of indifferent pleasures and pains, Alexander obviously thinks
that pleasure and pain are contraries that do have an intermediate. In Problem 14,
Alexander asks how to maintain the existence of something intermediate between
pleasure and distress, which suggests again that he sees pleasures and pains as con-
traries that have an intermediate. He makes an interesting remark here that natural
activities that are impeded are distress, or at least cause distress, but Problem 14 is
mainly concerned with the question about how the absence of distress (alupia) is not
identical to pleasure. And it is very interesting that Alexander entertains the pos-
sibility of having an instance of sensation slackening (anesis) from its best objects,
which results in a sensation that is neither pleasure nor distress. It is not probable
that Alexander is thinking of the Stoic notion of pleasure as an irrational swelling in
the soul (Andronicus, *On Passions* I (SVF 3.391)).

Alexander also explores another route to talk about the middle ground between
pleasure and distress, viz., in terms of the excellence of the objects of sensation. This
strategy is different from the one used earlier that focused on how well the sensation
itself is functioning. Here, the focus is on the sensibilia in relation to their nobility.
Naturally, if sensation is working properly and the objects are noble, then that state
of affairs would produce the pleasantest of experiences. Presumably, if the objects
are neither noble nor shameful, even though the sensation is working properly, there
might not be pleasure or distress involved.

Alexander’s views in the above paragraphs about slackening and the excellence of
the objects of sensation are compatible with the view I proposed in 2.3.3 about the
Balancing View of Pain (BVP), which says that the pleasures and pains that arise
simultaneously from different mental and bodily activities balance each other out.
Alexander’s idea of slackening simply adds a new explanation complementing BVP
of why in our unimpeded activities we do not always obtain pleasure.

Unto the puzzle now, Problem 7 asks the same question: If distress is an evil, then pleasure—given that it is the opposite of distress—seems to be something good. But observation suggests that some pleasures are unnatural and bad. In Problem 16, for example, Alexander sees the possibility of saying that all pleasures are good, though only some of them are good without qualification. Some other pleasures are pleasures with qualification, e.g., pleasures that come from vices. These latter pleasures are pleasures only for some people who think that they are pleasures. But they might not be pleasures in the proper sense of pleasure.

To solve the puzzle, let’s return now to Aristotle’s *Categories* 11, where he states the two following claims:

1. If A is contrary to B, and if B is good, then A is necessarily bad.

2. If B is contrary to A, and if A is bad, then B can be good or bad. Most of the time, the contrary of what is bad would be good. But an excess, which is bad, can be a contrary to another excess.

Aristotle’s reasoning that “even if all pains are bad, and even if pain is the contrary of pleasure, it does not follow from this that all pleasures are good” is just a direct application of the second point. This is a clear example of how Aristotle’s logic is applied in an ethical issue. Alexander says that unnatural and bad pleasures are opposed to distress “as one evil to another”, while pleasures that are proper will be opposed to distress as goods that are opposed to evils. This is ultimately Alexander’s solution to the puzzle.

I would like to suggest an additional thought on how to explain the second point above in the *Categories*, and this comes from Aristotle’s remark in book II of the *EN* that “one can miss the mark in many ways, but one can get things right in only one” (1106b28–31). What is “right” and what is “good” are not differentiated by Aristotle because he immediately quotes an unknown author that “For good people
are just good, while bad people are bad in all sorts of ways” (1106b35). It is precisely because of this fact about what is good and what is bad that the contrary of what is good is necessarily bad, but the contrary of what is bad can be either good or bad. Alexander’s solution to the problem of the contrariety between pleasures and pains is consistent with this thought because in the end of Problem 5, he affirms that only proper pleasures are good without qualification. In this way, Alexander can maintain the idea that all pains are evil (although they are good insofar as they discourage the continuation of bad activities) and that pains are the contraries of pleasures, but not all pleasures are good.

One limitation of my suggestion is important to mention here, viz., that the passage from the EN about missing the mark is primarily about virtue. Hence if I’m applying the idea in this passage to the issue of pleasure and pain, the pleasures and pains that are relevant will be only pleasures and pains that are related to virtue and vice and rational justification, and not pleasures and pains that are basic that even babies and non-human animals have.

At this point, the discussion of the aporia and the two possible solutions for it is complete. The aporia is as follows:

(10) Pleasure and pain supervene on activities.

