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Who were οἱ δυσχερεῖς in Plato, *Philebus* 44 a ff. ?*By Malcolm Schofield, Oxford*

ΣΩ. Πότερον οὖν αἰρώμεθα παρ' ἡμῖν ταῦτ' εἶναι, καθάπερ ἄρτι, τρία, ἣ δύο μόνα, λύπην μὲν κακὸν τοῖς ἀνθρώποις, τὴν δ' ἀπαλλαγὴν τῶν λυπῶν, αὐτὸ τοῦτο ἄγαθόν ὄν, ἥδὴν προσαγορεύεσθαι; b

ΠΡΩ. Πῶς δὴ νῦν τοῦτο, ὦ Σώκρατες, ἐρωτώμεθα ὑφ' ἡμῶν αὐτῶν; οὐ γὰρ μανθάνω.

ΣΩ. Ὅντως γὰρ τοὺς πολέμιους Φιλίβου τοῦδε, ὦ Πρώταρχε, οὐ μανθάνεις;

ΠΡΩ. Λέγεις δὲ αὐτοὺς τίνας;

ΣΩ. Καὶ μάλα δεινούς λεγομένους τὰ περὶ φύσιν, οἳ τὸ παράπαν ἡδονὰς οὐ φασιν εἶναι.

ΠΡΩ. Τί μήν;

ΣΩ. Λυπῶν ταύτας εἶναι πάσας ἀποφυγὰς, αἷς νῦν οἱ περὶ Φίλιβον ἡδονὰς ἐπ- c  
ονομάζουσιν.

ΠΡΩ. Τούτοις οὖν ἡμᾶς πότερα πείθεσθαι συμβουλεύεις, ἣ πῶς, ὦ Σώκρατες;

ΣΩ. Οὐκ, ἀλλ' ὥσπερ μάντεσι προσχρῆσθαι τισι, μαντευομένοις οὐ τέχνη ἀλλὰ d  
τινι δυσχερεῖα φύσεως οὐκ ἀγεννοῦς λίαν μεμισηκότων τὴν τῆς ἡδονῆς δύναμιν καὶ d  
νενομικότων οὐδὲν ὑγιές, ὥστε καὶ αὐτὸ τοῦτο αὐτῆς τὸ ἐπαγωγὸν γοήτευμα, οὐχ d  
ἡδονήν, εἶναι. τούτοις μὲν οὖν ταῦτα ἂν προσχρήσαιο, σκεπόμενος ἔτι καὶ τὰ ἄλλα d  
αὐτῶν δυσχεράσματα· μετὰ δὲ ταῦτα αἰ γέ μοι δοκοῦσιν ἡδοναὶ ἀληθεῖς εἶναι πεύση, d  
ἵνα ἐξ ἀμφοῖν τοῖν λόγοιν σκεπόμενοι τὴν δύναμιν αὐτῆς παραθώμεθα πρὸς τὴν κρίσιν.

ΠΡΩ. Ὅρθῶς λέγεις.

ΣΩ. Μεταδιώκωμεν δὴ τούτους, ὥσπερ συμμάχους, κατὰ τὸ τῆς δυσχερείας e  
αὐτῶν ἔχνος. οἷμαι γὰρ τοιόνδε τι λέγειν αὐτούς, ἀρχομένους ποθὲν ἄνωθεν, ὥς εἰ βου- e  
ληθεῖμεν ὁτιοῦν εἶδους τὴν φύσιν ἰδεῖν, οἷον τὴν τοῦ σκληροῦ, πότερον εἰς τὰ σκληρό- e  
τατα ἀποβλέποντες οὕτως ἂν μᾶλλον συννοήσαιμεν ἢ πρὸς τὰ πολλοστὰ σκληρότητι; e  
δεῖ δὴ σε, ὦ Πρώταρχε, καθάπερ ἐμοί, καὶ τούτοις τοῖς δυσχερεῖσιν ἀποκρίνεσθαι.

ΠΡΩ. Πάνυ μὲν οὖν, καὶ λέγω γε αὐτοῖς ὅτι πρὸς τὰ πρῶτα μεγέθει.

Plato, *Phileb.* 44 a-e

*The Context*

At *Philebus* 44 b 6ff., Socrates explains to Protarchus that there are certain philosophers who hold or imply that it is a mistake to distinguish three conditions, pleasure, pain, and a condition in which one feels neither of these. These 'enemies of *Philebus*' maintain that pleasures do not exist at all, and that what hedonists like *Philebus* call pleasures are escapings from pain. Socrates gives some indication

of the grounds they offered for these claims, when he says<sup>1</sup> that people who maintain the existence of two conditions only hold that pain is a bad thing for men and release from pain a good – which is accordingly called pleasurable. ‘It is *this* which is a good thing’, they say of release from pain; evidently implying that the things the hedonist would call good and class as pleasures are not really good (and so not really pleasures). One could put their chief polemical point by saying that, in their eyes, the state of having been released from pain<sup>2</sup> is the only condition aptly called pleasurable, but hedonists have mistakenly believed the process of escaping pain<sup>3</sup> pre-eminently pleasurable, and consequently have invented the fiction of a class of experiences distinct from release from pain, which they name ‘pleasures’ – such as rubbing an itch<sup>4</sup>.

When Protarchus asks Socrates who these persons are, he replies: *καὶ μάλα δεινούς λεγομένους τὰ περὶ φύσιν, οἳ τὸ παράπαν ἡδονὰς οὐ φασιν εἶναι* (44 b 9–10), which is perhaps best translated by Diès<sup>5</sup>: «Des gens réputés pour très habiles dans la connaissance de la nature, et qui nient absolument l’existence des plaisirs.» This is not a very specific identification, at any rate for the modern reader. But Socrates gives us some help – or what looks as though it is meant to be help – when he suggests that we should make use of these philosophers as if they were seers: seers who divine not by *τέχνη*, but by means of a certain *δυσχέρεια* belonging to a not ignoble nature (44 c 5–d 1). For it seems that this *δυσχέρεια* is a clue to the identity of the ‘enemies of *Philebus*’. Not only is it a further piece of information about them, but in the space of a very few sentences Socrates refers to it again more or less directly three times: he says that he and Protarchus must follow in the tracks of this *δυσχέρεια* (44 d 7–8), that they must provide an answer to these *δυσχερεῖς* (44 e 3–4), and most significant of all from our present point of view, that they must consider as well *τὰ ἄλλα αὐτῶν δυσχεράσματα* (44 d 1–2). The reason why this reference to their other *δυσχεράσματα* is so important is that Socrates never tells us what they are, although he presumably does have something quite definite in mind. It seems likely that he is alluding to a whole battery of opinions or arguments whose character and authorship he expects us to have identified by his brief indications.

### *The meaning of δυσχέρεια*

What is this *δυσχέρεια*, and what are these other *δυσχεράσματα*? Hackforth<sup>6</sup> translates *δυσχέρεια* as ‘dourness’, and *τὰ ἄλλα αὐτῶν δυσχεράσματα* as ‘their other

<sup>1</sup> 44 b 1–3 (I follow Burnet’s numbering).

<sup>2</sup> *τὴν ἀπαλλαγὴν τῶν λυπῶν* (44 b 2); at 51 a 3 a synonymous expression is used: *λυπῶν ... παύλαν*. Cf. *Rep.* 584 a–c.

<sup>3</sup> *λυπῶν ... ἀποφυγὰς* (44 c 1); the synonymous expression at 51 a 8 – clearly different in meaning from *λυπῶν παύλαν* – is *ἀναπαύσεσιν ὀδυνῶν*.

<sup>4</sup> Such ‘pleasures’ as this were especially disliked by *οἱ δυσχερεῖς*, according to Socrates: 46 a 29.

<sup>5</sup> A. Diès, *Platon: Philèbe* (Paris 1941) 56.

<sup>6</sup> R. Hackforth, *Plato’s Examination of Pleasure* (Cambridge 1945) 88. Cf. LSJ, who render this example as ‘harshness’.

dour characteristics'. Jowett<sup>7</sup> has 'repugnance' for the first use of *δυσχέρεια* (44 c 6) and 'dislike' for the second (44 d 8); the longer expression he reads as meaning 'the various grounds of their dislike'. Taylor<sup>8</sup> translates in much the same vein: he has 'fastidiousness' and 'dissatisfaction' for *δυσχέρεια*, and his translation of *τὰ ἄλλα αὐτῶν δυσχεράσματα* looks like a deliberate attempt to improve upon Jowett: 'their further grounds for dissatisfaction'<sup>8a</sup>.

