Pleasure as *Genesis* in Plato's *Philebus*

ABSTRACT: Socrates' claim that pleasure is a γένεσις unifies the *Philebus'* conception of pleasure. Close examination of the passage reveals an emphasis on metaphysical-normative dependency in γένεσις. Seeds for such an emphasis were sown in the dialogue's earlier discussion of μεικτά, thus linking the γένεσις claim to Philebus' description of pleasure as ἄπειρον. False pleasures illustrate the radical dependency of pleasure on outside determinants. I end tying together the *Philebus'* three descriptions of pleasure: restoration, indefinite, and γένεσις.

In the *Philebus*, Socrates and Protarchus investigate which, of pleasure and reason, is more responsible for making a human life good. But understanding just what these vying candidates are is no simple matter. Socrates' favourite – "knowing, understanding, and remembering, and what belongs with them, right opinion and true calculations"[1] – is worked out indirectly, in disparate passages: for instance, in the epistemology of 16a-19a; in the classification of 28b-30e, following the metaphysics of 23c-27c; and in a taxonomy of knowledges at 55c-59d. Pleasure is treated more directly, but no more simply. In fact, in the course of their investigations, Socrates and Protarchus turn up three separate descriptions of pleasure. There is, first, pleasure-as-ἄπειρον (unlimited, indefinite), from Philebus' own mouth at 27e, but repeated by Socrates at 31a. Secondly, there is pleasure-as-restoration, from the exposition of pleasure at 31b-32e.[2] Finally, there is the description with which the discussion of pleasure closes at 53c-55d, pleasure-as-γένεσις. In what follows, I argue that the pleasure-as-γένεσις view is central to Plato's view of pleasure.[3] Properly understood, the *genesis* view of pleasure builds on the detailed discussion of false

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[1] τὸ φρονεῖν καὶ τὸ νοεῖν καὶ μεμνῆσθαι καὶ τὰ τούτων αὖ σθγγενῆ, δόξαν τε ὀρθὴν καὶ ἀληθεῖς λογισμούς, *Philebus* 11b7-8.

[2] πλήρωσις at 31e8; ἀναχώρησιν at 32b4; and ἀνασῳζομένον at 32e2. The phrase 'going back to its nature' (εἰς τὴν αὐτῆς φύσιν ἀπιούσης) is used at 31d7-8.

[3] I disagree, then, with Gabriela Roxana Carone's recommendation that we take the claim 'with a pinch of salt' (Carone 2000, 264). While it is true that Socrates begins by attributing the view to certain clever men (κομψοί, 53c6), by 54c6-7 he has taken ownership of the view. He says, moreover, that "we should be grateful to the person" (in the singular now, 54d4-7) who pointed out that pleasure is becoming; in the other two alliances Socrates makes in the *Philebus* with persons he disagrees with (σύμμαχος 30d8; συμμάχους 44d7), he uses their views (44c5), but is not *grateful* to them. I explore in Section II a way that 'becomings' can also be 'beings', but for reasons given in Section III, I doubt this can happen in the case of pleasures. The *genesis* definition, we should note, *follows* talk of 'true pleasures'. Translations follow Dorothea Frede 1993, with modifications.

pleasures; it captures, moreover, those characteristics of pleasure that make one inclined to regard it as *apeiron*, and to call it a 'restoration'.

I am primarily concerned with what *genesis* means, when pleasure is called *genesis*, and so will first consider the varied formulations of the γένεσις-οὐσία relation condensed into 53d-54c. Looking at each one in turn, I hope to draw out the sense of *genesis* most relevant to the claim that "pleasure is always *genesis*" (53c5). One of the things we learn from this passage is that *genesis* is to be understood relationally – that is, being a '*genesis*' means bearing a certain relation to '*ousia*' or 'being' (Section I). This understanding of *genesis* and its relation to *ousia* is then brought to bear on the dialogue's earlier discussion of mixtures (*meikta*), in which mixtures appear to be *both* 'beings' and 'becomings' (Section II). I look then more closely at the theory that 'pleasure is becoming', in the distinctive version of *genesis* Socrates articulates, in the light of the dialogue's previous discussions of pleasure (Section III). I will conclude by examining how the three prominent descriptions of pleasure in the *Philebus* fit together (Section IV).

I. The Being (*ousia*)/Becoming (*genesis*) relation

If Protarchus seems at times like the standardly pliant Socratic interlocutor, he is at least also given to the odd outburst. At one point towards the end of the *Philebus*, his exasperation with Socrates is too much to be borne, and we might sympathise with him.

> SOCRATES: Suppose there are two kinds of things, one kind sufficient to itself, the other always in need of something else.
> PROTARCHUS: What do you mean by these things, and what are they?
> SOC: The one kind by nature possesses always supreme dignity; the other is lacking in that.
> PRO: Express this more clearly, please.
> SOC: We must have met fine and good youths, together with their courageous lovers.
> PRO: Certainly.
> SOC: Now, try to think of another set of two items that corresponds to this pair in all the relevant features that we just mentioned.

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> PRO: Do I have to repeat my request for the third time? Please express still more clearly what it is you want to say, Socrates!
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> SOC: Nothing complicated at all,[4] Protarchus; this is just a playful manner of speaking. What is really meant is that all things are either for the sake of something else or they are that for whose sake the other kind comes to be in each case.
>
> PRO: I finally managed to understand it, thanks to the many repetitions.
>
> (53d3-e8)

It might be 'nothing complicated' that Socrates means to convey, but in a dialogue comparatively free of high drama, driving Protarchus to this pitch of frustration stands out as unnecessary. For Socrates states the point succinctly in the end, and Protarchus apparently grasps it immediately. If *Plato* thought the point either easy to grasp or else mundane, the circuitousness and repetition would be inexplicable. If all Plato meant was something modest, Socrates could have spoken plainly (as plainly as Protarchus is made to speak), and Protarchus could have grasped the point in the first place. The hyperbolic nature of the exchange should make us sceptical about Protarchus' claim to have understood – "Perhaps, my boy, we will understand it better as the argument proceeds," is Socrates' cautious reply (53e9-54a1); and it should make us likewise cautious of Socrates' unreserved endorsement of Protarchus' example:

> PRO: By heavens, what a question you ask me! You might as well ask: "Tell me, Protarchus, whether shipbuilding goes on for the sake of ships or whether ships are for the sake of shipbuilding," or some such thing.
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> SOC: That is precisely what I am talking about, Protarchus.
>
> (54b1-5)

Perhaps Protarchus has got the point, and that is all there is to it. Socrates affirms it. But why, then, did Plato write in all the preliminaries, including Protarchus' frustration?

Protarchus offers, I suggest, an interpretation of Socrates' point, and a perfectly valid instance of the relationship at issue. In fact, Protarchus' example, unlike Socrates' previous attempts, is wonderfully concrete. For this reason, it is tempting to hold onto this

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[4] Nothing ποικίλον (53e4), variegated, changeful, manifold: ποικίλον (12c4) is the very first thing that Socrates set out to demonstrate to Protarchus that pleasure *is*, at *Philebus*12c-14b.