(11) Pleasure and pain derive their goodness or badness from the goodness and badness of the activities on which they supervene.

(12) Pleasure is good if it supervenes on good activity.

(13) Pleasure is bad if it supervenes on bad activity.

(14) Pleasure is indifferent if it supervenes on indifferent activity.

(15) Pain is bad if it supervenes on good activity.

(16) Pain is good if it supervenes on bad activity.
(17) Pain is indifferent if it supervenes on indifferent activity.

(18) Something that supervenes on bad activity cannot be good.

(19) Some pains supervene on bad activity.

(20) Some pains are good and not good.

The first solution to the *aporia* is by rejecting (18). This can be done because there is indeed something good that supervenes on bad activity, viz., pain as some kind of alienation. However, the goodness of pain is not intrinsic, but it is good only insofar as it is felt from a virtuous disposition, and insofar as it promotes the virtuous life by hindering the continuation of a bad activity. The second solution is to reject (16) and take Alexander’s claim that all pains are seriously bad. The rejection of (16) doesn’t give us any problem for the fact that pleasures are not uniformly good. The reason is that Alexander (and Aristotle) can simply apply the theory of contrariety to the issues of pleasure and pain.

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22. This is not to deny that what is intrinsically bad can have instrumental goodness.
Chapter 6

Conclusion

6.1 Summary

In general, the account of Aristotelian pleasures and pains can be viewed from two perspectives. The first is the ethical and dialectical perspective. Aristotle’s ethical works are an excellent example of how an ancient philosopher was very contemporary in his time. His concerns were cutting edge, and he was eloquently conversant with his active interlocutors. The place of pleasure in the good life was much debated in Aristotle’s time, just as it is now. Is pleasure the chief good in human life? Is pleasure a good at all? Can the pursuit of pleasure be the main motivation for action? What is the relationship between virtue and pleasure? What is the relationship between activity and pleasure? Is pain something bad in human life? Should the virtuous person always avoid pain? These and other related questions set the agenda of Aristotle’s inquiry about pleasure and pain. The dialectical part of Aristotle’s investigation involves a method of analyzing reputable opinions, not only for the sake of convincing his interlocutors about a certain philosophical view, but also for the sake of knowing which opinions stand philosophical analysis.

The second perspective is the scientific perspective. Here the study of pleasure and pain is a part or an extension of the study of nature. The study of nature will not be complete without the study of the soul and its activity. Pleasure and pain are indeed present in the soul, which makes them also the proper objects of the study of nature.

However, in the secondary literature on Aristotle, the investigation of the scientific account of pleasure and pain has not received as much attention as the debate concerning the nature of Aristotelian pleasures as presented in books VII and X of the
This is unfortunate because the focus only on books VII and X of the EN would leave unexplained other descriptions about pleasures and pains that appear elsewhere in the ethical works and in the rest of Aristotle’s corpus. Equally unfortunate is the fact that the debate about whether the account of pleasure in book VII is different from the one in book X is seen as having reached a stalemate.

Progress in the debate can be made, as I hope to have shown in this dissertation, by looking at the issue from a more holistic point of view, viz., by recognizing that Aristotle describes pleasures and pains not only as activities, but also as something that completes an activity, as well as a passion and a movement. These varieties of descriptions of pleasures and pains are used by Aristotle because he is aware that pleasures and pains are both ethical and scientific concepts. He freely moves from one description to another as it is fitting to do so.

When Aristotle is in a heated dialectical debate with Eudoxus and Speusippus in books VII and X of the EN, he emphasizes the fact that pleasures and pains are activities or actualizations of capacities that are complete in themselves, as opposed to processes. Hence in book VII he describes pleasure as an unimpeded activity of our natural state. In book X, he says that pleasure is something that supervenes on an activity, but the way he characterizes pleasure as something that is complete in itself unmistakably points towards the most important characteristic of an energeia. This emphasis on the active aspect of pleasure is important because Aristotle wants to argue, pace Speusippus, that pleasure is a good candidate for our final end. Speusippus, who critiques the hedonist Eudoxus, thinks that pleasure can’t be the final end because it is a process. Even though Aristotle is sympathetic to Speusippus’ contention that hedonism is wrong, he disagrees with him about the nature of pleasure. Pleasure is not a process, but rather an activity that is complete in itself. At least some pleasures are good, although the claim that pleasure is our final end is questionable.

