

## Propositional Pleasures in Plato's *Philebus*\*

Fernando Muniz

*Abstract* This paper evaluates the arguments presented regarding the interpretation of false pleasures in Plato's *Philebus* during the past 50 years. As the central axis of the debate is the concept of propositional attitude, I will tell the story of the propositional interpretation of the passage to show how and why it was constructed to become seemingly obvious, irrefutable, and even Platonic in its origin. Besides this, the paper raises the following problems for the propositional interpretation: (i) if it has textual basis and (ii) if it is necessary to understand the passage or if it is an obstacle and should be abandoned so that the Platonic text could be read in a non-anachronistic way.

### *Introduction*

In 1959, J. Gosling published his seminal "*False Pleasures: Philebus 35c-41b*," triggering an endless debate on a subject that had seemed sterile: the issue of false pleasures. Plato somewhat anticipated, not without some pleasure, this controversy when he makes Socrates say to Protarchus, at 36d, in the introduction of this theme in the dialogue: "We are starting a discussion that will be anything but small." This prediction, however, was not fully met until Gosling's article came into the hands of his peers. But what would have been the substance injected by Gosling into Plato's text to bring to life a subject that had been so well buried? It was a new drug that makes the Platonic text speak, not in that obscure language that his critics disliked, but in a way so clear and simple that we could swear it came from a text of Gilbert Ryle<sup>1</sup> or Bernard Williams.

After 50 years of intense controversy about false pleasures in the *Philebus*, maybe now we can evaluate some arguments in this debate. As the discussion has taken as

---

\* For research support, I thank CAPES for the grant I received to do post-doctoral research at Brown University. I would also like to thank David Konstan and Mary-Louise Gill for their constructive feedback during our discussions, as well as Boris Nikolsky and George Rudebusch.

<sup>1</sup> G. E.M. Anscombe: "The concept of pleasure (...) had hardly seemed a problematic one at all to modern philosophers until Ryle reintroduced it as a topic a year or two ago." (1957, p.76). For discussion see Bravo (1995).

central axis the concept of propositional attitude, I will tell the story of propositional interpretation of the passage to show how and why it was constructed to become obvious, irrefutable, and even Platonic in its origin. This article raises some questions about the propositional interpretation: (i) if it has textual basis, (ii) if it answers the fundamental questions raised by the dialogue, and finally (iii) if it is necessary to understand the passage or if it is an obstacle and should be abandoned so that the Platonic text could be read in a non-anachronistic way.

### *Hanging a Giorgione*

In his article, Gosling presented a summary of what he considered to be a superficial and distorted reading of the passage.<sup>2</sup> His intention was to correct the distorted view and at the same time build an alternative interpretation. In the summary of the Distorted View (DV) given by Gosling, Socrates examines anticipatory pleasures and suggests, “to the surprise of Protarchus that they can be true or false (...) and in the end he talks as though he had won an argument over Protarchus” (p. 45). But what Socrates is saying, according to DV, is that “sometimes we make prognostications, and in accordance with these prognostications we are delighted or depressed; but sometimes our prognostication is false, and in such a case, while it is true that our delight is genuine, and that strictly only the prognostication can be called false, still, we may loosely be allowed to call the delight false also, because it depends on and is closely bound up with the prognostication” (p. 45). DV separates the delight, the feeling of pleasure, and the enjoyment from the opinion and prognostication and, in no case, can admit what Gosling thinks that Plato is seriously doing, i.e., “suggesting that falsity is an attribute of pleasure” (p. 45).

For Gosling, “Plato was aware of the oddity of calling pleasures false (...) It is made clear that what he is holding is something which at first sight seems decidedly strange” (p. 46). But he is trying to reveal an important truth about pleasure that

---

<sup>2</sup> The question of false pleasure in the *Philebus* involves a typology. Socrates presents three kinds of false pleasures, but, as contemporary commentators focused their attention especially on this first kind—the so-called anticipatory pleasure—I’m going to restrict the subject of this paper to it.

“Protarchus’ position obscures” (p. 46). If DV is Protarchus’ view, we could ask why Plato’s text produces this distortion of his own perspective. Gosling doesn’t explain why, but as we know that Gosling takes Protarchus as a common man<sup>3</sup>, we can suppose that the average reader is led almost spontaneously to agree with him and ignore the more philosophical point of view Socrates is trying to establish. It is that non-critical sense that Gosling will strongly attack. His attack targets basically one point: Socrates, confronted with a common-sense position that takes pleasure as completely separate from opinion, proposes to consider the possibility of an “intimate connection” between pleasure and falsity and reveal an “important truth” about pleasure obscured by ordinary thought. Gosling’s strategy will succeed only if he clearly demonstrates the existence of the “intimate connection” that he supposes that Socrates is proposing.<sup>4</sup> Given his objective, Gosling will try to show that pleasure “may be false in a more genuine way than this account [DV] recognizes” (p. 46).

The two views on pleasure that Gosling identifies in the text were, in fact, well known at the time he published his article. In the historical background of the discussion on pleasure, they are contrasted in Ryle’s reflections on the subject.<sup>5</sup> In 1959, the same year of Gosling’s article, Bernard Williams published his equally famous article “*Pleasure and Belief*” and here too the two positions are opposed. More interestingly, in Bernard William’s article he is seeking to deepen the notion of pleasure as “one species or mode of attention” in a new way that “Ryle does not discuss, [namely,] what the relation is of attention to its objects, in particular to objects which are mistakenly believed to exist” (p. 71). The *Philebus* is without doubt the inspiration of Williams’s article, and many aspects of it echo Gosling’s text. Both articles can be read as complementary to the

---

<sup>3</sup> Cf. “the hesitation of the common man, i.e., Protarchus” p. 53. The idea that Protarchus is a common man without a theoretical position became a consensus among interpreters. See Frede (1985): “That pleasures are events with propositional content would be hard (and is hard) to explain to anyone who is not trained in philosophy and does not have the appropriate vocabulary at his disposition” (p. 174).

<sup>4</sup> “Far from accepting Protarchus’s view, Socrates is persisting in holding to some more intimate connection between pleasure and falsity” (p. 46). Decades later, Gosling’s “intimate connection” is still characterizing Socrates’ position to Propositionalists. See Frede (1993): “...his [Protarchus’s] epiphenomenal view that pleasure, the feeling, is separable from its object. This is what Socrates now attacks by establishing an intimate connection between pleasure and judgment” (p. 41 n.1).