One way of trying to adjudicate in this disagreement between Hackforth on the one side and Jowett and Taylor on the other would be to inspect the context in which the words *δυσχέρεια* and *δυσχεράσματα* appear more closely. Such a method has its merits. Hackforth's interpretation cannot survive its scrutiny. For how could consideration of the 'other dour characteristics' of the philosophers with whom Socrates is concerned be of value in an enquiry into the philosophical merits of hedonism? But while inspection of the context can lead us to exclude one alternative, it cannot bring us to an endorsement of the other. For that we need not only assurance that it is compatible with the context but also evidence that it accords with the common usage of *δυσχέρεια* and ground for thinking that it suits the context better than any other alternative. We must therefore turn to lexicography.

The adjective *δυσχερής* was formerly believed to derive from the noun *χείρ*: so LSJ, for example<sup>9</sup>; and one still comes across this view, as in Barrett's<sup>10</sup> note on Eur. Hipp. 484. But this derivation seems improbable. It is worth noticing that (as Manu Leumann has pointed out<sup>11</sup>) those words derived from this noun which contain the form *-χερ-* generally have a consonant immediately after the root: *χέρνιψ*, *χερνῆτις*; when a vowel succeeds the root, it usually takes the form *-χειρ-*: *ἐκατόγχειρος*, *χειρίς*, *ἐγχειρίζω*, *ἐπεχειρία*, *ὑποχείριος*, *χειρόω*. More importantly, if this etymology were correct, then (as Leumann has again pointed out<sup>12</sup>) it would be well-nigh impossible to understand the fact that *εὐχερής* does not mean 'easy to handle' or 'easy to deal with', nor yet (a possibility Leumann rightly does not trouble to mention) 'good at handling': a fact easily verified by looking at the examples cited by LSJ s.v. I and II. And the earliest surviving examples of *δυσχερής* do not square very well with the traditional derivation. In Aeschylus,

<sup>7</sup> B. Jowett, *The Dialogues of Plato*<sup>3</sup> (Oxford 1892) Vol. IV, p. 617.

<sup>8</sup> A. E. Taylor, *Plato: Philebus and Epinomis* (London 1956) 160–161.

<sup>8a</sup> The confusion concerning the correct translation of *δυσχέρεια* can also be studied in Diès' edition. In his running translation he offers for its two occurrences: 'répugnance' and 'morose argumentation' (p. 56). But in his introduction he translates thus: 'morose humeur' and 'moroses pressentiments' (p. LX).

<sup>9</sup> Some other adherents to this belief are listed by M. Leumann in 'εὐχερής und δυσχερής', on pp. 207–208 of his *Kleine Schriften* (Zürich 1959). This article originally appeared in *Philologus* 96 (1944) 161–169.

<sup>10</sup> W. S. Barrett, *Euripides: Hippolytus* (Oxford 1964) 248.

<sup>11</sup> Op. cit. 208. Leumann gives special attention to the likely objection that at any rate in the inflexion of *χείρ* itself we find forms such as *χερός*, *χερί*, *χέρεις*. He explains these as artificial poetic forms. He does not discuss such a late compound as *χερόπληκτος* (Soph. *Aj.* 632).

<sup>12</sup> Ibid. 209.



for example, Prometheus says: ἄλλην δ' ἄκουσον δυσχερῇ θεωρίαν (Prom. 802) in introducing his account of the griffins and the one-eyed Arimaspi. And at Suppl. 568 the Chorus describe Io as βοτὸν ... δυσχερὲς μειξόμβροτον. It seems unlikely that it is the intractability of these monsters that the poet has in mind.

Leumann's own suggestion is that δυσχερής and εὐχερής derive from χαίρειν. After a survey of the early usage of the words<sup>13</sup> he concludes<sup>14</sup>: «So ist δυσχερής meiner Meinung nach gleichsam \*δυσχαρής, subjektiv 'sich schwer an etwas freuend', also, 'unzufrieden, widerwillig', oder objektiv 'woran schlimmes Sich-freuen ist', d. h. 'unerfreulich, widerwärtig'; εὐχερής bildete sich aus als Gegenstück zu δυσχερής, daher subjektiv 'sich leicht mit etwas abfindend, zufrieden' oder objektiv 'leicht erträglich'.»

This proposal has the merit of offering a plausible account of the relation between the most frequent use of εὐχερής and that of δυσχερής. If one treats these adjectives as derived from a verbal root and as theoretically capable of active or passive force, one can say that εὐχερής is typically used in an active or subjective sense, δυσχερής in a passive or objective sense. But there are difficulties, too, in Leumann's view. In the first place, if he were right we should expect the ending -χαρής, not -χερής, as he himself points out. He compares the vowel gradation in ἀμερφές, ἀτρεκής and νημερτής, and suggests a similar gradation here<sup>15</sup>. This might carry conviction (although it has convinced neither Frisk<sup>16</sup> nor Chantraine<sup>17</sup>), were it not that a second objection can be made. For while Leumann's proposal seems to account satisfactorily for the usage of δυσχερής, it does not appear to capture the meaning of εὐχερής very accurately. On the one hand, the objective sense Leumann proposes, 'leicht erträglich', although it seems to give the correct meaning for the two early examples which demand a passive interpretation (Soph. Phil. 875–876, Hp. Prorrh. 1, 119)<sup>18</sup>, is hardly what one would expect if χαίρω were the root: 'delightful', rather than 'easy to bear', would be the meaning. And on the other hand, 'zufrieden', while the appropriate active sense for an adjective derived from χαίρω, does not do justice to the examples of εὐχερής which demand an active interpretation. Plato and Aristotle employ εὐχερής and εὐχερῶς in speaking of the appetite for his food displayed by the pig and the cannibal, and of the way Socrates drank down the hemlock (Pl. Phd. 117 c, Rep. 535 e, Plt.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid. 210–213.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid. 213.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid. 213–214.

<sup>16</sup> H. Frisk, *Griechisches Etymologisches Wörterbuch* I (Heidelberg 1960) s.v. δυσχερής.

<sup>17</sup> P. Chantraine, *Dictionnaire étymologique de la langue grecque* I (Paris 1968) s.v. δυσχερής.

<sup>18</sup> Soph. Phil. 875–876 πάντα ταῦτ' ἐν εὐχερεῖ/ἔθου: 'you treated all this as easy to bear' (for the construction, compare that with ἐν εὐμαρεῖ: Eur. I.A. 969, Hel. 1227, Fr. 382, 10); Hp. Prorrh. 1, 119 (5, 550 L.) οἱ ἐν ὑστερικαῖσιν ἀπύρως σπασμοὶ εὐχερεές, ὅλον καὶ Δορκάδι: 'In hysterical women, convulsions not accompanied by fever are easily borne, as in the case of Dorcas' (Galen ad loc. was inclined to think εὐχερεές meant 'not dangerous' – so LSJ – but this interpretation is difficult to fit with the known usage of the word. I would compare Ar. Hist. an. 587 a 11: περὶ τὰς δυστοκίας τῶν γυναικῶν τῇ εὐχερείᾳ ... βοηθεῖν, where εὐχέρεια is probably 'ability to endure the discomfort'). W. H. S. Jones tentatively dates *Prorrhetic* I to c. 440 B.C. (in Vol. II of the Loeb Hippocrates, pp. xx–xxix).

266 c; Ar. Hist. an. 595 a 18, Pol. 1338 b 21). Sophocles has Neoptolemus doubt whether the Chorus, now sympathetic to Philoctetes' requests, will be so *εὐχερής* ... *ὅταν ... πλησθῆς τῆς νόσου ξυνουσία* (Phil. 519–521). This suggests that 'contented' is far too colourless an epithet to convey the force of *εὐχερής*.

If we inspect the earliest occurrences of *εὐχερής* and *δυσχερής*, it becomes clear that these adjectives are typically used in contexts of emotional shock and of physical distress or revulsion. In the two Aeschylean passages cited above (Prom. 802, Suppl. 568), *δυσχερής* is applied to the sight of monsters, and a similar context of shock is presupposed in two of the three Sophoclean examples of the word: the discovery of the dust-covered body of Polyneices, which throws the guards into a panic, is called a *θαῦμα δυσχερές* (Ant. 254), while Electra tells Chrysothemis that the herald of Orestes' death is

*ἡδὺς οὐδὲ μητρὶ δυσχερής* (El. 929)

(here Electra's point is to expose her mother's unnatural *absence* of shock). And when Teucer forbids Odysseus to touch the body of Ajax

*μὴ τῷ θανόντι τοῦτο δυσχερές ποιῶ* (Ai. 1395),

his argument gains in force if he is taken to imply that Odysseus' touch would be almost physically repulsive to the dead hero. We may note, too, that the earliest examples of *εὐχερής* (Soph. Phil. 519. 875; Hp. Prorrh. 1, 119), as well as those in Plato and Aristotle cited above, and of *δυσχέρεια* (Soph. Phil. 473. 900) are introduced with reference to physical convulsions (so Hippocrates) and to a notoriously repulsive sore (note the concentration of these words in the Philoctetes).