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concrete example, and try to use it to illuminate Socrates' more abstract formulations – if

indeed we return to these at all. And if we do this, then it would be very easy to suppose

that what is at issue is the means-end relationship (as tools are for ship-building), or the

process-product relation (as ship-building is to the ship), and something that necessarily

takes place in time.[5]

But this would be a mistake. Socrates' own attempts to articulate the relationship

that interests him did not have these features. To best understand the way in which

Protarchus hits upon a correct example, we should understand it through Socrates' own

formulations – and not the other way round. To this end, let us start with Socrates'

summary of the point:

> I hold that all ingredients, as well all tools, and quite generally all materials, are always
> provided for the sake for some process of generation. I further hold that every process of
> generation in turn always takes place for the sake of some particular being, and that all
> generation taken together takes place for the sake of the existence of being as a whole.
>
> (54c1-4)

Here it is clear that it is the 'for the sake of' relationship that is at issue. It is not, however,

entirely clear just what this relation is supposed to be, nor is the relationship meaningful in

such a way that we can automatically agree with Socrates on the direction of normative

priority. Looking back over Socrates' initial formulations should help.

From Socrates, then, we have now four descriptions of the two categories being

related. The two are contrasted and related in the following ways:

GENESIS	*OUSIA*
[1] needy, not self-sufficient	[1] self-sufficient
[2] lacking (dignity)	[2] supremely dignified
[3] (like) a lover	[3] (like) a beloved
[4] for the sake of something besides itself	[4] that for the sake of which the other exists
(Protarchus' ship-building)	(Protarchus' ship)

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[5] As Aristotle seems to have taken it in his arguments against pleasure-as-*genesis*: see especially *EN* VII.12 and X.3

The key similarity, I suggest, binding these various images and articulations together is the notion of *dependency*, of a peculiarly Platonic sort – call it 'normative-metaphysical dependency'. The items in the first category acquire *both* their worth, *and* their very identity as the things they are, through the other. This heavy, solid mass becomes a hammer, and something valuable, only because hammering needs to get done – in order, say, to build a table. In general, it is carpentry that makes sense of the identity of such things as hammers, and it is according to the standards and practices of carpentry that the worth of such a thing (a hammer), or the quality of a candidate hammer, will be measured.

Genesis in this sense is not primarily a matter of physical generation; it is rather that physical generation, like Protarchus' ship-building, illustrates concretely a peculiar sort of *metaphysical* dependency.[6] If Socrates had intended to include only physical processes under '*geneseis*', then he would hardly have had to do much to explain it to Protarchus, nor to do so by resuming his questions[7] – and Plato would have given him a most needlessly confusing line of questioning. If Socrates' own initial formulations are at all illuminating – and indeed, not just downright misleading – then the question of whether one or the other of the relata changes over time, or is perceptible, cannot be the important one.

Only one of the examples offered in the passage involves a physical process of generation, and this example is provided by Protarchus; Socrates' example of lover and beloved clearly does not illustrate a physical process. The definitive formulation – the one Socrates offers when he stops being playful, and the one that Protarchus claims to understand – is in terms of the asymmetrical 'for the sake of' relation, at one or the other end of which all things stand. Anything, including a physical change over time, gets to be

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[6] This is a relationship which *can*, as Socrates' final formulation of it suggests, be relative. I return to this in Section II.

[7] "I will indeed try to explain it to you, my friend Protarchus, by resuming my questioning" (53c9-d1)

called a *genesis* in virtue of having the features Socrates picks out, constituting standing in the 'for the sake of' relation specified.

[1]   SELF-STANDING V. NEEDY: In the first articulation, the difference is between something 'self-sufficient' (or, 'itself-according to-itself', αὐτὸ καθ'αὑτό, 53d3) and something 'desiring' or 'aiming at' something else (ἐφιέμενον, 53d4)[8].   The latter, *as* 'lacking' or 'desiring', is thereby oriented towards another; it is by its nature reliant on something external to itself. And it is reliant on that external thing for its identity – both generically, as a 'lacking' or 'aiming' thing, and specifically, as this very lack that characterises it. That is to say, *qua* 'lacking'- or 'aiming'-thing, it requires some object distinct from, and absent to it; and *qua* this-or-that particular 'lacking'-thing, it will be defined as just that specific one by the fact that it is *this*, and not *that*, towards which it points. It is essentially characterized by its lack. By contrast, what is αὐτὸ καθ'αὑτό is already the thing that it is, quite independently of external considerations. It is such as to need only itself; it is not characterized by what it lacks. While ἐφιέμενον can mean 'desiring', the point here is clearly a conceptual, and not a psychological one. 'Desiring' shares with 'aiming' and 'lacking' generally a relation of dependence upon some lacking object, or target, for its existence as such and for its specific character.[9] This is how we might equally come to think of this partner in the pairing as essentially 'lacking' and 'needy'.[10] Insofar as it is 'lacking' ('desiring', 'aiming') it is dependent upon another for its distinctive and generic character, for it is essentially oriented towards something beyond itself. What is self-determining is, by contrast, independent – αὐτὸ καθ'αὑτό, or itself by itself.

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[8] Hackforth 1945 translates ἐφιέμενον as 'aiming'.

[9] Thus Hackforth's rendering of ἐφιέμενον as 'aiming', while perhaps the less obvious choice, does capture the structural point well. Recall the *Symposium*'s strong claim (200a9-b2): "a thing that desires desires something of which it is in need; otherwise, if it were not in need, it would not desire it. To me, indeed, it seems this is extraordinarily necessary, Agathon."

[10] Thus we see the sense in Dorothea Frede's rendering of 53d3-4: "Suppose there are two kinds of things, one kind sufficient to itself, the other in need of something else."

The phrase αὐτὸ καθ᾽αὑτό is not, of course, an unfamiliar one. It is what the Forms of the middle dialogues were supposed to be, as opposed to the particulars of the sensible world. Not being αὐτὸ καθ᾽αὑτό was supposed to be a problem – a problem resolved by the existence of objects that were so self-sufficient.[11] In the *Philebus*, however, the expression is used to describe the pure but trivial pleasures of sense-perception (51d8) – and interestingly, it was not language used either of the *monads* of the methodology (15b-19a) or of any one of the four kinds described in the dialogue's earlier four-fold ontology (23c-27c).[12] Here, the expression is used in the most abstract way – indicating that what is at stake is a certain relation, a conceptual relation if you like, and what follows for anything standing at either end of that relation. The relation is an asymmetrical one, with the superior relation being responsible for the identity and worth of the inferior partner.

But the more familiar use of αὐτὸ καθ᾽αὑτό may yet illuminate its meaning in the present context. Consider the Form-particular relation. What Forms had – and what particulars lacked, except insofar as Forms existed and had an effect of some sort on the particulars – was unproblematic self-identity (which is why they are 'pure'). Particulars were dependent for their identity on Forms, in that Forms make particulars have the specific qualities that they, the Forms, are.[13] Recall that it is not for their physical generation that two sticks need there to be Equality Itself, but for their being *equal* (*Phaedo* 74a-b). For this reason (at least), Forms were supremely valuable, while sensibles had a borrowed and incomplete value. If this much at least is familiar from the previous discussions of entities that were αὐτὸ καθ᾽αὑτό, then we are entitled, I think, to locate the

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[11] See especially McCabe 1994, part I, which sets out and defends such an interpretation. I think the same idea is captured in, for example, Terence Irwin's discussion of 'aspect change' (Irwin 1977). The *Parmenides*, and in a different way the *Sophist*, cast this *unproblematic* self-sufficiency and self-identity into doubt.

