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False Pleasures, Appearance and Imagination in the Philebus

SYLVAIN DELCOMMINETTE

ABSTRACT

This paper examines the discussion about false pleasures in the *Philebus* (36 c3-44 a11). After stressing the crucial importance of this discussion in the economy of the dialogue, it attempts to identify the problematic *locus* of the possibility of true or false pleasures. Socrates points to it by means of an analogy between pleasure and *doxa*. Against traditional interpretations, which reduce the distinction drawn in this passage to a distinction between *doxa* and pleasure on the one hand and their object on the other, it is argued that, rather, Socrates distinguishes between the mere fact of having a *doxa* or a pleasure, on the one hand, and the content of these acts, on the other hand. Consequently, the possibility for a pleasure to be false does not concern its relation to an object, but the affective content which defines it. In order to show how the affective content of a pleasure can be false, it is necessary to examine the three species of false pleasures described by Socrates in their relation to appearance and imagination. Appearance is not identical with perception for Plato: it consists in a mixture of perception and *doxa*. As for imagination, it consists in “illustrating” a *doxa* present in the soul by means of a “quasi-perception”. It is the presence of a *doxa* in each of these processes which makes it possible for them to be true or false, while mere perception cannot be either true or false. It is then argued that according to the *Philebus* pleasure can be false precisely because its affective content is not a mere perception, but either an appearance or an imagination.

I. *The problem of truth and falsity of pleasure*

The possibility of false pleasures is certainly one of the most controversial problems discussed in Plato's *Philebus*. From Theophrastus onwards, the relevance of applying such “epistemological” predicates as “true” or “false” to pleasure, that is to an affective state, has been questioned.¹ It is

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¹ For summaries of the debates on this topic, see: for the ancient times, Damascius, *Lectures on the Philebus, wrongly attributed to Olympiodorus*, Text, Translation, Notes and Indices by L.G. Westerink (Amsterdam, 1959), 79-83; for the nineteenth century, G. Rodier, “Remarques sur le *Philèbe*”, in *Études de Philosophie Grecque*, 2nd edn. (Paris, 1957), 124-8; for the twentieth century, J.C.B. Gosling and C.C.W. Taylor, *The Greeks on Pleasure* (Oxford, 1982), 438-42 and F. Bravo, “La critique contemporaine des faux plaisirs dans le *Philèbe*”, in M. Dixsaut (ed.), *Contre Platon. 2: Renverser*

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interesting to notice that most of the criticisms aimed at it are already formulated by Protarchus, which shows that Plato is perfectly aware of the paradoxical character of his argument. But it also suggests that these criticisms are beside point, because they are based on a conception that the whole discussion is precisely intended to refute. This conception is that of the separation between affectivity and knowledge. Now it has been demonstrated earlier in the dialogue (20 c8-22 b9) that the good life consists in a mixture of pleasure and intelligence. Hence it should come as no surprise that common predicates can be applied to both components of this mixture, or more precisely that cognitive predicates can be applied to pleasure: it simply means that the mixture is much more than a mere juxtaposition of heterogeneous elements, namely a single whole in which one component (intelligence) determines the other (pleasure). The problem of true and false pleasures is therefore crucial to the dialogue, since it is the point where the mixture of pleasure and intelligence takes place. However, the meaning and the mechanism of this process are far from easy to understand. The following pages are an attempt to throw some light on this issue.²

What does it mean for a pleasure to be false? Is it not true that someone necessarily feels pleasure when he *thinks* he feels pleasure? Socrates never denies that. What he means by “false pleasure” is something quite different. In order to explain to Protarchus what he has in mind, he makes an analogy between pleasure and *doxa* (37 a1-e9). It is important to understand that this analogy is only an analogy: for the moment, the point is not yet to demonstrate that *doxa* is a constitutive moment of pleasure, but simply to point to the problematic *locus* of the possibility of true and false pleasures. In other words, this analogy is neither the first step in the analysis of the first species of false pleasures nor an independent argument to show the possibility of false pleasures,³ but a preliminary approach to the

le Platonisme (Paris, 1995), 235-70. R. Brandt, “Wahre und falsche Affekte im platonischen *Philebus*”, *Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie* 59 (1977), 1-2, proposes a general survey of the main philosophical texts related to this problem, most of them being hostile to such a concept as “false pleasure”.

² In this paper I shall focus on the epistemological aspect of the concept of false pleasure and deliberately ignore its ethical significance (hence I shall not say a single word about the puzzling passage 39 e8-40 c3). The reason for this is not at all that I consider the ethical aspect of the discussion unimportant (on the contrary), but rather that its elucidation would require a complete interpretation of the general context in which it takes place, while its epistemological aspect can be understood relatively independently of the rest.

³ The first position is defended by J. Gosling (“False pleasures: *Philebus* 35 c-41 b”,

problem designed to reveal the common ground underlying the whole subsequent discussion.

The analogy goes as follows. Socrates distinguishes two aspects of judgement (δόξα): the fact of judging (δοξάζειν) and what is judged (τὸ δοξαζόμενον). Similarly, he distinguishes two aspects of pleasure (ἡδονή): the fact of taking pleasure (ἡδεσθαι) and “what that which takes pleasure takes pleasure in (τό ᾧ τὸ ἡδόμενον ἡδεται)”. Now, Socrates says, that which judges (τὸ δοξάζον), whether it judges rightly (ὀρθῶς) or not, never loses (ἀπόλλυσιν) the fact that it really judges (τὸ δοξάζειν ὄντως). In the same way, that which takes pleasure (τὸ ἡδόμενον), whether it takes pleasure rightly or not, never loses the fact that it really takes pleasure (τὸ ὄντως ἡδεσθαι). Hence the possibility of error is not to be sought in the δοξάζειν and the ἡδεσθαι, but in what is judged (τὸ δοξαζόμενον) and what that which takes pleasure takes pleasure in (τό ᾧ τὸ ἡδόμενον ἡδεται). These are the aspects that can be right or wrong, reach their aim or miss it (ἀμαρτάνειν), and therefore make judgment or pleasure true or false. The problem is to understand what exactly is referred to by these expressions.

Most commentators simply assume that τὸ δοξαζόμενον and τό ᾧ τὸ ἡδόμενον ἡδεται refer to the *object* of judgement and pleasure. But this interpretation is not satisfactory. First, it is clear that the distinction between δοξάζειν and δοξαζόμενον or between ἡδεσθαι and ᾧ τὸ ἡδόμενον ἡδεται cannot be reduced to a distinction between subject and object, for the subject is rather referred to by the expressions τὸ δοξάζον et τὸ ἡδόμενον. Secondly and more importantly, this interpretation makes it paradoxically very difficult to understand the possibility of error: for if τὸ δοξαζόμενον corresponds to the object of judgment, what could it mean that this object is *mistaken*? One should rather say that the subject is mistaken *about* the object. Nevertheless, Socrates clearly relates the participle ἀμαρτανόμενον to τὸ δοξαζόμενον.⁴ This suggests that this last term refers not to the object of the *doxa*, but to its *content* – that is to say: its

Phronesis 4 (1959), 48 and “Father Kenny on false pleasures”, *Phronesis* 6 (1961), 41-3); the second by A. Kenny (“False pleasures in the *Philebus*: A reply to Mr Gosling”, *Phronesis* 5 (1960), 46).