I propose to interpret *εὐχερής* and *δυσχερής* in such a way as to capture the strong emotional character of the attitudes involved such as this consideration of the contexts in which they are typically used suggests that they possess. I think the active sense of *εὐχερής* must be interpreted as something like 'with a strong stomach (for)', and the passive correspondingly as 'easy to stomach'. The basic sense of *δυσχερής* will accordingly be 'hard to stomach' – an improvement, I think, upon Leumann's 'unerfreulich, widerwärtig', although clearly 'disgusting' and 'unpleasant' will sometimes be appropriately used as synonyms of 'hard to stomach'. The case for seeing the notion of *stomaching* as crucial rests, of course, on the large number of examples we have considered in which these words and their cognates are introduced in contexts of food and sickness – and more could be adduced<sup>18a</sup>. I should guess that the adjective derive from a lost noun meaning 'stomach' or some organ of the stomach or digestive system, just as *εὐκόλος* and *δύσκολος* derive from the rare word *κόλον*<sup>19</sup>.

<sup>18a</sup> This specific context is particularly prominent in the early use of *εὐχερής*: see LSJ s.v., I. The connexion of these words with food is made the basis of an extended metaphor by Plato *Rep.* 475 b–c (cf. the similes at *Rep.* 535 e and Ar. *EE* 1221 b 2–3).

<sup>19</sup> Plato couples *εὐχερῶς* with *εὐκόλως* at *Phd.* 117 c, and *εὐχέρεια* with *εὐκολία* on the only two occasions where Ast records him as using this latter noun: *Alc. I* 122 c, *Laws* 942 d. In both passages (*pace* the translators of the second, in particular) 'a character not at all

In the course of time, I would suppose, the emotional content of these adjectives and of *εὐχέρεια* and *δυσχέρεια* was sometimes diluted, and they were no longer reserved for contexts of emotional or physical distress or revulsion. One has only to look at the use of *δυσχερής* and *δυσχέρεια* in Aristotle to see confirmation of this remark: he applies the words, without emotion, to problems and arguments, meaning that there is a *difficulty* present. We can document the corresponding tendency of *εὐχερής* and (more especially) *εὐχέρεια* (see LSJ) and *εὐχερῶς* (see e.g. Pl. Theaet. 154 b, Ar. Pol. 1336 b 5–6) to become broader and shallower in meaning by exploiting the implications of a Platonic pun. In the Politicus (266 c) Plato speaks of *γένει τῷ τῶν ὄντων γενναιοτάτῳ καὶ ἅμα εὐχερεστάτῳ*. He wants us to read this in two ways: at a first glance we are to think of a race most nobly born and very *easy-going* – demigods, perhaps; then we are to realize that he is referring to pigs – well-bred and yet without any trace of *squeamishness* about what they eat<sup>20</sup>.

We are now in a position to consider the noun *δυσχέρεια*. If my argument so far has been broadly correct, we may expect *δυσχέρεια* to mean either ‘offensiveness’, ‘disagreeableness’, ‘something unpalatable’<sup>21</sup>; or ‘revulsion’, ‘disgust’, ‘fastidiousness’; or both of these. Our expectation is confirmed. In pre-Hellenistic literature, *δυσχέρεια* can always be convincingly interpreted as belonging to one or other of these families of nouns or to a close cousin of one of them. And we shall find that disputes and uncertainties about its meaning in a particular context (of which there are many) can invariably be explained as arising from the difficulty of deciding between an active and a passive reading<sup>22</sup>.

The noun is first used on three occasions in the Philoctetes:

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fussy or squeamish’ is the meaning – a character not softened by what in the *Alcibiades* passage is called *τὴν ... ἀβρότητα τὴν Περσῶν*. Aristotle uses *δυσκολία* and *δύσκολον* in a logical sense, as synonyms of *δυσχέρεια* and *δυσχερής*: see Bonitz, *Index Aristotelicus* 210 a 8–9. 13. The lost noun I conjecture would doubtless be *\*χέρος* (so Frisk, who compares the derivation of *δυσμενής* from *μένος*).

<sup>20</sup> It might be felt that the character of the earliest example of *εὐχέρεια* militates against this speculative history: *πάντας ἤδη τόδ’ ἔργον εὐχερεῖ/α συναρμόσει βροτούς* (Aesch. *Eum.* 494–5, where the word is restored from *εὐχερίαι* M). A common rendering is ‘licentiousness’. But the Chorus is deeply shocked at the thought of *καταστροφὰι νέων θεσμίων* (490–491), so the context is like that of the early uses of its cognate words. I think we do better to interpret them as meaning ‘an attitude of stomaching anything’.

<sup>21</sup> ‘Unpalatable state of affairs’ seems the right translation at [Demosthenes] 17, 7, where *τῆς αὐτῆς δυσχερείας ὑπαρχούσης* refers back to *ὡς ἀδικήματος ὄντος τοῦ πολιτεύματος ...* The Loeb translator writes: ‘the same harsh system’.

<sup>22</sup> A nice problem arises at Isoc. *Philipp.* 29: *ἢν τὰς μὲν δυσχερείας τὰς περὶ τοὺς σοφιστὰς καὶ τοὺς ἀναγινωσκομένους τῶν λόγων ἀφέλης*. Does Isocrates advise the king to set aside prejudices or difficulties? Elsewhere in his writings the word always means ‘difficulty’: *Panath.* 117, *Ep.* 1, 3; 4, 8. And he has just enumerated a long list of deficiencies possessed by written speeches (25–27). So it would seem most likely that it is to these he now alludes, rather than to the revulsion which such deficiencies doubtless produce. Again, why the plural, if an active sense is to be found here? I know no other example of such a plural. I advocate ‘difficulties’, *pace* Laistner and the Loeb.

δυσχέρεια μέν,  
ἔξοιδα, πολλή τοῦδε τοῦ φορήματος. (473–74)

- οὐ δὴ σε δυσχέρεια τοῦ νοσήματος  
ἔπεισεν ὥστε μή μ' ἄγειν ναύτην ἔτι;
- ἅπαντα δυσχέρεια, τὴν αὐτοῦ φύσιν  
ὅταν λιπὼν τις δρᾷ τὰ μὴ προσεικότα. (900–903)

When we try to decide the meaning of *δυσχέρεια* in these contexts, we find ourselves confronted with just that decision between an active and a passive reading which I have mentioned. Jebb opts for the passive: 'great is the discomfort of such a freight', 'the offence of my disease', but LSJ and the Budé for the active (and Leumann hesitantly takes the same course): 'annoyance, disgust', 'répugnance'. It is difficult to be at all confident which is right. It seems probable that the same reading should be adopted in each passage, but either a passive or an active reading would fit both. I incline to the active, 'revulsion', for two reasons. First, the phrases *δυσχέρεια τοῦ φορήματος* and *δυσχέρεια τοῦ νοσήματος* range themselves in my mind with two phrases which occur in the immediate context of the second passage: *τοῦδε τοῦ κακοῦ δοκεῖ / λήθη τις εἶναι κἀνάπαντα δὴ* (877–78); *τοῦ πόνου γὰρ οὐκ ὀκνος* (887). I think that in each case we have a noun which is the name of a psychological state, *without article*, governing a noun with article which names the *object* of the emotion or condition in question. Contrast two cases where *νόσου/νοσήματος* is a *subjective* genitive governed by a noun of roughly the same semantic type as *δυσχέρεια* when given passive force (as *τοῦ φορήματος* and *τοῦ νοσήματος* would be governed on Jebb's reading): *τοῦπίσαγμα τοῦ νοσήματος* (755); *τὸ πῆμα τοῦτο τῆς νόσου* (765)<sup>23</sup>. Second, Neoptolemus' first words after the speech of Philoctetes in which the first use of *δυσχέρεια* occurs are these (he addresses the chorus): *δρα σὺ μὴ νῦν μὲν τις εὐχερὴς παρῆς* (519).

