

A Unified Interpretation of the Varieties of False Pleasure in Plato's *Philebus*

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A large portion of Plato's *Philebus* is occupied by an elusive discussion of the surprising claim that pleasure can be true or false in the same way belief can—call this ‘robust falsity’.¹ A particularly vexing aspect of this discussion is that Socrates' argument establishing a parallel between belief and pleasure (the “Anticipation Argument”) is directed at the highly particular case of pleasure taken in connection with the mistaken anticipation of future pleasure. Given that the ultimate aim of Socrates' division of pleasures is to determine the role pleasure should play in the best human life, and the justification for ultimately excluding many pleasures is bound up with their categorization as false, it would be deeply disappointing if the only type of pleasure that he gives any good reason for putting in this category were pleasure associated with mistaken anticipation and the relatively narrow class of parallel cases.

Matthew Evans draws attention to this concern in his 2008 paper, “Plato on the Possibility of Hedonic Mistakes.”² He argues that a principle aim of the discussion of false pleasure is the development of what he calls the “Grounding Thesis,” introduced in the dialogue at 40e6-41a4. Evans thinks Socrates is committed to the claim that “...what makes a pleasure bad, if it is bad, is nothing other

[Acknowledgments]

¹ A parallel claim is made about pain. Throughout the paper, for the sake of convenience, I will state claims as being about pleasure or pain when they are in fact about both.

² M. Evans, ‘Plato on the Possibility of Hedonic Mistakes’ [‘Hedonic Mistakes’], *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy*, 35 (2008), 89-124.

than its being false.”³ He goes on to argue that the main discussion of false pleasure at 36c-51a falls far short of satisfying the Grounding Thesis, because the class of pleasures Socrates establishes as robustly false is too narrow.⁴ Evans and other commentators have denied that Socrates means to establish that all four types are robustly false and have suggested that for some of them there is a more figurative or indirect sense of falsity in play.⁵ If this were correct, it would be hard to explain why Plato goes to such great lengths to establish that pleasures of mistaken anticipation can admit of robust falsity. He does not mention or allude to pleasures of mistaken anticipation anywhere in the final stage of the dialogue, where he determines the content of the best life. He is very concerned to exclude intense bodily pleasures from this life on account of their falsity, and it seems that he treats his evaluation of these pleasures as by far the most important part of the discussion of false pleasure. If the only pleasures that are supposed to be considered robustly false are pleasures of mistaken anticipation and parallel cases, then the notion of robust falsity is irrelevant to the case of intense bodily pleasure and it is mysterious why Socrates argues so extensively that pleasure can admit of robust falsity.

The structure of the dialogue makes much more sense if pleasures of mistaken anticipation are discussed as a less problematic example of the general way in which pleasure can admit of robust falsity, primarily in order to pave the way for the more problematic and important claim that intense bodily pleasure admits of robust falsity. Indeed, during the discussion of intense bodily pleasures, which Socrates argues are in fact mixtures of pleasure and pain, he indicates that the case of anticipatory

³Ibid., 91.

⁴ Evans, in at 111-121 in ‘Hedonic Mistakes’, reconstructs a different notion of false pleasure that he thinks does satisfy the Grounding Thesis on the basis of the discussion at 53c-55a of the ‘subtle thinkers’ who argue that pleasure is always a becoming. This discussion contains no mention at all of pleasure as admitting of falsity, and so it seems unlikely that Plato meant for it to contain his considered view about the sense in which pleasure admits of falsity. If it is possible to reconstruct an account of false pleasure on the basis of the main discussion of false pleasure in 36c-51a that satisfies the broader demands of the dialogue, then it seems clearly preferable to do so.

⁵ Evans, ‘Hedonic Mistakes’, n. 5 at 90-1. Also, for example, D. Frede, “Disintegration and Restoration: Pleasure and Pain in Plato’s *Philebus*” [‘Disintegration and Restoration’], in R. Kraut (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Plato* (Cambridge, 1992), 425-63 at 442-52.

pleasure that is introduced in the discussion of desire at 34c-36c and that is central to the Anticipation Argument is in fact a heuristic of sorts. Plato writes at 47c3-d2:

But take now the cases where the soul's contributions are opposed to the body's: When there is pain over and against pleasures, or pleasure against pain, both are finally joined in a mixed state. We have talked about them earlier and agreed that in these cases it is the deprivation that gives rise to the desire for replenishment, and while the expectation is pleasant, the deprivation itself is painful. When we discussed this we did not make any special mention, as we do now, of the fact that, in the vast number of cases where the soul and body are not in agreement, the final result is a single mixture that combines pleasure and pain.⁶

This passage indicates that the case of anticipatory pleasure was deliberately simplified when it was initially discussed, presumably to isolate a certain point before introducing further complexity. This suggests that Socrates' primary aim in discussing the case of mistaken anticipation is not to give a full and accurate account of the phenomenon, and that the case is not very important in its own right. I hold that anticipatory pleasure is in fact discussed as one step towards developing the idea that mixed pleasures admit of robust falsity, and so at the point when it is initially discussed the fact that false anticipatory pleasure is in most cases a mixed pleasure in its own right is suppressed.

Karel Thein has recently argued that the entire discussion of false pleasure—including the psychological discussion preceding the Anticipation Argument—should be taken as a unified argument, but he does not give any indication of how his understanding of the argument might account for the robust falsity of intense bodily pleasures.⁷ I agree with Thein that the entire argument seems to be unified, but it seems to me that the single most important desideratum in interpreting the argument as a unity is to account for the sense in which intense bodily pleasure admits of robust falsity. I will defend

⁶ Translations of passages from Plato are based on those in J.M. Cooper (ed.), *Plato: Complete Works*, (Indianapolis, 1997), but have sometimes been modified.

⁷ K. Thein, 'Imagination, Self-Awareness, and Modal Thought at *Philebus* 39-40', *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy*, 42 (2012), 109-149 at 112.

this idea primarily by arguing that the structure of the discussion as a whole makes far better sense if its ultimate aim is to establish that intense bodily pleasure can admit of robust falsity. I will also try to fill in the details of how an interpretation along these lines would go, but my primary concern is to motivate a general overall interpretation of the discussion. The *Philebus* is difficult and complex enough to demand a high degree of interpretive humility. For any given passage, other readings may be available, and indeed some of these readings may be better supported by the immediate context than the reading I suggest. I intend for my case to be cumulative: I aim to develop what I take to be the interpretation that makes the best overall sense of the discussion of false pleasure and its place in the dialogue as a whole.

Socrates is usually taken to identify four types of false pleasure in the *Philebus*:

- 1) Pleasure of mistaken anticipation
- 2) Pleasure distorted in magnitude due to perspective or relative comparison
- 3) Mistaking the neutral state for pleasure
- 4) A mixture of pleasure and pain appearing more pleasant because of the admixed pain⁸

Most commentary on the discussion focuses on the Anticipation Argument, which aims to establish that pleasures of the first type are robustly false. My primary concern in this paper is the question of whether this argument can be extended to account for the robust falsity of the other types of false pleasure. I have one major revision to make in framing the issue. I deny that (3) is in fact supposed to be a type of false pleasure. I will argue that Socrates discusses a school of thought that identifies pleasure with the removal of pain as a way of approaching what he will go on to say about (4), and does *not* mean to claim that the error proponents of this school of thought are making is a category of false

⁸ Some commentators omit (4) as a type of false pleasure. J.C. Dybikowski, in 'Mixed and False Pleasure in the *Philebus*: A Reply', *Philosophical Quarterly*, 20 (1970), 244-247, explicitly argues that it should be omitted, because he thinks that the falsity of pleasure always derives from the falsity of a belief. I will argue against this justification in section 2, and I will argue at length in sections 3-5 that Plato does indeed count (4) as a type of false pleasure. It is also omitted (without explicit justification) by S. Delcomminette, in 'False Pleasures, Appearance and Imagination in the *Philebus*' ['False Pleasures'], *Phronesis*, 48 (2003), 215-37.

pleasure in its own right. Excluding (3), I will offer a unified interpretation of the sense in which (1), (2) and (4) are false.

My central idea is that Socrates uses the Anticipation Argument to establish the way in which the contribution that the sensory imagination makes to the psychological processes that constitute certain types of pleasure introduces the possibility of robust falsity. Mistaken anticipation is not itself a very important case, but it is discussed extensively because it is a case where the falsity of a pleasure is inherited from the falsity of a belief, and so it illuminates the parallel between pleasure and belief. The other two types of false pleasure—particularly (4)—are more important to the broader concerns of the dialogue, but their parallel to belief is more obscure, and so Socrates is more elliptical about establishing their robust falsity. The Anticipation Argument can be extended to them by observing the continuity between them and the case of mistaken anticipation with respect to the role played by the sensory imagination.

This paper proceeds in five stages. In section 1, I offer an interpretation of the Anticipation Argument. In section 2, I argue that it can be extended to the case of pleasure that is distorted in magnitude due to the subject's perspective and that there are strong textual indications supporting such an extension. In section 3, I argue that Socrates does not mean to count mistaking the neutral state for pleasure as a category of false pleasure, but rather that his discussion of the neutral state is meant as a dialectical introduction to the discussion of mixtures of pleasure and pain. In section 4, I suggest a way of extending the Anticipation Argument to the case of a mixture of pleasure and pain appearing more pleasant because of the admixed pain. In section 5, I argue that if we accept the overall interpretation I suggest, the main discussion of false pleasure at 36c-51a can plausibly be taken to satisfy what Evans calls the Grounding Thesis and provide a basis for excluding certain pleasures from the best human life on the basis of their robust falsity.

