

Aristotle on Pleasure

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Introduction

Aristotle provides two extended discussions on the subject of pleasure within the *Nicomachean Ethics*. The first, which comprises the last four chapters of Book 7, produces a definition of pleasure in which pleasure is *identified* with activity (*energeia*). But in the second discussion of pleasure—provided in the first five chapters of Book 10—this position is characterized as “strange” or “absurd” (1175b 35).¹ Instead of an identification between the two, pleasure is now said to “supervene” upon activity “as the bloom of youth does on those in the flower of their youth” (1174b 33).²

Why this difference in the characterization of pleasure? Is Aristotle here committing the simple inconsistency of which he appears to be guilty? In the first section of this paper I shall argue that he is not. I hope to do so by demonstrating that the two different definitions of pleasure arise as a result of the fact that Aristotle was asking, and attempting to answer, two quite disparate questions in Books 7 and 10. Whereas in Book 7, he is interested in analyzing what it is that we (actually) find pleasurable, in Book 10, his interest turns to a consideration of what pleasure itself is. Thus the inconsistency turns out to be more apparent than real since the definitions are not different answers to the same question but, rather, are the conclusions of two different and independent enterprises.

In the second section of this paper I shall suggest some reasons as to why Aristotle's interests in the subject of pleasure changed in the relatively short interim between Book 7 and Book 10.

¹It is interesting to note, however, that when Aristotle says this in Book 10, he fails to mention that the position is, or at least was, *his* position some mere fifty pages before. Indeed, this is indicative of the complete independence of the two discussions from each other; something which is made even more apparent by the curious fact that nowhere in either discussion does Aristotle mention, or even allude to, the other one.

²Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, translated by W. D. Ross. Reprinted in *The Basic Works of Aristotle*, Richard Mckeon, ed. (New York: Random House, 1941). All future references to this text are taken from the Ross translation.

I

In the first Book of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle tells us that moral virtue is a type of habituated character; specifically, being habituated to choose the mean in action. Pleasure, and its converse pain, are integrally important in this process (of becoming habituated in this way) since it is taken by Aristotle—and correctly so, I think—as a simple truism of human psychology that we naturally tend towards those actions which give us pleasure and avoid those which give us pain. Given this, pleasure will prove important for both political science and ethics since through it we can socialize individuals into finding pleasure and pain in the "proper" actions. This is a point which, in fact, remains constant in both Books 7 and 10. Indeed it is explicit in the introductions to both discussions on pleasure. For example, Aristotle opens his discussion of pleasure in Book 7 with the following:

The study of pleasure and pain belongs to the province of the political philosopher; for he is an architect of the end with a view to which we call one thing bad and another good without qualification. Further, it is one of our necessary tasks to consider them; for not only did we lay it down that moral virtue and vice are concerned with pains and pleasures, but most people say that happiness involves pleasure; this is why the blessed man is called by a name derived from a word meaning enjoyment. (1152b 1-8)

Contrary to Aristotle's claim about the obvious relevance of pleasure to any treatise on either ethics or politics, many believe that pleasure has no place within the spheres of morality or the good. And so, in the familiar Aristotelian dialectical fashion, he begins his discussion of pleasure—in both Books 7 and 10—with an examination of those views contrary to his.³ And, as is usually the case with these dialectical discussions, Aristotle's own views on the subject are explicated in terms of that which he deems problematic in the account provided by others. In Book 7, this dispute

³In the latter book, however, Aristotle also includes a discussion of the view of Eudoxus who maintains that pleasure is the *chief* good. I will not, however, be dealing with this discussion in any detail. Very briefly, Aristotle's position is that pleasure cannot be the *chief* good but is, rather, *associated with* the chief good. This position is the result of his view that the value of any pleasure is to be determined by the value of the activity concomitant with the pleasures. This last point will be discussed later.

Also included in Book 10, but not in Book 7, are two chapters dealing extensively and exclusively with Aristotle's own view on the subject of pleasure.

takes the form of a rejection of Speusippus' claim that either: (1) pleasure is neither intrinsically or incidentally good or, (2) even if pleasure is a good, it is not the *chief* good.