It is not unlikely that Neoptolemus' *εὐχερὴς* (active in force) is a conscious echo of Philoctetes' *δυσχέρεια*. This would count slightly in favour of reading *δυσχέρεια* as active in force, too. It might be felt to count in Jebb's favour that *δυσχερής* is normally passive in force: surely the noun derived from it will follow suit. This argument founders, I think, on the fact that the adverb *δυσχερῶς* – also derived from *δυσχερής* – is invariably used in an active sense, to mean something like 'with reluctance', 'discontentedly' (see LSJ s.v.). Nor must the active force of *εὐχέρεια* – attested earlier than *δυσχέρεια* (Aesch. Eum. 494) – be discounted as a possible influence on the range of meaning *δυσχέρεια* can have.

Plato is the next author to use the word. It occurs in a number of passages outside the Philebus. In most of these there is no general agreement on its meaning.

I begin with an example from the doubtfully Platonic Epinomis (975 b): *τοῦτο γὰρ αὐτό, ἡ τῆς ποιήσεως ἐπικλήσις, τῶν ποιουμένων αὐτῶν δυσχέρειαν ἀπεργάζοιτ' ἄν*. Here Taylor translates: 'Why, the very word *produce* might tend to create

<sup>23</sup> At 755 I follow Jebb, LSJ, etc. in reading *τοῦπίσαγμα*, rather than *τοῦπείσαγμα* LA.



a certain repugnance to the product'; but the Loeb has: 'For this very name of *making* must produce an irksomeness in the actual things that are made'. This case is very like the two in the Philoctetes which we have just considered. As there I incline to the construction of *δυσχέρεια* as active (although Taylor's 'a certain' is gratuitous), but this time more confidently. For surely *δυσχέρειάν τινα* would be needed if the correct translation were 'an irksomeness'; and to read *δυσχέρεια* thus is to wish on the author a very quaint way of saying that the name *ποίησις* would make people feel revulsion – which is all that he *means*.

I next consider two examples where I am pretty sure that *δυσχέρεια* is to be construed as passive in force. The first is unproblematical: *τήν τε τῶν γυναικῶν τῆς κτήσεως δυσχέρειαν ἐν τῷ πρόσθεν παραλιπόντι* (Rep. 502 d). Here, as LSJ say, the meaning is 'difficulty', 'troublesome question', a close relative of the meaning 'something unpalatable' which I proposed above. It is paralleled by Plato's use of the adjective *δυσχερής* to mean 'awkward' with reference to arguments at Hipp. Min. 369 b.

In the Laws there is a use of *δυσχέρεια* in the plural (967 c): *ταῦτ' ἦν τὰ τότε ἐξεργασάμενα πολλὰς ἀθεότητος καὶ δυσχερείας τῶν τοιούτων ἄπτεσθαι*. 'Such studies gave rise to much atheism and perplexity', said Jowett; but he was rebuked by England, and later scholars have translated like Bury: 'These were the views which, at that time, caused these thinkers to incur many charges of atheism and much odium'. Jowett's translation can certainly be faulted both for its omission of a rendering of *τῶν τοιούτων ἄπτεσθαι* and for its interpretation of *δυσχερείας*. But no other examples are known of the senses Bury proposes for *ἀθεότης* and *δυσχέρεια* (although 'odium' could perhaps be taken as a cousin of 'revulsion' or 'disgust'). The defence for the popular interpretation which he adopts is presumably that only so can we make sense of *τὰ τότε ἐξεργασάμενα... ἄπτεσθαι*: 'the things which at that time caused ... to attack'. But it is a weak one, for Plato goes on immediately to say: *καὶ δὴ καὶ λοιδορήσεις γε ἐπὶ ἡλθον ποιηταῖς ...*, meaning not that the poets incurred abuse, but that abuse attacked them like a disease, so that they were stampeded into abusing others – the philosophers. By analogy, it would seem that in the previous clause Plato is saying that many sorts of godlessness and (not odium but) unpalatable teaching 'got a grip on', 'took hold of' materialist philosophers: so LSJ correctly take the verb.

There remain three examples of *δυσχέρεια* in Plato outside the Philebus. The first occurs when Protagoras tells us that doctors recommend the use of olive oil to those in a weak condition *ὅσον μόνον τὴν δυσχέρειαν κατασβέσαι τὴν ἐπὶ ταῖς αἰσθήσεσι ταῖς διὰ ξινῶν γιγνομένην ἐν τοῖς σιτίοις τε καὶ ὄποις* (Prot. 334 c). Translators are divided. LSJ render *δυσχέρεια* as 'loathing, nausea', and 'nausea' seems to be Adam's choice, too. But Croiset in the Budé appears to give it passive force: 'pour corriger l'âcreté de certaines sensations produites dans l'odorat par tel ou tel plat dont ils se nourrissent'. Jowett (followed in substance by Guthrie) writes: 'just enough to extinguish the disagreeable sensation of smell'. It is easier



to decide this case if one translates as literally as possible: 'just enough to extinguish the revulsion/offensiveness which comes upon the sensings that take place through the nostrils among foods and seasonings'. I think it is obvious that the rendering 'the offensiveness which comes ... among (or perhaps, in the case of) foods and seasonings' is extremely odd: one would expect 'the offensiveness of foods and seasonings'. It is equally clear that 'the revulsion which comes (on) ... among foods and seasonings' is a smooth rendering. If one considers the point Protagoras is making, the same conclusion suggests itself. Doctors are concerned to extinguish a revulsion the patient feels, in the first instance. So I take it that the translation of Jowett is essentially correct. It is perhaps worth adding that if I am right, Plato uses *δυσχέρεια* in just that sense which Sophocles used in the *Philoctetes* (as I read him).

The other two examples of the word occur in the *Politicus*. In one case the translators are unanimous (310 c): *πράττουσι μὲν δὴ οὐδ' ἐξ ἑνὸς ὀρθοῦ λόγου, τὴν ἐν τῷ παραχρῆμα διώκοντες ῥαστώνην καὶ τῷ τοὺς μὲν προσομοίους αὐτοῖς ἀσπάζεσθαι, τοὺς δ' ἀνομοίους μὴ στέργειν, πλεῖστον τῇ δυσχερείᾳ μέρος ἀπονέμοντες*. Jowett has 'feelings of dislike', Taylor 'repugnance', Skemp 'likes and dislikes(!)'. But one can supply an appropriate passive sense without difficulty: 'assigning the most importance to offensiveness'. Why do the translators take the option that they do? In the first place, the Eleatic Stranger's point in this sentence is the contrast between acting *ἐξ ὀρθοῦ λόγου* and acting upon one's feelings and emotions. It suits this theme better if the last clause of the sentence introduces the principal feeling, revulsion, which motivates people, after the milder 'being fond of' and 'not loving', rather than the principal object of their dislike. Second, on such a reading, *δυσχέρεια* is doing duty for the verb *δυσχεραίνειν* – one can easily imagine a reformulation of the last clause which introduced the verb. Now it so happens that Aristotle in the *Ethics* uses *στέργειν* and *δυσχεραίνειν* as contraries<sup>24</sup>: *δεῖ δὴ τὸ ἥθος προϋπάρχειν πως οἰκεῖον τῆς ἀρετῆς, στέργον τὸ καλὸν καὶ δυσχεραῖνον τὸ αἰσχροῦν* (EN 1179 b 29–31). This shows that the progression *μὴ στέργειν ... τῇ δυσχερείᾳ* (read as active in force) would be felt to be a natural one.

On the other *Politicus* example the translators disagree (286 b): *ταύτην τε οὐχ ἥμισυ αὐτῆς ἔνεκα τῆς δυσχερείας ἣν περὶ τὴν μακρολογίαν τὴν περὶ τὴν ὕφαντικὴν ἀπεδεξάμεθα δυσχερῶς ...* Here Diès gives *δυσχέρεια* active force: 'l'ennui', as do LSJ; but Taylor offers a passive sense: 'repulsiveness', and Jowett does likewise: 'impression of tediousness'. Is the Eleatic Stranger saying: 'Because of that very boredom (or disgust) which we accepted discontentedly'? Or is he saying: 'Because of that repulsiveness (or unpalatable feature) which we accepted discontentedly'? I think the right answer becomes clear when we try to translate the phrase *περὶ τὴν μακρολογίαν τὴν περὶ τὴν ὕφαντικὴν*. 'That repulsiveness which with respect to the prolixity ...' is pleonastic: the prolixity of the discussion of weaving is just

<sup>24</sup> This example I owe to Leumann, op. cit. 210, who cites it for a rather different purpose.

what was offensive about it. It is to remove the *boredom* aroused by that prolixity that the Eleatic Stranger has inserted his discussion of measuring. Of course, to suppose an active rather than a passive sense also tallies with the general pattern of the usage of the word in Plato and Sophocles. For on my view of the matter, an active sense – ‘revulsion’ or some cognate – is to be given to all but two of the examples of *δυσχέρεια* which we have studied. And both of these possess features not shared by the present example. The use of the word at Rep. 502 d, where Socrates speaks of the *troublesome question* of the possession of women, is closely related to the common use in Isocrates and Aristotle to mean ‘theoretical difficulty’. That at Laws 967 c cannot so easily be linked with a common use of the word, but its coupling with *ἀθεότης* supplies the reader with the context he needs for comprehension.