Section 1

The Anticipation Argument aims to show that pleasure associated with (or identical to) mistaken anticipation is false in much the same way that belief associated with (or identical to) mistaken anticipation is. This is supposed to be a surprising claim.⁹ It is not merely the claim that we sometimes take pleasure in anticipating doing something that we shouldn't do, or take pleasure in connection with a false belief about the future. Neither of these would be surprising. As I will argue, it is the claim that when we take pleasure in connection with a mistaken anticipation, the pleasure itself in some sense represents something as being the case when it is not in fact the case. My view is that Socrates' argument for this claim turns on the idea that the process of imagining the realization of a mistaken anticipation *is itself* the pleasure in question. The basis of this interpretation is the observation that the faculty of sensory imagination introduced in the psychological discussion at 31b-36c maps onto the metaphorical painter in the soul that figures prominently in the Anticipation Argument. I will first discuss Socrates' account of the faculty of sensory imagination, arguing that certain truth-committal imaginings are counted as pleasures, and then I will offer a corollary interpretation of the Anticipation Argument. I will not weigh in on the difficult question of whether there is a unified theory of pleasure in the *Philebus*.¹⁰ For my purposes, it will be sufficient to establish that Socrates counts certain types of psychological processes as pleasures—in particular, *perceptions of bodily restorations* and *sensory imaginings of bodily restorations*.

Socrates gives a brief account of perception:

⁹ Plato indicates this with Protarchus' incredulous reactions at, e.g., 36c8-9 and 37e12-38a1.

¹⁰ For discussion of this issue, see Frede, 'Disintegration and Restoration'.

Socrates: You must realize that some of the various affections of the body are extinguished within the body before they reach the soul, leaving it unaffected. Others penetrate through both body and soul and provoke a kind of upheaval (*seismos*) that is peculiar to each but also common to both of them.

Protarchus: I realize that.

Socrates: Are we fully justified if we claim that the soul remains oblivious of those affections that do not penetrate both, while it is not oblivious of those that penetrate both?

Protarchus: Of course we are justified.

...

Socrates: But when the soul and body are jointly affected and moved by one and the same affection, if you call this motion *perception*, you would say nothing out of the way.

(33d1-34a5)

Perception occurs when an affection penetrates (or “goes through”—δι’ ἀμφοῖν ἰόντα) both body and soul. This happens when a stimulus affects conducive bodily matter and causes a motion mimicking the character of the initial stimulus to travel through the body, until it reaches the soul and induces in it a motion that mimics the bodily motion, and therefore the initial stimulus. Many affections of the body do not reach the soul, either because they are too weak or because they do not involve suitably conducive bodily matter, and thus do not affect our awareness.¹¹ These affections do not count as perceptions. Socrates says that those that do count as perceptions provoke an upheaval (*seimon*) that is common (*koinon*) to both body and soul, but peculiar (*idion*) to each. A perceptual *seismos* is common to body and soul in the sense that it is *one* motion, but peculiar to each in the sense that its

¹¹ Cf. *Tim.* 64b3-7: “When even a minor disturbance affects that which is easily moved by nature [e.g., eyes or the eardrum], the disturbance is passed on in a chain reaction with some parts affecting others in the same way as they were affected, until it reaches the center of consciousness and reports the property that produced the reaction. On the other hand, something that is hard to move [e.g., bones or hair] remains fixed and merely experiences the disturbance without passing it on in any chain reaction....”

psychic and somatic stages are fundamentally different in nature. The somatic stage is a chain of events in the body, whereas the psychic stage is a chain of events in the soul that is manifested in the subject's awareness. The psychic stage of the *seismos* gains its representational content from the character the *seismos* has in its somatic stage. When one sees a tree, a *seismos* is induced in the body that gets its character from the way one's perceptual faculties are affected by the tree. The *seismos* travels through the relevant organs and the conducive bodily matter, until it reaches the central organ, where it is in some manner transmitted to the soul. When it reaches the soul, it affects one's awareness in such a way that a representation of the tree is formed. The initial stimulus induces a motion in the body that in some way mimics features of the stimulus, and if this motion makes it to the soul, these features are again mimicked representationally in one's awareness.

Socrates defines memory as follows:

Socrates: So if someone were to call memory the 'preservation of perception', he would be speaking correctly, as far as I'm concerned. (34a10-11)

Memory is the preservation of perception, and perception, as we have seen, is the movement of body and soul by the same affection. The faculty of memory enables the soul to store and then later induce in itself a motion of the same basic type as the psychic stage of a perceptual *seismos*, without a preceding motion in the body. Socrates employs this account of memory in the discussion of desire at 34c-36c, which he explicitly says at 34c6-7 is aimed in part at explaining how the soul can experience pleasure and pain on its own, without the body. Plato writes:

Socrates: When he is pained by his condition and remembers the pleasant things that would put an end to the pain, but is not yet being filled. What about this situation? Should we claim that he is then in between these two affections, or not?

Protarchus: We should claim that.

Socrates: And should we say that the person is altogether in pain or pleasure?

Protarchus: By heaven, he seems to me to be suffering a twofold pain; one consists in the body's condition, the other in the soul's desire caused by the expectation.

Socrates: How do you mean that there is a twofold pain, Protarchus? Does it not sometimes happen that one of us is emptied at one particular time, but is in clear hope of being filled, while at another time he is, on the contrary, without hope?

Protarchus: It certainly happens.

Socrates: And don't you think that he enjoys this hope for replenishment by remembering (τῶ μὲν ἡσθαί) while he is simultaneously in pain because he has been emptied at that time?

Protarchus: Necessarily.

Socrates: This is, then, the occasion when a human being and other animals are simultaneously undergoing pain and pleasure.

Protarchus: It seems so. (35e9-36b10)

When one has a bodily pain such as the pain associated with thirst and hopes¹² to have that pain relieved by drinking, one sometimes vividly prefigures the future pleasant experience of drinking by using the faculty of memory, and this process of prefiguring is itself a pleasure.¹³ All desire involves using the faculty of memory to represent the object of one's desire. The mere representation of an object of desire need not be pleasant, however; otherwise one would experience a pleasure in *any* case where one experiences desire, since desire always involves the representation of its object. We experience anticipatory pleasure when we vividly prefigure the fulfillment of our desire as something

¹² The term 'hope' translates the word '*elpis*'. 'Hope' ordinarily does not imply expectation (we can hope for the best while expecting the worst). In this context, however, it must imply expectation, since it is contrasted with the case where one does not expect that one's desire will not be satisfied. At *Laws* 1, 644c9-10, an *elpis* is said to be a *doxa* about the future. This seems to be the sense of '*elpis*' in the Anticipation Argument.

¹³ Presumably, the idea is not that one can only anticipate future experiences if one has had them before, but rather that the faculty of sensory imagination produces anticipations out of the raw material of memories. One can have a particular desire to drink cherry cola and a corresponding anticipation even if one has never drunk it before, as long as one has memories of what cola and cherry flavoring taste like and is able to cobble them together in one's imagination.

that is going to happen. This is what distinguishes cases that involve ‘simultaneously undergoing pleasure and pain’ from cases where desire involves a ‘twofold pain’.

Socrates began the discussion by announcing that it is aimed at grasping the pleasure that the soul experiences without the body. He says at the end of the discussion that the subject “enjoys this hope for replenishment by remembering (τῶ μεμνησθαι),” which indicates that he counts anticipations of future pleasures, which are constructed out of memories, as pleasures that the soul experiences without the body.¹⁴ I take the idea to be that the psychic portions of perceptions are the same basic type of psychic motion as memories and imaginings, but with a different source. Stimuli in the body induce the former; the soul induces the latter in itself. When the bodily stimulus is a disturbance, the perception is a pain; when it a restoration, the perception is a pleasure. Memories and imaginings do not directly follow upon bodily disturbances and restorations as perceptions do, but when they represent these events they are pains and pleasures.

The connection between the psychological theory I have been discussing and the Anticipation Argument is directly signaled at 36c3-7:

Socrates: Now let us apply the results of our investigation to this purpose.

Protarchus: What is it?

Socrates: Shall we say that these pains and pleasures are true or false, or rather that some of them are true, but not others?

This is the beginning of the Anticipation Argument. Socrates explicitly announces that the pleasures he is inquiring about are the ones that he’s just been discussing, namely, the ones that the soul induces in itself through the faculties of memory and imagination when one anticipates a future pleasure. He

¹⁴ I construe ‘τῶ μεμνησθαι’ as an instrumental dative. We enjoy our hope for replenishment *by means of memory*. The context supports this reading, because Socrates takes it to be problematic how the soul is able to make contact with replenishment when the body is in a state of deprivation, and memory is introduced as the means by which this is possible.

frames his argument that such pleasures can be true or false in terms of the simile of the illustrated book:

Socrates: That our soul in such a situation is comparable to a book.

Protarchus: How so?

Socrates: If memory concurs with perceptions on a particular occasion, then they and the affections (*pathēmata*) concerning them seem to me to inscribe words in our soul, as it were.

And if an affection (*pathēma*) writes the truth, then a true judgment (*doxa*) and true statements (*logoi*) are formed in us from this affection. But if what our scribe writes is false, then the result will be the opposite of the truth.¹⁵

Protarchus: I quite agree, and I accept this way of putting it.

Socrates: Do you also accept that there is another craftsman at work in our soul at the same time?

Protarchus: What kind of craftsman?

Socrates: A painter who follows the scribe and provides illustration to his words in the soul.

Protarchus: How and when do we say he does this work?

Socrates: When a person takes his judgments and statements from sight or any other sense-perception and then views the images he has formed inside himself, corresponding to those judgments and statements. Or is it not something of this sort that is going on in us?

Protarchus: Quite definitely.

Socrates: And are not the pictures of the true judgments and statements true, and the pictures of the false ones false?