Aristotle believes Speusippus' view and any view similar to it, to be false because of shortcomings in the underlying conception of pleasure. For pleasure is one of those concepts with which people are far too cavalier in their belief that they know that about which they speak. This is why, for example, there are many things which are *called* pleasures which are not so at all. Aristotle specifically has in mind here those medical processes which involve *pain-* and are directed towards the curing of the patient. though the end state of such procedures is the relief of pain—for to be sick is painful—procedures such as bloodletting or breaking one's nose in order to reset it properly cannot be called pleasurable, without stretching the concept of pleasure to such an extent as to make it meaningless.

The false view of pleasure on which such a misidentification rests is, according to Aristotle, that which identified pleasure with a 'perceptible process to a natural state'. W. F. R. Hardie explicates this view as follows:

It was held that an organism is in a normal healthy state when a balance or proportion is maintained between its components. . . . Some processes of change in the organism bring it nearer to its natural healthy state, others in the opposite direction. The former tend to be pleasant, the latter painful.⁴

On this view, then, we would say that the pleasure to be had from, e.g., quenching one's thirst, was the result of, (1) a deficiency in the natural state and, (2) the perceptible process⁵ to remove this deficiency and thereby restore us to our natural state. That pleasure cannot be the chief good on this view stems from the fact that the state of intrinsic worth is here taken to be the natural state from which pleasure is necessarily (i.e., definitionally) excluded. Thus, at best, pleasure can attain only instrumental or derivative value since it is solely restricted to processes which merely *lead to* those states within which intrinsic value is possible.

This account of pleasure is incorrect, according to Aristotle, on two counts. First, if it captures the truth about pleasure at all, it does so only with regard to *bodily* pleasures. But it does not at all capture the pleasure

⁴W. F. R. Hardie, *Aristotle's Ethical Theory*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2nd edition, 1980), p. 301.

⁵That the process needed to be perceptible arises from the simple fact that a pleasure is something of which we must be consciously aware. But, of course, we would not be aware of an imperceptible process.

of those things which involve an *activity* (*energeia*) rather than a *process*.⁶ Activity is to be here distinguished from process in that the former arise, "not when we are becoming something [e.g., becoming non-thirsty from a state of thirst or becoming healthy from a state of sickness] but when we are exercising a faculty." (1153a 9-11): for example, exercising the faculties of sense perception or of thought. Once this distinction is made, we can see that the above description of pleasure as a 'return to normalcy' is defective because it fails to accommodate the pleasures of normal activities such as the pleasures to be had from the activities of thought or sense perception which involve no process from a deficiency or an excess.⁷

Moreover, claims Aristotle, this characterization of pleasure does not even adequately account for bodily pleasures because the theory fails to see that, as he says, "the processes that restore us to our natural state are only incidentally pleasant" (1152b 33-35). His reasons for thinking this stems from his observation that "men do not enjoy the same pleasant objects when their nature is in its settled state as they do when it is being replenished." (1152b 35) Faced with the choice between maintaining that those pleasures are more 'real' which are experienced in: (1) a state of either deficiency or excess, i.e., a 'non-natural' state, or, (2) a state of 'normalcy'; Aristotle opts for the latter. (And this for the same reason, he says, that we accept, and call 'real', the perceptual judgement for a 'normal observer' that, e.g., the paper in front of us is white, over that judgement of a man suffering from jaundice who sees it as yellow.)

On Speusippus' account, however, the whole of pleasure is taken as that which is experienced while in a 'non-natural' state. Thus, according to Aristotle, Speusippus (and others) make the mistake of seeing what is in fact only incidentally pleasant as covering the whole spectrum of pleasure. On the basis of this, Aristotle concludes that "it is not right to say that pleasure is a perceptible process, but it should rather be called an activity of the natural state, and instead of 'perceptible', 'unimpeded'." (1153a 14-16)

⁶Generally, when Aristotle speaks of "process" in Book 7, he means it in the sense of a 'genesis' or a 'coming to be'. In Book 10, however, he uses it in the sense of a 'kinesis', i.e., a movement. I shall have more to say on this latter discussion when I discuss the arguments of Book 10.

⁷Aristotle is, however, at least partially wrong on this point since at least *some* thought processes—specifically, discursive thought processes—do involve a deficiency, viz., that which we are in the process of learning. But Aristotle's point does seem to hold in cases of (simple) perception and, more importantly for him, it also seems to hold for that which he considers the highest form of thought, viz., contemplation. For here one is involved in the reflection upon knowledge which one has already attained rather than a discursive process leading toward the end state of knowledge.