### *The δυσχέρεια of Speusippus*

If we now return to the Philebus, it is with the expectation that ‘revulsion’ or a cognate will prove to be the right equivalence for *δυσχέρεια* as Jowett and Taylor thought. And such a rendering certainly seems appropriate in the context. Socrates will be saying that he and Protarchus will be well advised to follow in the tracks of a revulsion which belongs to a not ignoble nature: doubtless because this revulsion against hedonism was accompanied by argument. Indeed, Socrates implements this advice by recounting to us a *philosophical question* which he says is raised by the ‘enemies of Philebus’<sup>25</sup>. But two problems remain. What account are we to give of *τὰ ἄλλα αὐτῶν δυσχεράσματα*? And why does Socrates call these philosophers *δυσχερεῖς*?

If *δυσχέρεια* is ‘revulsion’, *τὰ ἄλλα αὐτῶν δυσχεράσματα* are presumably – as the presumed derivation from *δυσχεραίνω* would suggest<sup>26</sup> – ‘expressions of disgust’. But while talk of ‘revulsion’ may be appropriate – logical dissatisfaction with hedonism may naturally be accompanied by moral revulsion – why should Socrates speak of a whole battery of arguments in this way (for Taylor and Jowett must be right in seeing a reference to *grounds* or *arguments* here, as I pointed out at the beginning of this paper)? It seems too jocular not to require further explanation, especially since *δυσχέραςμα* is probably a word coined for this occasion by Plato.

Taylor translates *δυσχερεῖς* as ‘fastidious’. But although this suits the account of *δυσχέρεια* one is inclined to adopt, it seems a doubtful rendering in the light of the common usage of the word. For *δυσχερής* means ‘hard to stomach’, and so ‘disagreeable’, ‘awkward’, ‘vexatious’: its force is passive. I can find only one example in the pre-Hellenistic literature which really looks as though it is naturally read as taking an active sense, but in this case the context dictates a very wary

<sup>25</sup> 44 d 8 – e 3.

<sup>26</sup> See P. Chantraine, *La formation des noms en grec ancien* (Paris 1933) 175–176. He renders *δυσχέραςμα* as ‘marque d’impatience’. Cf. *δυσχερασμός*, Philod. *Lib.* p. 8 Ol. rendered by LSJ Suppl. as ‘irritation, anger’.

approach. At Rep. 475 c, Socrates speaks of τὸν περὶ τὰ σιτία δυσχερῆ. One might – recalling the usual meaning of the word – render in a passive sense: ‘the man awkward (or disagreeable) about food’. But it seems clear that Plato means to give *δυσχερῆς* some such active force as *δυσχεραίνω* and *εὐχερῶς* possess. For a comparison is made between τὸν περὶ τὰ σιτία δυσχερῆ and τὸν περὶ τὰ μαθήματα *δυσχεραίνοντα*, and a contrast between this latter and τὸν εὐχερῶς ἐθέλοντα παντὸς μαθήματος γεύεσθαι. Consequently, LSJ rightly render the adjective here as ‘fastidious’. Two points must be made: first, it *only* gets an active sense through the aid of the context; second, it can probably only get the active sense ‘fastidious’ because this is practically equivalent to the familiar passive sense ‘awkward, disagreeable’ and because of the specification *περὶ τὰ σιτία* (which is of course a paradigm context for the active *εὐχερῆς*)<sup>27</sup>. So it seems hard to understand the application of *δυσχερῆς* to the ‘enemies of Philebus’, without qualification and without a helpful context such as the Republic example enjoys, as meaning anything but that they are disagreeable or offensive<sup>28</sup>. But why should Plato have Socrates abuse them so, even jokingly?

What Plato is doing is forcing us to puzzle over the meaning and point of *δυσχέρεια* and its cognates. And somehow, we must remember, as we identify the *δυσχέρεια* in question, the *identity* of οἱ *δυσχερεῖς* is supposed to suggest itself to us – or so I have urged. The key to these puzzles is adumbrated in an observation of Wilamowitz on this passage. He suggested that Plato took exception to «ein übertriebenes *δυσχεραίνειν*, einen Mangel an *facilitas* ..., sei es, dass sie in zu kniffllichem *ἀπορεῖν* beruhte, sei es auf dem absprechenden Wesen, das wir bei einem Moralisten zelotisch nennen»<sup>29</sup>.

My belief is that, although none of the equivalences for *δυσχερῆς* and its cognates here which I have argued for is mistaken, what Plato directs our minds to is τὸ *ἀπορεῖν*; and more specifically, to that other sense of *δυσχέρεια*, frequent in Aristotle: ‘logical difficulty’. For scrutiny of Aristotle’s use of the word in this sense shows it to be very likely that Plato’s successor, Speusippus, was particularly fond of employing the word in this sense; and further, that this employment of the word was at one time – at least within the Academy – a peculiarity of his, although Aristotle (and doubtless others) came to adopt it himself. So Plato, I argue, heaps up slightly mysterious and jocular references to the *δυσχέρεια* of the ‘enemies of Philebus’ to persuade us that in these we have a clue to their identity, to puzzle us about the *sort* of *δυσχέρεια* they exhibit, and so to put us in a position

<sup>27</sup> At *EE* 1221 b 2–3 Aristotle describes the *φθονερός* as *δυσχερῆς*, contrasting him with the man at the opposite extreme, who is *εὐχερῆς ὥσπερ οἱ γαστρίμαργοι πρὸς τροφήν*. *δυσχερῆς* may perhaps mean ‘fastidious’ here, but it is safer to take it as ‘disagreeable’.

<sup>28</sup> It might be argued that the proximity of *δυσχέρεια* and *δυσχέρασμα*, both nouns with active force, does supply a context which leads us to read *δυσχερῆς*, too, as active. This thought is certainly one factor in one’s puzzlement. But the reference to οἱ *δυσχερεῖς* without this context at 46 a 5 militates against its validity.

<sup>29</sup> U. von Wilamowitz-Moellendorf, *Platon* II<sup>2</sup> (Berlin 1920) 270.

to grasp that it is the 'difficulty' felt by Speusippus to which he wishes us to attend.

Here are the passages of the *Metaphysics* which support my claims about what may be gleaned from Aristotle's use of *δυσχέρεια*:

οἱ μὲν γὰρ τὰ μαθηματικά μόνον ποιοῦντες παρὰ τὰ αἰσθητά, δρῶντες τὴν περὶ τὰ εἶδη δυσχέρειαν καὶ πλάσιν, ἀπέστησαν ἀπὸ τοῦ εἰδητικοῦ ἀριθμοῦ καὶ τὸν μαθηματικὸν ἐποίησαν. (Metaph. 1086 a 2–5)

τῷ δὲ τοῦτον μὲν τὸν τρόπον οὐκ οἰομένῳ διὰ τὸ τὰς ἐνούσας δυσχερείας δρᾶν περὶ τὰς ἰδέας ὥστε διὰ γε ταῦτα μὴ ποιεῖν ἀριθμούς, ποιοῦντι δὲ ἀριθμὸν τὸν μαθηματικόν .... (Metaph. 1090 a 7–10)

παρὰ μὲν γὰρ τῶν θεολόγων ἔοικεν ὁμολογεῖσθαι τῶν νῦν τισίν, οἳ οὐ φασιν, ἀλλὰ προελθούσης τῆς τῶν ὄντων φύσεως καὶ τὸ ἀγαθὸν καὶ τὸ καλὸν ἐμφαίνεσθαι (τοῦτο δὲ ποιοῦσιν εὐλαβούμενοι ἀληθινὴν δυσχέρειαν ἢ συμβαίνει τοῖς λέγουσιν, ὥσπερ ἔνιοι, τὸ ἐν ἀρχῇ). (Metaph. 1091 a 33–b 1)

συμβαίνει γὰρ πολλὴ δυσχέρεια—ἣν ἔνιοι φεύγοντες ἀπειρήκασιν, οἳ τὸ ἐν μὲν ὁμολογοῦντες ἀρχὴν εἶναι πρῶτην καὶ στοιχεῖον, τοῦ ἀριθμοῦ δὲ τοῦ μαθηματικοῦ. (Metaph. 1091 b 22–25)

Although Speusippus is not named in any of these passages, there is no doubt whatever that Aristotle refers to him in each of them<sup>30</sup>. In the first two, he alludes to the difficulties which Speusippus found in the theory of Ideas and which led him to claim that 'mathematical' number was the only sort of number besides groups of sensible things; and in the second two he refers to the difficulty Speusippus saw in the Platonic notion that the One is not only a principle of things, but the source of goodness in things. Now Aristotle clearly has a predilection for using the word *δυσχέρεια* to refer to Speusippus' philosophical objections. But the first passage I have quoted suggests further that it is a piece of Speusippus' own terminology, naturally and deliberately used in his discussion of Speusippus' position by Aristotle. For there he couples *δυσχέρεια* with *πλάσις*, 'fiction', used in this sense on this occasion only by him, and never before used in this or any sense in extant Greek literature. I would guess that *πλάσις* is a Speusippian word; and if *πλάσις*, then very likely *δυσχέρεια*.