Aristotle also says that pleasure is something that supervenes on activities (in book X). This claim is troubling because it appears inconsistent with the earlier claim that
pleasure just is activity (in book VII). Nevertheless, there is no flat contradiction between these two claims. What supervenes on an activity can itself be an activity. My solution is to understand “activity” in both books VII and X as an actualization of a capacity. In book VII, this general meaning of activity is used consistently. In book X, when Aristotle says that pleasure supervenes on an activity, the activity here is also an actualization of a capacity, but it mainly refers to activities such as perception and thinking that are the paradigm examples of activities that can be perfected by pleasure. The focus on perception and thinking in book X is not surprising because Aristotle wants to talk about pleasure in relation to animal and human life in general (1175a10ff.). In book IX, Aristotle explicitly describes life in terms of perception and thinking:

People define animal life by the capacity for perception, and human life by the capacity for perception or thought. But the capacity is relative to its activity, and what really matters lies in the activity; so living in the real sense seems to be perceiving or thinking. And living is one of the things that are good and pleasant in themselves. (1070a16–20)

In the same way, book X mentions the activities of seeing and thinking as the activities on which pleasure supervenes. When he claims that pleasure supervenes on an activity, we can understand this claim as saying that pleasure supervenes on activities such as perceiving and thinking. But Aristotle wants to make a distinction between pleasure and activities such as perceiving and thinking. It would be strange (atopon), he says, if pleasure were perceiving or thinking (1175b34). My suggestion was to understand pleasure as the passive counterpart of an activity (of perception or of thinking), although it is itself an activity (i.e., an actualization of a capacity). Book X repeatedly says that pleasure completes the activity. I suggested that this claim points to the fact that pleasure is the “terminus” of an activity, although strictly speaking the term is improper because activity doesn’t involve succession. This terminus is the passive counterpart of the activity. As Aristotle mentions in book III
chapter 10, the gourmand takes pleasure in the contact between the food and his throat (1118a33–1118b1). It is the being-affected that occurs when there’s a transaction between sensibilia and the sense organs that is pleasure. Thinking is treated in a parallel way by Aristotle in On the Soul. The pleasure that comes from thinking is the pleasure that occurs when there is a transaction between intelligibilia and the mind. In a sense, there is an affection of the mind.

The account of pleasure in book X is not different from the one in book VII, but it tells us more about what pleasure is. Pleasure is the final end of an activity, although it is what I call the accidental final end, because it is not “that for the sake of which”. Pleasure is the end point of an activity, but it is not that for the sake of which the activity is done in the first place. It just happens that when one is doing an activity such as perceiving and thinking, there is a passive aspect to it that serves as the terminus of the activity. As such, pleasure is a way of being affected unimpededly when one is in a natural state.

Understanding pleasure as a way of being affected is not contradictory to seeing it as an activity, and the reason is that being affected is an actualization of a passive power. In fact, in the EN Aristotle says that pleasures and pains are passions that are hard to rub off because they have been with us since infancy (1105a3–4). When he is making this claim, he is not in the debate with Eudoxus or Speusippus. He is instead emphasizing the passivity of the subjects experiencing pains and pleasures because he wants to show how these passions are so ingrained in our lives, that the discussion of virtues must incorporate a discussion of pleasure and pain. Being in the world, we are exposed to all sorts of pleasant and painful sensations whether we like it or not, and pleasure and pain inevitably influence the development and exercise of our character.

Aristotle doesn’t talk about pleasures and pains exclusively as a way of being affected until he discusses the workings of the soul and sense organs. In On the Soul his main concern is to explain the activities of the soul in a way that is compatible
with the language of physics. Since he thinks that pleasure and pain are a kind of perception (although not identical to the perception of seeing, etc.), then pleasure and pain are ways of being affected, just as perception is a way of being affected. But a couple of worries immediately arise if pleasure and pain are passions or ways of being affected. First, passions are movements, and Aristotle does contrast activity with movement. Second, in *On the Soul*, Aristotle believes that the soul is not being moved, and even the sense organs and the mind are strictly speaking impassible. How is it the case that there is an affection in the soul if the soul is not changed? Aristotle’s own solution is to make a distinction between the standard alteration and alteration of a different kind. An actualization of a capacity involves an alteration in the latter sense. Pleasure and pain are passions, but they are not constituted by any standard alteration. Rather, they are alterations of a different kind, i.e., the kind that we attribute to an object that is actualizing its potentiality (e.g., when a person who knows Greek actually uses his knowledge of Greek upon seeing a Greek word).