¹⁵ ἡ μνήμη ταῖς αἰσθήσεσι συμπίπτουσα εἰς ταῦτόν κακέϊνα ἃ περὶ ταῦτ' ἐστὶ τὰ παθήματα φαίνοντά μοι σχεδὸν οἷον γράφειν ἡμῶν ἐν ταῖς ψυχαῖς τότε λόγους· καὶ ὅταν μὲν ἀληθῆ γράφη τοῦτο τὸ πάθημα, δόξα τε ἀληθῆς καὶ λόγοι ἀπ' αὐτοῦ συμβαίνουσιν ἀληθεῖς ἐν ἡμῖν γιγνόμενοι· ψευδῆ δ' ὅταν ὁ τοιοῦτος παρ' ἡμῖν γραμματεὺς γράψῃ, τάναντία τοῖς ἀληθέσιν ἀπέβῃ. I have altered Frede's translation of this passage extensively. I delete the OCT's brackets around τοῦτο τὸ πάθημα in 39a4, because the αὐτοῦ in line 5 should refer to the τοῦτο in line 4. Frede does not translate the bracketed phrase. I am indebted to Mor Segev for helpful discussion of this text.

Protarchus: Certainly.

Socrates: If we have been right with what we have said so far, let us in addition come to terms about this question.

Protarchus: What about?

Socrates: Whether these experiences are necessarily confined to the past and the present, but are not extended into the future.

Protarchus: They should apply equally to all the tenses: past, present, and future.

Socrates: **Now, did we not say before, about the pleasures and pains that belong to the soul alone, that they might precede those that go through the body.** It would therefore be possible that we have anticipatory pleasures and pains about the future. (38e12-39d5)

Socrates says that whenever memory and perception concur, a resultant *pathēma* (affection) inscribes words in the soul. I take it that the *pathēma* in question is a matching of an occurrent perception with a stored memory to make a determination about the representational content of the perception.¹⁶ For instance, if I see a tree-like shape in the distance I compare it to memories of trees and subsequently find that it matches these memories, and then this matching causes the words ‘that is a tree’ to be inscribed in my soul. Socrates says that such *pathēmata* ‘inscribe words in the soul’, and then immediately says that whenever what the *pathēma* writes is true, which is the case when the perception is determined in a way that accurately represents the world, a true judgment (*doxa*) is formed. This implies that forming a judgment is equivalent to words being inscribed in one’s soul. This is an important point for my argument. As I will discuss in section 2 below, it is often taken to be the case that the falsity of a pleasure is necessarily bound up with the falsity of a judgment, because judgments are taken to be the shared work of the painter and scribe. I maintain that pleasures are the work of the painter in the soul, whereas judgments are the work of the scribe. In this initial example there is a

¹⁶ I take this to be a version of the idea captured by the wax tablet model in the *Theaetetus*. I discuss this connection in section 2 below.

causal connection between the work of the scribe and the work of the painter, but they can also operate independently, such that a subject can have a false pleasure without even forming a judgment.

The bolded text is another explicit flag that Socrates means to be referring back to the preceding psychological discussion. He is referring to the argument in 34c-36c that the soul can experience pleasure on its own, without the body. In particular, he established in that passage that prefiguring a future pleasure through memory is itself a pleasure. I take it that the painter in the soul is supposed to map onto the faculty of sensory imagination that produces anticipations and other forms of imaginings by cobbling together pieces of memories. When one forms a belief, one often accompanies this belief with a sensory illustration. For instance, when one forms the belief “my dog is sleeping right now,” one may at the same time picture one’s dog curled up in her dog bed, sleeping soundly. This imagining is constructed out of memories seeing one’s dog asleep in her dog bed, but need not correspond to any particular memory. Socrates claims that when a belief is false, its accompanying sensory illustration is also false. I take it that ‘false’ here more strictly means ‘incorrect’. Idle imaginings, such as imagining one’s dog chasing deer on the moon, are not false in a way that is parallel to the falsity of belief. Belief is inherently truth-committal, imagining is not; only truth-committal imaginings admit of falsity in a way that is parallel to belief.¹⁷ Similarly, Socrates must have in mind that sensory illustrations of beliefs purport to represent the world as it actually is, was, or will be (unlike idle imaginings), and sometimes do so incorrectly.

¹⁷ Evans and I disagree on this point. He takes false pleasures to be pleasures with false content rather than pleasures with incorrectly asserted content (Evans, ‘Hedonic Mistakes’, 101). He defends his interpretation on the grounds that it upholds the analogy between belief and pleasure and makes the Anticipation Argument come out as valid, but recognizes that on this interpretation the argument has the problematic implication that any imagining with false content (including, e.g., harmless daydreaming or even a virtuous person projecting incompatible but desirable outcomes as part of a decision-making process) is bad (*ibid.*, 107). I suggest an alternative interpretation of the Anticipation Argument where the argument still comes out valid, but where a false pleasure is one with incorrectly asserted content. I take it that the aspect of my overarching disagreement with Evans that leads us to construe this point differently is that he interprets the argument as saying that false pleasure is pleasure that is *taken in* false anticipation of a future pleasure, whereas I interpret it as saying that false pleasure is *identical* to the false anticipation of a future pleasure. One advantage of my interpretation is that it does not have the problematic consequences that Evans’ does with respect to daydreaming and other non-truth-committal modes of imagining.

Socrates completes the Anticipation Argument at 39d7-40c3:

Socrates: And are those writings and pictures which come to be in us, **as we said earlier**, concerned only with the past and the present, but not with the future?

Protarchus: Decidedly with the future.

Socrates: If you say 'decidedly', is it because all of them are really hopes for future times, and we are forever brimful of hopes throughout our lifetime?

Protarchus: Quite definitely.

Socrates: Well, then, in addition to what has been said now, also answer this question.

Protarchus: Concerning what?

Socrates: Is not a man who is just, pious, and good in all respects, also loved by the gods?

Protarchus: How could he fail to be?

Socrates: But what about someone who is unjust and in all respects evil? Isn't he that man's opposite?

Protarchus: Of course.

Socrates: And is not everyone, as we have just said, always full of many hopes (πολλῶν... ἐλπίδων)?

Protarchus: Certainly

Socrates: There are, then, statements (*logoi*) in each of us that we call hopes?

Protarchus: Yes.

Socrates: **But there are also those painted images.** And someone often envisages himself in the possession of <plenty of> gold and of a lot of pleasures <because of this>. And in addition, he also sees, in this inner picture himself, that he is beside himself with delight.

Protarchus: What else!

Socrates: Now, do we want to say that in the case of good people these writings (τὰ γεγραμμένα) are usually true, because they are dear to the gods, while quite the opposite usually holds in the case of wicked ones, or is this not what we ought to say?¹⁸

Protarchus: That is just what we ought to say.

Socrates: And wicked people nevertheless have pleasures painted in their minds, even though they are somehow false?

Protarchus: Right.

Socrates: So wicked people as a rule enjoy false pleasures, but the good among mankind true ones?

Protarchus: Quite necessarily so.

¹⁸ The passage is sometimes read as saying that both vicious and virtuous people hope for money and resultant pleasure, because τὰ γεγραμμένα in 40b3 is translated as ‘pictures’ (this is Frede’s translation) and taken to refer to ‘phantasmata’ in 40a9. It does not seem likely, however, that Plato would say that virtuous people hope for money. There is no need to read the passage in this way, since τὰ γεγραμμένα in 40b3 could be translated as ‘writings’ and taken to refer to ‘πολλῶν... ἐλπίδων’ in 40a2-3 and/or to ‘logoi’ in 40a6. The structure of the argument still makes good sense on this construal, since Socrates has already established that pictures illustrating false writings are themselves false. I take the passage to be saying that vicious people hope to have a great deal of money and to experience many pleasures because of this. Such people, however, have excessive desires that are difficult (if not impossible) to satisfy and tend to behave in a profligate manner that depletes their resources. Virtuous people, on the other hand, have moderate desires that are easy to satisfy and generally hope for things that are not vulnerable to chance, such as the cultivation of virtue. Perhaps Socrates points out that the virtuous are god-beloved while the vicious are not to suggest that the world is structured providentially, such that virtuous people generally end up having their desires satisfied and vicious people do not. Or, perhaps the idea is that the virtuous only desire that which the gods necessarily grant (i.e., that which is not vulnerable to chance). In any case, all Socrates needs to establish is that some people correctly expect to have their desires satisfied and that other people do not, which seems uncontroversial. The point of choosing virtuous and vicious people as examples is to establish the moral significance of pleasures of mistaken anticipation. This reading contrasts with V. Harte’s, in ‘The *Philebus* on Pleasure: The Good, The Bad, and the False’, *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, 104 (2004), 113-130. She suggests an interpretation of the passage where the moral aspect of the example is important. On her reading, the vicious person’s anticipation is rendered false because obtaining a lot of gold will not in fact lead to experiencing pleasure (because a vicious life is an unpleasant one). Harte suggests that Socrates’ conception of false pleasure in general might be interpreted along these lines—false pleasures project something that is not in fact pleasant as being pleasant. I take it that my reading allows for a broader range of pleasures to be false (including, e.g., those that represent a restoration as being larger than it in fact is, which I discuss in section 2 below). If I am right that the Anticipation Argument is supposed to extend to the other types of false pleasure, this gives us reason to prefer a broader reading of the Anticipation Argument, where what makes a pleasure false is that it represents the past, present, or future state of the world inaccurately.