That is my case for believing the philosophical use of *δυσχέρεια* to be the special property of Speusippus. I now want to adduce some circumstantial evidence in its support.

Aristotle often uses the vocabulary of a thinker whom he is discussing – indeed, it would be odd if he did not. Interpreters have sometimes been misled into supposing that the extent of this borrowing is greater than it is in fact: one thinks of the old view that *ὁμοιομερές* was a term actually used by Anaxagoras himself<sup>31</sup>. But it seems that, for example, he uses words and expressions used by Eudoxus

<sup>30</sup> See e.g. W. D. Ross, *Aristotle's Metaphysics I* (Oxford 1924) LXXi–LXXiii.

<sup>31</sup> See e.g. W. K. C. Guthrie, *A History of Greek Philosophy II* (Cambridge 1965) 325–326.



when he presents his theory of pleasure in the Nicomachean Ethics, words and expressions which unlike Plato's *ἰδέα* could well have been supplanted by an Aristotelian paraphrase<sup>32</sup>. In the case of Speusippus, too, there seems to be at least one occasion other than the first passage I quoted where Aristotle uses his own words. Aristotle tells us that Speusippus assumed the existence – the separate existence – of the objects of mathematics because there could be no axioms true of sensible things, and because – obscurely – ἀληθῆ ... τὰ λεγόμενα καὶ σαίνει τὴν ψυχὴν (Metaph. 1090 a 35–b 1). The Sophoclean<sup>33</sup> metaphor leaps out from the dry context; one suspects that it sat more comfortably in a treatise of Speusippus, where the point for which it was called into service was no doubt clearer than in Aristotle's enigmatic clause.

Both passages suggest that Speusippus had a lively taste in metaphors. And this is confirmed by inspection of the Epistle to Philip which purports to be the product of his hand and is very probably genuine<sup>34</sup>. Johann Sykutris pointed out that the use of metaphor in this letter is restrained, but apt and vigorous, in the manner of the best Attic stylists<sup>35</sup>. The whole piece is interestingly written, as Sykutris' analysis bears out, and very readable. Furthermore, Iamblichus, when he reports what seems to be Speusippus' theory of the fundamental principles of things<sup>36</sup>, employs two words in referring to matter which Philip Merlan plausibly supposed to derive from Speusippus himself: εὐπλαδής (LSJ record no other use of this word) and συμμεμολυσμένον (whose interpretation here is uncertain: it should probably be written συμμεμωλυσμένον and so connected with the adjective μῶλυσ, 'soft', a word rare in extant Greek literature, used metaphorically of a λόγος of Isocrates in the Epistle to Philip)<sup>37</sup>. Both these are striking metaphors.

In these last two paragraphs I have been offering some indirect positive evidence for supposing it not unlikely that δυσχέρεια is a specifically Speusippian word. I add now that there is evidence to suggest that it is not a particular favourite with Aristotle. Bonitz records fifteen places in genuine works of Aristotle where the word occurs in the sense 'philosophical difficulty'. Nine of these instances occur in Books *M* and *N* of the Metaphysics. And of these, four occur in accounts of Speusippus' views (as we have observed). The third passage I quoted (see above p. 13) continues: ἔστι δ' ἡ δυσχέρεια οὐ διὰ τὸ τῇ ἀρχῇ τὸ εἶ ἀποδιδόναι ὡς ὑπάρχον, ἀλλὰ διὰ τὸ τὸ ἐν ἀρχῇ καὶ ἀρχὴν ὡς στοιχεῖον καὶ τὸν ἀριθμὸν ἐκ τοῦ ἐνός (Metaph. 1091 b 1–3). Aristotle is saying: There is a δυσχέρεια, Speusippus, but

<sup>32</sup> See J. Burnet, *The Ethics of Aristotle* (London 1900) 442.

<sup>33</sup> Soph. *O.C.* 319–320.

<sup>34</sup> Authenticity is argued convincingly by E. Beckermann and Joh. Sykutris, *Speusipps Brief an König Philipp*, Berichte über die Verhandlungen der Sächsischen Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Leipzig, Phil.-Hist. Klasse, 80 (1928).

<sup>35</sup> Op. cit. 56–57.

<sup>36</sup> Iamb. *De comm. math. sc.* 15, 6–18, 12 Festa. The Speusippian identity of the content of this passage was demonstrated by Ph. Merlan, *From Platonism to Neoplatonism*<sup>2</sup> (The Hague 1960) ch. V.

<sup>37</sup> Iamb. *De comm. math. sc.* 15, 13; 17, 20 F. I follow Merlan's treatment, op. cit. 120–121.



it lies in something you and the orthodox Platonists both believe, not in the Platonist position only. Clearly this instance must be counted with the four above. In another passage, at 1087 b 18–21, it is quite likely that the difficulties with Platonism to which Aristotle alludes are Speusippus' difficulties<sup>38</sup>; and in the remaining three passages in these books where *δυσχέρεια* occurs, Aristotle might very well be influenced in his selection of the word by its frequent use in Speusippus, even if he is not actually citing Speusippus' objections<sup>39</sup>. I suspect a similar reminiscence in the two uses of the word elsewhere in the *Metaphysics*<sup>40</sup>. In the four uses Bonitz records outside the *Metaphysics* it is idle to look for any significant echo of Speusippus. But one may observe that at *De an.* 410 a 27 Aristotle uses the word merely as a resounding synonym for his favourite term for 'difficulty', *ἀπορία*: *πολλὰς δ' ἀπορίας καὶ δυσχερείας*; and that at *De caelo* 309 a 29 he wants to say that someone is *caught* in a difficulty – a special motive for using *δυσχέρεια* here<sup>41</sup>. To conclude, I claim that it is a fair statement of Aristotle's use of *δυσχέρεια* to say, first, that it is not a word which leaps regularly to his mind when he wants to mention a philosophical difficulty or problem; and second, that his partiality for it in the *Metaphysics* is very reasonably explained by the hypothesis that Speusippus' liking for it infected his own vocabulary in Books *M* and *N*, not only when he was reporting Speusippus himself.

We have good grounds, then, for thinking *δυσχέρεια* a word of which Speusippus was especially and idiosyncratically fond. It is therefore natural to suppose that he is the 'enemy of Philebus'.

### *Some objections countered*

The view that Plato refers to Speusippus when he speaks of *οἱ δυσχερεῖς* is an old one: Wilamowitz<sup>42</sup> was tempted by it; A. E. Taylor<sup>43</sup> and Robert Philippson<sup>44</sup> championed it. But their enthusiasm for this identification was founded on the general belief that Plato in the *Philebus* intervenes in those same disputes in the Academy about pleasure which Aristotle reports and alludes to in the *Nicomachean*

<sup>38</sup> The difficulties alluded to here seem to be concerned with Plato's hypothesis of a *single* material principle, the Large and the Small, and moreover one apparently appropriate for the explanation only of extended entities: so the corrections to Plato's thesis which Aristotle condemns suggest (*Metaph.* 1087 b 16–18). Now Speusippus was apparently the originator of Aristotle's objection (*Metaph.* 1001 b 19–25; cf. 1090 b 32–1091 a 2) that on Plato's theory it was impossible to see why the Large and the Small should generate now numbers, now extended magnitudes (*Iamb. ibid.* 16, 18–17, 1 F.). So maybe Aristotle is thinking of this and similar objections here.

<sup>39</sup> *Metaph.* 1083 b 19; 1085 b 17; 1086 b 12.