⁴ Cf. 37 e1: “Ἄν δέ γε ἀμαρτανόμενον τὸ δοξαζόμενον ἦ . . . A. de La Taille, who translates “Mais si ce dont on a une opinion est erroné . . .”, comments: “autrement dit, si l’objet ne correspond pas à l’idée que s’en fait le sujet . . .” (in *Platon: Philèbe* (31 b-44 a), Traduction, Notes et Commentaire (Paris, 1999), 91). This attempt to maintain the interpretation of τὸ δοξαζόμενον as the object of *doxa* is far from convincing.

propositional content.⁵ In this case, the distinction between the *δοξάζειν* and the *δοξαζόμενον* would correspond to a distinction between the *formal* aspect of *doxa*, namely the very fact of judging, which is identical in any *doxa* whether true or false since it remains in any case a *doxa*, and the *content* of *doxa*, what specifies it as *this* or *that doxa*, which for its part can be either true or false. *Doxa* is the unity of these two aspects, which means that it cannot be reduced either to its form or to its (propositional) content. But if it can itself be called true or false, it is only in respect of its content, without this affecting the reality of the *δοξάζειν*.⁶ This distinction may seem self-evident, but it should be noticed that it already supposes a refutation of the sophistical argument according to which a false *doxa* would be identical with no *doxa* at all.⁷ The possibility of a false *doxa* is based on this distinction. It is therefore not surprising that the same holds for pleasure.

Now if this interpretation is correct, it implies, in virtue of the analogy, that “what that which takes pleasure takes pleasure in” does not correspond to the *object* of pleasure, but rather to its *content* – that is, not to the pleasant object, but to *what is felt as pleasure*. Socrates would therefore distinguish between the mere fact of taking pleasure, namely the empty form of this affective state, and the content taken up by this form, which makes me feel *this* or *that* pleasure.⁸ It is only this content which can be mistaken, and consequently make the pleasure itself false, without undermining the reality of the ἡδεσθαί.

But what does this mean? In the case of *doxa*, falsity means that its content does not correspond adequately to what this *doxa* is about, namely to the state of affairs it refers to. The situation seems to be similar in the

⁵ It may be useful to remind that in the *Republic*, the *object* of *doxa* is not called τὸ δοξαζόμενον, but τὸ δοξαστόν: cf. V, 478 a11, b2, b3, e3; VI, 510 a9; VII, 534 a6.

⁶ From this point of view, it is very surprising to see C.J.F. Williams writing that Plato’s “mistakes” in his treatment of false pleasures result from the fact that he has not seen that saying that a belief is real but false is misleading, for what is real and what is false are not the same thing: what is real is my believing that *p*, what is false is the *p* such that I believe that *p* (“False pleasures”, *Philosophical Studies* 26 (1974), 295-7). Actually, this is precisely the distinction Socrates draws here.

⁷ See notably *Euthydemus* 283 e7-284 c6; *Cratylus* 429 d1-430 a7; *Theaetetus* 189 a10-14; *Sophist* 237 e1-7.

⁸ The only commentator known to me who understands the problem this way is H.H. Joachim, “The Platonic distinction between ‘true’ and ‘false’ pleasures and pains”, *The Philosophical Review* 119 (1911), 471-97 (see especially 487).

case of pleasure, since Socrates says that a pain or a pleasure can be mistaken “about what it is pained or pleased at (περὶ τὸ ἐφ’ ᾧ λυπεῖται ἢ τοῦναντίον)” (37 e5-6). This last expression (“what it is pained or pleased at”) should not be confused with that expressing the content of the pleasure, namely “what that which takes pleasure takes pleasure in (τὸ ᾧ τὸ ἡδόμενον ἥδεται)”, since it is that *about which* one can be mistaken. Just like the state of affairs in the case of *doxa*, it rather corresponds to what the content of the pleasure *refers to*, i.e. to what it *represents*. Now most commentators would certainly say that this precisely corresponds to the object of pain or pleasure. However, this concept of the object of pain or pleasure, which plays such a crucial role in the commentaries on this passage, is never explicitly invoked in the following analysis of false pleasures.⁹ As we shall see, what *is* invoked as a criterion for true and false pleasures is rather the *actual* condition of the body (or the soul) of the person who feels a pain or a pleasure, the representation of which corresponds to the content of the pain or the pleasure as it is *felt*. I shall therefore argue that the falsity of pleasures and pains arises from the absence of correspondence between the affective state as it is felt and the actual condition of the body (or the soul) to which it refers. Having a false pleasure would therefore imply that we really take pleasure, but that what we take pleasure in does not, in fact, correspond to a real pleasure in our body or our soul.

However, in order to understand that, we shall need a much more detailed investigation. For the moment, Socrates has only pointed to the problematic *locus* where the possibility of false pleasures has to be looked for. The aim of the subsequent discussion is to explain this possibility. As we shall see, it proceeds by distinguishing three different kinds of false pleasures, each of which is based on the demonstration that pleasure cannot be reduced to mere perception (αἴσθησις), but always implies *doxa* as a constitutive moment. From this point of view, the discussion about false pleasures can be compared to that of the definition of knowledge as perception in the *Theaetetus*. Moreover, N. Mooradian has proposed to interpret the initial position of Protarchus as being close to that of Theaetetus in the first part of the dialogue named after him.¹⁰ For Protarchus only

⁹ I do not mean that this concept is irrelevant to the problem of pleasure, nor that Plato considered it irrelevant (the analyses of *Republic IX* demonstrate the contrary), but merely that it plays no role in the analysis of false pleasures proposed in the *Philebus*.