The two phrases I have bolded clearly flag the connection between the present argument, the simile of the illustrated book, and the earlier psychological discussion. I take it to be very clear that when Socrates mentions “painted images,” he is referring to the anticipatory pleasures that he introduced at 34c-36c.¹⁹ He says, at 36b4-6, “And don’t you think that he enjoys this hope for replenishment by remembering, while he is simultaneously in pain because he has been emptied at that time?” When one forms the belief that one will have plenty of gold in the future and will experience various pleasures in connection with this eventuality, one at the same time may represent one’s hope in a sensory mode via the faculty of imagination.²⁰ If the belief is false, so is the sensory representation. The sensory representation, however, is itself a pleasure. This was established already in 34c-36c, where Socrates showed that imaginings and memories representing restorations are themselves pleasures. Mistaken anticipations are therefore robustly false pleasures. They are pleasures that represent the future state of the world incorrectly. Imaginative pleasures that purport to represent the present or past accurately (e.g., pleasantly imagining that one’s friend is having a good time on vacation when in fact they are sick,

¹⁹ This point is overlooked in the debate between Anthony Kenny and J.C.B. Gosling about how to construe the Anticipation Argument. Gosling, in ‘False Pleasures: *Philebus* 35c-41b’, *Phronesis*, 4 (1959), 44-54 and ‘Father Kenny on False Pleasures in Plato’s *Philebus*’, *Phronesis*, 6 (1961), 41-5, argues that Plato conflates the pleasure taken in a painted image with the painted image itself, such that pleasure taken in a false image is false pleasure. Kenny, in ‘False Pleasures in the *Philebus*: A Reply to Mr. Gosling’, *Phronesis*, 5 (1960), 45-52, argues that there must be an undefended suppressed premise according to which pleasure taken in a false picture is false pleasure. What they both fail to understand is that the “painted image” is not a static picture, but rather an ongoing process of picturing that is itself a pleasure. Gosling is closer to being correct, since he recognizes that Plato identifies the painted image and the anticipatory pleasure. This identification is not a conflation, however, but a deliberate argumentative step that is taken in 34c-36c.

²⁰ D. Frede, in ‘Rumpelstiltskin’s Pleasures: True and False Pleasures in Plato’s *Philebus*’ [‘Rumpelstiltskin’s Pleasures’], *Phronesis*, 30 (1985), 151-80 at 179, writes “What counts for Plato as *the pleasure* is not the *seismos*, the elation that the soul undergoes, but what the pleasure consists in [the *doxa*]. This is what Plato, it seems to me, wanted to teach us in the part of the *Philebus* that was here under discussion: that what counts is what the painter and scribe have been doing, not what I actually *feel* at a particular occasion.” I disagree with Frede’s identification of the *seismos* in the soul with some form of elation that is conceptually separable from the work of the painter in the soul. The *seismos* is exactly what the painter in the soul produces. It is a motion representing the world as being a certain way in the past, present, or future, and it is identical to the elation that the soul undergoes. There is no reason to think that Plato thinks that there is a sensation or feeling of pleasure over and above the perception or imagination of a restoration. Moreover, as I discuss above in connection with 39a, I take it that she is wrong to equate the *doxa* with the work of the painter and the scribe. It is exclusively the work of the scribe, while the *seismos* is the work of the painter.

or having an inaccurate memory of an experience as being pleasant) but fail to do so can be robustly false in just the same sense.

Section 2

I take it that Socrates' main point in discussing the second type of false pleasure is to show that the falsity of a pleasure need not derive from the falsity of a belief. He began his account of false pleasure with cases where the falsity of a pleasure derives from the falsity of a belief in order to illuminate the parallel between pleasure and belief, and he now turns to cases where the falsity of a belief derives from the falsity of a pleasure to show that pleasure can be non-derivatively false. This reading cuts sharply against the claim several commentators have made that pleasure can be robustly false only because of the relation it bears to belief.²¹

The second type of false pleasure that Socrates identifies is two-pronged. It includes cases where the magnitude of a pleasure or pain is distorted by either temporal proximity or comparison with another pleasure or pain.²² In cases where the distortion is due to temporal proximity, there is a close parallel with pleasures of mistaken anticipation, in that one incorrectly imagines a future experience. In cases where the distortion is due to comparison with another pleasure or pain, however, it may seem that the imagination is not involved. Suppose one has a chronic pain in one's lower back and on a given occasion stubs one's toe. The pain in one's lower back may seem very mild in comparison with the acute pain of a stubbed toe, even though the disturbance in one's back has not changed and is fact

²¹ E.g., Frede, 'Rumpelstiltskin's Pleasures', 179; Delcomminette, 'False Pleasures', 220.

²² I take this to more precisely mean that the magnitude of a *disturbance* or *restoration* is distorted, because I take it that pleasures and pains are necessarily experienced, and the pre-distorted disturbance or restoration is not experienced by the subject. Throughout this paper, I work under the assumption that Plato uses the terms 'pleasure' and 'pain' loosely, to refer either to an experienced pleasure or pain, or to a bodily restoration or disturbance that would be more precisely understood as causing or underlying or perhaps partly constituting a pleasure or pain. For an example of a place where Socrates clearly seems to be using the terms to refer to bodily disturbances and restorations, see 46b8-c4, where he says that there are mixtures of pleasures and pains both in the body and the soul (I take this usage to refer to restorations and disturbances) and that some of these mixtures are called pleasures while others are called pains (I take this usage to refer to experienced pleasures and pains).

considerable. It is not easy to see how the false appearance of the pain's magnitude could be considered parallel to the case of a mistaken anticipation.

Socrates' account of the second type of false pleasure is relatively brief:

Socrates: In the case where we intend to come to a decision about any of them in such circumstances [pains and pleasures existing side by side], which one is greater or smaller, or which one is more intensive or stronger: pain compared to pleasure, or pain compared to pain, or pleasure to pleasure.

Protarchus: Yes these questions do arise, and that is what we want to decide.

Socrates: Well, then, does it happen only to eyesight that seeing objects from afar or close by distorts the truth and causes false judgments? Or does not the same thing happen also in the case of pleasure and pain?

Protarchus: Much more so, Socrates.

Socrates: But this is the reverse of the result we reached a little earlier.

Protarchus: What are you referring to?

Socrates: Earlier it was true and false *judgments* which affected the respective pleasures and pains with their own condition.

Protarchus: Quite right.

Socrates: But now these [pleasures and pains] are themselves seen shifting on account of their distance or proximity on each occasion, and put side by side, the pleasures seem greater compared to pain and more intensive, and pains seem, on the contrary, moderate in comparison with pleasures.²³

Protarchus: It is quite inevitable that such conditions arise under these circumstances.

²³ I have significantly altered Frede's translation of this part of the passage. She apparently leaves μεταβαλλόμενα out of her translation, which affects the way she construes Socrates' entire statement.

Socrates: But if you take that portion of them by which they appear greater or smaller than they really are, and cut it off from each of them as a mere appearance and without real being, you will neither admit that this appearance is right nor dare to say that anything connected with this portion of pleasure or pain is right and true.

Protarchus: Certainly not. (41e2-42c4)

The first thing that it is important to note about this passage is that it makes clear that the falsity of a pleasure of mistaken anticipation does not necessarily depend on the prior falsity of a judgment or belief.²⁴ This is implied by Socrates' statement that this case is the reverse of the one discussed earlier, where the falsity of anticipatory pleasure is derivative from the falsity of the judgment that it corresponds to.²⁵ In this case, without a prior shift in judgment, the proximity or distance of an anticipated pleasure can give rise to a false anticipatory pleasure. For instance, take a case where one needs to receive a shot at the doctor's office. When the appointment is two weeks off, one may correctly expect the pain of the shot to be very minimal. As the doctor crosses the room, needle in hand, about to administer it, however, one may briefly imagine that the shot will excruciatingly painful,

²⁴ S. Delcomminette, in 'False Pleasures', argues that Socrates' argument that pleasure admits of falsity hinges on the idea that belief (*doxa*) is in some sense constitutive of pleasure. He suggests at 220 that Plato states at *Soph.* 264a4-b4 a conception of the faculty of *phantasia* (appearance) as a mixture of perception and belief, and that, while the term '*phantasia*' does not occur in the *Philebus*, uses of related words refer to the functioning of this faculty. There does not seem to be as tight a connection between the *Philebus* and *Soph.* 264a4-b4 as Delcomminette supposes. In the *Philebus*, '*doxa*' is used to refer to *linguistically articulated* belief or opinion. It is the work of the scribe in the soul. This is implied at 39a, discussed above. In the *Sophist*, it is not entirely clear what the Visitor means when he says that *phantasia* is a mixture of belief and perception, but he either means that it is a linguistically articulated belief (as in the *Philebus*) formed on the basis of perception or that it is a belief that is formed on the basis of perception that has perceptual (i.e., sensory-representational) content. If he means the former thing, then Delcomminette's interpretation cannot make sense of this second type of false pleasure, since here the subject's false *doxa* is formed on the basis of a prior false pleasure, and so the *doxa* cannot be taken to be constitutive of the pleasure or to be the locus of its falsity. If he means the latter thing, then the term '*doxa*' is being used differently at *Soph.* 264a4-b4 than it is in the *Philebus*. In the *Philebus*, a *doxa* has linguistic content, not sensory-representational content. Perhaps when Plato wrote the *Sophist* he had in mind a type of belief that has sensory-representational content, but when he wrote the *Philebus* he shifted to characterizing this mental state as *analogous* to belief rather than as being a type of belief.

²⁵ This statement also strongly indicates that the discussion of the second type of false pleasure is supposed to be directly connected with the discussion of the first type of false pleasure. It would be odd to describe this case as being the reverse of the previous one with respect to the order of explanation of the falsity of the relevant pleasure and the relevant belief if an entirely different notion of falsity were now at stake.

without having formed the judgment that it will be so. One might subsequently form this judgment, but it would be formed on the basis of one's false imagining, which is the reverse of the case described in the Anticipation Argument. The Anticipation Argument can readily be extended to account for the robust falsity of such a pain. Just as in the case where one forms a mistaken judgment about the future and then illustrates it with a mistaken anticipation, in this case one incorrectly prefigures the future via the faculty of sensory imagination. This indicates any interpretation of the Anticipation Argument according to which the falsity of pleasure necessarily derives from the falsity of a belief is incorrect.