[12] Much to the consternation of philosophers, who have nevertheless struggled to place Forms *somewhere* within the *Philebus*'s ontology (See, e.g. Striker 1970, esp. part IV; Fahrnkopf 1977; Moravcsik 1979; Shiner 1979; Dancy 1984; and finally a monograph devoted to the subject by Benitez 1989)

[13] The particular large things were large in virtue of the Large itself. Cf. *Phaedo*100c-102c; *Republic* 479a-e; *Phaedrus* 247c-250c

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asymmetry Socrates characterises as within this field of concerns – 'to be' is to have independent identity, while 'to become' is to require something outside oneself, in order to be the thing one is.[14]

[2] SUPREMELY DIGNIFIED / LACKING THAT: With this in hand, we begin to see the way in which the one category possesses supreme dignity or majesty, while the other lacks this. It is not just blind Platonic prejudice in favour of being over becoming. The preference for being is a preference for independence, and marks an important insight into intelligibility. Recall that σεμνός (or here, σεμνότατον, 'most dignified') is most properly said of the gods; and in the *Philebus* Plato consistently associates the gods and the divine with intelligence and intelligibility.[15] Lacking that dignity is, I suggest, tantamount to lacking the self-sufficiency of independent intelligibility.

'Becoming' things defy identification because they lack a fixed identity, and this is so whether we consider physically changing particulars, or anything else which becomes what it is in virtue of something else – 'changing' by aspect or by context, or 'indefinite' underdetermined things such as 'hot'. Such 'becomings' owe what they are, insofar as they *are* some definite thing, to something else, and such dependence is undignified – it renders that which is thus dependent epistemologically and metaphysically deficient. This leaden lump might be a paperweight, an anchor or a hammer – nothing about the leaden lump itself, if that is all I have, determines the question. The needs of navigation, however, might in this case provide the answer. It may, indeed, tell us further what changes should be introduced and what state ought to be maintained in the object, or in such objects generally. That is to say, changing, or underdetermined things do not after all elude comprehension altogether; they *can* be determinately 'this' or 'that' – but only insofar as

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[14] We might in this context compare *Timaeus* 52c1-5, which distinguishes 'that which becomes' from 'being' in the same sort of way: the former rely upon the latter as the depiction the depicted.
[15] For full references, see Carpenter 2003, esp. 107-109

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they refer to stable points of reference external to themselves. So for example, it may be that it is in virtue of its role in answering to the demands of navigation that I can place this particular object *as an anchor*, and so grasp which changes over time matter (threaten or constitute its identity) and which do not. Which constancy suffices for identification and re-identification of the object or property is determined by which characteristics enable it to play the role within, or be well-related with respect to some stable conceptual framework.[16]

The relation between *genesis* and *ousia* is thus hierarchical, and it is a hierarchy of intelligibility. Something that refers to no criteria outside itself for its identity is able to function as a standard for other, less intrinsically definite, less determinate things. It has 'majesty', is to be looked up to, or revered. Anything beholden to an external standard, by contrast, cannot render the standard itself more definitively what it is. And it is because of this that the 'standard' can determine and make sense of what is measured by it, but not the other way round. From self-standing identity, one can measure and manage degrees of determinacy within disorder; starting from disorder, on the contrary, is a non-starter. One can neither create nor be a definite, intelligible, ordered thing, if the only measure is chaos. In this way, the relationship in question is intractably hierarchical: whatever is intrinsically underdetermined will be at the mercy of, and so inferior to, whatever is capable of bestowing on it 'measure', determinacy as *this* rather than *that*, and so subject to *these* standards of success, rather than *those.*

[3] LOVERS & BELOVEDS: Socrates' second pairing is value-laden, and intimates, I argued, the way that metaphysical dependency leads directly to normative dependency. This 3rd pairing,

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[16] It should not be supposed that familiar crafts offer the only sort of stable reference points there might be; they are a useful example, but any stable, intelligible framework would do as well. In the language of the *Philebus*, the indefinite becomings of 'high and low', 'fast and slow', are definite, intelligible, and evaluable – 'tempo', 'pitch', 'harmony' and so on – when considered as a part of the structure of music.

lover-beloved, picks up on this theme of value – the lovers are 'manly' or 'courageous' (53d10); the beloveds are 'handsome' or 'fine', and 'good' (53d9) – and its connection to dependency and self-determination.

The pair lover-beloved is, as Frede points out,[17] no doubt a reference to the *Symposium* and the *Phaedrus*, and we should recall the incomplete lover seeking what he lacks (*Symposium* 200a-201a, 205d-e). This relation picks up the 'lacking' and 'aiming at' of the previous two formulations, focusing now on the goal-oriented aspect of the relation that interests Socrates. The lover wants something, and insofar as he acts as a lover, is determined by his aiming to get that very thing.

This model of the *genesis-ousia* relation resists any connotations of physical generation in *genesis*. A lover after all does not become his beloved. At the same time, it highlights instead a relation of pointed, or directed, deficiency, relying on something else to supply what is missing. Yet, it is hardly plausible to write the *feeling* of desire into the metaphysical structure of reality. So the point of this pairing must not be so much the desiring, as rather the way the lover is constituted *as* a lover through his being oriented or directed towards a beloved. And any particular lover is, moreover, the very lover he is through the way that he is oriented towards his particular beloved.

The notion of 'orientation towards', conspicuous of the lover-beloved pair, generalises in non-personal cases to illustrate that there is a standard distinct from some objects with respect to which they are rightly judged, and without reference to which we could not identify them as the kind of thing or as the particular thing they are – without a beloved, a man is no lover. And because it might seem that the reverse is also true (no beloved without a lover), it is important to hold onto the asymmetry of the relation: the lover (insofar as he acts as a lover) organizes his life, practically and emotionally, around

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[17] in her notes to the English translation (64n1)

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the beloved – thus becoming manly, if he loves well. The beloved in this scenario simply remains steadfastly himself.[18] The man who loves may lack any number of things; but it is specifically the lack of the beloved that determines the lover. So similarly, any object might not have any number of features; but there will be certain of these features that it 'strives' in some sense to manifest, that it ought to have for its own – certain qualities towards which it is oriented, and by reason of which we can point to these qualities, rather than to others, as indicating the nature of the dependent object.

[4] FOR THE SAKE OF: The expression of the relation as 'for the sake of' is the one that Protarchus claims finally to understand. He illustrates his understanding that 'becoming' and 'being' stand in this relation by his facetious question about ship-building – followed by, 'What keeps you from answering your questions yourself, Socrates?' (54b6), to register his indignation. Socrates readily accepts Protarchus' gloss on the *genesis-ousia* relationship, and he includes the abstract correlates of the example on his subsequent list of 'inferiors' (54c1-4). But Protarchus' gloss, referencing a process of physical production, is in this respect strikingly in contrast to Socrates' own formulations of the point at 53a5-7 and 54c1-4, where *genesis* being 'for the sake of' *ousia* is a distinctly impersonal – even timeless – teleological relation.[19] The scope in the final formulation has been widened to *include* definitely temporal items – and after all, the means and process of attaining a certain end or creating a product *are* teleological, too.

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[18] Recall, the beloveds were on the side of the 'self-sufficient' in the set of analogies. Should a beloved fail to be self-sufficient, and so to remain steadfastly himself, then the beloved will not be able to play the identity-constituting role he otherwise might, and the unfortunate lover, like Callicles (*Gorgias* 481d-482b) will fail to attain *qua* lover even that dependent and deficient sort of identity typical of *geneseis* that are properly related to *ousia*.