¹⁰ N. Mooradian, “Converting Protarchus: Relativism and false pleasures of anticipation in Plato’s *Philebus*”, *Ancient Philosophy* 16 (1996), 94 and 105-6. However, I

refuses to apply the predicate “false” to pleasure and pain, not the predicate “true” (cf. 36 c8-9, 37 b6, 37 e8-9): according to him, all pleasures are true, just as all perceptions are true according to Theaetetus and Protagoras. Now as is well known, the final refutation of the identity between knowledge and perception in the *Theaetetus* consists in the demonstration of the impossibility for any perception to be *either true or false*, since perception cannot get at being, and, therefore, at truth. The only power which can get at being is *dianoia*, and therefore only *doxa*, which corresponds to the act by which *dianoia* expresses itself, can be either true or false (cf. 184 b3-187 a9).¹¹ One can also read this passage as a refutation of the identity between perception and appearance (φαίνεται, φαντασία) assumed at the very beginning of the discussion (cf. 152 b12-c2), which announces the definition of appearance as “a mixture of perception and *doxa*” that can be found in the *Sophist* (264 b2): if appearance, unlike perception, can be false, it is precisely because it cannot be reduced to perception, but includes *doxa* as a constitutive component which introduces the possibility of error. The way Socrates proceeds in the *Philebus* to demonstrate the possibility of false pleasures is very similar: he will show that contrary to what Protarchus thinks, pleasure is not a perception, but an appearance; as such, it includes *doxa*, which introduces the possibility of falsehood in it. This supposes that *doxa* is used in a very different way from a mere analogy with pleasure, namely as a constitutive moment belonging to all pleasures as such. In order to shed light on this point, I shall begin by examining the role of *doxa* in appearance and imagination as described in the *Philebus*, before showing how that can explain the possibility of false pleasures.

II. *Doxa, appearance and imagination*

In order to explain this possibility, Socrates provides a full account of *doxa*, appearance and imagination (*Philebus* 38 b12-39 c12). This account is usually understood as related only to the first species of false pleasures. Nevertheless, if it were the case, it would go far beyond its point, for this first species only involves imagination, and many elements concerning

cannot agree with the subsequent interpretation he proposes of Socrates' refutation of that position (cf. 110-11).

¹¹ The neglect of this crucial demonstration is a major weakness in the recent interpretation proposed by J.-F. Pradeau, *Platon: Philèbe*, Introduction, Traduction et Notes (Paris, 2002), pp. 50-7, who confuses perception and appearance.

doxa and appearance seem irrelevant to it. I shall argue that these elements are in fact very important as soon as they are related to the two other species of false pleasures. In other words, I shall try to show that the account of *doxa*, appearance and imagination is used as a general reference for the *three* species of false pleasures that will be distinguished later.

Doxa and the attempt to come to a *doxa* (τὸ διαδοξάζειν ἐγχειρεῖν)¹² always happen to us through memory and perception, Socrates says (38 b12-13). He gives an example (38 c5-e8). Let us imagine a wanderer who sees something from a distance and not very clearly (πόρρωθεν μὴ πάνυ σαφῶς), and who wants to decide (κρίνειν) about what he sees. He would raise the following question for himself: “What is that which appears (φανταζόμενον) to stand beside the rock under a tree?”. And, answering himself, he could either hit the mark (ἐπιτυχῶς) and say that it is a man, or be mistaken (παρενεχθείς) and call it a statue (ἄγαλμα). If the wanderer is alone, that dialogue, which can be pursued long after the original perception which provoked it, usually remains silent and internal, and finally reaches a *doxa*; but if someone accompanies him, he can put it into actual speech (ἐντείνειν εἰς φωνήν) and transform his *doxa* into a *logos*.

What is happening in this situation? “Memory”, Socrates says, “coinciding with perceptions (αἰσθήσεσι), and what is related to these affections (παθήματα),¹³ appear to me so to speak to write *logoi* in our souls;

¹² The meaning of the verb διαδοξάζειν (an hapax in Plato) is debated. The most convincing interpretation seems to be R.G. Bury’s (*The Philebus of Plato*, Edited with Introduction, Notes and Appendices (Cambridge, 1897), 79-80, n. *ad loc.*), which consists in seeing the same relation between διαδοξάζειν and διαλεγέσθαι as between δόξα and λόγος, namely that the second term of each couple corresponds to a vocalisation of the silent activity expressed by the first. The verb διαδοξάζειν would therefore refer to the silent dialogue of the soul which tries to come to a δόξα, while διαλεγέσθαι would correspond to the same activity expressed in words, whose result is a vocalised δόξα, i.e. a λόγος.

¹³ For summaries of the difficulties raised by the expression κάκεινα ἃ περὶ ταῦτ’ ἐστὶ τὰ παθήματα and of the different interpretations proposed, see especially Bury 1897, 81-2, n. *ad loc.*; Rodier 1957, 99-103; P. Friedländer, *Plato. 3: The Dialogues. Second and Third Periods*, Translated from the 2nd German edn. by H. Meyerhoff (London, 1969), 539-40; F. Teisserenc, “L’empire du faux ou le plaisir de l’image. *Philebe* 37 a-41 a”, in M. Dixsaut (ed.), *La Fêlure du Plaisir. 1: Commentaires* (Paris, 1999), 283-4. I follow Teisserenc’s interpretation, which seems the most reasonable one, consisting in referring ταῦτα to τὰ παθήματα, understood as corresponding to what has just been at issue, namely memory and perceptions. “What is related to these affections” would therefore refer to the wanderer’s silent dialogue.

and when this affection¹⁴ writes what is true, the result is that a true *doxa* and true *logoi* spring up in us; but when such a scribe (γραμματεύς) writes what is false, the result is the contrary of true <*doxai* and *logoi*>” (39 a1-7). It has often been noticed that this text refers to a passage of the *Theaetetus* where Socrates describes a similar process of perceptive identification (191 c8-195 b8). With this reference in mind, we can understand that what is at issue here is the process by which the wanderer, perceiving an unclear figure from a distance, tries to adjust his actual perception to a memory which can be compared to a stamp in a wax block. The activity of the soul which connects actual perceptions to memories in order to establish relations of sameness or otherness between them is what Plato calls *dianoia* (cf. *Theaetetus* 185 a4 sq., 195 d1; *Philebus* 38 e6-7: διανοούμενος). He describes it as an internal dialogue of the soul with itself, which can but does not have to be expressed in words.¹⁵ *Doxa* corresponds to the final step of this dialogue, to its fixation in a determination, symbolised by the action of the scribe. However, strictly speaking, *doxa* cannot be confused with what the scribe writes: as F. Teisserenc remarks,¹⁶ the scribe only writes what is true (ἀληθῆ) or false (ψευδῆ); as for true or false *doxai*, they are rather the consequences of the presence of such writings in our souls. The reason for this clearly appears when one remembers the difference between δοξάζειν and the δοξαζόμενον: what the scribe writes is only the δοξαζόμενον, “what is judged”, which is only one of the two aspects necessary to form a complete *doxa* – the only one concerned with truth or falsity. *Doxa* cannot be reduced to this aspect, for it also presupposes the δοξάζειν, namely the *fact* that the scribe writes.

Now this passage does not only describe the genesis of *doxa*: it also provides an account of *appearance*, of which *doxa* is an essential component. By “appearance”, I mean what the Stranger in the *Sophist* (264 a4-b5) calls indifferently ‘φαντασία’ or ‘φαίνεται’, which he defines as

¹⁴ I keep the text of the manuscripts, which has τούτο τὸ πάθημα, suppressed by Badham. As A. Diès remarks (*Platon: Philèbe*, Texte établi et traduit par A. Diès (Paris, 1941), 47, n. 1), this singular prepares the following γραμματεύς. But unlike Diès, I understand it as a reference to the complex formed by memory, perception and internal dialogue.