The trickier step is extending the Anticipation Argument to the other prong of this type of false pleasure—cases where pleasures or pains seem greater or smaller due to comparison with other pleasures or pains experienced at the same time. In such cases, the false pleasure or pain would seem to be associated with perception rather than imagination. The crux of the Anticipation Argument is that one sometimes incorrectly imagines the world to be a certain way in the past, present, or future, and that such imaginings themselves count as pleasures. There is no indication anywhere of a parallel argument relating to perception. A perceptual pleasure follows upon a bodily restoration and gains its character from that restoration. In a case where a chronic pain seems smaller than it really is due to comparison with an acute pain, it is not as though the mechanism relaying the state of one's body to one's soul has malfunctioned. The motion initiated by the chronic disturbance continues to occur in just the same way as it did before the acute pain arose, while the subject's experience of it somehow changes due to the comparison.

Socrates says at 42b8-c3, of pleasures that are distorted in magnitude, "But if you take that portion of them by which they appear greater or smaller than they really are, and cut it off from each of them as a mere appearance and without real being, you will neither admit that this appearance is right nor dare to say that anything connected with this portion of pleasure or pain is right and true." I suggest

that Plato has in mind that the *soul*, not the body, is the source of the portion of the pleasures that Socrates labels as 'mere appearance'. As Socrates established at 34c-36c, the soul can induce pleasures in itself, thanks to its stockpile of stored perceptual memories. I take it that when the magnitude of a pleasure is distorted, the portion of the pleasure that does not correspond to a real motion in the body is added to it in some manner by the soul, through the faculty of the sensory imagination. Given the psychological theory of the dialogue, it does not seem that there is anywhere that the portion of these pleasures that Socrates labels as 'mere appearance' could come from except for the sensory imagination. It could not come from perception, since perception only relays real motions from the body. If there is a plausible way of making sense of how the sensory imagination could be the source of these 'mere appearances', there is a good deal of motivation for interpreting the passage in that way. I will argue that there is.

I suggest that, in such cases, the falsity of the subject's experience is due to a supplementary contribution that the imagination makes to the perceptual process.²⁶ The imagination supplements perception in the formation of experience, and sometimes does so in a way that incorrectly represents events in a subject's body. Before spelling this idea out, it will be helpful to discuss an example that Socrates uses in the Anticipation Argument and a related passage from the *Theaetetus*. To introduce the simile of the illustrated book, at 38c-d, Socrates describes a case where one sees a shape in the distance and is unsure of what it is. It is in fact a man, but one might instead determine that is a scarecrow. Arriving at such a determination and articulating it linguistically is making a judgment or statement, and it is the work of the scribe in the soul. Socrates goes to say at 39b9-c1 that the painter in the soul does his work "when a person takes his judgments and statements from sight or any other sense-perception and then views the images he has formed inside himself, corresponding to those judgments and statements." He is referring to cases where one makes a judgment or statement on the

²⁶ An important piece of evidence for attributing this idea to Plato is 47c3-d2, discussed in section 4 below.

basis of sense perception (this is the process described in 39a) and then illustrates the judgment via the sensory imagination. If one sees the shape in the distance and judges that it is a scarecrow, the sensory imagination fills in the indeterminate picture presented by perception in accordance with that determination by imagining a scarecrow. One imagines the way the scene would look if one were able to perceive it more determinately.

There is an apparent connection between this example and the wax tablet model at *Theaetetus* 191c-195b, which describes in greater detail the process of identifying a perceptible object.²⁷ The process of identifying a perceptible object involves comparing one's perception with a set of memories and determining which remembered object it best corresponds to. Plato writes:

Socrates: So there remains the possibility of false judgment in this case. I know both you and Theodorus; I have your signs upon that block of wax, like the imprints of rings. Then I see you both in the distance, but cannot see you well enough; but I am in a hurry to refer the proper sign to the proper visual perception, and so get this fitted into the trace of itself, that recognition may take place. This I fail to do; I get them out of line, applying the visual perception of the one to the sign of the other. It is like people putting their shoes on the wrong feet, or like what happens when we look at things in mirrors, when left and right change places. It is then that 'heterodoxy' or false judgment arises. (193b9-d2)

The "signs" or "imprints" that Socrates has of Theaetetus and Theodorus are based on memories of what the two men look like. The process of identifying them when they approach from a distance involves forming templates through the faculty of sensory imagination on the basis of memory (in this case, Socrates imagines what Theaetetus and Theodorus look like) and then comparing one's

²⁷ I do not mean to imply that the wax tablet model is ultimately endorsed in the *Theaetetus* or that it is meant to underlie the psychological theory of the *Philebus*. All I am supposing is that the model reflects some notions Plato has about how perceptual identification works and that it helps us understand in greater detail the process of perceptual determination described at *Philebus* 39a.

indeterminate perception with these templates and making a determination about which template better fits one's present impression. When one makes such an identification, according to *Philebus* 39a, a judgment is formed. One may illustrate this judgment through the faculty of sensory imagination. If Socrates determines that the shape approaching in the distance is Theaetetus, he might in his imagination picture that shape as being Theaetetus. This process of picturing is truth-committal, and therefore admits of robust falsity.

I suggest that we take cases where the magnitude of a pleasure or pain is distorted by comparison with other pleasures or pains to function in the same basic way. When we undergo more than one pleasure or pain at the same time, the resulting motions in the soul are not neatly ordered and compartmentalized. Perceptions do not sort themselves out. They can involve a great deal of indeterminacy, and this is especially true when distorting factors such as distance or relative comparison are present. The process of sorting them out and making them determinant centrally involves the sensory imagination. The motions in the soul that constitutes the subject's awareness do not follow directly from motions in the body, but rather are synthesized from them and supplemented in various ways by the imagination.

In cases where one is trying to identify a perceptible object, the contribution of the sensory imagination is to provide templates to match indeterminate perceptions to and arrive at a judgment, and then to fill in the indeterminate aspects of these perceptions in accordance with this judgment. The template story is not as vivid for cases of distortion as for cases where one is identifying a perceptible object, because these cases involve estimation on a continuous scale, not simply matching objects to templates, and also because the distortion happens prior to the subject making a judgment. There does, however, seem to be an analogy between distortion cases and identification cases. In the wax tablet passage, at 193c7-d1, Socrates compares mistaken identifications with the way left and right are

reversed when one looks in a mirror. The default is for left to appear on the left and right to appear on the right. When one looks in a mirror, the appearance is reversed but it does not announce itself as such. Right fits into the template for left, as it were, and vice versa. One must actively take account of the fact that one is looking in a mirror and adjust for that fact to avoid making a mistake on the basis of appearance. Similarly, in cases of distortion, the default is for magnitudes to be as they appear, but proximity and comparison make them appear larger or smaller without any warning to the subject. The default template that contextualizes appearances is formed through experiential memory. We are accustomed to seeing people of average height standing next to each other, for instance, and so when someone unusually tall is standing next to someone of average height the person of average height may seem short, because normally when someone is standing next to someone so much taller than them, that person *is* short. One needs to employ a “measuring art” to adjust for the distortions that these relations introduce.²⁸ When a pain is imminent, one may anticipate it incorrectly by fitting it into too large a magnitude template, as one may underestimate the size of the moon by fitting it into the magnitude template of a quarter. When a chronic pain is experienced alongside an acute pain, the relative comparison may lead one to fit the chronic pain into too small a template, as seeing a man of average height standing alongside an especially tall man may lead one to mistakenly fit the former’s appearance into the template of someone who’s short. The false representation of the pain’s magnitude through the sensory imagination precedes any false judgment about the magnitude of the pain. I take it that a judgment is necessarily formed only in cases of identification. In cases other cases, a perceptual feature is attributed to a perceptual object by the painter in the soul, but no identification is made and the scribe in the soul may not be active at all.²⁹ If one does form a false judgment in cases

²⁸ See *Rep.* 10, 602c-603a and *Prot.* 356c-357a.

²⁹ Hendrik Lorenz argues at length that in Plato’s post-*Republic* writings, belief (*doxa*) is a distinctively rational capacity through which a subject applies predicates, whereas lower cognitive capacities, such as the sensory imagination, cannot apply predicates, but can grasp perceptual features and attribute them to perceptual objects (H. Lorenz, *The Brute Within: Appetitive Desire in Plato and Aristotle*, (Oxford, 2006), 55-110). Attributing a

of distortion due to comparison, it is because of the way the magnitude of the chronic pain appears, and this appearance derives not from a prior judgment, but from the process of sorting out complex perceptual experiences and making them determinant through the faculty of sensory imagination. When the sensory imagination plays this role, its contribution has a truth-committal character. It does not sort and determine one's experience haphazardly, but rather in a way that purports to accurately represent the world. It thereby introduces the possibility of robust falsity.

I submit that there is a high degree of continuity between the first and second types of false pleasure, and that the Anticipation Argument can be extended to the second type. Both involve forming representations through the faculty of sensory imagination that purport to accurately represent the world but are in fact mistaken. Some pleasures of the second type—those that involve distortion by comparison—involve perception as well as imagination, and so their account is more complicated than those of the first type. My speculative hypothesis is that in writing the dialogue Plato employed the slippery rhetorical approach of making his argument in reference to the least problematic case and then extending it to more problematic cases without sufficient explicit justification, but with indication that the uniting thread between the cases is the role played by the sensory imagination. If it is possible to take the Anticipation Argument to extend to the other types of false pleasure without straining the text, then we should do so, especially given exegetical desiderata that emerge in the scope of the entire dialogue and that I will discuss in section 5 below.

perceptual feature in this manner is a non-rational analogue to predication; both are truth-committal. This idea—which Lorenz thinks is intended as a solution to an outstanding problem for the psychological picture of the *Republic*—is introduced in nascent form in the *Timaeus* and developed more fully in the *Philebus*. I do not stake my case on Lorenz's argument, but clearly his developmental story is very friendly to my picture and if he were right it would be an important consideration in favor of my view.