[19] Thus, the lover does not exist to *benefit* the beloved, nor does ship-building consist in benefiting ships; this is not the sort of 'for the sake of' relation at issue. Rather both in some sense aim to attain their respective ends (see *Euthyphro* 13b-e for the distinction). The lover strives to attain (the virtues of) the beloved (*Symposium*, *Phaedrus* 251-254), and ship-building aims at reproducing all the key qualities of ships. Richardson Lear 2004, 72-92, brings out well the nature of Platonic (and Aristotelian) love as a metaphysical, teleological relation.

But the means-end relation, or the process-product relation, do not *supplant* the connotations of the first three descriptions;[20] nor are Socrates' 'for the sake of' relations mere varieties of the genus illustrated by Protarhcus' example. In fact, the situation is just the reverse: Protarchus' ship illustrates one sort of Socrates' asymmetrical 'for the sake of' relation. Indeed, what makes 'means' inferior to 'ends', or processes inferior to products, is that they are dependent, normatively and metaphysically, on 'ends'. Generation, in its ordinary physical sense, manifests this dependency particularly clearly; and so the wider phenomenon of such normative and metaphysical dependency is aptly named *genesis*. The interest of such phenomena, however, and what allows Protarchus' ship, Socrates' beloved, and 'that which is αὐτὸ καθ'αὐτό' to be grouped together, is the dependency (or lack of it) for criteria of identity and standards of success.

Being sets the standard. Something 'has being' or 'is a being' to the extent that it acts as the standard to which other things must measure up if they are to count as a 'thing of this kind'. In part this means that a *genesis* will only be determinately the very thing it is (let us say, the activity of ship-building) in virtue of the organising role that something more determinate (in this case, the ship) has with respect to it. This is dependency of identity – assembling planks and hammering them together is meaningless motion, it could be anything, unless it is a ship, *or something else in particular*, that one is building. This dependency is at the same time a normative one – if it is a *ship*, not a shop, that one wants from the hammering of planks, then the requirements for being a navigable vessel determine whether the building has been well done. The hierarchy is a complex one,[21] but the point in each case is the same: as tools and materials are to production, so is the coming-to-be related to the things that are. They are similar not because *genesis* is the

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[20] And so I disagree with Hackforth's claim that "the antithesis of γένεσις and οὐσία is identical with that of means and end." (Hackforth 1945, 106)

[21] As Plato was aware, even this is not the end of the story – 'what it is to be a ship' will be dependent upon what a sea-captain or navigator wants to be able to *do* with a ship – *cf. Republic X*, 601e, where flute players are responsible for telling flute-makers what to do.

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material or instrument of *ousia*, but because both are cases of one thing being ontologically and normatively determined through its relation to something else.

So the point is not primarily about processes that take place in time, about crafts and artefacts – lovers, after all, do not produce their beloveds, or turn into them. The point at issue is rather the direction of flow of identity and normativity – and especially, that the two go together, in the same direction. Value and identity flow from whatever is self-standing to whatever becomes what it is only in relation to something external to it; *from* that which can be explained (and so is such as to be), without reference to anything external to it, *to* the parts, aspects, particulars, and so on whose identity and meaning is undetermined without reference to something more defined, orderly or whole than they are in themselves.

Socrates' claim that "pleasure is always a *genesis*" (53c4-5), then, is the claim that pleasure as such is dependent, lacking, not self-determining – is a *genesis* in the sense his various formulations articulate.

II. *Geneseis-eis-ousian, Pleasure as apeiron*

The ground for understanding what it means for pleasure to be *genesis* has in fact already been laid, somewhat surprisingly perhaps, in the earlier discussion that ends up classifying pleasure as *apeiron* (27e). For that classification arises out of a metaphysical discussion which itself draws on a complementary epistemology, according to which identity and value come (or become) in tandem, and with respect to something stable. The epistemology (at 16a-19a) and metaphysics (at 23c-27c) illustrate how it is that because music, for example, is the unified and well-defined system it is, certain sounds are able to be identified *as* music; and, moreover, how this instance of music is then susceptible to evaluation as *good* or *bad*, in some respect.

The four-fold ontology, in particular, contains the seeds for the focus on the metaphysical relevance of *genesis*.[22] It is there we learn that to succeed in being a single, definite and unified thing is to be thereby a standard or measure of value, a norm or paradigm ('health', 'temperate climate', 'music' at 25e-26b) against which that which is indefinite and becoming could be made determinate – coming to be in a being, so that these could be both *identified* as the kind of thing they were, as well as *evaluated* for how well, or in what way they succeeded.

At 23c4, Socrates proposes dividing "everything existing now in the universe", eventually into four kinds: limit (πέρας), unlimitedness (ἄπειρον), the mixture (μεικτόν) of the two, and the cause of the mixtures, which turns out to be intelligence (νοῦς). 'Mixtures' (*meikta*) are well-formed, complex wholes[23] – examples are 'health' (25e7-8, 26b6) and 'climate'.[24] That out of which they are mixed, however, prove nearly impossible to understand outside of their constituting something belonging to the third kind. 'Hotter and colder' (24a), 'fast and slow' (26a) are given as examples of 'unlimitedness', or 'indeterminateness', of which the general mark is to "admit of more and less" (24e7). Such terms are necessarily understood relationally,[25] and could consist in any arbitrary degree. Whether 25 kph is 'fast' or 'slow' – in fact, whether 'fast' should be measured in kilometres per hour or beats per minute – is settled only once we have some specific mixture or another in view: a sprinter, an aeroplane, a symphony. It is settled, that is, by considerations entirely external to the indeterminate pairing 'fast-slow'. Similarly with

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[22] That *genesis* may have some significance beyond, and more relevant than, physical processes of change is not a new thought – see, for example, Frede 1988 and Code 1988.

[23] Contra Hackforth (1945, 39), we cannot suppose 'mixtures' to be whatever combinations of limit and unlimitedness happen to arise. In fact, doing so raises a number of interpretive difficulties, as Hackforth sees (42-43). See also Gosling 1975, 165 *ff.*, for the obvious complications involved in taking *meikta* to be merely *any* co-instantiation of limit and unlimitedness. These difficulties are best avoided, I think, by recognizing the normativity built into 'mixtures' of limit and unlimitedness; but this, as we shall see, will mean dropping the unnecessary supposition that *genesis* can refer only to the physical, sensible world.

[24] Specifically, 'climate' that is 'moderate' and 'harmonious' (26b1-3, 26a7, 26a8); other examples include 'music' (26a3-4),'beauty' (26b6), 'strength' (26b6), and 'fine things of the soul' (26b6-7).

[25] This is brought out in Socrates' repeated use of comparatives to name these pairs – see esp. 25c.

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'limit' (*peras*), examples of which are ratios – e.g. double, half, equal. A mathematical ratio is in a way more determinate – it specifies a particular ratio, and so is not continually liable to change;[26] but a ratio does not, of itself, determine which things are measured and related. Again, only the fact that some particular mixture or another – 'climate' or 'health' – is at issue settles this.

Philebus' last contribution, after a long silence, is to assert categorically that pleasure is 'unlimited' or 'indefinite' (ἄπειρον, 27e7-9), before bowing out of the discussion altogether with a snide aside to Socrates (28b1, b6). This classification is allowed to pass without clarification. Although Philebus clearly wants, in his eager classification of pleasure as 'unlimited', to ensure that pleasure is always something you can have more and more of, what he thereby signs up to is something more: namely, that pleasure is the sort of thing that gets "tied down by" limit (27d8), in the context of some specific mixture – thus borrowing its identity and its terms of evaluation, or else having none at all. Certain motions 'come to be' pleasures when they arise in a soul, and are made determinate, through being determinately related to other motions and states.