<sup>40</sup> *Metaph.* 995 a 33; 1005 b 22. The first of these examples occurs in Book *B*, a treatise devoted to issues debated within the Academy; in the second case, Aristotle speaks of *λογικὰς δυσχερείας*, an epithet which suggests the same Academic milieu for the difficulties in question as at 1087 b 20, where the same phrase is used.

<sup>41</sup> The other two examples are at *Spir.* 474 a 24, *Gen. an.* 740 b 15. <sup>42</sup> *Platon* II 272–273.

<sup>43</sup> See especially *A Commentary on Plato's Timaeus* (Oxford 1928) 455–456.

<sup>44</sup> *Hermes* 60 (1925) 470–474.

Ethics; and on the particular circumstance that Speusippus was apparently the leading opponent of hedonism in the Academy – at any rate, he is the only one named by Aristotle, apart from Plato himself (at *EN* 1153 b 1–7). The report of Clement, that according to Speusippus the condition which all men desire and which *οἱ ἀγαθοί* make their aim is *ἀοχλησία* (Strom. II 22, 133 p. 186, 19 Stählin = P. Lang, *De Speusippi Academici scriptis* [Bonn 1911] Fr. 57), lends strong support to this case<sup>45</sup>. Yet the *δυσχέρεια* clue has always either been ignored or been felt to be puzzling.

The opinion that the *Philebus* is a contribution to an Academic debate is pretty well universally held. But the specific identification of *οἱ δυσχερεῖς* as Speusippus was called into question a generation ago, mildly and aporetically by Diès, confidently by Hackforth, and so far as I am aware their arguments have not been met.

Diès correctly points out that if Plato has Speusippus in mind, it is difficult to understand why he calls him *δυσχερής*, when there is no independent evidence to suggest that he was known for being *δυσχερής* and some suggest that he was not. Diès reminds us of a tale in Plutarch: «Dion, banni par Denys le Jeune, devint un familier et un favori de l'Académie et s'y lia particulièrement non seulement avec le néfaste Callippe, mais aussi avec Speusippe. Platon avait voulu cette liaison pour rendre plus amène le caractère de Dion 'au contact d'une amitié qui avait de la grâce et savait, à l'occasion, plaisanter avec élégance, *ὁμιλία χάριν ἐχούση καὶ παιδιᾶς ἐμμελοῦς κατὰ καιρὸν ἀπτομένη*'. Car tel était Speusippe, ajoute Plutarque»<sup>46</sup>.

We may add to Diès' point that whether Speusippus was *δυσχερής* or not, it seems that Plato would be perpetrating a needless and pretty unforgiveable insult in calling him as much, especially in such decided terms.

This objection to the identification of Speusippus as *οἱ δυσχερεῖς* is easily countered once we allow that Plato's point in ascribing *δυσχέρεια* to the 'enemies of *Philebus*' and in making such play of their being *δυσχερεῖς* is to get us to think of the philosophical *δυσχέρεια* in which Speusippus often found himself. It is just a joke on Plato's part to pretend that Speusippus was offensive or disagreeable.

Hackforth's objection to the identification concerns a point of philosophical substance. He argues: «A combination of Arist. *EN* 1153 b 1–7 with 1173 a 5–9 shows that [Speusippus] regarded pleasure and pain as both real, and both opposed to the neutral state, whereas the *δυσχερεῖς* admit not three states, but only two»<sup>47</sup>.

Here is the principal Aristotelian text to which Hackforth refers: ἀλλὰ μὲν δτι καὶ ἡ λύπη κακόν, ὁμολογεῖται, καὶ φευκτόν· ἡ μὲν γὰρ ἀπλῶς κακόν, ἡ δὲ τῷ πῃ ἐμποδιστική. τῷ δὲ φευκτῷ τὸ ἐναντίον ἢ φευκτόν τι καὶ κακόν, ἀγαθόν. ἀνάγκη

<sup>45</sup> But only Philippon made allusion to it. Wilamowitz (loc. cit.) quoted a passage of Aulus Gellius (IX 5, 4 Hos.) as possible support; but this seems to be dependent on *EN* 1153 b 1–7, which I discuss below (both passages in Lang, Fr. 60).

<sup>46</sup> Diès, *Platon: Philèbe* LX–LXII; Plutarch, *Dion* 17.

<sup>47</sup> *Plato's Examination of Pleasure* 87.

οὐδὲν τὴν ἡδονὴν ἀγαθὸν τι εἶναι. ὥς γὰρ Σπεύσιππος ἔλυνεν, οὐ συμβαίνει ἡ λύσις, ὥσπερ τὸ μείζον τῷ ἐλάττονι καὶ τῷ ἴσῳ ἐναντίον. οὐ γὰρ ἂν φαίη ὅπερ κακὸν τι εἶναι τὴν ἡδονὴν (EN 1153 b 1–7). The safest remark to make about Speusippus' argument here and Aristotle's rebuttal of it is that of Wilamowitz: 'nicht eindeutig'<sup>48</sup>. But I shall offer a tentative exegesis.

The first question I want to consider is this: Did Speusippus adduce the contrariety that the greater has to the equal and the less in the first instance in order to make a point about the contrary of bad or about pain and pleasure? There can be little doubt of the correct answer. If we turn to the related passage of Aristotle cited by Hackforth, we find what seems to be the same argument of Speusippus reported in these terms: οὐ γὰρ φασιν, εἰ ἡ λύπη κακὸν ἐστὶ, τὴν ἡδονὴν ἀγαθὸν εἶναι. ἀντικεῖσθαι γὰρ καὶ κακὸν κακῷ καὶ ἄμφω τῷ μηδέτερον (EN 1173 a 6–8)<sup>49</sup>. However we take this passage, it is surely clear that Aristotle understood Speusippus to be concerned in his argument with the contrary of bad<sup>50</sup>. This is only slightly less clear at 1153 b 1–7. For the only principle about contrariety which Aristotle enunciates there and which therefore seems appropriate for Speusippus to be contradicting has to do with good and bad: τῷ δὲ φευκτῷ τὸ ἐναντίον ἢ φευκτόν, ἀγαθόν.

The second point I want to make is that Speusippus did not make it clear in his argument whether he supposed pleasure a bad thing or not. This is evident from 1173 a 10–11: an obscure and perhaps corrupt passage, but it is at least clear that Aristotle's procedure implies this unclarity in Speusippus' argument. For he argues that whether Speusippus were to hold both pain and pleasure bad or whether he were to hold ... (here text and sense are doubtful), he would contradict what we all reckon to know about pleasure and pain<sup>51</sup>.

Nonetheless, Aristotle in the earlier passage (but not the later) implies that Speusippus is committed – although he would be loath to acknowledge it – to the consequence that pleasure is to be located in the genus *bad*. Why does he suppose this? And why was Speusippus unwilling to allow that pleasure is bad?

<sup>48</sup> Op. cit. II 273 n. 1.

<sup>49</sup> I have accepted the reading *μηδέτερον* (with Stewart and Burnet), on the grounds (a) that it is more strongly supported than *μηδετέρῳ* in the MSS and is *lectio difficilior*, (b) that it is «strongly supported by Plato *Rep.* 583 e ἢ καὶ δυνατόν τὸ μηδέτερον εἶναι ἀμφοτέρω γίνεσθαι – words which occur in a context which, I think, Aristotle has in his mind here» (Stewart ad loc.).

<sup>50</sup> The difficulties concern the reference of *ἄμφω* and the supplement we are meant to give to *μηδέτερον*. Gauthier ad loc. gives a full discussion of the solutions adopted by different scholars. My view is that *ἄμφω* means 'both good and bad' and that *τῷ μηδέτερον* means 'that which is neither good nor bad': this gives the obvious complement to the first part of the sentence.

<sup>51</sup> The text of 1173 a 10–11 runs thus in Bywater's edition: ἀμφοῖν γὰρ ὄντων <τῶν> κακῶν καὶ φευκτῶν ἔδει ἄμφω εἶναι, τῶν μηδετέρων δὲ μηδέτερον ἢ ὁμοίως. This would mean: 'For if both belong to the class of bad things, then both should also be objects of aversion, or if both belong to the class of things neither good nor bad, neither should be objects of aversion or both equally' (after Ross). The difficulty this raises is that Speusippus is hardly likely to have entertained the latter option. Aristotle would therefore have offered a poor, captious

The first problem is not a very taxing one, I think. According to Speusippus, it was a mistake to think of the contrary of bad simply as good – the greater/equal/less parallel is relevant. Now it seems to have been a commonplace in the Academy (and it was certainly Aristotle's doctrine) that good things are to be seen as occupying a mean position between two extremes, an excess and a deficiency, which were located in the same genus, *bad*<sup>52</sup>. Aristotle, I suggest, supposes that Speusippus had this doctrine in mind in introducing the greater/equal/less parallel; and considers that since he does not hold pleasure to be a good, he seems bound to think it bad<sup>53</sup>.