Section 3

Nearly all modern commentators on the *Philebus* discussion of false pleasure take Socrates to identify mistaking the neutral state for pleasure as a type of false pleasure.³⁰ This is a very understandable reading, given that Socrates spends several pages in the middle of the false pleasure discussion arguing that people who identify the neutral state with pleasure are making a mistake and then engaging with a school of thinkers who believe that pleasure is nothing more than the removal of pain. There is a great deal of evidence, however, that Socrates discusses these people and this school of thinkers not because he thinks they are exemplars of a special type of false pleasure, but rather as a dialectical way of introducing the discussion of mixed states as a type of false pleasure.

Plato writes:

Socrates: Next in order after these, we will find pleasures and pains in animals that are even falser than these, both in appearance and reality, if we approach them in this way.

Protarchus: What are they, and what is the way? (42c5-8)

Socrates promises two things: a discussion of the next type of false pleasure and a way of approaching it. I propose that the type of false pleasure in question is the mixture of pleasure and pain, and the way of approaching it is through discussing the school of thinkers who identify pleasure with the removal of pain. After making this remark he begins a line of questioning with Protarchus about whether or not there is a neutral state, where a subject experiences neither pleasure nor pain. He suggests at 43e-44a that some people falsely believe that they are experiencing pleasure when they are not in pain. He does not at any point say that these people experience false pleasure. At 37e12-38a2, Protarchus distinguishes the claim that pleasure itself can be false from the claim that pleasure can arise in

³⁰ The only other commentator I am aware of who omits it as a type of false pleasure is D. Reidy, in 'False Pleasures and Plato's *Philebus*', *The Journal of Value Inquiry*, 32 (1998), 343-356. He does not offer any justification for the omission.

connection with a false belief. From this point forth, the thesis under consideration is whether pleasure itself can be false, and it seems clear that having a false belief about whether one is experiencing pleasure would not count as experiencing a pleasure that is false in its own right. We do not find any explicit argument anywhere in the dialogue for the claim that having a false belief about whether one is experiencing pleasure constitutes a false pleasure.

It seems unlikely, then, that Socrates means to be introducing a third type of false pleasure when he argues that people sometimes falsely believe that they are experiencing pleasure when they are free of pain. Moreover, Protarchus interrupts Socrates at 44b4-5 and asks him what the point is of discussing people who make this mistake. If Socrates had just introduced a third type of false pleasure, it should be perfectly clear to Protarchus why they are discussing the matter. Socrates' response is that Protarchus doesn't get the point because he doesn't understand who the real enemies of Philebus are:

Protarchus: But why is it we are asking ourselves this question now, Socrates? I don't get the point.

Socrates: That is because you don't really understand who the enemies of our Philebus here are.

Protarchus: What enemies do you mean?

Socrates: I mean people with a tremendous reputation in natural science who say that there are no such things as pleasures at all.

Protarchus: How so?

Socrates: They hold that everything the followers of Philebus call pleasures are nothing but escape from pain.

Protarchus: Do you suggest we should believe them, Socrates, or what is it you want us to do?

Socrates: Not that, but use them as seers who make their prophecies, not in virtue of any art but in virtue of a certain harshness in their nature. It is a nature not without nobility, but out of an inordinate hatred they have conceived against the power of pleasure, they refuse to

acknowledge anything healthy in it, even to the point that they regard its very attractiveness itself as witchcraft rather than pleasure. You may now make use of them for our purposes, taking notice of the rest of their complaints that result from their harshness. After that you will hear what I, for my part, regard as true pleasures, so that through an examination of these two opposed points of view, we can reach a decision about the power of pleasure.

Protarchus: A fair proposal.

Socrates: Let us attach ourselves to them as to allies and follow their traces in the directions which their dour arguments point us.... (44b4-d8)

I take it that Socrates means that he himself is not the true enemy of pleasure-loving Philebus, since he believes there are such things as true, pure pleasures that are worth including in a human life. The true enemy is rather the school of natural scientists who argue that pleasure is nothing more than the removal of pain, and thus that there is no such thing as pleasure over and above the neutral state. The point of arguing that people who believe they are experiencing pleasure when they are in fact experiencing the neutral state are making a mistake was to establish that there *is* such a thing as pleasure over and above the neutral state, and now Socrates considers why the school of natural scientists in question deny that there is such a thing. The origin of their mistake turns out to be related to their evaluation of intense bodily pleasures, and Socrates approaches his subsequent discussion of the sense in which these “mixed” pleasures are false by discussing the basis of the school’s negative evaluation. There is no indication whatsoever that the point of discussing this school of natural scientists is to introduce a third type of false pleasure.

Another important consideration is that at 44d7 and 51a4, respectively, Socrates speaks of the school of natural scientists as “allies” and “witnesses.” This makes a great deal of sense if he is discussing them as a way of approaching his account of mixed states as a type of false pleasure, but is strange and incongruous if they are primarily under discussion because they confuse a certain type of

false pleasure for the whole of pleasure.³¹ The profligate pleasures that vulgar hedonism prizes are mixed states and depend on strong, painful desires. Some natural scientists, seeking to take a harsh stance against these popular pleasures, argued that pleasure is in fact just the removal of pain, and that mixed states are therefore inherently hedonically inferior to the maintenance of a neutral state through moderation. They took a strong stand against pleasure quite generally, because they thought that pleasure in general should be judged by the strongest and most intensive pleasures, which are thought to be mixed states. Socrates' approach is to follow their arguments towards a negative appraisal of mixed states but then to disagree with their judgment about pleasure in general by suggesting that instead of the most intensive pleasures, we should look to the truest ones to see whether pleasure can be good.³²

Socrates begins the discussion of mixed states by announcing that he will pose as a representative of the thinkers who identify pleasure with the removal of pain and question Protarchus from their perspective. He says, "Now, it is your task, Protarchus, to answer these difficult people, just as you have answered me." (44e3-4) This transition fits very well with my suggestion that the discussion of these thinkers is the "way of approaching" the next type of false pleasure that Socrates refers to at 42c5-8. The topic of mixed states is approached from the perspective of the school of thought that identifies pleasure with the removal of pain. And then, at the end of the discussion of mixed states, Plato writes:

Socrates: Although I am not really in agreement with those who hold that all pleasures are merely releases from pain, I nevertheless treat them as witnesses, as I said before, to prove that

³¹ They might be under discussion for *both* reasons, but the dialectical reason seems entirely sufficient to explain why they are under discussion and I do not see any compelling reasons for thinking that they are also under discussion for the other reason.

³² True pleasures escape the criticisms of this school of thinkers precisely because they are pure (i.e., unmixed with pain), and so it is clear why Socrates presents these thinkers as a foil to his own positive remarks about pleasure. Rather than denying that there is such a thing as pleasure over and above the neutral state (as these thinkers do) as a way of explaining what is wrong with mixed states, he argues that mixed states are *false* pleasures, and this enables him to say that there are also such things as true pleasures that escape the criticisms of these thinkers.

there are certain kinds that only seem to be pleasures, but are not so in reality, and furthermore, that there are others that have the appearance of enormous size and great variety, but which are in truth commingled with pain or with respite from severe pains suffered by soul and body. (51a2-9)

The fact that Socrates returns to the school of thinkers who identify pleasure with the removal of pain at the end of the discussion of mixed states is yet another indication that the point of discussing this school of thinkers in the first place was as a way of approaching an appraisal of mixed states. He again refers to them as “witnesses” and remarks that he is “not really in agreement” with them, which is a relatively weak disavowal of their position. This is not the attitude we would expect him to display if they were primarily under discussion because they confuse a certain type of false pleasure for pleasure as a whole. Socrates is sympathetic to their position; he just thinks they are mistaken in denying that there is such a thing as pleasure beyond the removal of pain and that their judgment of pleasure in general is on this account overly harsh.

This passage may, however, be taken to cut against the interpretation I have been defending. It may seem to imply that Socrates counts mistaking the neutral state for pleasure as a type of false pleasure, given that he says that the thinkers are witnesses against two types of false pleasure: one type that appear to be pleasures but are not, and another that seem to be of great magnitude but are in fact commingled with and dependent on pain. It may seem that the first type referred to are cases of mistaking the neutral state for pleasure. There is another way of reading the passage, however. At 46d-47a, Socrates discusses two types of mixed states that should be considered false pleasures. The first type are mixtures such as scratching an itch that in fact involve an excess of pain over pleasure, but that are experienced as pleasant when the pain is partially relieved.³³ The second type are mixtures that

³³ The idea seems to be that the disturbance causing the itch is internal and cannot be remedied by scratching, but that the surface relief on the skin brought about by scratching is experienced as a positive pleasure even though it

involve an excess of pleasure over pain, but where the admixed pain makes the pleasure seem more intense than it actually is. I suggest that the first type of false pleasure referred to in 51a2-9 is not the case where a neutral state appears pleasant, but rather the case where a mixture that involves an excess of pain over pleasure appears pleasant. Socrates says at 51a2-9 that instances of this type of false pleasure only seem to be pleasures, but are not so in reality. This is compatible with the reading I suggest, because mixtures that involve an excess of pain are properly considered pains, not pleasures, but are incorrectly experienced as pleasures. The second type referred to in 51a2-9 would then be taken to be mixtures involving an excess of pleasure over pain. They seem to have enormous size, but this is a false appearance due to the admixture of pain. This reading of 51a2-9 seems highly preferable to the alternative, according to which the first type of false pleasure referred to is the case of mistaking the neutral state for pleasure. If that reading were correct, Socrates would be referring to the thinkers in question as “witnesses” against their own view.