The final description of *genesis* at 54c established not only its asymmetrical, hierarchical relation to *ousia*, but also illustrated how this relation can be hierarchically iterated: tools and materials are for the sake of becomings; processes are for the sake of beings. Dependency and self-sufficiency can come in degrees. This, too, has been anticipated in the metaphysics of the four kinds.

Meikta are stable unities, within which indeterminacy has been resolved, becoming has been brought to an end through the introduction of 'limit' (24d, 25e), proper ratios. Nevertheless, these mixtures can also be said, sometimes, to 'come to be' (25d1). Protarchus

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[26] "The hotter and equally the colder are always in flux and never remain, while definite quantity means standstill and the end of all progression." (24d3-5)

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describes mixtures as 'certain generations' (γενέσεις, 25e4), and Socrates confirms this.[27] We might think this odd, for *meikta* to be considered *geneseis,* when they are that in which measure has brought an end to all progression (προϊόν, 24d5), that which has measures capable of putting an "end to the conflicts there are among opposites" (25d11-e1). But Socrates follows this up with an even more noteworthy phrase – each mixture, he says, he regards "as a unity, a becoming-into-being [γένεσιν εἰς οὐσίαν, 26d8] created through the measures imposed by limit" (26d7-9).[28] Socrates repeats this striking claim that 'mixtures' such as 'music' and 'health' are *ousia*, and yet involved in *genesis*, in his recapitulation (27b8-9): "third is the being [οὐσίαν] which is mixed and generated [μεικτὴν καὶ γεγενημένην] from those [limit and unlimitedness]."

Taken as a piece of physics, a 'becoming-into-being' seems flatly contradictory – how could something be 'becoming' and at the same time 'being'? Either it is in motion or it is not.[29] One might attempt to resolve this by supposing that *meikta* is ambiguous – it refers both to eternally unchanging complex unities such as 'music', and also to particular instances of such unities: this musical performance. Only the latter, we might then think, would qualify as *geneseis-eis-ousian.* But even if *meikta* is so ambiguous, there is no evidence Socrates intends such a qualification to his claim that "*all* the joint offspring" (26d8) of *peras* and *apeiron* are 'becomings-into-being'. And there is an alternative near to hand which addresses the riddle in a way consonant with the metaphysical picture Socrates has been setting out. Take *genesis* to highlight metaphysical dependence, picking up on the category of the indefinite with which it is closely associated, rather than physical processes

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[27] "From such mixture in each case," Protarchus says, "certain generations result." Socrates replies, "Your impression is correct" (25e5).
[28] Although Hackforth recommends that we "not read too much into the words *genesin eis ousian*" xxCHECK GREEK IN QUOTE?, it is not, I think, over-interpreting to be struck by the phrase, and sceptical that it "need not mean anything more than *genesis* alone" (Hackforth 1945, 49n2), especially since the juxtaposition of *genesis* and *ousia* occurs twice in describing the *meikta.*
[29] 'Becoming' and 'being' were supposed to be mutually exclusive (see, for example the *Timaeus* 28a); *Theaetetus* 157a-c also works by contrasting these two, when taken as a doctrine of physics.

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or 'things in the sensible world'. If we correspondingly take *ousia* to be marked peculiarly by *independence*, or self-standingness, then the εἰς indicates the directedness of the former with respect to the latter that we discussed already in the asymmetrical pairings of 53c-54. What is intrinsically indefinite becomes derivatively determinate through constituting some well-articulated, structured whole. It need not, then, be perplexing that the very same kind of thing could be described at once as *genesis* and as *ousia*.

Well-ordered 'mixtures' such as 'health' and 'music', for example, are on the one hand normative, and unchangingly impervious to the vicissitudes of things in the physical world. Particular physical constitutions or musical performances are judged healthy (or otherwise), musical (or otherwise) according to whether they match certain established criteria, those that constitute 'healthiness' or 'musicality'. Moreover, what constitutes health, or music, is independent of individual instances of healthy or musical things.

But at the same time, 'health' and 'music' are not absolutely independent. They are themselves normatively dependent upon more abstract notions – for example balance, proportionality, and so on; and they depend also on the intelligence which determines that just these ratios of just these ingredients is *good*.[30] Intelligence appeals to intrinsically valuable characteristics to determine that *just this* set of criteria is the appropriate one for determining health, while just *these* are the criteria appropriate to music. Thus *meikta*, (non-sensible, intelligible mixtures) are both independent, stable, and reliably the same (they are *ousia*); and yet they are at the same time crucially dependent for their normative identity on something besides themselves (that is, they are *geneseis*, in the sense of *genesis* that arises from Socrates' examples at 53d-54c). This, then, would be another way in which it is right to regard the *meikta* as *geneseis eis ousian*, rather than simply as *geneseis* or *ousia*.

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[30] Socrates argues for mind's causal responsibilities at 26e-27b and 28d-30d. What exactly the dependent *meikta* are dependent upon I am also drawing from the final ranking of 'goods' – or perhaps, better, sources of goodness – with which the dialogue culminates (66a-c). I must thank Christopher Taylor for insisting that I think harder about the dependency of *meikta*, especially pointing out that their dependency on 'mind as cause' did not suffice to make the point I wish to make here.

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They are *ousia* with respect to their constituents, and yet dependent upon external standards for their specific identity and value.

The metaphysics of the *Philebus* thus presents us with the conceptual apparatus for grasping *genesis* in its metaphysical aspect of normative dependency. It is against this background that we should understand Socrates' acceptance of Philebus' claim that pleasure belongs to the 'unlimited' or 'indefinite' or 'indeterminate' kind. This theme of the metaphysical and normative indeterminacy of pleasure, and its consequent dependence on intelligence, is carried from the classification of pleasure as *apeiron* to the description of pleasure as *genesis*, through Socrates' first argument for false pleasure. This discussion illustrates what pleasure is dependent upon, displays some consequences of this dependency, and highlights how that makes pleasure peculiarly vulnerable.

III. Pleasure's Neediness: Restoration and Falsity

Something is a *genesis* when it suffers from a dependency of a certain kind. It is 'in need of', or 'aims at' something else, as Socrates' first description has it (53d3-4). If pleasures 'aim at' something, it is natural, in the Platonic context, to have recourse to the 'restoration' model of pleasure, described at *Philebus* 31d-e; and it is natural to conclude from this that what pleasures aim at is 'the restoration of a lack'. And this would not be *wrong*; but it would also not be especially helpful. For the restoration model of pleasure suggests a literal, physical refilling – eating and drinking are Plato's too-familiar examples; and many pleasures are just not like that.[31]

Plato shows that he is fully aware of the limitations of this physical model when he introduces entirely mental pleasures into his definition at 32c – these are, he says, "a

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[31] C. C. W. Taylor 2003, 6-7, observes that even sex, another standard bodily pleasure, does not easily fit this model.

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different kind of pleasure" (32c4) from physical pleasures.[32] 'Hope' and 'fear' are his primary examples of mental pleasure and mental pain; but *hope* only exists so long as the hoped-for object is not actually had, and likewise fear.[33] Although they may be fluctuating and unstable states, hope and fear seem very difficult to characterise as refillings or depletions of any kind, and Plato does not try to do so. He does not even suggest that he thinks hope and fear *are* fluctuating or unstable. Nor is it easy to conceive what imbalance they might be restoring or introducing.[34]

For this reason, the restoration conception seems limited, and Plato aware of its limits. But the notion is not useless. Depletion and restoration point in the right direction in understanding pleasure generally, for they are particularly clear manifestations of pleasure's neediness. Thinking of the body as a vessel needing food poured into it is one expression of a more radical and thoroughgoing dependency and indeterminacy infecting all pleasures.