<sup>5</sup> Ryle (1949 e 1954).

understanding of the insertion of *Philebus* into the context of a large discussion on pleasure opened by Ryle. Gosling never mentions directly the theoretical background of his interpretation, but a mere look at Williams's paper gives us the clues to the presuppositions of Gosling's view. In the example that opens Williams's article, the *Philebus* is the immediate reference: "I may be pleased because (as I suppose) I have inherited a fortune, when I have not" (p. 57). This example inspired by Plato will take us straight to the problem of anticipatory pleasure and to the relation between pleasure and opinion ("our present concern here is with the problems of belief and knowledge in relation to pleasure" p. 68). That's the question of Williams's article. And answering the question, Williams introduces a decisive distinction for the future of the interpretation of Plato's passage on false pleasures<sup>6</sup>. It is presented in relation to a painting by Giorgione<sup>7</sup>:

(GI) "I may be pleased at x, but say that I am pleased at y because I falsely believe that x is y;"

(GII) "I may take pleasure in, or be pleased by, x which I mistakenly think is y, where x's supposedly being y is the basis of my pleasure. Thus, I may be pleased by this supposed Giorgione as being a Giorgione." (p. 66)

In the first case, the falsities of opinion don't affect my pleasure, "because x's being y is no element in my pleasure. Thus, I may be pleased by this picture, as a picture, and say that I am pleased by this Giorgione, when the picture is not a Giorgione." In the second case, the situation is completely different because the "discovery of the truth will mean (...) the end of pleasure - at least, of that pleasure" (p.66). This would be similar to the case of "my supposed inheritance of a fortune," which means "be pleased at something that does not exist at all" (p. 66).

---

<sup>6</sup> Williams (1959), nonetheless, never attributes the distinction of pleasure of anticipation and the anticipation of pleasure to Plato. On the contrary, he says, p. 69, quoting *Philebus* 39d seq.: "for the pleasures of anticipation consist in the anticipation of pleasure."

<sup>7</sup> The mysterious Renaissance painter Giorgione, also known as Barbarelli, was famous for his gifts. There is uncertainty about the authenticity of works attributed to him. Giorgione made his first appearance in a philosophical scene in Quine's book *O Sentido da Nova Lógica*, published in Brazil in 1944 and written in Portuguese. Bernard Williams's distinction is clearly inspired by Quine's example.

Now, we can return to Gosling's alternative account. As we have said, he was searching for the "intimate connection" between pleasure and belief. And now we can say that this search is for the Giorgione II — that is, a case like Gosling's sentence GII above — in the text. Only a Giorgione II could show the logical necessity that makes pleasure depend on opinion. This process that I call "hanging a Giorgione" is the fabrication in the Platonic text of a distinction that we cannot find explicitly in it. That's what Gosling was looking for when he discusses "what Plato is getting at in the analogy of pleasure and belief." Socrates' investigation begins with an analogy. It is easy to see that the analogy is based on Protarchus' admission that beliefs are true or false. That's why Socrates is going to construct a parallel to transpose the condition of belief to pleasure. The analogy between pleasure (*hedone*) and belief (*doxa*) can be schematically put in the following way:

1. *There is such a thing as believing (doxazein). 37a2-3*
- 1'. *There is such a thing as enjoying (hedeisthai). 37a5*
2. *[In cases of believing] there is something believed (to doxazomenon). 37a7*
- 2'. *[In cases of enjoying] there is something that the one enjoying enjoys (ho(i) to hedomenon hedetai) . 37a9*
3. *The thing that believes, whether it believes rightly (orthos) or not, does not ever nullify the fact of believing. 37a11-12*
- 3'. *The thing that enjoys, whether it enjoys rightly (orthos) or not, will never nullify the fact of enjoying. 37b2-3 [these symmetrical relations are going to permit a perfect transposition at 4 and 5]*
4. *If the thing believed (to doxazomenon) is mistaken (hamartanomenon) then the belief that makes that mistake is not right (orthen). 37e1-3*
5. *If a pain or pleasure is mistaken (hamartanousan) in what it is pleased or pained about, it would be impossible to call it right. 37e5- [But Protarchus perceived the trap and says at 6...]*
6. *Protarchus: If the pleasure can be mistaken (hamartesetai)...[at 8], [At this point Socrates tries to associate pleasure and opinion]*

7. *Socrates: Pleasure and pain often come with true and with false belief . 37b9-10*  
[Protarchus accepts the association but denies the identification...]

8. *Protarchus: In those cases, what we can call false is only opinion. Nobody can call pleasure itself false. 38a1*

Gosling based his analysis of this analogy upon two words: *orthotes* (“rightness”) and *harmartanein* (“to miss the mark”). Established by these key words, this similarity places pleasure and opinion in a symmetrical relation. The strategy was supposed to work with Protarchus, but failed to convince him. But, according to Gosling, what Plato is trying to get with the analogy is “that anticipatory pleasure is taken (...) from supposed information about the pleasures to come” and that it is “the correctness of this information that is directly responsible for the “truth” and “falsity” of the pleasure” (p. 49). If Protarchus had accepted this, he would have accepted a logical dependence between the pleasure and opinion like that of Giorgione II, the “intimate connection.” But Protarchus introduces an asymmetry in the analogy (38a1). He rejects the application of falsity to pleasures, so that what Socrates has to investigate now is the asymmetry proposed by Protarchus: opinion may be true or false, but genuine pleasure can only be true (p. 51).

Thus Socrates introduces another analogy: between the soul and a book. And we move from belief to picture. In the second analogy, after describing a perceptual situation when somebody sees something appearing at a distance and tries to identify it, Socrates compares the soul to a book: The combination of memory and sense experience writes sentences in the soul; sometimes what they write is true, sometimes false. Besides the writer, there is also a painter “who paints pictures in accordance with the logos” and that which is painted may be past, present and future. The pictures take place “in the absence of direct experience which is the subject of logos” (p. 51).

This ‘painting’ analogy is decisive to Gosling’s reading. The “*zoographos* [painter] passage,” he says, is not “irrelevant.” Plato is saying “a little more than” the DV reading. But what does Gosling see as essential to anticipatory pleasure in the passage? With this analogy, Socrates obtains the admission of Protarchus that pictures of false beliefs are themselves false. But why does the analogy of soul to book lead Protarchus to accept that some pleasures are false? Gosling’s answer is based on a supposed ambiguity.