¹⁵ Apart from the present *Philebus* passage, see *Theaetetus* 189 e4-190 a8 and *Sophist* 263 e3-264 b5. These three texts are analysed in M. Dixsaut, “What is it Plato calls thinking?”, *Proceedings of the Boston Area Colloquium in Ancient Philosophy* 13 (1997), 1-27.

¹⁶ Teisserenc 1999, 284-5.

the *doxa* which arises not on its own but through perception, or as a mixture of perception and *doxa* (σύμμειξις αἰσθήσεως καὶ δόξης).¹⁷ “Appearance” is essentially different from mere perception, since it supposes that the perception is “mixed”, that is to say *structured by a doxa*. This *doxa* corresponds to the application of a concept to the perception, which makes it appear *qua this* or *that*. This “*qua*” is not contained in mere perception; rather, it originates in the activity of the subject to whom it appears, namely in his *doxa*: it is *because I consider it qua this or that* that it appears to me *qua this* or *that*. Hence if this *doxa* varies, the appearance varies too: for example, what appeared to me *qua* a statue now appears to me *qua* a man. Even if my perception is identical in both cases, the way it appears to me is different, for appearance involves *doxa* as a constitutive component.

Nevertheless, though *de jure* perception can always be distinguished from appearance, *de facto* it is **always already** structured by a *doxa* which transforms it into an appearance. As the *Timaeus* insists (28 a2-3, 52 a7), it is only by means of the combination of perception and *doxa* that we can have access to the world around us, not by means of mere perception. And the *Theaetetus* demonstrates that in any sensible appearance the most basic determinations such as being, sameness and otherness, unity and number, similitude and dissemblance, and the like, cannot come from any sense-organ or from all of them, but only from *dianoia*, whose act is called δοξάζειν (184 b3-187 a9). Hence it is not surprising that in the *Philebus* example, the figure which appears under a tree is already referred to as an appearance (cf. φανταζόμενον, 38 d1; φαντασθέντα, d2) rather than a mere perception. From the very beginning, it is at least considered *qua* a being, and *qua* a unity; furthermore, it is considered *qua* a figure,

¹⁷ At *Theaetetus* 152 b12, an identity between φαίνεται and αἰσθάνεται is posited, which becomes at 152 c1 an identity between φαντασία and αἴσθησις. But it is clear that this identity results from Protagoras’ position and can in no way be ascribed to Plato himself: on the contrary, the passage on which the refutation of the first definition of knowledge concludes (184 b3-187 a9) shows that something which cannot be ascribed to perception, but only to the act of *dianoia*, namely the δοξάζειν, is present in any appearance. Even though the expressions ‘φαντασία’ and ‘φαίνεται’ do not appear in the latter passage, it clearly prepares the definition of these terms proposed in the *Sophist*. Moreover, one of the specific characteristics of the structure of the *Theaetetus* is precisely to distinguish progressively what was confused at the beginning of the dialogue: perception, appearance, *doxa* and knowledge (cf. M. Frede, “Observations on perception in Plato’s later dialogues”, in G. Fine (ed.), *Plato. 1: Metaphysics and Epistemology* (Oxford, 1999), 379).

which can only result from a *doxa*.¹⁸ But in this case, the activity of *dianoia* remains unnoticed, so that this figure *immediately* appears to us *qua* a figure, as if the *doxa* were coming to us from the outside. The work of *dianoia* only becomes explicit when we have doubts – which is why Socrates has chosen such a case to exemplify the process. But since in the latter case any “*qua*” determination results from a *doxa*, we have to admit that this holds for any case of appearance where a “*qua*” is involved. Consequently, the difference between the recognition of what appears to us under the tree *qua* a figure and *qua* a man or a statue does not correspond to a difference between mere perception and appearance, but to a difference between a relatively undetermined and a relatively determined appearance. This degree of determination depends on the part played by *doxa* in this appearance, more or less important according to the context where perception takes place.

Now this definition of appearance implies that if the *doxa* is false, the appearance itself is false. When I judge that what I see is a statue rather than a man, it really appears to me *qua* a statue, but this appearance is false. How can such an error come about? Since appearance is a mixture of two elements, there seem to be two possibilities. The error always concerns the *doxa*, but it can originate either in the perception or in the conditions of *doxa* itself. First, one can be mistaken because the perception is too undetermined and provides no solid ground for interpreting it *qua* this rather than *qua* that. This is the case of the wanderer in the example, since Socrates says that he sees a figure from a distance and not very clearly. But there is another reason why an appearance can be false, namely if the concept applied to the perception is itself false. For concepts are not given: they are acquired by education (*παιδεία*), as Socrates implies in the *Theaetetus* (cf. 186 b11-c5). In order to make sure we get right concepts, education must be pursued by means of the dialectical method, as is the case with letters and musical intervals (cf. *Philebus* 17 a8-18 d2). But this is far from being the case in all fields, and consequently many of our concepts are wrong and can induce errors in the process of recognition. In the *Philebus* example, it would mean that the wanderer can think that what appears to him is a statue rather than a man because he confuses man and statue *in their very concepts*. Such a con-

¹⁸ I cannot therefore agree with S. Rosen, “The problem of sense perception in Plato’s *Philebus*”, *Studies in Philosophy and the History of Philosophy* 33 (1999), 253, according to whom the immediate perception of the wanderer corresponds to the non-structured apprehension of a form.

fusion is highly improbable in this case, but it becomes much less so when aesthetic or ethical issues are at stake: we can be mistaken when we think that the man who appears to us is beautiful or acts virtuously because our concepts of beauty and virtue are wrong. We shall see later that in the case of pleasure, this possibility becomes perfectly understandable.

But Socrates is not content with describing the activity of the scribe. He now presents the work of another craftsman, present in our soul “at the same time” (ἐν τῷ τότε χρόνῳ, 39 b4) as the scribe, but who acts (at least from a logical point of view) “after” him: “a painter (ζωγράφον), who, after the scribe (μετὰ τὸν γραμματιστήν), draws in our soul copies (εἰκόνας) of what is said” (39 b6-7). This one acts “when, having taken away (ἀπαγαγών)¹⁹ from sight or any other perception what is then judged and said, one sees so to speak (πως) in himself copies of what has been judged and said” (39 b9-c1). In these conditions, “the copies of true *doxai* and *logoi* will be true, but those of false ones will be false” (39 c4-5).

What is here at issue is *imagination*, namely the process of producing “images” in the soul. However, these images should not be understood as exclusively visual: Socrates makes it clear that this process can happen for all the kinds of perceptions, and we have no reason to think that the image of a sound would be visual. The image of the painter should therefore be understood metaphorically.