The various descriptions of pleasure as (1) activity, (2) something that supervenes on activity, (3) passion, and (4) movement appear as a result of the complexity of Aristotle’s philosophy of mind and physics. But this complexity is useful for his philosophical discourses because the view about pleasure encompasses different aspects that can be put forward selectively, depending on the context of each philosophical discourse. While in the ethical works Aristotle emphasizes the activity of pleasure to convince Speusippus that pleasure is an unimpeded activity, in the psychological works he is not afraid of showing the passivity of pleasure because he wants to connect it to the discussion of perception, thought, and motion. These findings are the result of an investigation that encompasses a wide area of Aristotle’s philosophy, including ethics, logic, physics, metaphysics, and psychology.

My discussion of the nature of Aristotelian pain also used the holistic approach. What I did was to start the investigation of Aristotelian pain anew, without relying upon the existing literature on Aristotelian pleasure. I concluded that in order to
understand Aristotelian pain properly, we need to have a perceptual model of pain. Pain is primarily a passion in that it is a way of being affected in the instance that something has gone wrong: either the subject is not functioning properly, or the objects (e.g., sensibilia and intelligibilia) are improper. I also proposed a method of understanding Aristotelian pain by positioning it in the categories of being, and concluded that pain is at least both a relative and a being-affected. Furthermore, I suggested that we can understand pain by mirroring the concept of pleasure. The focus of my discussion was in the analysis of contrariety, since pain is the contrary of pleasure. Contrariety is a mirroring tool for conceptualizing pleasure and pain. If the mirror is set properly, one can understand better what pain is from the concept of pleasure, and vice versa. If pleasure is an unimpeded activity, then pain is probably an impeded activity.

If the first part of my dissertation investigates the nature of pleasure and pain, the second part of my dissertation investigates the place of pain in the Aristotelian good life. Understanding the nature of pleasure and pain is necessary for understanding fully their role in a virtuous life. This fact is evident from Aristotle’s own strategy in books VII and X of the EN. Aristotle discusses the nature of pleasure as unimpeded activity to argue for the fact that it is a good candidate for our final end. In the same way, understanding the nature of pain is necessary to understand fully the place of pain in a happy life. Is pain identical to activity? Is pain a necessary byproduct of some activities, including virtuous ones? Is pain also a final end of an activity, just as pleasure is? The answers to these questions will determine our attitude towards pain. For example, if the ancients believe that everyone seeks happiness and that happiness is something that is unimpeded, then if pain turns out to be an impeded activity, then pain can’t be a good candidate for our final good.

That being said, the puzzle about the ethics of pain in Aristotle’s ethics as I formulated it in Chapter 4 can be solved by bracketing the debate about what the nature of pain is. The reason is that I was focusing on the question about which kinds
of pain are avoidable or not avoidable in human life. My conclusion about the role of pain in the happy life follows the common intuition about pain, viz., that pain is bad, but the exercise of some virtues does inevitably involve pain. However, since Aristotle is not a hedonist, he is not recommending that the pursuit of pleasure or the avoidance of pain be the main motivation in actions. Rather, it is virtue that must be the goal of actions. Hence it is not the case that pain must be always avoided. Instead, pain should be avoided only if it is virtuous to do so.

In Alexander’s works, we saw a more serious effort to contemplate the possibility that pain is good if it supervenes on a bad activity. First, Alexander settles with the view that all pains are bad in themselves. He, too, follows the intuitive view that there is no pain that is intrinsically good. Pain is good only insofar as it alienates and hinders the bad activity. He uses Stoic terminologies such as “indifference” and “alienation”, but it seems that he is not infusing the Stoic ideology into his use of terms. Rather, he is expressing Aristotelian concepts using Stoic language, which is the philosophical language that was common at that time.

Second, there is a question about why it is the case that not all pleasures are good if pain is the contrary of pleasure and all pains are bad. I suggested that we need to look to Aristotle’s *Categories* to answer this problem. In the *Categories*, Aristotle says that if A is bad, and if B is contrary to A, then B can be good or bad. Most of the time, B would be good. But what is bad can be a contrary to another bad thing, just like one bad extreme (deficiency) is contrary to another bad extreme (excess). This is Alexander’s solution, too, for he says that bad pleasures are opposed to pains as one evil to another. By taking this stance, Alexander is showcasing how Aristotelian logic is applied directly to an attempt to solve ethical problems.