A final consideration in favor of the reading I suggest is that at 42c7 Socrates says that the next type of false pleasure is found in *animals*. It is hard to see how non-human animals could mistake the neutral state for pleasure, given that the mistake as Socrates describes it lies in misapplying the concept of pleasure to the neutral state. Socrates never describes a non-rational way of experiencing the neutral state as pleasant that could plausibly be taken to apply to animals as well as humans. Animals clearly experience mixed states (e.g., a dog itching itself with delight), however, and so Socrates’ statement makes perfect sense if he means to refer forward to the discussion of mixed states.

Section 4

The discussion of mixed states at 44d-51a is highly complex and riddled with special difficulties, but there is a plausible basis for extending the Anticipation Argument to the case of mixed states in

does not in fact restore the underlying disturbance and depends on the persistence of the stronger underlying pain.

much the same way I have suggested it can be extended to pleasures that are distorted in magnitude due to comparison. The basic picture I suggest is that in cases where pleasure and pain are mixed, it often happens that the pain is misrepresented in one's awareness as augmenting the pleasure, and that this misrepresentation is due to a contribution of the imagination.

Plato writes:

Socrates: When someone undergoes restoration or destruction he experiences two opposed conditions at once. He may feel hot while shivering or feel chilled while sweating. I suppose he will then want to retain one of these conditions and get rid of the other. But if this so called bittersweet condition is hard to shake, it first causes irritation and later on turns to wild excitement. (46c6-d2)

Bodily pleasure is connected to the restoration of a disturbance. Socrates here describes a case where a disturbance remains while it is partially restored in an ongoing way. He says that when such a mixed condition persists, it causes irritation and eventually excitement. The underlying processes themselves do not necessarily change in a way that could account for the transition from painful irritation to pleasant excitement, nor do the motions that they generate and transmit to the soul. Following the suggestion I made in section 2 about the imagination's role in sorting out indeterminate clusters of perceptions and making them determinate, I suggest that the shift from irritation to excitement involves a shift in the way the mixture of pleasant and painful perceptions is sorted out by the imagination. It is hard to see what else could explain the shift.

Socrates gives a vivid account of cases where the mixture involves an excess of pleasure over pain:

Socrates: Now, in all those cases where the mixture contains a surplus of pleasure, the admixture of pain gives rise only to a tickle and a mild irritation, while the predominant part of pleasure causes contractions of the body to the point of leaping and kicking, color changes of all

sorts, distortion of features, and wild palpitations; it finally drives the person totally out of his mind, so that he shouts aloud like a madman. (47a3-9)

In such cases, the subject experiences the admixed pain as milder and the admixed pleasure as greater than they would be experienced if they were on their own. The idea seems to be that the pain generates a need for relief, and when the relief comes but the pain does not dissipate the subject somehow experiences the ongoing feeling of needing relief as augmenting the pleasure associated with the reception of such relief. When one has a painful sexual desire and engages in sexual activity, the desire is not removed while the sexual activity is ongoing, but rather becomes stronger. It is not experienced as increasingly painful, however, but rather the sexual activity is experienced as increasingly pleasant due to the admixture of painful desire. On this interpretation, it makes sense that mixtures would typically first be experienced as irritating, but then later as exciting. One may initially be irritated as a restoration fails to remove the underlying pain and its urgent imperative for relief, but as the resulting mixed condition persists the ongoing feeling of relief, coupled with the increasing need for such relief, is experienced as increasingly pleasant. The leaking vessel example from the *Gorgias* is helpful.³⁴ If a vessel does not leak, it can only be filled with the amount that it holds. If it leaks, however, it can continue to be filled. This continued filling creates the illusion that one is experiencing a great positive quantity of pleasure, when in fact one is merely extending one's experience of pain while pursuing the neutral condition. As the pain becomes greater and creates a larger deficit to be restored, the intense need for relief gives the experience of this relief a frenzied character or 'intensity', to the point where the subject is prone to leaping and kicking.

My suggestion is that the subject's experience of the admixed pain as augmenting the admixed pleasure is due to a contribution of the imagination. Even more so than for the second type of false pleasure, the details of how this might work are difficult spell out (hence, by my hypothesis, Plato's

³⁴ *Gorg.* 493a-494b.

slippery rhetorical approach), but it does seem plausible. Using the template story, the idea may be that ongoing restorations are experienced by default as increasingly great pleasures. In cases such as scratching an itch, the restoration is ongoing, but it is only the restoration of a surface symptom, while the underlying disturbance persists and continues to give rise to the symptom and create the need for restoration. This sort of restoration does not involve ongoing linear progress towards the neutral state. When a disturbance is restored, the default is for the associated pain to subside. In these cases it does not in fact subside, but because the disturbance is continuously being restored the imagination fits it into the template of a pain that subsides as it is relieved and shifts to representing it as smaller than it really is. The strength of the pain and the urgent need for relief are transmuted into a quality of intensity that the admixed pleasure gains. The motion in the body emanating from the underlying disturbance does not reach the subject's awareness so as to cause the subject to experience pain in the appropriate proportion. Through a contribution of the imagination, the subject's awareness is constituted by a motion in the soul that represents the disturbance as smaller and the restoration as larger than they in fact are.

This, I take it, is the ultimate point Socrates was reaching towards at 34c-36c when he introduced the idea that the soul can induce pleasures in itself. This idea is easy to get one's mind around when we consider cases like the anticipation of a future pleasure, but it is much harder to see how this is what is happening when one enjoys scratching an itch or having sex. Given that scratching an itch and having sex involve motions in the body that would properly be experienced as pains if they were transmitted to one's awareness without interference, and yet in many cases subjects experience increased pleasure on account of these motions, Plato posits that such interference is effected by the sensory imagination and that the resultant pleasures are thereby rendered false.³⁵

³⁵ D. Frede, in 'Rumpelstiltskin's Pleasures' at 177, denies that pleasures such as those associated with drinking or sex can admit of falsity in any robust sense, because they do not have content of a sort that could render them truth apt. I take it that these pleasures have as their content *bodily restorations*, and they are truth apt in as far as

Socrates explicitly refers back to 34c-36c at 47c3-d2:

But take now the cases where the soul's contributions are opposed to the body's: When there is pain over and against pleasures, or pleasure against pain, both are finally joined in a mixed state. We have talked about them earlier and agreed that in these cases it is the deprivation that gives rise to the desire for replenishment, and while the expectation is pleasant, the deprivation itself is painful. When we discussed this we did not make any special mention, as we do now, of the fact that, in the vast number of cases where the soul and body are not in agreement, the final result is a single mixture that combines pleasure and pain.

This passage, briefly discussed at the beginning of this paper, can be taken to corroborate the interpretation I have been defending. Socrates states that in the cases previously discussed, the deprivation in the body is painful, while the expectation in the soul of replenishing this deprivation is pleasant. He now adds that the pleasure and pain are usually experienced as a single mixed state. This indicates that the sensory imagination does indeed play the role of synthesizing perceptions with sensory memories in the formation of experience. The pain of the deprivation in the body is not experienced on its own as such, but rather is fused with the expectation of replenishment (which is a product of the imagination) into a single mixed experience. It is interesting that Socrates notes that he did not make any special mention of this when he initially discussed anticipatory pleasure. This indicates that the Anticipation Argument is deliberately oversimplified to make a certain point, and that it's not supposed to be a full and accurate account of the phenomena. This fits well with my suggestion that the argument focuses on the case of anticipation because it is the least problematic case, and that the argument is ultimately supposed to pertain to more problematic but less perspicuous cases.

they can be true or false if they represent bodily restorations accurately or inaccurately. M. Evans defends the idea that in the *Philebus* bodily pains have bodily disturbances as their representational content, but does not consider any way that they could be false except for the bodily disturbances to not in fact be occurring (M. Evans, 'Plato and the Meaning of Pain', *Apeiron*, 40 (2011), 71-94 at 89). I hold that it is possible for them to be represented correctly as occurring, but for their magnitude to be misrepresented and for the pleasure to thereby be rendered false.

Section 5

Plato writes:

Socrates: Well, then, do we have any other way of distinguishing between good and bad judgments than their falsity?

Protarchus: We have no other.

Socrates: Nor, I presume, will we apprehend that they are bad in any other way except by their being false.

Protarchus: What you say is quite the opposite of the truth, Socrates! It is not at all because they are false that we regard (θείη) pleasures or pains as bad, but because they fall in with (συμπιπτούσας) some other grave and wide-ranging kind of badness. (40e6-41a4)

Matthew Evans has claimed that in this passage Socrates means to endorse what he calls the Grounding Thesis, which is the thesis that “pleasures, like beliefs, are bad just in so far as, and just because, they are false.” (89) Evans thinks that the discussion of false pleasure at 36c-51a fails to establish this thesis. In this section, I will argue that Evans underestimates the explanatory resources of the account of false pleasure at 36c-51a.

I make one revision to Evans’ idea. His formulation, quoted above, states that bad pleasures are bad *just in so far as* and *just because* they are false. This position would be difficult or impossible to reconcile with Plato’s stance on intense bodily pleasure. He says at 63d5-e3 that intense bodily pleasure is an impediment to reason and knowledge and can bring about madness in those who partake of it. Intense bodily pleasures are bad in part because of these ruinous effects, and so it would seem that these pleasures are not bad *just* because they are false.

It does not seem that Plato could mean to endorse such a strong claim about the relationship between the badness and falsity with respect to pleasure. Part of the basis for whatever claim he means to make at 40e6-41a4 is the analogy between pleasure and belief. He thinks that some thesis clearly holds for belief, and asserts that an analogous thesis holds for pleasure. The analogue of the Grounding Thesis does not hold for belief, however. A false belief about how to get to the store is bad in part because it will get one lost and waste one's time, and a false belief that one should kill in revenge is bad in part because it might bring about the bad outcome of someone being killed in revenge. The badness of a false belief does not consist *just* in its being false.