What are here called εἰκόνες will later be called φαντάσματα (40 a9). Does this mean that the distinction established in the *Sophist* (235 c9-236 c8) between εἰκαστική τέχνη, i.e. an art which reproduces the real (οὐσία) determinations of the model, and φανταστική τέχνη, i.e. an art which only reproduces the apparent (δοξοῦσαι) determinations, has been forgotten?²⁰ It does not seem so, as soon as one understands that the images drawn by the painter can be considered as εἰκόνες or as φαντάσματα according to

¹⁹ According to H.G. Liddell and R. Scott, *A Greek-English Lexicon* [1843], Revised and augmented throughout by H.S. Jones, 9th edn. with a Revised Supplement (Oxford, 1996), 174, s.v., V.2, this term would rather mean “receive” in the present context. One should therefore translate: “having received from sight or any other perception what is then judged and said . . .”. However, it is difficult to understand why this special meaning should be needed (it is the only occurrence of this term with this meaning cited in the lexicon): what is “received” in appearance is certainly neither *doxa* nor *logos*, but only perception; and it would be absurd to say that this is received “from perception”. The usual meaning therefore seems preferable in this passage.

²⁰ Or has not been discovered yet, if one assumes the *Philebus* to be earlier than the *Sophist*.

the model to which they are compared. The images produced by imagination are called εἰκόνες when they are considered as reproducing the *doxa* or the *logos* written in the soul. Now it is very important that no distortion between the model and the copy arises here, for this allows us to say that the image itself is true or false *insofar as* the *doxa* is true or false. On the other hand, these images must be called φαντάσματα when they are compared to *the very things* to which they are supposed to correspond. Indeed, what the images reproduce can only be the *appearance* of these things rather than their reality, since they depend on the *doxa* constitutive of their appearance. The image is an εἰκὼν insofar as it perfectly reproduces the *doxa* which it illustrates, but since this *doxa* is the *doxa* constitutive of the appearance, it can only reproduce the appearance of the thing to which it corresponds, and therefore is a φαντάσμα from this viewpoint. Now when this *doxa* is false, the image itself is false.

The φαντάσμα is therefore the image of the φαντασία or the φαινόμενον. What does this mean? Both have a share in *doxa*; furthermore, the *doxa* constitutive of the φαντάσμα is identical with that constitutive of the φαινόμενον. What is different is rather the role of perception in each of them. For by contrast with the φαινόμενον, the φαντάσμα is not aroused by a perception: what makes it necessary is precisely the absence of an actual perception. The function of imagination is to compensate for this absence by producing a “quasi-perception” which replaces it. The main difference between such a “quasi-perception” and a real perception is certainly that the first can only be purely mental, while the second has been defined earlier in the dialogue as a common motion of the body and the soul (cf. 33 d2-34 a9).²¹ There is no motion of the body in the case of imagination. But apart from this, which also implies that the quasi-perception produced by imagination is less vivid than the real perception, the φαντάσμα has a nature very similar to that of the φαινόμενον, and can therefore be called a “quasi-appearance”.

Socrates adds something very important for the problem of false pleasures, namely that the activity of the painter occurs not only about what is and what has been, but also about what will be (39 c10-12).²² In other

²¹ Contrary to what is sometimes assumed (e.g. by Damascius in Westerink 1959, 75-7 and Pradeau 2002, 45 and 264, n. 129), the motion of the soul belonging to perception cannot be a *judgement*, which only comes about with appearance: it is the mere *awareness* of the affection by the soul.

²² Does it also hold for the scribe? Certainly, at least so long as this figure is considered in its mere *function*. Nevertheless, this function does not seem to have the same origin in a present appearance and in *doxai* about the past or the future (*pace*

words, imagination can illustrate *doxai* concerning the past, the present and the future. Now as we have seen, the images thus produced will be false if the *doxai* they illustrate are themselves false. But how should we understand falsity here? For the present, it means that what appears to us *qua* a statue and is reproduced as such is not in fact a statue, but a man. The falsity of the image stems from the falsity of the appearance. What about the past and the future? We might suppose that the falsity of the image which represents them should also stem from that of the appearance, namely, for the past, from the fact that what has appeared to us *qua* a statue was in fact a man, and, for the future, that what will appear to us *qua* a statue will not be a statue, but a man. In this case, the false *doxa* which would give rise to the false image would be the past or future *doxa* constitutive of the past or future appearance. However, this interpretation does not leave any specificity to images representing the past or the future, nor to the kind of error which can affect them. Now it is clear that another kind of error is possible concerning the past and the future: we can be mistaken in thinking that we had or that we shall have an appearance of statue, not only because what appeared or will appear to us as a statue was not or will not be a statue, but also because we can believe *now* that we had or shall have an appearance of statue, while we actually had or shall actually have an appearance of man, or of cow, or no appearance at all. In this case, falsity does not concern the *doxa* constitutive of past or future appearance, but the *present doxa* relative to what appeared or will appear;²³ and it is this *doxa* which, when it is illustrated by a quasi-perception, gives rise to an image of the past or the future that is true or false just as the *doxa* is. The fact that this is what is at issue here is confirmed when Socrates cites anticipation as an example of a *doxa* concerning the future (39 d1-5), and more precisely hope (39 e4-6), which is a *logos* (40 a6-8) – or a *doxa* if it remains unexpressed. For it is clear that hope is a present *doxa* concerning the future, which can be false when what it anticipates will not appear in the future, at least not the way it is anticipated.

Teisserenc 1999, 288). All *doxai* are not bound to perception: the *Sophist* distinguishes the *doxa* which arises through perception (δ' αἰσθήσεως) from the *doxa* which arises "on its own (καθ' αὐτήν)" (264 a4-6). It seems clear that many *doxai* concerning the past and the future (as well as the present) belong to this second species, and therefore do not arise from a comparison between perceptions and memories, but for example from persuasion. Hence the perceptive model should not be generalised to explain the genesis of *any doxa*.

²³ On this kind of error concerning the future, see *Theaetetus* 177 c6-179 b5.

Hence the same should hold for the *doxa* concerning the past, which can only be here a *present doxa* that can be mistaken about what happened and is only illustrated *afterwards* by a quasi-perception, giving rise to an image of the past.²⁴

Let us now examine how this analysis can shed light on the problem of false pleasures.