As the truth or falsity of the pictures depends on the *logoi* of which they are pictures, Gosling supposes that for Plato “the pleasure and the picture are run together, and the picture of a pleasure and the pleasure of a picture taken to be the same.” Gosling thinks that Protarchus accepts this conflation. In sum, “anticipatory pleasures can be said to be correct or incorrect, right or mistaken, because they are in fact pictures, and pictures, when based on beliefs, can be incorrect or mistaken, and so false.” When the relation between the pictures and beliefs is explained, Protarchus could accept the truth or falsity of the pictures. “Belief infects the pictures”, as Socrates says, with their condition. Since they are based on beliefs, their truth or falsity is derivative.

But I say this derivative sense threatens Gosling’s project of demonstrating an “intimate connection” between pleasure and belief. The very idea of ‘infection,’ suggested by Socrates, assumes their separability. In truth, Gosling seems to end up agreeing with what he thinks was the original thesis of Protarchus: falsity cannot be attributed to an episode of pleasure. For Gosling, it is meaningless to say, “I falsely enjoyed a glass of beer.” You can attribute falsity to a belief, but belief is not sufficient to produce pleasure. “So long as one refrains from picturing anything to oneself, one may have the belief without any pleasure at all.” So, the difference between belief and picture should explain how pleasures are possible. The question now becomes: what do pictures do that makes pleasure possible? For, in Gosling’s view, pleasures derive their falsity from false beliefs, but they do so via the fact that they are pictures” (Dybikowski, p. 150). Correctly, Gosling places all of the weight in his paper upon the imagination and the images that it constructs. And his question then becomes: how does one move from the truth or falsity of the images to the truth or falsity of the pleasures?

What Gosling saw as ambiguities, his readers, such as Kenny and Dybikowski, saw as an accusation of confusion on the part of Plato. In his reply to Kenny, Gosling says, “This is far from the case. My point is that Plato does not make a distinction between the pleasure to be got from a picture and the picture. The painted pleasure, as the painted Socrates, is the picture, not the subject. Whether this is confusion or not I do not know. It seems to me that only if he conflates the two has he shown that such pleasures can be false.” At the end, Gosling shows the *aporia* behind the conflation: “Whether or not he makes this conflation is important (...) For if he does not make it, he must distinguish between taking pleasure in the picture and having the picture. But if this is so,

he should have seen that Protarchus could have repeated his earlier objection about belief: just the belief, not the pleasure, is false, so now it is not the pleasure that has been shown to be false, but the picture” (p.43-4). In an appendix to *The Greeks on Pleasure* (1982), Gosling and Taylor made a revision of the interpretations on false pleasures. They did not find any substantial difference between Gosling’s account and Kenny’s or Dybikowski’s. They all agree that the conflation is the central problem of the passage.<sup>8</sup> Gosling (only with Taylor in *The Greeks on Pleasure!*), Kenny, and Dybikowski agree that some kind of mistake in Socrates’ argument prevents a clear reading. While Gosling and Kenny see the argument as turning on a conflation of (...) picture and picturing<sup>9</sup>, Dybikowski makes it depend on a conflation of picture and object depicted. The interpretive problem turns out to be how Socrates proceeds from the truth or falsity of pictures to the truth or falsity of pleasures<sup>10</sup>.

In the conclusion of his article, Dybikowski made a special contribution to the Propositional Interpretation. He termed the question about the plausibility of Plato’s

---

<sup>8</sup>“While Gosling and Kenny (1960) see the argument as turning on a conflation of... picture and picturing, Dybikowski (1970) makes it depend on a conflation of picture and object depicted, together with a further conflation of the object depicted (a pleasure) with the pleasure of depicting that object (p. 440). According to Kenny (1960), Protarchus is convinced by an argument that takes the truth in another sense: “Bad men enjoy largely false pleasures, while good men enjoy true ones.” Protarchus would be induced to admit that a pleasure may be false by considering the case of false belief held by a wicked man who is picturing a future pleasure” (p. 9). False belief here should not be understood in terms of a misclassification of an event [to receive or not a fortune]. In the case of the man looking forward to receiving a fortune, the false belief is not the belief that he will get the money” but it “is the belief that he will enjoy these activities.”

<sup>9</sup> According to Kenny (1960), Protarchus is convinced by an argument that takes the truth in another sense: “Bad men enjoy largely false pleasures, while good men enjoy true ones.” Protarchus would be induced to admit that a pleasure may be false by considering the case of false belief held by a wicked man who is picturing a future pleasure” (p. 9). False belief here should not be understood in terms of a misclassification of an event [to receive or not a fortune]. In the case of the man looking forward to receiving a fortune, the false belief is not the belief that he will get the money” but it “is the belief that he will enjoy these activities.”

<sup>10</sup> About the crucial passage on imagination, Dybikowski (1970) recognizes that if we take what Plato says in the passage literally at 40b6-7, he is giving false pleasures painted. Thus, the falsity is attributed to the anticipated pleasures, and not, as expected, the pleasures of anticipation. Socrates has therefore made a mistake, “instead of claiming that the pleasure taken in the picture is false, he makes the claim about the pictured pleasure.” (p. 165) But the mistake permits Protarchus to agree with the conclusion: he accepts that the pleasure is false because it has already accepted that the pleasures of evil are false paintings. “But neither Socrates nor Protarchus see that a very different claim has to be established in order to show that there can be false pleasures.” (p. 165)

defending anachronistic positions irrelevant. Although he concludes that Plato is mistaken, he thinks that Plato was “moving in fresh directions” in his account of pleasure and belief, so that “this account need not carry any logical commitment to Plato’s general theory of pleasure and that, in consequence, it can be detached from it, whether Plato would be willing to follow such a lead or not”<sup>11</sup>. It all depends on our contemporary philosophical interest. “For it is not the general theory of pleasure which is of interest to the modern philosopher so much as Plato’s acknowledgement that belief plays an important role in the analysis of the concept of pleasure and his use of it to map a relation between pleasure and desire.” In sum: if we could apply the Giorgione distinction to Plato’s passage, we don’t need to connect the passage with Plato’s philosophy anymore, because we can suppose that he was moving in fresh directions. Coincidentally and fortunately, as we are going to see, he was moving to meet—and please—our own expectations...