Pleasure-as-restoration makes it clear that, as the *genesis* passage confirms, pleasures are directed, specified by their object. A pleasure is dependent upon its object, not just for its occasion, but also for its particular phenomenological identity. This is clear when we consider that there is no one sensation which arises each time we are pleased – the pleasure of a job well done does not *feel like* the pleasure of watching a comedy.

But this sort of 'dependence' is not special to pleasure, and does not exhaust the ways in which pleasure's directedness is externally determined. An oil painting does not *look like* a prize poodle, and the experiences of seeing each will differ accordingly, no less

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[32] Cf. 33c5. That they are different does not preclude the possibility that they have something significant in common; in fact, my aim is to bring out what that significant similarity is in the different sorts of pleasure there are. This will become clearer in the final section.

[33] Hope is defined by reference to physical pleasures and pains (it is "the anticipation of the soul itself of these two kinds of experiences", 32c1); and it is, potentially, one component of desire ("he enjoys hope for replenishment when he remembers", 36b4), which requires the soul to *be in contact* with the desired object, precisely because the body is not. (35b-c).

[34] Even if the hopes always have reference to some refilling, they are supposed to *be* pleasures, not just refer to them. If the hopes themselves are to be pleasant, then unless they are refillings, it is not the case that all pleasure is a refilling.

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than the pleasures each might afford. Pleasure is peculiar in that something idiosyncratic about the person enjoying it determines whether this or that object will occasion pleasure at all, and in what way. Does he want it? Is she missing it? Do I crave it? If not, the object will not likely give rise to pleasure in that person. Do you long for it, or do you merely hope for it? Do you have a realistic idea of what it would be like to get it? Just how it feels to achieve the object of your desires will vary depending on which of these relations you stand in. In general, it is the quality of the wanting (whether conscious or not) as developed through myriad beliefs, judgements and values, that gives shape to the consequent pleasure.

Thus, while 'restoration' points in the right direction for grasping pleasure's nature, it points too vaguely – for having a 'lack' the size and shape of the object, being defined through its object in this way, does not suffice to distinguish pleasure from, for instance, perception. There is no determinate 'pleasure'-feeling, in the way that there is a 'white-perception'.[35] What any pleasure is like must be determined in its particularity by the way an individual relates to a particular object at a particular time. This was implicit in the classification of pleasure as *apeiron*, as something which becomes determinate in virtue of the context in which it arises, once it is specified that the appropriate context for pleasure is 'soul' (33c-34b).

In this way, pleasure is a precarious thing. It ought, the restoration model suggests at first, to be a straightforward, scientifically ascertainable matter of whether or not such-and-such is occurring in a living body (31d) – either a physical lack is being filled, or it is not. But bodily changes only occasion sensation or perception, whether pleasant, painful or neutral, provided that one is *aware* of these changes, in some way; and this awareness is

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[35] Against the idea that there is one determinate sensation (being pleased) which accompanies some of our other determinate sensations, Dorothea Frede writes, "For Plato there is in each case of pleasure only *one* motion of the soul, i.e. the positive reception of what the soul desires. There is not (a) one motion – e.g. Rumpelstiltskin's thought that he will get the Queen's child, and (b) another one accompanying or succeeding the first one, something like an indistinct *glow*" (Frede 1985, 172).

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provided by the soul's engagement. "When the soul and body are jointly affected," says Socrates, "and moved by one and the same affection, if you call this motion *perception*, you would say nothing out of the way" (34a3-5);[36] but if the soul is unaffected, no perception – and hence no pleased- or pained-perception – has taken place. Since all pleasures must be perceived alterations in order to exist at all (43b-d),[37] all pleasures, and not only the purely 'mental' ones, are dependent on psychic activity for their existence.

But this percipient soul, in virtue of which a physical or mental change will count as a pleasure, is not a blank slate. The percipient soul is always animated by a believing, judging, discriminating mind. It perceives the sensations that arise in the body *as* sensations that arise in a body, in this body, in fact, which is mine. In becoming aware of the sensation, the perception of pleasure or pain takes its place alongside a whole host of mental machinery that is already in place, and arises as related in various complex ways to the beliefs, judgements, values and desires that we already have. For pleasure to arise at all is for it to arise in a rich and full mental context.[38] Notice that in order merely to define pleasure, Socrates brings into the conversation pain (31c), memory (33c-34a), perception (33c-d), knowledge (34c), and desire (34c).

This is not just 'mental holism', if mental holism implies an equal dependency of all psychological functions on each other. For pleasure is more dependent for its determinacy on its context than perception, for instance, which also must engage the soul. This is,

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[36] Because pleasures always involve 'awareness', there is usually (if not always) some aspect through which we relate ourselves to the source of pleasures. Thus Bernard Williams' description of pleasure as "one mode or species of attention" is apt (Williams 1959, 71).

[37] Strictly, any pleasure requires awareness of bodily change; this need not be the implausible claim that such awareness would take the conscious form of 'my body is changing', rather the change is noticed as a pleasure arising.

[38] While the relevant beliefs and so on surrounding our reception of a pleasure may be implicit, they nonetheless may colour the very nature of the pleasure itself. "That such implicit intended objects that come to the fore when one gives a complete description of a pleasure are more often involved in our everyday pleasures than we want to admit to ourselves is obvious," writes Frede 1985, 178. "It is known that people who thoroughly enjoyed a beef-stew in a restaurant later felt nausea when they learned that dog-food had been served. So there are hidden or implicit propositions contained even in immediate pleasures concerning the objects of pleasures."

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rather, hierarchical mental holism – for there are certain dependence relations which only work one way. In particular, whatever in us aims to 'get it right' about the world is responsible for providing the stable mental structure and framework within which any desire takes definite shape or any pleasure arises. A look at Plato's discussion of false pleasures will help to illustrate this asymmetrical holism.

The first argument for the possibility of false pleasures (36e-40e) culminates by drawing attention to the dependency of pleasure on mind, when Socrates opposes the pleasures of the good man to those of the wicked man (39e10). "Wicked people as a rule enjoy false pleasures," Socrates claims, "but the good among mankind true ones" (40c1-2). His concern is specifically with different people's imaginings and anticipations about the future: those anticipations turn out to be true for good men – "because they are dear to the gods" (40b3) – and false for the wicked. The claim sounds at first absurd, the *deus ex machina* brought in to justify it desperate.

But we could see this as something more substantial than an appeal to divine grace.[39] If we see the passage as exploring the practical implications of the claim that pleasure is *apeiron*, then we can see in it an implicit claim about the relation between one's cognitive state and one's pleasures: in brief, pleasures depend on cognitive states in some way that the reverse is not true. Then, since on Socrates' view being good consists in (coming closer to) having knowledge, this *explains* the pleasures the good man has and their qualities, while being wicked consists in false views of various kinds, and this has the same explanatory power.[40]

When one has a thoroughly false or distorted way of perceiving and relating to the world, as the wicked man does, then any pleasures that arise will be likewise false and

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[39] And I have argued elsewhere that it is not (Carpenter 2006).

[40] The appeal to divine grace, then, would for Socrates be an appeal to the "Zeus" who is divine *nous*, and as such responsible for the world's being an intelligible and providentially ordered whole (30d). Further detail and defence of the ideas in this paragraph and the next can be found in Carpenter 2006.