On this account of pleasure, then, it is maintained that what we *actually enjoy* is not a *process* to a natural state but the *activity of the natural state itself*. Thus, activities such as quenching one's thirst or recovering from sickness—things taken as paradigmatic pleasures on the alternative account—are, in Aristotle's theory, taken as being only incidentally or derivatively pleasurable. 'Real' or 'unmixed' pleasures are to be identified with the unimpeded activity of the natural state. Since thirst or sickness can *impede* such activity, the alleviation of them is (incidentally) pleasurable since it allows for the possibility of true 'unmixed' pleasures.

Given this, we can see that Aristotle's enquiry in Book 7 centers on an investigation into what it is, exactly, that we enjoy about those things which we say we enjoy: thus his claim that what we do in fact find pleasurable is the unimpeded activity of the natural state rather than a perceptible process to such a state. And, as G. E. L. Owen says:

In these contexts Aristotle's question "What is pleasure?" means "What is the character of a pleasure, what ingredients of a life are enjoyable in themselves?" The nature of enjoying does not come into question in A [i.e., in Book 7]⁸ If we were asked what is admirable about politics or what is bad about beagling, we do not stop to ponder what admiring or detesting is before embracing the question.⁹

However, it is questions of the sort mentioned at the end of the above citation with which Aristotle is concerned in Book 10. That is, in Book 10, Aristotle is interested not with what we take as things enjoyed, and what it is about them that we do enjoy—as he is in Book 7—but, rather, with the question about the very nature of pleasure and/or enjoyment itself. In other words, Aristotle is concerned in the latter book with what enjoying is as opposed to what it is that we actually enjoy.

Although Books 7 and 10 reveal marked similarities, there exist at least two basic differences which give credence to the above stated hypothesis. First, although in both books we find Aristotle combatting the view that pleasure is a perceptible process back to natural state by maintaining that such views about pleasure fail to accommodate the pleasures of 'normal activities,' we find a second argument presented in Book 10 which displays a quite radical shift in Aristotle's thinking.

⁸In calling the discussion of pleasure found within Book 7 'A' and the discussion of pleasure found in Book 10 'B', Owen is following a tradition that began with Festugiere's influential book, *Aristotle, le Plaisir*, (2nd edition, Paris, 1946).

⁹G. E. L. Owen, 'Aristotelian Pleasures', *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* (Feb., 1972), p. 142.

Recall that in Book 7, Aristotle argued that bodily pleasures are to be explicated in terms of the activity of the natural state rather than processes merely leading to that state. Now, although these two accounts of pleasure differ, they are similar in that they both adopt as a basic, underlying presupposition that pleasures are allowed to be identified with some sort of process or activity of a *body*. But, as Owen correctly points out, in Book 10, Aristotle argues that "enjoyment-verbs cannot have 'my body' as subject."¹⁰

The relevant passage from Aristotle is the following:

If then pleasure is the replenishment with that which is according to nature, that which feels pleasure will be that in which the replenishment takes place, i.e., the body; but this is not thought to be the case. . . (1173b 9-11)

The problem with which Aristotle is here grappling seems to be just this: We have a body which is being replenished. If this is all that there is to being pleased—i.e., if this is what "enjoying" is—than we have to say that it is 'my body which is pleased'. But, as Aristotle says, "this is not thought to be the case" even though "one would *be* pleased when replenishment was taking place, just as one would *be* pained if one was being operated on." (1173b 12) It would seem then that Aristotle is here distinguishing between two questions—roughly, "What is enjoyable?" and "What is the nature of enjoyment?" Moreover, he is saying that the answer to the first "question" may be *totally irrelevant* in attempting to answer the second. This is how he is able to claim that although the body is pleased when in the process of regaining health, this *has nothing whatsoever* to do with the question, "What is the nature of pleasure?"

That Aristotle's interests have changed from Book 7 to Book 10 is also evident in the way in which, in the latter book, he rejects several of the other positions opposed to his. I shall briefly examine what I consider to be the two most important cases.

The first case I want to consider occurs at 1173a 15-22 wherein the thesis is put forward that pleasure cannot be equated with the good because, whereas pleasure is said to be indeterminate since it "admits of degrees", the good is said to be determinate. However, replies Aristotle, if the argument is based on the notion of *being pleased*, i.e., the active verb 'enjoying'—as opposed to the question (asked in Book 7) "What is it that we find pleasurable?"—then the argument fails because the same indeterminacy applies as well to 'being just'—as opposed to 'justice'—and 'being brave'—as opposed to 'bravery'. That is, just as we can be more or less pleased, we can be more or less just or brave. Thus, if indeterminacy

¹⁰*Ibid.*, p. 149.

in this sense is taken as problematic to such an extent that that which is deemed indeterminate cannot be associated with the good, then we would be forced to extend this argument to cover such cases as bravery and justice as well as pleasure. That we do not—and, on Aristotle's view, that we ought not—do so, implies that indeterminacy of this sort is not problematic.