One significant point of Gosling - this time co-authoring a book with Taylor - in *The Greeks on Pleasure*, is a change of vocabulary in relation to Gosling’s first articles. Gosling and Taylor describe what is called false in terms either of “some enjoyment” or “a propositional attitude.” A propositional attitude is characterized by the expression “... is pleased that p.” For them, “if this is what Plato is talking about and not enjoyments, then we can readily see how falsity of the sort attributed to beliefs could be attributed to such an attitude” (p. 429). Gosling and Taylor recorded that, at that time, 1982, a tendency in the analysis of the passage was gaining ground, namely, the propositional interpretation of false pleasures. This new trend reads Gosling (1982) against Gosling (1959), eliminating “ambiguities,” “conflations,” “errors,” and “mistakes” which, in one way or another, he and his followers attributed to Plato. Accepting Dybikowski’s suggestion of detaching the passage of Platonic account of pleasure and showing in the text devices that make possible the idea that Plato was aware of the distinction of

---

<sup>11</sup> This idea is behind Frede’s conviction is that Plato thought that “a revision of the ontology of pleasures should be made; and I see this as one of the main objectives in the *Philebus*” (1985, p. 176). The “fresh start” of Dybikovsky became “fresh ground” to Frede (“The *Philebus* thus breaks fresh ground” (p. 161)) or even “fresh start” (“Plato makes a fresh start in the *Philebus*”(p. 161)). The revision in question is a revision of “the concept of true and false pleasures in *Rep. IX*” and of the doctrine of “the degrees of reality” to which it is tied. But what is missing in *Rep. IX*? Frede has no difficulty in answering: “the propositional sense of true” (1985, p. 160-1).

Williams's Giorgione, the interpretation in terms of Propositional Pleasure thereby establishes the canonical interpretation of the false pleasures.

This tendency started in 1962. Shortly after the publication of the articles of Gosling and Bernard Williams, Thalberg publishes an enthusiastic "interpretation" of the passage, although far away from the text of the *Philebus*. There, his aim was to "explain Plato's view of false pleasure and answer the more obvious objections to it (...) and (...) argue that his strange doctrine illuminates the neglected propositional aspect of the moods we characterize as "enjoyment," "amusement," or "pleasure." His "presumptions" are based, not surprisingly, on Ryle. "Professor Ryle," he says, "has demonstrated that these nouns and their corresponding verbs, do not apply to sensations or any kind of neural process" (p. 65). But Ryle, according to Thalberg, left "untouched the residue of fascinating expressions" (Ex. "John is pleased [or thrilled, or overjoyed, or delighted, or satisfied, or content] that his enemies died of a heart attack"). In the *Philebus*, Thalberg found "an illuminating rapprochement between this family of phrases about pleasure (the seeming non-cognitive state) and a family of cognitive- sounding idioms: 'anticipating (expecting, fearing, hoping, believing) that'." According to Thalberg, the Platonic thesis "is a simple one": "When Jones is convinced that he is (or will be) the winner of the Irish Sweepstakes, but his number doesn't come up, we call his belief false. Therefore, if Jones declared, 'I'm delighted that I won,' why shouldn't we say that he was mistaken - that his pleasure was false?" (p. 66) For Thalberg, in Protarchus's "analysis" of the relation between pleasure and belief, "it sounds as if the two elements of such a mental state were completely separable, like the melting of a piece of wax and the heating that precedes it" (p. 67). Thalberg attributes to Protarchus a causal connection between belief and pleasure. "But surely, he says, there is no logical connection between believing and being delighted that one has triumphed in the Sweepstakes". As we can see, Thalberg is still looking for the "intimate connection" between pleasure and belief and thought that he found this "inseparability" in a new concept implicit in Williams's distinction. Thalberg concludes what he called a "defense of Plato's view" with the emphatic declaration: "Finally: I intend to classify pleasure and similar states as 'propositional attitudes.'" (p. 73)<sup>12</sup>.

---

<sup>12</sup> Thalberg explicitly talks about Quine's objections to the concept of propositional attitudes: "I admit, he says, the difficulties that Professor Quine ascribes to the analysis of propositional

Despite the vagueness of Thalberg's interpretation and the striking absence of Plato's text in it, it is clear that his interest is focused on a Rylean analysis of those "fascinating expressions". The *Philebus* is just an excuse for it. Thalberg gave an over-interpretation of the text so that he could get where he wanted to go. Someone needed to try connecting this over-interpretation to the text. That's what Terry Penner did.

In 1970, in the same issue of the journal that published Dybikowski's article, we find "False Anticipatory Pleasures, *Philebus* 36a3-41A6" by Penner. This article establishes definitely the propositional interpretation of false pleasures as a canonical interpretation of the passage. Although based on Gosling's reading, and motivated by Thalberg's blind optimism, Penner focuses his interpretation upon Williams and his Giorgione distinction. He indicates "very roughly" how he is going to use the distinction:

*This Giorgione pleases me (this is ambiguous, since it may be read as either of the following)*

*This painting is a Giorgione, and it pleases me*

*This painting is a Giorgione and it, being a Giorgione, pleases me. (167-8)*

This difference Williams points to is that the painting being a Giorgione is "within the scope of my being pleased when 'this Giorgione' is read as in (3), whereas when read as in (2) it does little more than help me pin an identificatory tag upon the painting which is the object of my pleasure." Penner thinks that the fact that Plato speaks of "certain beliefs 'infecting' certain 'pleasures' seems prima facie grounds for saying that it was indeed *this distinction* that Plato was after in his discussion of false anticipatory pleasures" (p. 167, my italics)<sup>13</sup>. Penner nonetheless recognizes that just to say that Plato was after this distinction is not enough to reach an interpretation of the passage. He thinks that "he can do better than this" and "better than any of those recent treatments of the passage which have been aware of the distinction of Williams" (p. 167), Gosling

---

attitudes. A statement describing a pleasure that is a propositional attitude – for instance, "Mr Jones is pleased that Mr Jones's horse won the handicap" – is referentially opaque..." (p. 73)

<sup>13</sup> For convenience, Frede (1985, p.166) mistranslated "*anepimplasan*" in 42a10, by "affect" and criticizes the correct translation by "infect": "Gosling (...) and Kenny (...) translate it by "infect", but that might be too weak because this may just means that they have an impact while a merger seems rather to be what Plato has in mind." Her translation by "affect" (1993, *ad loc*) is an attempt to eliminate the obvious difficulty that the text offers to propositional interpretation.

included. What is necessary to do that is “demonstrating Plato’s insights.” The better thing that Penner could do was to find proofs in the text that Plato is not only aware of the distinctions but is applying them. Metaphorically speaking, he aimed to find a nail to hang his Giorgione. And was he successful? Penner supposes that some grammatical elements (prepositions and uses of the dative case) give practical evidence that Plato is applying the distinction<sup>14</sup>. Using these grammatical elements, Plato is “urging, which nowadays recognize in our talk of ‘propositional attitudes’.” To make his ‘machinery’ work<sup>15</sup>, beyond identifying all these ‘devices’<sup>16</sup>, Penner introduces some replacements. First Penner replaces the Giorgione example, because “to Williams, objects of pleasure are paintings hanging in a gallery. But for Plato, the objects of pleasure are possible future state of affairs -- oneself getting a lot of gold and many pleasures as a consequence.”...”So let us alter William’s example to make it more like Plato’s.” (p. 168) Second, he replaced Plato’s example because, as is evident, it does not meet the needs of Penner, which is to find an example that perfectly fits the distinction of Williams. And so this time we are going out not to a sweepstakes with Thalberg, but to a skate race with Penner. There, he asks us to consider the following: “I am skating in a race and believe that I am going to win the race. Then there are at least the following two cases of pleasure:

(4) *I’m going to win the race and I am taking pleasure in (enjoying) skating.*

(5) *I’m going to win the race and because I am going to win the race I am pleased.*  
*Sentence (5) is equivalent to:*

(6) *I am going to win the race and I am pleased that I am going to win the race.* (p. 168)

Penner can, at last, say that “the objects of pleasures here are not the activity of skating but the possible future state of affairs or as I shall call it the ‘proposition’ that I am going to win the race.” But where does Plato demonstrate awareness of Williams’s

---

<sup>14</sup> About the criticism of the use of English grammar as model to propositional attitude see Merricks (2009, p. 231): “Apparently, the contingent and conventional Grammar of English does not dictate the metaphysics of how a thinking agent is related to propositions”

<sup>15</sup> “Machinery” is the word that Penner (1970a) applies to interpretations before his.

<sup>16</sup> Penner (1970a, p. 175): “All of these devices are natural ones for the relation I have characterized as ‘phi-ing in p’.”

distinction? According to Penner, “It is in the recognition of the analogy between being *pleased-that* and *believing-that* that Plato exhibits his awareness of Williams’s distinction.” (p. 171) After replacements and adjustments, Penner could affirm that for Plato pleasure is a kind of perceiving (but only “if the perceiving is a perceiving that something is the case”). This perceiving is just “a way of saying that ‘being pleased that... [and therefore] perceiving is a propositional attitude’”<sup>17</sup> (p. 171). However artificial and inaccurate we might now judge Penner’s essay, as a historical fact it established the propositional interpretation as a dogma.

### *Erasing a Giorgione*<sup>18</sup>

Gosling and Taylor recognize the novelty of Penner’s reading, establishing Plato as the creator of the concept of propositional pleasures. In Penner’s words (p. 171), “Plato was the first person in the history of philosophy to see this” [the concept of propositional attitudes]. They recognize that the identification of the intimate connection with propositional attitudes was a contribution to contemporary thought on the subject. But, for Gosling and Taylor, “if Penner’s thesis is to come to more than that,” i.e., make more than a contribution to contemporary thought, he “has to show that Plato distinguishes between (...) being pleased that p on the one hand and enjoying the thought of p on the other. But not only does Plato’s language nowhere suggest a grasp of this very subtle

---

<sup>17</sup> Penner (1970a) explains why Protarchus was convinced by Socrates’ argument on the grounds that Socrates re-directed “Protarchus’ attention to the idea of taking pleasure in the belief, i.e., in the proposition. But in a footnote (p. 176 n.12) Penner revealed the old difficulty to sustain this position: “There is a difficulty as to just where Protarchus concedes that pleasure can be false. It might seem that he does so at 40b8-c3. However, on any reading, 40 b8-c3... is odd, for the *hedonai* (...) *ezographemenai* that are called false are not the pleasures of anticipation... but the pleasures being anticipated, the pleasures painted in the soul... So, I agree with Kenny (*op. cit.* 52) that 40b6-7 must be elliptical for something like: ‘And pictured pleasures are no less present to the evil, but [these pictures] are false.’”

<sup>18</sup>In 1953, the young avant-garde painter Rauschenberg asked the great painter of that time, De Kooning, for a drawing so that Rauschenberg might erase it as an act of performance art. De Kooning understood the symbolic importance of the act and gave him a masterpiece for destruction. The Erased De Kooning Drawing was exhibited, to public scandal, in the same year. Hence the title of this section, although my purpose is different; since the Platonic Giorgione is fake and my intention is not transgressive but just philosophical.

distinction; even more damaging to Penner's thesis is the fact that Plato's example ...is clearly of someone enjoying the picturing of future pleasure" (p. 441).<sup>19</sup>

Despite Gosling and Taylor's reservations, forty years after Penner's article, we read, in a 2009 paper by Matthew Evans, Penner's assumptions in a dogmatic form: "Anyone who wants to base an account of false pleasures on an analogy between pleasure and belief—as Plato clearly does—is thereby committed to the view that at least some pleasures are attitudes."<sup>20</sup> In a footnote, Evans says that "most commentators are in agreement on this point (Penner, Frede, Irwin, Delcomminette, Harte, Russell)" while mentioning Gosling and Taylor as a "noteworthy dissent."

The dogma of propositional pleasure is either not questioned or, when it is, as Dorothea Frede does, is only done so rhetorically. "Should we ourselves, who are more used to such philosophical monsters as 'propositional attitudes,' agree to the argument's presuppositions? Does it make sense to call some *logoi* pleasures? Are not feelings one thing and propositions another?" – she asks (1993, xlvii). But Frede's question is not a real question. She accepted the idea of propositional pleasure without discussion or even a clear definition of it. According to her, "pleasure is a 'propositional attitude' if not "things" are enjoyed, such as an apple or a glass of wine (...) Snow-White's evil stepmother, e.g., enjoys not her own beauty but the alleged fact 'that she is the fairest of all'. The content of the pleasure consists in a statement or 'proposition,' as philosophers prefer to call it."<sup>21</sup>

"As philosophers prefer to call it" or as "we nowadays recognize in our talk of 'propositional attitudes'"<sup>22</sup> is the usual justification for the use of the concept. But it is

---

<sup>19</sup> Gosling and Taylor (1982 p. 441): "The vocabulary of 'experiencing pleasures in advance etc., noticed above is appropriate to the description of anticipatory enjoyment, but inappropriate to the description of simply being pleased that one will have some future enjoyment, which may come to no more than this, that one believes that one will have the enjoyment and regards the fact that one will have it as something to be welcomed."

<sup>20</sup> Evans (2009), 93-4. <sup>21</sup> Frede (1993), xlv, n. 2.

<sup>21</sup> Frede (1993), xlv, n.2.