6.2 Reflections

My research arrived at several conclusions about the nature of Aristotelian pleasure and pain, and also about how we should see the role of pain in the good life. Let me
I set up the major chapters in this dissertation using the structure of *aporia*-solution. This method is dialectical and particularly Aristotelian. I begin by surveying the claims about pleasure and pain that are present in Aristotle’s writings, taking them as phenomena if not reputable opinions. Then, following Aristotle, I formulated puzzles concerning Aristotelian pleasure and pain by showing inconsistency in the claims involved. The propositions that made up the puzzles were not all *endoxa*. Some of the propositions are put forward as logical consequences of the recognized *endoxa*. In Chapters 2 and 3, for example, the propositions that pleasure is a motion and that pain is a motion come as an implication of the fact that pleasure and pain are feelings or passions. Also, the puzzle that I formulated from Alexander’s *Ethical Problems* contains propositions that result from Alexander’s own pondering, such as “pleasure that supervenes on indifferent activity is indifferent”. The task in a dialectical project is to go through each of the phenomena to see whether the claims are tenable, and to purge the claims that are problematic.

Using this structure of *aporia*-solution for my chapters was advantageous in several ways. For one thing, I embarked on this dissertation journey with a specific goal to solve a philosophical puzzle as opposed to merely filling what is lacking in the ancient philosophy scholarship. I was forced to reformulate in a fresh way the problems about Aristotelian pleasure and pain. The reformulations in turn bring freshness not only to the understanding of the problems, but also of the solutions. Both the problems and the solutions require a holistic approach to Aristotle’s corpus. For example, instead of pitting only book VII of the *EN* against book X, I also brought in two more descriptions of pleasure as feeling and motion. The problem became more complex, but at the same time a creative way to solve the problem became apparent.

This approach is also a direct test of the effectiveness of Aristotle’s philosophical method when encountering philosophical problems. What I found was that in order to solve some of the puzzles, I had to refer to established propositions that are al-
ready assumed by Aristotle elsewhere. In Chapter 4, for example, the solution to the puzzle depends on the understanding that Aristotle is not a hedonist and that virtue is ethically more important than the pursuit of pleasure or the avoidance of pain. Accordingly, one might object that solving a puzzle using Aristotle’s own system is begging the question and circular. I think we need to bite the bullet with respect to the charge of circularity. Aristotle begins with the assumption that it is the virtuous person that serves as the canon of what is bad and good. If this basic assumption is denied, then there must be another standard (e.g., utility or rationality) that is in need of a justification itself. The project of solving an Aristotelian puzzle must indeed be done from within Aristotle’s own system because an ethical theory such as Aristotle’s does not pretend that it comes from a neutral base.

In my reading of Aristotelian pleasure, I tried to give a via media between the view that (a) pleasure is identical to activity and the view that (b) pleasure is a phenomenon that is above and beyond activity. On my interpretation, Aristotelian pleasure is neither of these. Rather, pleasure is the passive counterpart of an activity such as perception and thinking. It is not a thing separate in existence from activity, though its account is different from the activity on which it supervenes, for pleasure is the final end or the terminus of an activity. If this is really Aristotle’s view of pleasure, then he maintains the intuitive view about pleasure that it is different from activity, but he doesn’t fall into a view that pleasure is a mysterious entity above and beyond activity, that we can’t really know when and where we will feel pleasure. Aristotle unequivocally says that when the subject and the object are excellent, pleasure necessarily will come. This position is ontologically parsimonious without being so austere as to slash the difference in account between pleasure and activity.

Methodologically speaking, I suggested that the piecemeal approach to the topic of Aristotelian pleasure is not the only or the best approach available. Even if we look at the entire EN, we will find different descriptions of pleasure. Without assuming the unity of the books in the EN, I think it is reasonable to see Aristotle as having
a coherent account of pleasure, and that the different descriptions of pleasure (as activity, feeling, and something that supervenes on an activity) are ways of looking at pleasure from different perspectives, viz., ethical and scientific. The intersection between philosophy of mind and ethics in Aristotle can’t be overstated. For example, in talking about akrasia, Aristotle utilizes the distinction between knowledge in the first and second actuality, which is a distinction that is present in On the Soul. It would be interesting, too, for example, to look at what deliberation is in On the Soul and how the scientific understanding of deliberation might help us understand moral responsibility.