I agree with Evans that Socrates must think that when pleasure is bad, it is bad because it is false (in a broadly explanatory sense), but I deny that it is bad *just* because it is false. I take it that when Socrates says that pleasures are not bad in any other way except by being false, he means that nothing else *can make them* bad, not that there is no other respect in which they *are* bad. The parallel with belief is clear on this reading. A false belief about how to get to the store is bad in part because it will waste one's time, but a true belief could never have this effect. Contingencies can work out such that a true belief has worse results than a false belief, but we don't blame the belief or consider it bad when this happens.

Evans thinks that Socrates' main account of false pleasure cannot account for the connection between badness and falsity in various uncontroversial examples of bad pleasure. He writes:

According to [one way of understanding the Grounding Thesis], however, a malicious pleasure is bad only if the harm in which it is taken is not actually occurring. And this is absurd by anyone's lights. Consider also the intense bodily pleasures associated with excessive indulgence in eating, drinking, or sex—pleasures that, according to Plato at any rate, should be avoided at all costs (45a4-e7, 63c5-64a6). Either these pleasures have content or they don't. If they do not, then obviously they do not have false content; if they do, then presumably their content is true just in

case the pleased agents are actually undergoing the relevant physiological changes. But then the vast majority of bad bodily pleasures do not have false content.³⁶

Evans' objection is defused if we accept the interpretation of Socrates' account of mixed pleasures that I suggested in the previous section. Evans dismisses the possibility that Socrates' accounts of three of the four of the types of false pleasure discussed (he includes mistaking the neutral state for pleasure as a type of false pleasure) can support the analogy between pleasure and belief.³⁷ He thinks that the only type of pleasure that Socrates thinks can admit of robust falsity is pleasure associated with anticipation and the relatively narrow class of parallel cases, and that the other three types discussed can only be understood as cases where people have false beliefs about their experience of pleasure. If there is a plausible alternative reading according to which all the types of pleasure Socrates discusses are taken to admit of robust falsity, however, there is strong interpretive motivation to prefer such a reading. A unified interpretation has the advantages of making better sense of the structure of the discussion of false pleasure and its relation to the rest of the dialogue and giving Socrates' theory of false pleasure sufficient resources to be plausibly taken to satisfy the Grounding Thesis.

The ultimate aim of the dialogue is to determine the content of the best life. When Socrates arrives at this juncture, he addresses reason and knowledge and asks them which pleasures they would like to have join them in composing the best life:

Will you have any need to associate with the strongest and most intensive pleasures in addition to the true pleasures?" we will ask [reason and knowledge]. "Why on earth should we need them, Socrates?" they might reply, "They are a tremendous impediment to us, since they infect the souls in which they dwell with madness or even prevent our own development all together. Furthermore, they totally destroy most of our offspring, since neglect leads to forgetfulness.

But as to the true and pure pleasures you mentioned, those regard as our kin. And besides, also

³⁶ Evans, 'Hedonic Mistakes', 106.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, n. 5 at 90-1.

add the pleasures of health and of temperance and all those that commit themselves to virtue as their deity and follow it around everywhere. But to forge an association between reason and those pleasures that are forever involved with foolishness and other kinds of vice would be totally unreasonable for anyone who aims at the best and most stable mixture or blend. This is true particularly if he wants to discover in this mixture what the good is in man and in the universe and to get some vision of the nature of the good itself. (63d1-64a2)

Clearly Socrates means to allude to mixed pleasures when he speaks of the “strongest and most intensive” pleasures. He does not mention or allude to pleasures of mistaken anticipation anywhere in the final stage of the dialogue, where he determines the content of the best life. He is very concerned to exclude intense bodily pleasures from this life, and it seems that he treats his evaluation of these pleasures as by far the most important part of the discussion of false pleasure. If the only pleasures that are supposed to be considered robustly false are pleasures of mistaken anticipation and closely parallel cases, then it is mysterious why Socrates discusses the analogy between pleasure and belief and the Anticipation Argument so extensively. These pleasures are presumably excluded from the best life, but this exclusion is not important enough for Socrates to explicitly mention it at the climax of the dialogue. The structure of the dialogue makes much more sense if pleasures of mistaken anticipation are discussed as a less problematic example of the general way in which pleasure can be robustly false, primarily in order to pave the way for the more problematic and important claim that mixed pleasures are robustly false.

Evans argues that if intense bodily pleasures do have content, then that content is true just in case the agent is in fact undergoing the relevant bodily changes, and that by this criterion very few intense bodily pleasures will turn out to be false.³⁸ This argument neglects the details of Socrates’ discussion of mixed pleasures, where he clearly has in mind that the falsity of intense bodily pleasure is

³⁸ Evans, ‘Hedonic Mistakes’, 106.

in some way due to the admixture of pain. Evans denies that this notion of falsity could be the same as the notion of robust falsity that is in play in the Anticipation Argument. I have suggested that Socrates does in fact mean to argue that intense bodily pleasure is robustly false, insofar as it involves a real disturbance in the body that would properly be experienced as pain, but that the subject instead experiences as augmenting the pleasure's intensity. When a subject scratches an itch and experiences an intense pleasure, there is an ongoing disturbance in the body that would be accurately experienced as pain. When the subject's imagination transmutes this pain to intensity, the subject experiences a pleasure that misrepresents the bodily processes that she is in fact undergoing. On my interpretation, the truth or falsity of a bodily pleasure does not merely depend on whether or not the subject is undergoing the relevant restoration, but also on whether the restoration and the other bodily motions that it is mixed with are experienced accurately.³⁹ This idea is corroborated in Socrates' discussion of the second type of false pleasure, where he says, "But if you take that portion of them by which they appear greater or smaller than they really are, and cut it off from each of them as a mere appearance and without real being, you will neither admit that this appearance is right nor dare to say that anything connected with this portion of pleasure or pain is right and true." (42b8-c3) Bodily pleasures can seem greater than they are due to comparison with another pleasure or pain. Socrates clearly indicates here that this falsity is not a matter of such pleasures representing whether or not a bodily restoration is happening. The restoration is happening, and is represented as such, but it is experienced as more pleasant—that is, as a greater restoration—than it in fact is. Socrates says that the *extra* pleasure that the subject experiences (in addition to the amount that would accurately represent the bodily

³⁹ In the case of malice, the pleasure is false not because the harm that one is pleased by is not actually occurring, but rather because the subject misrepresents the pain associated with malice as augmenting the pleasure of laughter. The discussion of malice is difficult to interpret, because Socrates has only given an account of pleasure and pain as they relate to the senses, and it is not clear how this account can be adapted to emotions. As with mixtures of pleasure and pain relating to the body, however, the basic idea is that malice is in fact a pain but that the malice involved in laughing at someone maliciously is not experienced as painful, but rather as augmenting the pleasure of laughter.

restoration) is a mere appearance and lacks real being—that is, it emerges from the imagination and not from a motion in the body.

Socrates does not exclude *all* mixed pleasures from the best life, but allows “...the pleasures of health and of temperance and all those that commit themselves to virtue as their deity and follow it around everywhere.” (63e4-7) The interpretation I have been defending can readily make sense of this inclusion. Pleasures of health and temperance will involve some pain, since even mild thirst and hunger are painful. Given the understanding of virtue as a measuring art, we can presume that Socrates thinks that when one partakes of such bodily pleasures in a virtuous way, one experiences them accurately. That is, one experiences the admixed pain as what it is, and not as augmenting intensity, because the measuring art enables one to adjust for distorting factors (also including proximity and comparison). While such pleasures are not pure and totally free of pain (as the “true” pleasures are), they are at least not false in the sense of misrepresenting the world or the state of the subject’s body, and so they are in no way bad or harmful and there is no reason to exclude them from the best life.

If we consider the class of robustly false pleasures to include mixed states and misestimated pleasures in addition to pleasures of mistaken anticipation and closely parallel cases, then it seems that Socrates’ theory can plausibly be taken to satisfy the Grounding Thesis as I understand it. All vicious pleasures would seem to fit into one of these categories. Most clear examples of vicious pleasures fall under the class of mixed states. Socrates’ account of false pleasure seems to get the extension right: all and only bad pleasures can plausibly be taken to turn out false according to his account. The question remains of how their falsity *explains* their badness.

The connection between the badness of such pleasures and their falsity seems to turn on the idea that they are false because they misrepresent a disintegration in one’s body as augmenting a restoration. A motion away from the natural state is experienced as though it were a motion towards it. The badness of mixed pleasures is said at 63d1-64a2, discussed above, to consist (at least in part) in

impeding reason and knowledge. The fact that these pleasures impede reason and knowledge is explained by their falsity. Sexual pleasure, for instance, impedes reason and knowledge because on account of its intensity it seems to the subject who experiences it to be a greater pleasure than the pleasure of reason and knowledge and thereby distracts the subject from the pursuit of rational activities and otherwise interferes with their performance. The intensity of these pleasures is the locus of their falsity. Their intensity is the false appearance of the pain that they are mixed with as augmenting their pleasantness. Vicious people are motivated to pursue bad things as though they were good because these bad things falsely appear to be more pleasant than they in fact are (i.e., they appear as great restorations when in fact they are a mixture of great disintegrations and partial restorations). One must develop the measuring art in order to experience bodily restorations and disintegrations with reliable accuracy.

The overarching argument of the dialogue makes a good deal more sense, then, if Socrates means for mixed states and misestimated pleasures to be counted as robustly false. This generates strong motivation for seeking a unified interpretation of the three types of false pleasure discussed. I have suggested such an interpretation, centering on the claim that all three types admit of robust falsity because they involve a truth-committal contribution of the sensory imagination.

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