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distorted – at least, this will follow if one is thinking of pleasures as determined (as pleasure, and as this specific pleasantness) by the whole *psyche.* When, conversely, one's view of reality is undistorted, and one's perception and judgement are unclouded, as is the case for the good man, the pleasures that thereby arise cannot but be true, for the same reason. Whether the claim that "wicked people as a rule enjoy false pleasures, but the good among mankind true ones" is convincing, we have at least an argument for it, provided one regards pleasure as something indeterminate, whose specific nature is established in each case by the condition of the *psyche* in which it arises. This presumption makes sense of the reliable link Socrates argues for, between goodness and true hopes. The passage about the good man's pleasures then illustrates what it means for pleasures to be dependent for their worth and identity on more determinate capacities of soul – that is, on the truth-oriented capacities which, on the rationalist view, make a man count as good or bad. The illustration thus explains the consequences of classifying pleasure as *apeiron*, and anticipates the description of this inadequacy as *genesis.*

The dependency of pleasure on judgement is reiterated and expanded in Socrates' discussion of the second and third sorts of falsity to which pleasure is subject. Mistaking proximity for quantity or value (for, that is, desirability) can cause us to experience our pleasures and pains as greater or lesser than they actually are (esp. 42b). Finally, taking against our pleasures, being suspicious of them or regarding them as undesirable (falsely considering them pains, 43d-44d), can cause them to be, in fact, painful, or at least unpleasant.[41] Our evaluation of one of our own pleasures can itself be part of the determination of it as the feeling it is. This last means that the determinate size or quality

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[41] It seems to me that both the person who says 'the neutral, painless pleasureless, state is most pleasant' (thus "identifying pleasure with freedom from pain", 43d10), and the one who says, "there are no such things as pleasures at all" (44b9-10) is likely to be thinking that all so-called pleasures are in fact painful. It is, of course, possible for the first sort to suppose that things conventionally called pleasures are indeed pleasures, but that they are lesser pleasures than no pleasure or pain at all – presumably because of a view that all pleasures other than the 'neutral state' are also bound up with pain, and evidently with more pain than pleasure, or else how could a neutral state, equally void of pleasure and pain, be most pleasant?

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of a potentially pleasant sensation relies not only on the specific nature of the object of pleasure, but on circumstances external to both pleasure and object, on circumstances specific to the psyche in which the sensation arises. And the psychic climate is made determinate by the activity of the truth-oriented faculties.[42]   It may perhaps still be informative to think of pleasures as 'filling a lack' in this sense: they are determined in their nature by the specific shape of the hole – created by expectation, value-judgement, belief, perception – to be filled.

Socrates offers a rather different sort of illustration of the dependent nature, or intrinsic indeterminacy of pleasure, in the 'dream sequence' of 20b-22a. The 'mollusc argument' at 20b-21d, takes the matter from the other way round, by inviting us to consider what 'pleasure *qua* pleasure' would look like. Eliminate "knowing, understanding, and remembering, and what belongs with them, right judgement and true calculations" (11b7-8), and we find we have eliminated whatever was desirable to us in pleasure, or even intelligible to us as pleasure.

> SOC: Since you would not be in possession of either reason, memory, knowledge, or right judgement, must you not be in ignorance, first of all, about this very question, whether you were enjoying yourself or not, given that you were devoid of any kind of intelligence?
>
> PRO: Necessarily.
>
> SOC: Moreover, due to lack of memory, it would be impossible for you to remember that you ever enjoyed yourself, and for pleasure to survive from one moment to the next, since it would leave no memory. But, not possessing right judgement, you would not realize that you are enjoying yourself even while you do, and, being unable to calculate, you could not figure out any future pleasures for yourself. (21c1-7)

Protarchus is struck dumb (21d4-5). And no wonder: What is striking about this picture is how impossible it would be actually to give a detailed or precise description of any particular pleasure. The pleasures, like the person as a whole, would be an amorphous blob, indistinguishable one from the other. If this can still be called pleasure at all, it seems clear at least that it is not pleasure as we know and experience, and desire it. Even setting aside

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[42] 'Truth-oriented' need carry no grander connotations than 'tries to get it right about the world'. When we use our eyes, we try to see what is in fact there.

the name-calling, Socrates is entitled to his conclusion that "you would not live a human life" at all (21c6-7) – these experiences do not fall within the recognizably human range, and so the hypothesis that pleasure could be recognizably what it is for us, without relying on cognition, must be false.

IV. *Genesis*, Restoration, and the Indefiniteness of Pleasure

Three distinct descriptions of pleasure are put forward in the *Philebus* – pleasure is unlimited/indefinite, pleasure is a restoration, and pleasure is a 'becoming'. The final formulation neither discards nor contradicts the previous two – it refines them. *Genesis*, in the sense developed at 53d-54c, picks out what should trouble us about pleasure's indefiniteness, and about its restorative nature.

The way *genesis* picks up the second of these, restoration, is the more difficult to see; I will consider it first. As I suggested above (Section III), I believe that Plato was very aware of the limitations of the 'restoration' theory of pleasure, if it was taken to be some kind of physical refilling. His juxtaposition of the 'other sort of pleasures', mental (32b9, 33c5-36c), with the physical restorations and depletions is too stark (31d-32b7, 32e1-2), and the question, 'In what way is hope a restoration?' is made too obvious.[43] This has led some to conclude that Plato, in the *Philebus*, does not regard pleasure as a single sort of thing.[44] There is a way in which I agree, but would put the point rather differently – restoration, taken in its most obvious sense, may well not capture every sort of pleasure. It is, however, one way in which to model the relation of dependency that all pleasures have on the more 'cognitive' functions of soul. The size, shape, and character of any lack will be what determines whether any particular sensation counts as a pleasure, as it will at the same

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[43] Socrates even suggests that we go "back to the same point of departure" (34e7), recalling thirst and hunger to mind directly before considering desire and hope.
[44] Cf. Hackforth 1945, 105; Gosling 1975, 73-43, 142, 213; Gosling and Taylor 1982, 134-138

time determine the pleasure qualitatively. What restoration misses is the way that pleasure is characterised as much by what *is* there, mentally, as by what is not.

Yet Socrates persists in using the language of refilling (e.g. pure pleasures, which "are based on imperceptible and painless lacks, while their fulfilments are perceptible and pleasant" at 51b5-7; again at 52a5, "filling with knowledge"), and the restorative aspect of pleasure makes a frequent appearance in other Platonic dialogues.[45] This can be partly attributed to the fact that restoration, physical and intellectual/emotional, is, for creatures like us, a chronic need. Thus, insisting on the language of 'restoration' insists also on the imperfection, the tendency towards deterioration, of each of us. This constant state of not being perfect, yet having perfection to strive for, is of vital importance to Plato, throughout his ethical thought.

But when we search for some attenuated sense in which 'hopes' could be regarded as restorations, 'fears' as depletions, reflections leads us from restoration to dependency. It may be that to hope, for example, is constantly to refill our minds with the good thing that is outside of our possession. If our minds are forgetful, then perhaps a state of hoping could be regarded as a process of continually refreshing our attention to something not immediately within our grasp.[46] This extension, however, turns the focus towards the way that such pleasures are *dependent* – upon judgement, memory, perception – rather than obviously restorative. For even such a minimal description relies on there being judgements about what is good to have, perceptions and judgements about whether I have it, whether it is possible to get it, what it would be like to have it and so on. These are the conditions of the hoping.