When talking about the nature of Aristotelian pain, I found that it would be best to start from scratch and harvest what Aristotle says about pain directly, while bracketing references to pleasure as tightly as possible. In this way, I avoided the debate about the nature of pleasure in books VII and X of the EN. It would be very difficult if not impossible to have a perfect isolation, and that is because ethical concepts inform each other in a web of descriptions. Still, this bracketing method proved useful to unearth materials that enabled me to reconstruct Aristotle’s view of the nature of pain. Aristotle’s descriptions of pain are not less diverse than his descriptions of pleasure. Hence I used the same reconciliation strategy as the one I utilized in my discussion of pleasure. I also showed that Aristotelian pain can be explained using a perceptual model that incorporates the workings of phantasia. I did not build my own perceptual model but rather relied on an existing one suggested by Everson. Obviously my decision to use Everson was motivated by the compatibility between his reading of Aristotelian perception and my reading of Aristotelian pain. But this shouldn’t be a problem because I wanted to show only that my reading of Aristotelian pain can be complemented by a respectable interpretation of Aristotelian perception.

The bridge between the discussions of pleasure and pain can be found in my discussion of contrariety in the end of Chapter 3. If pain is the contrary of pleasure,
then the concept of contrariety can serve as a sort of mirror between pain and pleasure. This discussion of contrariety is independent of the discussion of the nature of pleasure and the nature of pain in the previous chapters. Now we have three discussions that are relatively independent of each other. My discussion of the nature of pleasure did not depend on the discussion of the nature of pain or of contrariety, and *mutatis mutandis*. If the three are compatible with one another, as I believe they are, then we have a strong case for a reading that is consistent.

Chapter 4 begins with a formulation of a puzzle about the place of pain in the good life. The puzzle revolves around the issue of whether (a) all pains are bad and hence (b) must be avoided in a wholesale manner. My solution to this puzzle was to affirm (a) and to deny that (b) can be a primary motivation for action. This solution, as I hinted earlier, entirely depends on the assumption that Aristotle is not a hedonist. Solving the puzzle about pain, however, is not only about making a set of propositions consistent, but also about clarifying concepts and trains of thought. This reflection brought me to the conclusion that making a set of propositions consistent can be done in a robust way only if there is a substantial philosophical analysis of the validity and soundness of the argument. Ultimately, then, the solution to the puzzle must not only depend on the assumption that Aristotle is not a hedonist but also on an effective argument against hedonism.

In Chapter 5, I discussed pleasure and pain through the lens of two of Aristotle’s ancient commentators. My claim that Aristotelian pleasures and pains are feelings or ways of being affected echoes what Alexander and Aspasius say in their commentary on the *EN*. More importantly, Alexander doesn’t see that there is a conflict between the account of pleasure in book VII and the one in book X of the *EN*. Why is this important at all? Well, in reading an ancient work that is difficult, the history of interpretation can sometimes give us hints about how to read a text. Since Alexander and Aspasius are authoritative philosophers who lived closer to Aristotle’s time than we, their opinions surely deserve to be heard.
Alexander presented puzzles in his *Ethical Problems* concerning pleasure and pain. What I did was extract one of those puzzles and make the *aporia* explicit. One of the important questions that Alexander wanted to ask was whether pain that supervenes on a bad activity is actually good. It was interesting to see Alexander’s thought process in trying to answer that question. He entertained the possibility that some pains are good not only instrumentally, but also in themselves. Pains that supervene on bad activities are good candidates for this kind of pain because they discourage the continuation of bad activities. In the end, however, Alexander surprisingly, or perhaps unsurprisingly, settled with the common intuition that all pains are bad, and dismissed other possibilities that he pondered about earlier. This attitude was also present in Aristotle’s ethics. Aristotle observed that people actually avoid pain and this fact is evidence to show that people see pain as bad. Alexander used the word “alienation” to explain why pain that supervenes on bad activity might be good. Pain might be some kind of alienation, and if it supervenes on bad activity, it alienates or puts off the bad activity. Alexander’s conclusion was that pain was good only insofar as it was an alienation. It is not good in itself. There doesn’t seem to be any solid argument for this claim, but only a consensus of the majority of people. This ethical intuition about the badness of pain is not outrageous and can be accepted even by the classical utilitarians.