The second case occurs at 1173a 31-64 in Aristotle's rebuttal to the argument that pleasure cannot be identified with the good because the latter is perfect while pleasure is imperfect since it involves a *kinesis* (movement). Aristotle's response to this claim is that pleasure is not a *kinesis* but an *energeia* (activity).

Though this distinction between *kinesis* and *energeia* is complex (and possibly, in the last analysis, inherently muddled), it need not concern us here in anything but a fairly straightforward and simplistic way. Roughly, the distinction is just this: whereas movements occur "in time", activities do not. By this Aristotle simply means that movements, such as building a house, begin at a certain time and end at a certain *later* time when the movement has been completed. Such is, however, not the case with activities such as pleasure or perception or contemplation since, as he says, they "take place in a moment [as] a whole." (1174b 8) In other words, whereas walking (from someplace to someplace else) or building a house takes time since they necessarily must cover a series of steps before they are completed, activities such as seeing are complete as soon as they begin so, in a (somewhat loose) sense, they do not take any time but are complete at each moment within which they are occurring.

The important point for us vis-a-vis this distinction is that, by making the distinction in the way in which he does, Aristotle once again demonstrates that his interest in Book 10 is in considering pleasure in terms of the logic of "enjoyment-verbs" rather than in those questions dealt with in Book 7. For, whereas movements such as walking and talking can be said to be done quickly or slowly, and "while we can change quickly or slowly into a state of pleasure, we cannot quickly exhibit the activity of pleasure, i.e. be pleased." (1173b 3)

Thus, once again we find Aristotle in Book 10 offering a rejoinder to a position counter to his by employing a distinction between thinking of pleasure in two quite different ways; either in the sense of a 'state of pleasure' or, on the other hand, in the sense of 'being pleased'. And once again the rebuttal depends upon considering pleasure only in the latter sense—which I have characterized, following Owen, as a concern with the logic of enjoyment verbs—as opposed to the former which, as I have argued, is the focus of Book 7.

To conclude this section, let me employ the following example in the hopes of drawing the distinction between the enterprises of Books 7 and 10 into sharper relief. In so doing, I hope to make it clear that Aristotle commits no simple inconsistency in providing us with two separate accounts of pleasure.

Suppose I say, "I enjoy playing tennis." The question which Book 7 asks of this is, "What is it about tennis that you enjoy?", to which an appropriate response might be one or all of the following: "The fresh air, the exercise, socializing with friends, etc."¹¹ In Book 10, however the question posed is—to follow up our tennis analogy—e.g., 'what are the rules and regulations of tennis and how do these rules and regulations differ from those of other games such as baseball or table tennis?'

Given this change in interest from Book 7 to Book 10, it is not at all odd that the two definitions of pleasure *appear* as radically different: no more odd, at any rate, than saying that, on the one hand, what is pleasurable about tennis is, e.g., its social nature, while on the other hand—when inquiring into its very nature—giving an account of its rules.

But our enterprise is not yet complete. For it remains a question as to why Aristotle has changed the focus of his inquiry into the subject of pleasure. It is to this question that I turn in the next section.

II

Let us begin by briefly mentioning a few relatively simple and basic points concerning Aristotle's ethics. All of us seek happiness. Happiness, then, is the final end of all our actions. But what is it for a human being to be happy? According to Aristotle, this question can only be answered with reference to the function of man which he tells us is activity in accordance with reason. In order for pleasure to be associated with the good, then, it must be connected somehow to rational activity.