<sup>22</sup> Penner (1970a), p. 175. When Frede says "Philosophers" and Penner "our talk of propositional attitudes," they have in mind Fregean semantics. Although Penner says in his paper that it was "by noticing Plato's use of these words ["belief", "with", "in"] that I came to the philosophical points," it is clear enough that he found in Plato what he knew to look for from the Fregean tradition. See note 4, p. 168, where he says: "In an unpublished paper on quantification into intentional context, I explore the significance of this distinction [the

not so obvious that Snow White's evil stepmother could take pleasure from propositions. Moreover, if belief in this case is a necessary condition to pleasure, it is not sufficient to produce pleasure. Belief cannot explain pleasure. The same belief or proposition can produce pain, pleasure, or nothing at all. That's why Frede could very well imagine a situation in which Snow White's stepmother would have pain in believing "that she (and not her beloved and ugly stepdaughter) is the fairest of all."

If commentators had given more attention to what philosophers nowadays discuss about the subject, perhaps this classification of pleasure as a propositional attitude would become less obvious. Let's take a definition that fits the commentators' general view: "Propositions are what we believe, disbelieve, or suspend judgment about. When you fear that you will fail, or hope that you will succeed, when you venture a guess or feel certain about something, the object of your attitude is a proposition."<sup>23</sup> But as A. N. Prior has already pointed out call long ago, "it is (...) clear that we do not fear, desire, etc., sentences. Or at least the objects of such fears, hopes, etc., as are expressed by saying that someone fears that so-and-so, hopes that so-and-so, desires that so-and-so, are not sentences."<sup>24</sup> There is recent strong criticism of the idea that desire and fears are propositional attitudes<sup>25</sup>. One conclusion of these discussions is "that when the content of a fear or desire cannot be fully expressed by using a that-clause, that fear or desire is not a propositional attitude"<sup>26</sup>. More incisively, Trenton Merricks does not deny the existence of propositional attitudes as beliefs, but affirms that "fears and desires are never propositional attitudes, not even when we can fully express the content of the relevant fear or desire by using a that-clause" (p. 209).<sup>27</sup> "We do not fear propositions, not as

---

Giorgione distinction] for developments of Fregean semantics and the Fregean theory of existence and the existential quantifier," and note 6, pp. 169-170, where he mentions his article "Verbs and the Identity of Actions" (which deals with process-product ambiguities) in a volume on Ryle (1970b).

<sup>23</sup> Salmon, and Soames, quoted by Merricks (2009), p. 207.

<sup>24</sup> Prior, A. N. (1971) p.14-15.. 26 Merricks (2009), p. 209.

<sup>25</sup> See Montagne (2007), and Brewer (2006).

<sup>26</sup> Merricks (2009), p. 209.

<sup>27</sup> In fact, Merrick uses a more complex definition of propositional attitude than that "whose content can be fully expressed by a that-clause". For him, it is "an attitude that is analyzed as – or reduced to – a relation between an agent and a proposition. For example, my desiring that my children flourish is a propositional attitude, in my sense, if and only if my desiring this is analyzed as, or reduced to, my standing in a certain relation to a particular proposition" (p.

some fear dogs”, he says (p. 213). It would be pathological for anyone to fear a proposition “as he fears that a tiger will attack him.” Proposition are abstract objects and “no one should really fear any abstract object (...) Jones does not fear any proposition in the way that he fears that a tiger will attack him” (p. 214).

But let’s ignore the problems and suppose with Frede that propositional pleasure is a non-problematic concept. Let’s suppose that “everything is, ‘logically speaking,’ above board” and take seriously another rhetorical question of Frede’s: “Why does Socrates not explain in a more direct way that some pleasures consist in *logoi* or pictures?” Frede asks herself this relevant question but offers us a disappointing answer: “His reasons are mainly psychological.”<sup>28</sup> In reality, Frede has found her justification not in the Platonic text, but in her “wishful thinking” that Plato should have thought that propositional pleasures are “intellectually most interesting since they concern the logical sense of truth and falsity” (1985, p. 177-8). Once more it is Giorgione’s distinction and the search for “the intimate connection”<sup>29</sup> that is at work backstage. As Frede said, Bernard Williams’ article “has inspired all interpretations that have been sympathetic to ‘propositional pleasures’”(p.178 n. 49).

Against this idea, Mooradian has already shown that Socrates is always talking about pleasures that come with false belief, not only in the crucial passage, 37e, when he provokes Protarchus’ reaction, but also in 38a (“the pleasures that come with true belief”) and 38b (“pleasures and pain often follow true and false belief”). There is no evidence in Platonic texts that can suggest that Plato is applying Giorgione’s distinction. Gosling has insisted on this since the beginning of the controversy: “The vocabulary [of the passage]... is appropriated to the description of simple anticipatory enjoyment but inappropriate to the description of simply being pleased.” (1982, p. 441) Yet Propositionalists defend their position with the enthusiasm of Ryle fighting against Cartesian dualism. And their defense sounds like a threat: if you “reject this conception of pleasure [propositional pleasure]”, says Frede, you are going to “take up the cudgel, once

---

210).

<sup>28</sup> See p. xlvii: “Had he taken such a direct route, Protarchus would not have understood him”...

<sup>29</sup> “This is what Socrates now attacks by establishing an intimate connection between pleasure and judgment.”, Frede (1993), n. 1, p. 41.

again, for Protarchus' initial tenet that pleasures are mere feelings." (p. xviii). The threat implicit in Frede's hypothesis might intimidate Ryle's followers, but it ought not intimidate Plato's readers. For the threat depends on a decision about the meaning of Protarchus' position. This is "the central interpretative problem" for Dybikowski, who rightly pointed out that we have to know "how does Socrates persuade Protarchus" after "his claim (...) that falsity is only properly attributed to the belief, but not the pleasure" (p. 157). If the conversion of Protarchus "remains a puzzle"<sup>30</sup> until now, it is because commentators have failed to understand Protarchus' position.

Let's take a look at another one of Frede's problems: "Every interpreter must ask himself (and most actually have) why Socrates ruins his own analogy and does not claim that at least in a derivative sense one can maintain a distinction between true and false pleasures" (1985, p. 166). The possibility never admitted by Frede is that the analogy could not have this demonstrative character. In other words, Socrates could not be trying to show that *doxa* is an element that constitutes pleasure; he is only trying to extract from this comparison the asymmetric result that belief cannot explain pleasure. Frede understands the asymmetry as a sign that Socrates is looking for more than this, i.e., the intimate connection. "If Socrates undermines his own analogy," she says, "this must indicate that he himself is not satisfied with it but wants to establish the truth or falsity of pleasure in the primary sense" (p. 167). But the question persists, as Mooradian has pointed out: "Why should Socrates describe his position in such a way as to maintain a distinction between pleasure and judgment if his goal is to identify pleasure with judgment or objects of judgment?" (p. 101, n. 16). We know Frede's answer: psychological reasons.