III. *The three species of false pleasures*

(1) The first species of false pleasures mainly concerns pleasures of anticipation. As Socrates has shown before, such pleasures suppose that a future pleasure is not only desired, but *hoped for*, i.e. that the desire for pleasure is taken up by a *doxa* according to which it is probable that this pleasure will occur in the future (cf. 36 a7-b10). This point is extremely important, because it implies that, contrary to what is often assumed by commentators, what we take pleasure in when we get a pleasure of anticipation is not merely an anticipated *fact*, but an anticipated *pleasure*. This is made very clear by the word *προχαίρειν* used by Socrates to describe this situation (39 d4): when we get an anticipatory pleasure, we take pleasure *in advance* in a future pleasure. This supposes that the future pleasure is in some way present to our soul. Now it cannot be present as such, since it is precisely not occurring for the moment; the only way of making it present is by means of an anticipatory representation. This representation, which is a *phantasma*, is grounded on the *doxa* constitutive of anticipation, namely hope in this case; but it also supposes that this *doxa* is illustrated by a quasi-perception which compensates for the absence of actual perception constitutive of the future pleasure. The anticipatory representation of the future pleasure may be called the *anticipated pleasure*. It corresponds to the *content* of the anticipatory pleasure, that is to say to what we take pleasure in when we get an anticipatory pleasure.

The example proposed by Socrates will make this clearer. He says: "Someone often has visions of possessing a great amount of gold, as well as many pleasures; and in addition, he sees himself in this internal picture highly (*σφόδρα*) delighted with himself" (40 a10-12). We can distinguish three logical moments in this process. First, there is the desire for

²⁴ This process is therefore very different from recollection, which consists in reactivating a *perception* (*Philebus* 34 b6-c3). In recollection, perception is primary; in the image of the past, the quasi-perception is only the *a posteriori* illustration of an independently reached *doxa*.

gold and for the pleasure its possession is supposed to produce. Then, the object of this desire is considered as *having to occur in the future*; that is to say, it is taken up by an anticipation, and more precisely by a hope (39 e4-6), which is a present *doxa* concerning the future (cf. 40 a6-8). Finally, this *doxa* is illustrated by the painter who represents the dreamer himself enjoying the possession of gold. The result is what Socrates calls a “painted pleasure” (ἡδονή . . . ἐξωγραφημενή, 40 b6-7), i.e. the anticipated pleasure. As in the case of sound, a representation of pleasure should not be understood as exclusively visual: it is rather a reproduction of the kind of perception involved in pleasure. Through the mediation of this anticipatory representation, the dreamer can take pleasure *in advance* in the future pleasure itself; that is to say, the anticipated pleasure is the *content* of the anticipatory pleasure, what this pleasure takes pleasure *in*. It is therefore clear that what produces pleasure in this case is not merely the anticipation of the dreamer’s future wealth, but the anticipation of the *pleasure* he will enjoy in being so wealthy.

Thanks to the quasi-perception it produces to illustrate a *doxa*, imagination makes it possible for us to feel pleasure apart from the actual experience of the body. Now this power is not confined to the future: it can as well concern the past or the present (cf. 39 c10-12). One should therefore conclude that this analysis of anticipatory pleasures is only a paradigm for all pleasures felt apart from the body, even though these pleasures are the most common case, since “we are full of hopes throughout our lifetime” (39 e5-6).

But how can such pleasures be either true or false? This possibility is easy to understand in the case of anticipated pleasures. As we have seen, these pleasures are *phantasmata*; and *phantasmata* are true when the *doxa* they illustrate is true, but false when it is false. An anticipated pleasure will therefore be false when it is grounded on a false hope, namely on a present *doxa* stating that a future pleasure will occur while it will not. In this case, the future pleasure is unreal (cf. 40 d7-10) and its anticipatory representation is false, since it does not adequately correspond to the future condition of the body or of the soul it is supposed to represent. But how can falsity affect the anticipatory pleasure itself? Socrates does not explicitly elucidate this transition: he feels content with attributing the possibility of falsity to the “painted pleasure” (cf. 40 b6-7), namely to the anticipated pleasure. This approach has led some commentators to suggest that he confuses these two types of pleasures.²⁵ Actually, even though the

²⁵ This criticism has been formulated by J. Ferber, “Platos Polemik gegen die

anticipatory pleasure and the anticipated pleasure are not strictly identical, the falsity of the latter necessarily implies that of the first. For as we have seen, the anticipated pleasure corresponds to the *content* of the anticipatory pleasure. Now as Socrates repeats here (cf. 40 c8-d10), falsity can only concern the content of a pleasure; as for the ἡδεσθαι, at least the *actual* ἡδεσθαι, i.e. the fact that I really take pleasure *now*, it is as unquestionable as the fact that I judge when I judge. What can be false is only what I take pleasure in, and this corresponds, in the case of an anticipatory pleasure, to the anticipated pleasure. But when the content of a pleasure is false, one can say as well that the pleasure itself, i.e. the whole experience formed by the ἡδεσθαι and the ᾧ τὸ ἡδόμενον ἡδεται, is false. Hence the anticipatory pleasure taken in the representation of an unreal future pleasure can also be called false, since it is a pleasure taken in an unreal pleasure through the mediation of a false representation of the future.

(2) Let us now turn to the second species of false pleasures. This one concerns pleasures whose content is no longer a *phantasma*, but an appearance. Now as we have seen, an appearance can be false inasmuch as it consists in a mixture of perception and *doxa*; and its falsity, though it always concerns the part of *doxa* present in it, can find its origin either in the perception or in the *doxa*. It is the first kind of case which is at issue here.

In order to introduce this kind of false pleasures, Socrates begins by reminding us that desire produces a separation between our body and our soul, since the soul always desires a state contrary to the actual state of the body (41 b11-c8). This means that when the actual state of the body is pain, the soul desires pleasure.²⁶ In this case, Socrates says, “pleasures

Lustlehre”, *Zeitschrift für Philosophie und philosophische Kritik* 148 (1912), 168, and especially by Gosling, notably in Gosling-Taylor 1982, 435-8. Kenny 1960, 52, replied by denying that this identification appears in the text, but his arguments are not very convincing: see the criticisms by A. McLaughlin, “A note on false pleasures in the *Philebus*”, *Philosophical Quarterly* 19 (1969), 60 and J. Dybikowski, “False pleasure and the *Philebus*”, *Phronesis* 15 (1970), 164.

²⁶ This is the easiest case. But what does happen when the actual state of the body is pleasure? Obviously, Socrates cannot mean that the soul desires pain in this case. All that it can desire is a *more intense* pleasure. In this case, the contrariety between the state desired by the soul and the actual state of the body is reduced to a contrariety between a more intense and a less intense pleasure; and as we shall see, this contrariety between the more and the less is all that is needed for the present argument.