Although Aristotle is concerned with the pleasures associated with intellectual and rational activities in both Books 7 and 10, this concern is much more pressing in the latter book. Indeed in Book 7 he seems much more concerned with the question of how it is possible to characterize—in terms of our bodies—what we find pleasurable as being in any sense good. And though he wants to extend his concept of pleasure here to cover intellectual as well as bodily pleasures—and often *states* that it does—he does not in Book 7 actually discuss, outside of one brief passage, how pleasure *relates* to intellectual activity. This brief passage occurs at 1153a 22-24 where Aristotle responds to the claim that pleasure is bad because it interferes with our thought processes. To this charge, Aristotle says:

¹¹Note that Aristotle is here quite prepared to say—and, in fact, does say—that we can be wrong, and systematically wrong, about that which we think is the source of our pleasure. Thus, he might say of our above response(s) vis-a-vis tennis that it is incorrect and that what we really enjoy about tennis is its competitive element, specifically, beating our opponents. Indeed, this is just the sort of thing he does when he argues that Speusippus' account is incorrect.

Neither practical wisdom nor any state of being is impeded by the pleasures arising from it; it is foreign pleasures that impede, for the pleasures arising from thinking and learning will make us think and learn all the more.

But on the matter of how non-foreign intellectual pleasures will make us "think and learn all the more," Aristotle is, in Book 7, silent. In Book 10, however, this very question is what gives rise to his 'new' definition of pleasure and thus constitutes most of the discussion in chapters 4 and 5.¹²

His discussion of this issue in Book 10 begins in chapter 4 at 1174b 15. He says:

Since every sense is active in relation to its object, and a sense which is in good condition acts perfectly in relation to the most beautiful of its objects (for perfect activity seems to be ideally of this nature; whether we say that *it* is active, or the organ in which it resides, may be assumed to be immaterial), it follows that in the case of each sense the best activity is that of the best-conditioned organ in relation to the finest of its objects.

In chapter 5, Aristotle continues in this vein to maintain that pleasures differ in value just to that extent which the activity, to which they are attached, differ in value. As he says, "Now since activities differ in respect of goodness and badness, and some are worthy to be chosen, others to be avoided, and others neutral, so, too, are the pleasures . . ." (1175b 24, 25) That such is the case results from the very close connection which Aristotle sees between activity and pleasure. Indeed the connection is so close that many (including Aristotle himself in Book 7) see the two as indistinguishable, thus putting the matter into "dispute" as to "whether the activity is not the same as the pleasure." (1175b 33) However, Aristotle is adamant that the two are *not* the same for "this would be strange." (1175b 35).

But if pleasure and activity are not identical, then what is the relationship between them? On this Aristotle says a number of things. To begin with the weakest connection which Aristotle postulates between the two, he says merely that pleasure is somehow "involved in the activity" (1175 a 1) and "accompanies activity." (1175a 5) The nature of this involvement is that pleasure "completes the activity" (1174b 32, 1175a 15, 1175a 28). But it does so "not as the corresponding permanent state does,

¹²It is interesting to note as well that it is within the parameters of this discussion that Aristotle calls the definition of pleasure arrived at in Book 7 "strange" and "absurd".

by its immanence, but as an end which supervenes as the bloom of youth does on those in the flower of their age." (1174b 32, 33)

The point which Aristotle is making here is rather opaque. I offer the following brief explanation. By definition, an activity is in some sense complete since it is an actuality. This is why Aristotle says that pleasure does not complete an activity in the "same way the combination of object and sense" (1174b 25) completes an activity; i.e., it does not, by its immanence, bring something from a purely potential state to a state of actuality, for *that* process is already complete. Thus the completion which pleasure effects upon an activity is rather that of a "consequent final cause,"¹³ a something extra added to the activity which, though not immanent, is not extraneous either.

But if this is the case, then why are the pleasures, *as well as* the activities, considered to possess value? It is in answering this question that we come upon Aristotle's detailed distinction—only briefly alluded to in Book 7—between what he calls foreign or alien pleasures and proper ones. The former of these impedes the activity to which it is attached in the following way. Imagine someone occupied in the activity of geometry. Suppose, however, that someone is playing a violin in the next room. Further, suppose that we enjoy violin playing; much more so than we enjoy doing geometry. In such a case as this, Aristotle tells us, it is extremely unlikely that we could keep concentrating on geometry rather than the violin playing. Thus this foreign pleasure, i.e., the pleasure, in this case, of listening to the violin, impedes the activity of geometry. In this, Aristotle says, "alien pleasures do pretty much what proper pains do, since activities are destroyed by their proper pains." (1175b 16)

Proper pleasures, however, have just the opposite effect. As Aristotle puts it:

For an activity is intensified by its proper pleasure, since each class of things is better judged of and brought to precision by those who engage in the activity with pleasure; e.g. it is those who enjoy geometrical thinking that become geometers and grasp the various propositions better, and similarly, those fond of music or of building, and so on, make progress in their proper function and by enjoying it; so the pleasures intensify the activities, and what intensified a thing is proper to it. (1175a 30-35)

And thus we begin to see a little more clearly what Aristotle means when he say that pleasures complete activities. They do so, to use Urmson's

¹³See Terence Irwin's translation of the *Nicomachean Ethics* (Indianapolis, Indiana: Hackett Publishing, 1985).

word, by adding "zest"¹⁴ to the activity, thus enabling us to direct our full attention towards that activity, disregarding all else.