For Propositionalists, as we have said, Protarchus is an *epiphenomenalist*, but does the Platonic text support this idea? Following Gosling, they think that what Protarchus is trying to say is that pleasure is "an indistinct feeling of euphoria or elation that can arise on any occasion, an *epiphenomenon*" (1985, p. 172). As an *epiphenomenalist*, Protarchus wouldn't be persuaded by the analogy between pleasure and belief. He would say, as he does at 37a, that he doubts that pleasure can be mistaken (*hamartesetai*) in relation to its object as *doxa* does, because pleasure would be a mere

---

<sup>30</sup> Mooradian (1996), p. 93.

*epiphenomenon*, i.e., only loosely connected with belief. Thalberg's image of the "melting of a piece of wax and the heating that preceded it" gave the model to future interpreters.<sup>31</sup> Commentators, modeling their views on Thalberg's metaphor, tend to see in Protarchus an expression of a Humean view that pleasures are not the sort of mental states that can represent states of things.<sup>32</sup> Against this view, and against Gosling, the inventor of the topic of false pleasures in contemporary terms, Kenny (p. 46) had already noted that "Protarchus never denies that pleasure can be true, he only denies that they can be false."<sup>33</sup> Therefore, Protarchus can't be an *epiphenomenalist*, but should be defending a different view. But, if Socrates is not fighting against epiphenomenalism, which view is the target?

The more plausible hypothesis was defended by Mooradian<sup>34</sup>. He suggests that Protarchus is expressing the same view of *aisthesis* presented in the first part of *Theaetetus*: Pleasure cannot be false because it is a kind of *aesthesis*, and *aisthesis* is always correct in relation to its object. In fact, there is a "striking similarity," as he says, between the description of pleasures and pains, desires, and fears as incorrigible states of awareness (*aisthesis*) and Protarchus' claim that only belief can be false, not pleasures and pains, fears and expectations. Mooradian pointed out that "commentators have failed to notice this similarity because they have thought Socrates meant to signal other propositional attitudes by including fears and expectations into the range of possible false mental states. But this assumption is unwarranted."<sup>35</sup> Mooradian's more attractive and Platonic alternative is to assume "that Protarchus held that pleasure cannot be true or false because it is not a representational state", that we could see him "as advancing the relativistic thesis of *Theaetetus* that the object cannot fail to be pleasurable if the agent takes pleasure in it".

---

<sup>31</sup> Thalberg, p. 67

<sup>32</sup> For the attribution of a Humean view to Protarchus, see Mooradian (1996).

<sup>33</sup> Mooradian (p. 94)

<sup>34</sup> One important point about Protarchus, linked to the Epiphenomenalist thesis, is that Propositionalists think that he is commonsensical person, expressing a naïve conception, a spontaneous view. But, on the contrary, Protarchus seems to be defending a theoretical point of view (even though he wasn't the most competent man to defend it). When Protarchus replies that he is only saying what he hears (38a), this is a strong indication that Protarchus is expressing the philosophical thesis that Plato means to develop and criticizes".

<sup>35</sup> Mooradian (1996), 105-6.

Mooradian's alternative thesis is behind two recent and important attempts to escape from the *aporia* of Giorgione's distinction. Verity Harte says (p.120 n. 6) that her conclusion is "similar to Mooradian although we differ over how [Socrates] gets there." But she still agrees "with those commentators who take Socrates to portray the pleasures he takes to be capable of falsity as propositional attitudes" (p. 120). Harte knows very well that it is difficult to defend the "generally held" view that Socrates' false pleasure is of William's type ("pleasure is false –it is generally held–when expectations of acquiring the gold are not fulfilled" p. 124). And she correctly thinks that images "should not be identified with attitudes," but to keep the propositional law working, she assumes that "*logoi* and images are *involved in* our having such attitudes" [my italics]. Unfortunately, she doesn't explain what this *involvement* is exactly. As Dybikowski says, all we want to know is how we go from the *logoi* to the pictures, or how we pass from belief to affect, from "proposition" to pleasures. Harte's solution to the central question of Giorgione seems to follow Gosling's rejected suggestion of precognition. For Harte, in Socrates' example, what is depicted is the anticipated pleasure, but in the sense that it is the pleasure of which the anticipatory pleasure takes an advance installment of the pleasure depicted (p. 127). It is not a pleasure "in picturing," but "by picturing." But why is it false? Harte is aware of the problem: "If falsity consists in the failure of the person's prediction (...) then Socrates will claim (...) that good people are by and large accurate. Whereas bad people (...) [are] not. But it is not at all obvious why this should be the case," Harte recognizes (p. 127). The second attempt goes a bit further. Delcomminette recognizes that the conception of a propositional pleasure begins with Bernard Williams ("L'initiateur de cette conception est Williams (1959)"). And, in a certain way, he seems to have learned Gosling's lessons, because he says that if we try to understand the pleasure of anticipation on the level of *doxa* and *logos*, as the majority of Anglo-Saxon commentators. "...on ne comprendrait guère pourquoi Socrates aurait pris la peine de nous décrire le fonctionnement de l'imagination." But at the same time Delcomminette accepted the propositional dogma, and his interpretation is also trapped by Giorgione distinction.<sup>36</sup>

---

<sup>36</sup> Delcomminete (2006), p. 385. He recognizes the majority of Anglo-Saxon commentators "voyant en Platon le père d'une conception du plaisir comme 'attitude propositionnelle'." He

Two important but neglected passages in the text show the limitations of the Propositionalist thesis:

A: “There are, above all, painted appearances. For example, when somebody often sees gold in profusion coming to him, and with the gold multiple pleasures; and, particularly, when he watches himself in the painting enjoying himself excessively.” (40a9-12)

B: Socrates says we could “affirm that the paintings presented to good people, in the majority of cases, are true, because good people are dear to the gods, but the paintings presented to bad people are exactly the opposite?” Protarchus: “Certainly we should say that.” Socrates: “There are painted pleasures in bad people no less [than in good people], although in bad people the paintings are false (...) Bad men most of the time enjoy false pleasures, good men, to the contrary, enjoy true pleasures.” Protarchus: “What you are saying is absolutely necessary.” (40b2-c2)

The first passage, fundamental for understanding the position Socrates is trying to defend, is “the only typical case that Plato gives of the thing he has in mind,” as Gosling says in his first article. Inserted in the middle of argumentation of false pleasure, the