and pains are at the same time side by side (ἅμα παρακεῖσθαι), and the perceptions (αἰσθήσεις) of them, which are opposed to one another (ἐναντίων οὐσῶν), occur simultaneously one beside the other (ἅμα παρ' ἀλλήλας)" (41 d1-3). It is important to notice how Socrates insists on the fact that the pleasures and the pains of the body and of the soul are *simultaneous*. This may seem paradoxical, since what is desired by the soul is a state of the body which is precisely *not* its present state. Nevertheless, this can be understood if we remember what Socrates said earlier, namely that when it desires something, the soul is *in contact* with its object (cf. ἐφάπτεσθαι, 35 b11): for this means that this object (pleasure) is *present* to the soul, even though it is not to the body. Now we also know that pain and pleasure admit of the more and the less, i.e. are *apeira* (41 d8-9). I cannot here give a full account of what this qualification implies. In the present context, let us merely assume that it means that pleasure and pain can only be defined by comparison to one another, as the two opposite directions of a single motion. Hence if we want to judge (κρίνεσθαι) or to discern (διαγνῶναι) which one of these two affections is greater than the other and which one is smaller, or which one is more intense, or which one is stronger (τίς τούτων πρὸς ἀλλήλας μείζων καὶ τίς ἐλάττων καὶ τίς μᾶλλον καὶ τίς σφοδρότερα), we must compare them to one another, a pain to a pleasure, a pain to a pain and a pleasure to a pleasure (41 d11-e8). Now such a comparison can induce a distortion. In order to explain what he means, Socrates introduces an analogy with sight: "Well now! In the case of sight (ἐν . . . ὄψει), the fact that we see magnitudes (τὰ μεγέθη) from afar or close by obscures (ἀφανίζει) the truth and makes us judge (δοξάζειν) falsely, but the same thing would not happen in the case of pains and pleasures (ἐν λύπαις . . . καὶ ἡδοναῖς)?" "On the contrary, it happens to a much greater degree, Socrates", Protarchus answers (41 e9-42 a4). Considered "from afar", a pleasure often seems greater or smaller than it is. Many commentators think that this analogy is intended to compare the distortion caused by temporal distance to that caused by spatial distance.²⁷ But this interpretation does not seem compatible with the insistence we have noticed on the fact that both affections are *present* to the

²⁷ Compare Damascius in Westerink 1959, 89; P. Natorp, *Platos Ideenlehre*, 2nd edn. (1921, repr. Hamburg, 1994), 340; R. Hackforth, *Plato's Philebus*, Translated with an Introduction and Commentary (repr. Cambridge, 1972), 77-8; Gosling 1959, 44; D. Gallop, "True and false pleasures", *Philosophical Quarterly* 10 (1960), 333; McLaughlin 1969, 58; Brandt 1977, 4-6; D. Frede, "Disintegration and restoration: Pleasure and pain in Plato's *Philebus*", in R. Kraut (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Plato* (Cambridge, 1992), 447; C. Hampton, *Pleasure, Knowledge, and Being. An*

soul: the actual state of the body because it is perceived by the soul now, and the desired state because the soul is in contact with the object it desires. We should therefore take the text more literally and ascribe this distortion to the fact that pleasure and pain are *apeira*, that is to the fact that they admit of the more and the less. To consider a pleasure “from afar” would therefore mean to consider it *from the viewpoint of pain* (or of a smaller or greater pleasure), and this is what causes mistakes about its intensity. And actually, the same holds in the case of sight: if a magnitude (cf. τὰ μεγέθη) appears to us smaller than it is when it is considered from a long distance, it is because the smallness of this magnitude is contrary to the greatness of the distance from the viewpoint of which it is considered, and this opposition of two contrary predicates makes them *apeira*.

Now in these conditions, a pain or a pleasure may appear greater or smaller than it really is. In order to understand this, we should distinguish between two things: the mere *perception* (cf. αἰσθήσεις, 41 d2) of pleasure or pain, either actual or desired, which is purely *apeiron* and cannot be felt as such, and the *appearance* (cf. φαίνονται, 42 b4-5, b9; φαινόμενον, b9, c1) of pleasure or pain, that is to say what pleasure or pain appear to be when they are properly felt. As we have seen, the appearance consists in a mixture of perception and *doxa*, also referred to here by the word κρίσις (cf. 41 e2, 8). It is this *doxa* that can be false if it overestimates the intensity of the perception of pleasure or pain, and when it is, it necessarily makes the appearance of pleasure or pain which it constitutes false, since these pleasures or pains *appear* to us greater or smaller than they are (μείζους τῶν οὐσῶν ἐκάτεροι καὶ ἐλάττους φαίνονται, 42 b8-9). The cause of error lies here in the indeterminacy of perception, just as in the case of the wanderer thinking that what he sees is a statue rather than a man because he sees it from a distance and not very clearly. The only difference is that the mistake is here made unavoidable because the undetermined perception is placed side by side with its contrary.

Hence Socrates is entirely justified in saying that this situation is contrary to that concerned by the first species of false pleasures, for while the pleasures of the latter species were made false because of a false *doxa*, it

Analysis of Plato's Philebus (Albany, 1990), 60; N. Mooradian, “What to do about false pleasures of overestimation? *Philebus* 41 a5-42 c5”, *Apeiron* 28 (1995), 93-4; de La Taille 1999, 118-19.

is now the *doxa* which is made false because of the pleasures and pains themselves (42 a5-b7) – namely the *perceptions* of pleasure and pain.²⁸ This means that the falsity of pleasure has moved up from the *phantasma* to the appearance. But in what does the falsity of the appearance of pleasure really consist? We know that falsity cannot affect the ἡδεσθαι, which remains unquestioned, but only the *content* of the pleasure. Now what we take pleasure in is what *appears* to us *qua* pleasure, the *appearance* of pleasure. But this appearance of pleasure is greater than the perception of pleasure really is. Therefore, the difference of intensity between the perception of pleasure and its appearance does not correspond to anything: it is merely an *unreal* appearance of pleasure. Nevertheless, what takes pleasure takes pleasure in that too; it takes pleasure in the totality of the pleasure which appears to it. Consequently, this part of the pleasure it feels is false, and insofar as it takes pleasure in it, it can be said to get a false pleasure (cf. 42 b8-c3).²⁹

(3) In order to establish the possibility of a third species of false pleasures, Socrates begins by demonstrating the possibility of a state in which neither pleasure nor pain is felt (42 c9-43 d3). We should therefore distinguish between three states: a state of pleasure, a state of pain, and a state where none of these affections is experienced. This neutral state cannot be confused with pleasure. Now there are people who make this confusion, claiming that the most pleasant condition is a life without pain (43 d4-10). These people therefore judge falsely (ψευδῆ . . . δοξάζουσι) about the nature (φύσις) of pleasure (44 a9-10); and the result is that they think that they feel pleasure when they do not in fact but merely feel no pain (44 a4-8).

Some commentators consider that the designation of “false pleasures” is particularly mistaken in this case, because the error discussed here would be purely theoretical and would not affect the experience of the one

²⁸ This contrast has been questioned by Gosling-Taylor 1982, 447-8; but their objection does not take the difference between the perception of pleasure and the appearance of pleasure into account.