Why should Speusippus resist this interpretation? Perhaps we can best approach this problem by considering where Aristotle's interpretation has probably gone wrong – as it must have done. For had Speusippus really introduced the greater/equal/less analogy with the doctrine of the mean in mind in just the way Aristotle appears to suppose – accepting both that pain is bad and pleasure not good –, his vulnerability to Aristotle's objection (that he would not say that pleasure is bad) would have been so glaringly obvious a criticism that it is difficult to believe him capable of supposing he had an argument to offer against the thesis that pleasure is good. Aristotle himself seems to have come to recognize an inadequacy in his grasp of Speusippus' point. For in Book X, as we have seen, he takes the greater/equal/less analogy as designed simply to point out that there are other types of contrariety than that instantiated by the opposition of good to bad. He no longer interprets it as committing Speusippus to any positive claim about what sort of contrariety is to be assigned to the relation of pleasure to pain.

But it seems unlikely that this revised interpretation is correct<sup>54</sup>. The analogy which Speusippus invokes is surely too specific for it to be conveying the general suggestion that all the varieties of contrariety must be considered before any inferences are drawn about the goodness or badness of pleasure from its opposition to pain. Aristotle's first understanding of his argument seems better supported – at least inasmuch as Speusippus' analogy is naturally related to the doctrine of the mean. I believe that with the help of the *Philebus* we can offer a plausible account of Speusippus' meaning which relates his argument to the doctrine of the mean and yet does not commit him to asserting that pleasure is bad.

Speusippus' point, I think must have been that pain is contrary not just to 'pleasure' – a notion too little explored by hedonists, he might have added – but more exactly to two conditions, the one release from pain, the other escapings

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bit of argument here. Gauthier et al. prefer to emend and read τὸ μηδέτερον: 'that which is neither good nor bad should be an object neither of choice nor of aversion, or of both these equally'. I incline to this view.

<sup>52</sup> *Top.* 123 b 27–30 seems to indicate that the doctrine was current in the Academy: see I. Düring, in *Aristotle on Dialectic: the Topics*, ed. G. E. L. Owen (Oxford 1968) 206–207. For Aristotle's own elaboration of the doctrine, see e.g. *EN* II 6–9, especially 1108 b 11–19.

<sup>53</sup> This is the traditional reading of this passage: see Gauthier ad loc.

<sup>54</sup> But it is accepted by Gauthier ad 1153 b 4–7.



from pain. The former of these is good, and so properly designated 'pleasurable'; the latter are what hedonists especially, but quite erroneously, have in mind when they talk of pleasures, for they are in themselves bad. Now this position derives most of its details from the Philebus. It seems to me to combine without strain and certainly without contradiction of the evidence what Plato tells us about οἱ δυσχερεῖς and what Aristotle reports concerning Speusippus at 1153 b 1–7. But Hackforth would claim that it cannot be compatible with Plato's report that οἱ δυσχερεῖς held that there is only *one* condition to be contrasted with pain, not two. To this it may be rejoined that we must not abstract this report from its context. What the thinkers Plato has in mind assert thereby is tantamount to the denial that pleasure (in the true sense) and release from pain are distinct. And this denial is not compromised by the position I elaborated at the beginning of this paragraph.

It might be objected against this reconstruction of Speusippus' position that it is unlikely that one who held the commonly accepted pleasures to be mere escapings from pain would naturally construe them as opposed to pains as an excess is related to a deficiency. Surely, it might be said, escaping from pain would occupy an intermediate position of excellence between pain and release from pain. But the impression the Philebus conveys is that οἱ δυσχερεῖς saw the commonly accepted pleasures – particularly the pleasures of rubbing itches and the like – as desperate remedies for related ills: an intense passion (i.e. suffering) provokes an intense activity which is in itself no less disgraceful and bad, but which promotes relief as its end<sup>55</sup>. The construction of the passion as a deficiency and the activity as an excess is not unintelligible in this light.

What Aristotle appears to have missed, then, upon my view of Speusippus' position, is a distinction between what Eudoxus and other hedonists treat as pleasures and pleasure in the true sense. That is, he seems to have misconstrued the character of Speusippus' opposition to hedonism, taking it as a denial of the thesis that pleasure is good rather than as an acceptance of this thesis, but in a different sense from that given to it by hedonists. For Speusippus argued (Phil. 44 b 1–3): Pain is bad; release from pain is good; whatever is the opposite of pain and is good is pleasurable; so release from pain is pleasurable. And when he said that there were no pleasures (44 b 9–10), he seems to have meant that there was nothing pleasurable over and above release from pain, contrary to public opinion (44 c 1–2). So he appears to have accepted not only the efficacy of an argument from contrariety, but an analytic connexion between 'good' and 'pleasurable'. His disagreement with Eudoxus could be expressed by saying that, if Speusippus' reasoning as reported by Plato is accepted, Eudoxus must be convicted of not examining the notion of pleasure carefully enough – of not considering just *what* it is that is both the opposite of pain and good. Had he done this, he would have

<sup>55</sup> Here, of course, I am glossing the doctrine of the mixture of pleasures and pains which is developed at *Phil.* 44 d ff.



seen that the only thing which satisfies these conditions is release from pain, and that it is only insofar as what people call pleasures consist in it that they are pleasurable. Speusippus expresses his disagreement in a different but closely connected way in the argument Aristotle reports. He claims that, if pleasure (sc. the sort of pleasure which Eudoxus has in mind, conceived of as quite independent of release from pain) is the opposite of pain, it is not necessarily opposed to the evil of pain as a good in virtue of that opposition. He could have added that Eudoxus would have to demonstrate its goodness independently of its being an opposite.

Eudoxus would doubtless have replied, as did Aristotle at 1173 a 11–12, that its goodness is established by the fact that it is an object of choice – indeed, in his argument as it is reported by Aristotle (1172 b 18–23), he makes much of the claim that it is an object of choice (and for itself, not as the means to an end). Speusippus seems to have ignored this claim. If his doing so was not just an incompetent blunder, he must have thought it in some way irrelevant to the thesis that pleasure is good (in the sense that hedonists give to this claim). One can perhaps only guess at his reason. But just before he discusses Speusippus' attack on the argument from contraries in Book X (1173 a 5ff.), Aristotle reports and dismisses the objection to Eudoxus that what all things aim at is not necessarily good (1172 b 35ff.). This is the sort of move Speusippus could appropriately have used to counter Eudoxus' connexion of 'good' with 'object of choice'. And in fact he may have been its author. I quote Gauthier ad loc.: «Aristote ne nomme pas les adversaires d'Eudoxe auxquels il s'en prend ici. Mais au livre VII, 14, 1153 b 5, il a expressément attribué à Speusippe la réfutation de l'argument du contraire qu'il va rejeter 1173 a 6–13; comme les adversaires d'Eudoxe visés depuis 1172 b 26 jusqu'à 1173 b 20 sont manifestement les mêmes, c'est donc dans toute cette section de Speusippe qu'il s'agit.» This is too confident, and appears to be contradicted by Gauthier himself, when he plausibly refers the arguments at 1173 a 15–28, for example, to the Philebus. But his claim about the authorship of the argument that what all things aim at is not necessarily good may well be correct, since the discussion of the argument from contraries is joined to the discussion of this argument by a sentence which looks as though it introduces a thesis of the same philosopher as he has just been controverting: *οὐκ ἔοικε δὲ οὐδὲ περὶ τοῦ ἐναντίου καλῶς λέγεσθαι* (1173 a 5–6).

A last objection to the identification of *οἱ δυσχερεῖς* as Speusippus may be raised: «If he is the 'enemy of Philebus', then Philebus must be Eudoxus. But this latter identification is incredible<sup>56</sup>.» We need not take such an argument very seriously. We know that Speusippus opposed Aristippus as well as Eudoxus on these questions, and we know that he wrote more than one work in which hedonism must have been discussed<sup>57</sup>.

<sup>56</sup> Its incredibility is widely accepted, and is convincingly argued by Hackforth, *Plato's Examination of Pleasure* 5–7.

<sup>57</sup> Dialogues entitled *Ἀρίστιππος* and *Περὶ ἡδονῆς* are ascribed to him by Diog. Laert. IV 4.