As a commentary, Alexander’s work on the *EN* is faithful to Aristotle’s texts. Two unique characteristics in Alexander’s commentary should be mentioned here. First, Alexander moved further than simply doing an exegesis of Aristotle’s corpus. What he did was to reformulate ethical problems and try to solve them. This enterprise is something that I also did in the previous chapters, but this time Alexander’s works were among the objects of investigation. Second, Alexander used the language that his contemporaries would understand. He utilized terms such as “alienation” and “indifference” that sound Stoic. In my investigation, I concluded that these terms are borrowed halfheartedly without the Stoic content. In contemporary philosophy, we
sometimes borrow a term to explain an ancient concept. For example, we talk about supervenience without adopting Kim’s theory of supervenience, and we use this word to translate *epiginetai*, which simply means “accompanies”. This is what happened, too, with Alexander, who tried to present Aristotle’s thought using a contemporary language at that time, which was influenced by Stoicism. Although using some Stoic terminology, Alexander remains faithful to Aristotle and his thoughts on alienation and pain clarify the place of pain in the good life. What is crucial to note is that the solution to the puzzle that I proposed in Chapter 5 also assumes that virtue is more important than the avoidance of pain, and the latter can’t be the primary motivation for action. This assumption is again not something that’s problematic, because Alexander and Aristotle discuss pleasure and pain from resources within Aristotle’s theory.

The transition between Chapters 2-3 and Chapters 4-5 was abrupt. The reason is that these two parts of the dissertation were dealing with different questions. Chapters 2-3 asked about the nature of pleasure and pain, and Chapters 4-5 asked about the place of pain in the good life. I tried to make each chapter in this dissertation as independent as possible of the other chapters. Hence if one should fall, the others would still stand proudly. But this strategy comes with a cost, viz., that the unity between the two parts of the dissertation is not immediately obvious. Although I do think that knowing the nature of pleasure and pain (at least to a degree) is necessary if one wants to understand their ethical implications fully, the puzzles in both Chapters 4 and 5 need not assume any view of the nature of pain.

That being said, ultimately one must be able to explain what pain is to explain fully what it means to avoid pain and to understand the place of pain in the good life. When people avoid pain, what they avoid is the terminus of an activity that involves an impediment. In a way, pain is an impeded activity. Because of this, pain can’t be a good candidate for happiness because happiness is unimpeded (and that’s why we need external goods, viz., to ensure our continuous activity). Understanding what
pain is, then, excludes pain from being our chief end in life. At the same time, the analysis of Aristotelian pain shows that it is something that is inevitably present in human life, and it can have some instrumental value for human survival.

It is true that the assumption that pursuing virtue is more important than avoiding pain doesn’t depend on any view of the nature of pain. However, understanding the nature of pain can help us determine whether it is even possible to avoid pain and which kinds of pain we should or should not avoid. We can solve the inconsistency problem in the puzzles in Chapters 4-5 without assuming any view of the nature of pain, but we can’t complete our conceptual analysis of pain, which is a term that is used throughout the puzzles.

6.3 Limitations and Future Directions

There are several limitations in this dissertation that I have to acknowledge, some of which can be addressed in future research:

1. I did not address the question about the unity of Aristotle’s works extensively, but I assume that a coherent and holistic account of Aristotelian pleasures and pains can be given. An in-depth study of the unity of Aristotle’s works will make this study more robust.

2. There was an anonymous ancient commentator who wrote a commentary on book VII of the EN. Additionally, Michael of Ephesus wrote a commentary on books IX and X of the EN. An investigation of their works will be important to undertake to complement the study in my dissertation.

3. Suppose my reading of Aristotelian pleasure and pain is correct. The next question to follow should be about in what ways Aristotelian pleasures and pains continue or differ from pleasures and pains as understood by Plato and other ancient philosophers.¹

¹An attempt of this nature is made by Rist, who discusses the accounts of pleasure in the
4. Yet another question that needs to be asked is about how to situate this reading of Aristotelian pleasures and pains in the debates on pleasure and pain in the contemporary philosophy of mind.

5. I realize that the issue of the phenomenology and intentionality of pleasure and pain has not been treated extensively in this dissertation. Such an investigation might have to involve an investigation of the phenomenology of perception, because on my reading, some Aristotelian pleasures and pains are the passive counterparts of perception.

Despite these limitations, I do hope that my analyses of Aristotelian pleasure and pain open up a new conceptual and methodological space in the research of this topic.

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