²⁹ Let us notice that this passage implies that the part of the whole pleasure which corresponds to the perception of pleasure is true for its part. This is important, for it means that falsity does not have a different meaning in the case of this second species from its meaning in the case of the first, namely “overestimation” rather than “not-being”: in the two cases, false pleasures are pleasures taken in something which is not a pleasure.

who makes it, who would simply feel no pleasure at all.³⁰ But this does not seem quite right, for as we have seen, *doxa* is an intrinsic part of the appearance. Actually, we are here confronted with the second possible cause of error in the appearance, namely a mistake *in the actual concept* which is applied to the perception in order to transform it into an appearance. Just as the wanderer could be mistaken about what he perceived because he confused the concept of a statue with the concept of a man, the person concerned here confuses pleasure with absence of pain in the concept itself, and consequently thinks that what he experiences when he does not feel pain is pleasure. This means that this state really *appears to him qua* pleasure, and therefore that he *feels* it *qua* pleasure, though he has no perception of pleasure at all. Certainly, this case is a little different from that of the wanderer, because what is here falsely interpreted is not a perception, but precisely the absence of any perception. Nevertheless, this absence remains on the same level as perception (it is an absence *of perception*), and therefore it does not seem impossible to treat it as what corresponds to the role of perception in the appearance.³¹

Let me put that in another way. Just as in the case of the first two species of false pleasures, what is false here is not the ἡδεσθαι, the fact that the person concerned feels pleasure, for in any case the person who confuses pleasure with absence of pain really takes pleasure in the neutral state. Falsity rather concerns *that in which he takes pleasure*, τὸ ᾧ τὸ ἡδόμενον ἡδεταί, insofar as that is precisely not pleasure, but absence of pain. One more time, having a false pleasure means taking pleasure in something which is not a pleasure, though it appears to be one.³² But in

³⁰ See for example Hackforth 1972, 81 and Frede, *Plato: Philebus*, Translated, with Introduction and Notes (Indianapolis, 1993), 50, n. 1. Following the same line of argument, Ferber 1912, 165, n. 1, denies that the confusion between pleasure and absence of pain is a species of false pleasures.

³¹ This interpretation seems to be confirmed by the fact that in *Republic* IX, 584 a7-10, it is explicitly said that the neutral state *appears* (φαίνεται) pleasant without being it (οὐκ ἔστιν). Nevertheless, the situation described in this text is different from that of the *Philebus*: in the *Republic*, the confusion of the neutral state with pleasure occurs to those who are in a state of pain (cf. IX, 583 c10-11: τοὺς τῶν καμνόντων λόγους, οὓς λέγουσιν ὅταν κάμνωσιν), while in the *Philebus*, it occurs to those who do not feel (either pleasure or) pain (cf. 44 a4-5: ὅταν μὴ λυπῶνται). Anyway, that this species of false pleasures also concerns appearances is explicitly said in the *Philebus* too: cf. φαينوμένως, 42 c6.

³² This species of false pleasures may nevertheless seem more paradoxical than the two previous ones, because in this case there is no perception of pleasure at all, though a pleasure (or more precisely an appearance of pleasure) is felt. But it should be

the present case, this mistake results from a false *concept* of pleasure, while the false pleasures of the first two species were only false according to a determined concept of pleasure. *The condition of the truth of any pleasure is the truth of the concept of pleasure we have at our disposal.* Now the reason why people who confuse pleasure and absence of pain make this confusion lies in their wrong approach to it. As we shall learn later, these people take it as obvious that the nature of pleasure should be looked for in its most intense manifestations (cf. 44 d7-45 a3). Now this is obviously false, since as we have seen earlier, the apparent intensity of pleasures varies according to their mixture with pain. Hence the approach of these people can only lead them to discover the nature of mixed pleasures, which they consider not worthy of seeking. This is what leads them to praise the neutral state. But these mixed pleasures are not the only ones: beside them, there are also pure pleasures of which their approach gives no account (cf. 50 e5-51 a9). Their mistake therefore consists in the fact that they do not take *all the kinds of pleasures* into account. That is to say, they get a false concept of pleasure because they examine its nature without using the dialectical method of collection and division. Dialectic is therefore the only way to get true concepts of the nature of the things it examines, and consequently, since the truth of concepts is the condition of the truth of the appearances they contribute to constitute, it is the only way to get true appearances, for example true appearances of pleasure.

Let us sum up. The concept of false pleasure supposes that we distinguish two aspects of pleasure: the fact of taking pleasure and what that which takes pleasure takes pleasure in, namely the content of this pleasure. Falsity can only concern the second aspect, while the first aspect can never be questioned when a pleasure occurs. But a pleasure can only be false if it is more than a mere perception and includes a part of *doxa* in itself. This can occur in three different ways, and consequently Socrates distinguishes three species of false pleasures. The first kind of error can take place when what we take pleasure in is a *phantasma*, which can be defined as the illustration by imagination of a *doxa* concerning the past, the present, and especially the future. Since this *doxa* can be false, and since the image which illustrates it is its perfect copy, it can itself be false; and if this image is a *phantasma* of pleasure in which that which takes pleasure

noticed that this was already the case for the second species, where what could be called "false pleasure" was precisely nothing but *the part of the (appearance of) pleasure* which did not correspond to any perception of pleasure at all (cf. n. 29 above).

takes pleasure, the content of the pleasure will be false, and consequently the pleasure itself too. But the content of pleasure can also be an *appearance*, corresponding to a mixture of perception and *doxa*. Now an appearance can be false for two different reasons. The first is connected to the indeterminacy of perception, which can give rise to a false *doxa*, especially when this perception occurs at the same time as the contrary undetermined perception. In the case of pleasure, this means that a pleasure, when it occurs at the same time as a pain or another pleasure, appears to us more intense than it really is. Now insofar as we take pleasure in that pleasure as it appears to us, we also take pleasure in that part of it which appears to us but does not correspond to anything real, and we have a false pleasure. But an appearance can also be false for another reason, namely the falsity of the *concept* used to interpret the perception: for example, the person who confuses pleasure with absence of pain will think he has a pleasure when he merely undergoes absence of pain, and will consequently have a false pleasure.

The three species of false pleasures are therefore rigorously ordered according to the three levels at which falsity can take place: in the *phantasma*, in the appearance or in the concept. This division of false pleasures is exhaustive, for falsity cannot occur outside these three levels: neither below, for perception can be neither true nor false, nor above, for knowledge itself can only be true. But these three levels are not independent of one another: the truth of the third one is the necessary condition of the truth of the second one, which is itself the necessary condition of the truth of the first one. The *phantasma* is the mere image of the appearance, and therefore it can only be true if the appearance itself is true; and the truth of the concept is the necessary condition of the truth of both the appearance and the *phantasma*, for the person who does only have a false concept of pleasure at his disposal will never be able to have a true appearance of pleasure, and still less a true *phantasma* of pleasure. The division of false pleasures is therefore a perfect application of the divine method of dialectic introduced earlier in the dialogue (16 c1-18 d2); but it also leads us to consider dialectic as the condition of possibility of any true pleasure, thus preparing the division of knowledge where dialectic will rank at the top of the scale (57 e6-59 d9).³³

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