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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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.  

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, but a preliminary approach to the

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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 (δοξα): the fact of judging (δοξάζειν) and what is judged (το δοξαζόμενον). Similarly, he distinguishes two aspects of pleasure (ηδονή): the fact of taking pleasure (ηδεσθαι) and “what that which takes pleasure takes pleasure in (το φο ηδομενου ηδεται)”. Now, Socrates says, that which judges (το δοξαζόμενον), whether it judges rightly (όρθως) or not, never loses (ἀπόλλυσιν) the fact that it really judges (το δοξάζειν οντως). In the same way, that which takes pleasure (το ηδομενον), whether it takes pleasure rightly or not, never loses the fact that it really takes pleasure (το οντως ηδεσθαι). Hence the possibility of error is not to be sought in the δοξάζειν and the ηδεσθαι, but in what is judged (το δοξαζόμενον) and what that which takes pleasure takes pleasure in (το φο το ηδομενον ηδεται). 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 το δοξαζόμενον and το φο το ηδομενον ηδεται 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 ηδεσθαι and φο το ηδομενον ηδεται cannot be reduced to a distinction between subject and object, for the subject is rather referred to by the expressions το δοξαζον and το ηδομενον. Secondly and more importantly, this interpretation makes it paradoxically very difficult to understand the possibility of error: for if το 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 το 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


4 Cf. 37 e1: “An δε γε ἀμαρτανόμενον το δοξαζόμενον η… A. de La Taille, who translates “Mais si 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 το δοξαζόμενον as the object of the doxa is far from convincing.
propositional content. In this case, the distinction between the δοξάζειν and the δοξάζωμενον 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. 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. 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. It is only this content which can be mistaken, and consequently make the pleasure itself false, without undermining the reality of the ἱδέουσθαι.

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

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5. It may be useful to remind that in the Republic, the object of doxa is not called τὸ δοξάζωμενον, 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 c7-284 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 ἐρότηται ἢ τοῦνοαντίον)” (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 ὑπὸ τὸ ἡδόμενον ἡδέται)”, 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. 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 (αἰσθησίας), 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. For Protarchus only

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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).\footnote{The neglect of this crucial demonstration is a major weakness in the recent interpretation proposed by J.-F. Pradeau, Platon: Philebe, Introduction, Traduction et Notes (Paris, 2002), pp. 50-7, who confuses perception and appearance.} One can also read this passage as a refutation of the identity between perception and appearance (phiaînetai, phantasia) 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

\begin{itemize}
\item cannot agree with the subsequent interpretation he proposes of Socrates' refutation of that position (cf. 110-11).
\end{itemize}
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 ἕγερμεν)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 πάνω σωφαίς), and who wants to decide (κρίνειν) about what he sees. He would raise the following question for himself: “What is that which appears (φανταξόμενον) to stand beside the rock under a tree?”. And, answering himself, he could either hit the mark (ἐπιτυχός) and say that it is a man, or be mistaken (παρενεχθέεις) and call it a statue (ἄγγαλος). 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 (αἰσθήσεις), and what is related to these affections (παθήματα),”13 appear to me so to speak to write logoi in our souls;

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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 διαλεγόμεθα as between δὸξα and λόγος, namely that the second term of each couple corresponds to a vocalisation of the silent activity which first. The verb διαδοξάζειν would therefore refer to the silent dialogue of the soul which tries to come to a δόξα, while διαλεγόμεθα 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 κάθένα ἂ περὶ ταύτῃ ἐστι 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. Teissierenc, “L’empire du faux ou le plaisir de l’image. Philèbe 37 a-41 a”, in M. Dixsaut (ed.), La Fèlure du Plaisir. 1: Commentaires (Paris, 1999), 283-4. I follow Teissierenc’s interpretation, which seems the most reasonable one, consisting in referring ταύτα 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 affection\textsuperscript{14} writes what is true, the result is that a true doxa and true logoi spring up in us; but when such a scribe (γραμματέως) 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: διανοομενος). He describes it as an internal dialogue of the soul with itself, which can but does not have to be expressed in words.\textsuperscript{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,\textsuperscript{16} the scribe only writes what is true (ἀληθή) or false (ψευδή); 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 'φαντασςον', which he defines as

\textsuperscript{14} I keep the text of the manuscripts, which has τούτο το 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 γραμματέως. But unlike Diès, I understand it as a reference to the complex formed by memory, perception and internal dialogue.

\textsuperscript{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.

\textsuperscript{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 disemblesance, 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 φαντασία and αἰσθήσεις is posited, which becomes at 152 c1 an identity between φαντασία and αἰσθήσεις. 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 ‘φαντασσία’ 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. I: Metaphysics and Epistemology (Oxford, 1999), 379).
which can only result from a doxa. 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 (παθεία), 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-

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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 (ἀπαγγέλων)" from sight or any other perception what is then judged and said, one sees so to speak (ποις) 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 εἰκοστικὴ τέχνη, i.e. an art which reproduces the real (ὄσοια) determinations of the model, and φανταστικὴ τέχνη, i.e. an art which only reproduces the apparent (δοξούσαι) determinations, has been forgotten? 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

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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 εἰκόν 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 φαντάσματα. What does this mean? Both have a share in doxa; furthermore, the doxa constitutive of the φαντάσμα is identical with that constitutive of the φαντάσματα. What is different is rather the role of perception in each of them. For by contrast with the φαντάσματα, 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). 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 φαντάσματα, 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). In other

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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 doxa 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.

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

Teisserenc 1999, 288). All doxai are not bound to perception: the Sophist distinguishes the doxa which arises through perception (δ’ αισθησιως) from the doxa which arises “on its own (καθ’ αυτην)” (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.
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 προχοίρεω 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

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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" (ηδονή... εξορωσμενή, 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 anticipa-
tory 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, imagi-
nation makes it possible for us to feel pleasure apart from the actual expe-
rience 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 there-
fore conclude that this analysis of anticipatory pleasures is only a para-
digm for all pleasures felt apart from the body, even though these
pleasures are the most common case, since “we are full of hopes through-
ant 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 pos-
sibility 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 ὅ το ηδόμενον 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. In this case, Socrates says, “pleasures


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 (ἀμα παρακείσθαι), and the perceptions (αἴσθησεῖς) of them, which are opposed to one another (ἐναντίων οὐσῶν), occur simultaneously one beside the other (ἀμα 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. ἔφασεν θαν, 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 (διαγνώσαι) 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 πρός ἀλλήλας μεῖζον καὶ τίς ἐλάττων καὶ τίς μᾶλλον καὶ τίς σφοδροτέρα), 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 . . . ὠψεῖ), 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

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 μεγάλη) 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; φαίνομένον, 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 (μείζον τῶν ουσῶν ἐκάτερα 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

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. 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 ἰδέεςθαλή, 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).

(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 (ᾔνη... δοξάζωντι) 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

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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. 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.

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 ήδεσθαι, 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, τό ὁ τὸ ήδόμενον ήδεσθαι, 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. But in

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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 κομνόντων λόγους, ὃς 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 λυπώμενοι). Anyway, that this species of false pleasures also concerns appearances is explicitly said in the Philebus too: cf. φαίνομένας, 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}

\[\text{Université Libre de Bruxelles}\]

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