On the basis of this, we can see that in Book 10—in contrast to Book 7—Aristotle is grappling with the issue of how it is possible for pleasure to function *within* those activities characterized as intellectual rather than those taken as bodily. And, I suggest, it is this question which forces Aristotle to realize that pleasure cannot be *identified with* activity but is rather, something which is concomitant with it and, in some sense, "completes" this activity. That is, in Book 7, when Aristotle did not much concern himself with the relation of pleasure to intellectual activity, he could allow himself to identify the two. But, in Book 10, when he does attempt to deal with this issue, he must have become aware that those epithets which we ascribe to activities such as thinking simply cannot be ascribed to pleasure itself, without slipping into absurdity. As Owen puts it:

Circular or syllogistic thinking cannot without joking be called circular or syllogistic pleasure . . . So the question becomes [in Book 10]: what can be said about enjoying X-ing that cannot be said about X-ing [itself], and the converse.¹⁵

But why is this same sort of observation not found relevant, and indeed problematic, in Book 7 when Aristotle identifies pleasure with bodily activity? That is, why doesn't he realize in Book 7—in the way in which I have argued he does in Book 10—that those epithets which we ascribe to the body oftentimes cannot be so ascribed to pleasure? For example, though we can say of a body that it has a certain colour or is of a certain temperature, to say the same of pleasures would be ludicrous.

Many different types of explanation might be forthcoming here, perhaps the most obvious being that the discrepancy represents a change in Aristotle's thought, with Book 10 revealing his mature thought on the matter. But if this were indeed the case, then why wouldn't Aristotle have amended Book 7 in order to make it compatible with Book 10? At this point one is almost forced to search for extra-philosophical explanations. For example, Guthrie maintains that the remaining discrepancy represents nothing more than that there existed "a conscientious editor who did not want anything by his master to be lost."¹⁶ On these matters I admit complete ignorance, tinged with a certain amount of cautious skepticism. And in lieu of such types of explanation I wish only to stress

¹⁴J. D. Urmson, 'Aristotle on Pleasure', in *Aristotle*, ed. by J. M. E. Moravcsik, (1967), p. 324.

¹⁵Owen, *op. cit.*, p. 151.

¹⁶W. K. C. Guthrie, *History of Greek Philosophy, Vol. VI, Aristotle: An Encounter* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), p. 381.

the importance of keeping in mind that the problems inherent in identifying pleasure with (bodily) activity are not forced upon Aristotle in Book 7 in the obvious way in which it is in Book 10. For in Book 10, as I have said above, he is inquiring into the *relationship between* pleasure and intellectual activity. But in Book 7, it is not the relationship between pleasure and body *per se* which is of primary importance. Rather, in Book 7, his primary question is "What is it that we find pleasurable about those things which we enjoy?" to which an obvious response (albeit, in the end, probably an incorrect one) would have something to do with the body. That is, to flesh out that which we find pleasurable about things which we enjoy in terms of the body is not at all unusual. This does not, of course, excuse Aristotle for committing the mistake of Book 7 by going on to say that, on the basis of this, there exists a straightforward identification between body and pleasure: it does, however, offer a plausible reason why he should have committed a mistake which is both quite obvious and one of which he seems well aware in Book 10.

On the basis of this analysis, Aristotle can be seen as innocent of blatant inconsistency in the *Nicomachean Ethics* with regard to the conception of pleasure. Typical of his precise method of investigation, he formulated two distinct questions about pleasure, one in Book 7 and one in Book 10. His answers to those distinct questions are distinct and precise, the answer to the first question (as I argued) irrelevant to and independent of the answer to the second.¹⁷

¹⁷I take this opportunity to thank two anonymous referees from this journal for providing me with many insightful suggestions on ways in which to improve my original paper. I would also like to thank Wendy Ewara for suggesting several stylistic changes. They, of course, are not responsible for any errors in judgement which may remain.