The characterisations of pleasure as *apeiron* and as *genesis* seem more obviously connected, at least on the interpretation of *genesis* I am arguing for. I claimed above that to

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[45] Cf. *Gorgias* 491e-494e; *Republic* IX, 583c-586c, esp. 585a8-e4
[46] Cf. *Symposium* 208a-b

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be 'indefinite' means to require both limit, and the proper context (a particular limited thing) as well as intelligent cause, in order to be anything at all.[47] Any indefinite thing becomes determinate only inasmuch as it contributes to the unity of an intelligible whole – it must have limit set on it (25d11-e2), and they must be the right limits.[48] In themselves, indefinite things have no stability, no 'inner logic', no real claim to be this rather than that. Indefinite things are no *things* at all.

When it has limit set on it, however, indefiniteness becomes 'for' something – it "attains an end"(24b2), in both senses. A certain measure of heat in a body, for example, is required for there to be a living body at all. Independently of this context, it is indeterminate what temperature should count as hot, rather than cold, which temperature is to be welcomed, which avoided. In itself, it is as pointless, and meaningless as it is limitless and indefinite. But this is, in a way, just the nature of the relationship Socrates describes in his discussion of *genesis* and *ousia*.

Regarding it in this way should shed light on the mystery of how it is that pleasures, defined as indefinite, or unlimited can – some of them – suddenly be 'assign[ed] to the class of things that possess measurement' (52d1-2), and yet immediately afterwards be considered always *genesis* (53c5). For, acquiring 'measure' is something that happens to indefiniteness when it comes to be within the context of a definite whole, contributing thereby to the unity of that whole. A lump of metal, or a damp scrap of earth, becomes an awl, or a pot, in the hands of a cobbler or a potter exercising his craft. It *does* thus acquire a determinate nature – in acquiring a purpose and identity, it loses its indeterminacy; but only dependently or conditionally so, in virtue of arising for the sake of constituting some

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[47] This is, of course, a bolder claim about how we should read 23c-27c, and even 16c-18d, than I can argue for fully here. Carpenter 2007 argues more fully this is how best to read the passages.
[48] See especially 26a-c, and the explanation of why *mind* must be responsible for the "joint offspring of the other two kinds as a unity" (26d) at 28d-31a. See also discussion, Section II, above.

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complex whole.[49]

Through this coming-into-being of a well-mixed whole, the indeterminate long-shortness of the metal, or hard-softness of the clay becomes, in turn, beholden to specific standards of correctness, by which the awl can be judged 'too short' or 'the correct length', the pot 'too soft' or 'the right consistency'. The indeterminate qualities of the metal or earth thus acquire measure, when they attain right measure, though the intelligible context in which they arise. And so similarly with pleasure: by arising in the (more or less) well-mixed whole that is a human soul, some pleasures can be assessed as 'the right measure', others as inappropriate, too much, *for the good constitution of the mixture* a human soul strives to maintain.

This determinate identity remains, however, tied to the demands of the craft, the craftsman and whole being constituted. However much success mind has in imposing limits, the metaphysical dependence of ingredients, materials, lovers and the like (as well as processes and parts), remains. They are of a sort that requires something external to, and more definite than themselves in order to become the things they are. Further, the worth they have once they have arisen is fully dependent upon the worth of the object with reference to which they were able to arise, the object which gave them birth.

But if *genesis* is really supposed to have primarily some 'metaphysical', rather than physical meaning, hasn't it simply lost all its sense as 'process', as a perfectly straightforward word for everyday honest-to-goodness processes of change? On the view I have been putting forward, this aspect of '*genesis*' does not disappear entirely - rather, it becomes illustrative of a relationship which need not always consist in physical change.[50]

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[49] The same point holds whether the γένεσιν εἰς οὐσίαν is a particular, physical pot, or whether it is 'pot', the abstract stable mixture, taken with respect to pottery and human purposes.

[50] One might find the need for a non-standard – more metaphysical than physical – sense of 'becoming' in Plato obvious; cf. the interesting discussion of the matter by Frede 1988, esp. 37-43 and Code 1988, esp. 58-59. To Frede "it is clear that 'becoming' here [*Tim.* 27d] cannot mean what at first sight we take it to mean. . . namely 'coming into being' in the sense of generation" (39), while Code points to "a special, idiomatic

The connotations I attribute to Plato's use of *genesis* in the *Philebus* should *explain* how physical change might be a problem, rather than taking it for granted that Plato simply thinks it is so. After all, that pleasures were restorative and unlimited, or indefinite, was not something that bothered Callicles in his hedonistic moment (491e-499b);[51] and it would hardly have ruffled his feathers to have it pointed out that this meant pleasures were *geneseis*, processes of change in the pedestrian sense.[52] Nor would the Humean be inclined to judge this world an inferior one merely on account of its changeability. It might, however, give a Calliclean pause for thought, if he were to observe the utterly dependent situation this put pleasure into, or the myriad ways in which pleasure – while most definitely something or another in each case – was nothing at all in itself, independently of the whole of the being in which the pleasure arises. That some such rejoinder, specifically directed at a Calliclean endorsement of the life of perpetual refilling, is at work in the final conception of pleasure as *genesis*, can be seen in the echo of *Gorgias* 497e-499b in the final 'argument from absurdity' with which Socrates concludes the discussion of pleasure at *Philebus* 55b.[53]

[usage]" – *viz.*, 'to prove oneself to be good/bad' – that perhaps "Plato is drawing on. . .when he forges his new technical use of the verb" (58-59).

[51] There is such a thing, says Callicles, as hunger and thirst "and also having all the other appetites and being able to fill them and enjoy it, and so live happily" (*Gorgias* 494c1-3)

[52] "The man who has filled himself up has no pleasure any more. . . Rather, living pleasantly consists in this: having as much as possible flow in," says Callicles. To Socrates' question, "Isn't it necessary, then that if there's a lot flowing in, there should also be a lot going out?" Callicles replies, "Certainly." (*Gorgias* 494a6; 494b1-5)

[53] At *Philebus* 54e1, Socrates says that he who sees that pleasure is a *genesis* will laugh at those who "take delight in generation as pleasure and proclaim that they would not want to live if they were not subject to hunger and thirst and if they could not experience all the other things one might want to mention in connection with such conditions" (54e5-8). Hunger, thirst and the other appetites are precisely the pleasures Callicles claims make a life truly happy, as opposed to the happiness of "stones and corpses" (*Gorgias* 492e5) endorsed by Socrates; and as cited in note 52, above, Callicles approves of influx and efflux over stasis. The second 'absurdity' Socrates calls to Protarchus' attention at *Philebus* 55b is that "we should have to call the person who experiences not pleasure but pain *bad* while he is in pain, even if he is the best of men" (55b5-7); we should compare this to Socrates' remark that on Callicles' view "all those who feel enjoyment are good, and all those who feel pain are bad" (*Gorgias* 498e2-3). That these two final absurdities Socrates finds with the hedonist position at *Philebus* 55a-c are not only meant in earnest, but are in fact very real objections, I have argued in Carpenter 2006.

Thus it is that *genesis* captures what is wrong with pleasures, what is objectionable about their being restorative and unlimited/indefinite. Even pleasures that restore a lack which is unfelt, so that "there is no inevitable pain" (51e2) as a condition of its existence, and even pleasures moderated by their arising within, and on account of, a temperate soul, are all nonetheless *geneseis* – they lack sufficient internal criteria of identity, and worth. Having only a dependent value, borrowed from the nature, and especially the mind, of the creature pleased, they can only ever become good provided there is something else good, to which they are properly related.[54]

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