---

accepts what Gosling said in his first account about the *zoographos* passage: It should not be read as “an embellishment, picturesque perhaps, but irrelevant, which complicates what was intended as a simple picture.” But as we have shown, it was exactly in trying to make sense of the *zoographos* passage that Gosling’s interpretation collapsed. Delcomminette, trying to understand the passage in the context of Platonic thought, found the same old Giorgione obstacle: “Mais comment passer de cette fausseté du plaisir anticipé à la fausseté du plaisir d’anticipation lui-même? Socrate n’explicite pas cette transition: Il se contente d’attribuer la possibilité de la fausseté au plaisir paint (cp. 40b6-7).” Delcomminette recognizes the problem: “On pourrait rétorquer que c’est bien plutôt cette distinction qui est erronée: en effet le plaisir d’anticipation n’est rien d’autre que l’anticipation d’un plaisir.” (2006, p. 389-390). Delcomminette can’t follow this line of thought because he is committed to the idea that the question of falsity is directly linked to the “propositional content” of *doxa* (v. 2003, p. 217) and “la dépendance causale de la fausseté de l’image à l’égard de celle de la *doxa* (2006, 362 n.23). And so we are taken back to the Gorgione aporia. Against Mooradian and the idea that Protarchus is defending a Protagorean thesis, Delcomminette says that appearance is essentially different from mere perception since it supposes that perception is “mixed,” that is to say, structured by *doxa*. But strangely, he assumes that at *Theaethetus* 152b12 an identity between *phainetai* and *aisthanetai* is posited, which becomes at 152c1 an identity between *phantasia* and *aisthesis*. Now, Delcomminette accepts that “this identity results from Protagoras’ position and can in no way be ascribed to Plato himself” (n.17 223). So it is not clear why Delcomminette thinks that Protarchus could not be defending exactly this Protagorean identification.

second passage is of the *theophileis*, and commentators, in general, don't have "a word to say about it."<sup>37</sup> In relation to A, it is curious that Propositionalists, always so worried to save Plato from attributed confusions and conflation, don't have any charitable account of his typical case. Instead of paying attention to it, they prefer to create their own cases of the pleasure of anticipation. "I am looking forward to my Mediterranean holiday," dreams Gosling, "I picture myself enjoying a long drink under a beach umbrella, and enjoy the picture."<sup>38</sup> But why have commentators insisted on imagining their own typical cases?<sup>39</sup> Frede explains: "Plato's own example is difficult to evaluate since it is not *prima facie* clear what, precisely, are the pleasures of the man who sees the painted illusions of possessing a lot of gold and many pleasures on account of that (40a)." In other words, there are no *logoi* implied in the pleasure described by Socrates. And, as Plato's example here is not clear for the purpose of Frede's theory, she decided to "suggest a different example, where *logoi* are clearly implied, namely that of *Rumpelstiltskin* in the Grimm Tale" (p. 171). Obviously, Frede is forcing the Platonic text to say what she is expecting to hear by means of her example. Kenny imagines another kind of pleasure. In this situation "a man might foresee that he will win 70,000 pounds from a football pool; and being a selfish man he might anticipate spending the entire sum on beer."<sup>40</sup> Thalberg, as we have seen, pictures himself as a sweepstakes winner, Penner in a skating race, but Russell prefers speedy cars and asks the reader: "Suppose that I set my heart on owning a Jaguar, dreaming of the thrill of speeding along being the envy of my neighbors and friends" (p. 179). In summary, we have a whole world of painted pleasures anticipated by interpreters and commentators created just to explain what they can't find their presuppositions in the Platonic typical case.<sup>41</sup> It seems easier for them to talk about their

---

<sup>37</sup> Delcomminette (2003), 216 n. 2: "In this paper I shall focus on the epistemological aspect of the concept of false pleasure and deliberately ignore the ethical significance (hence I shall not say a single word about the puzzling passage 39e8-40c3)."

<sup>38</sup> GT, p. 436.

<sup>39</sup> Teisserenc (p.290) has called attention to this process: "Penner préfère consacrer la première moitié de son article à la discussion d'exemples de son cru" et ... Frede, "Rumplestiltskin's" emprunte à Grimm (...) Ce faisant, ils commentent davantage leur propre conception que celle de Platon."

<sup>40</sup> Kenny (1960), p. 37.

<sup>41</sup> Commentators have disagreed about their own examples. Thus Frede thinks that Gosling's example (of the excited schoolboy who [falsely] enjoys the food (...)) while what he enjoys is

examples, and we may have an impertinent question to ask: Could an interpreter falsify a theory by forging inaccurate examples?<sup>42</sup>

Let's take a look at the rejected example.

In 40a, Protarchus agrees that every man is full of many expectations and that there are in us *logoi* that we call expectations, and Socrates adds:

There are, above all (*kai de kai*), painted appearances (*ta phantasmata ezographemena*). For example, when somebody often sees (*hora*) gold in profusion (*aphthonon*) coming to him, and with the gold multiple (*pollas*) pleasures; and, particularly (*kai de kai*), when he watches (*kathora*) himself in the painting enjoying himself excessively (*sphodra*).

The example is evidently centered in direct visualization of the painting. And there is a clear change of focus from the *logoi* to the *phantasma* introduced by the adverbial expression “*kai de kai*.” In the soul there are *logoi* that we call expectations, and also painted *phantasmata* (appearances). The present indicative verb *hora*, he sees, in relation to a *phantasma* seen, recreates the situation of perception similar to that described in 38d (when somebody frequently sees (*idonti*) an apparition (*phantazomenon*)). The two parallel situations give us the key to understand the example. The similarity has, nonetheless, one fundamental asymmetry. In the external visualization of the *phantasma*, the appearance is not clear (*me saphos*) giving space for an attempt to discern what the appearance is. The *doxa* results from this effort, and *logos* makes it possible to express the *doxa*. In the internal visualization, on the other hand, the painted appearance doesn't provoke any doubt<sup>43</sup> and comes after a *logos* that in turn results from a conjunction of memory, perception (*aisthesis*) and associated feelings (*pathemata*). This internal experience of anticipatory pleasure has as a model the external experience of perception. This fact rules out any attempt to transform the introspection of the *painted phantasma* into a “being pleased that” or any kind of propositional attitude. In her effort

---

the adventure) should be changed: e.g., the schoolboy falsely enjoys “eating up the headmaster's favorite dessert” (falsely, because it is not the favorite dessert...). Frede (1985), p. 171 n. 39

<sup>42</sup> Teisserenc (1999), p. 290, n. 2.

<sup>43</sup> Teisserenc (1999), p. 290, has pointed out this aspect of the painted pleasure: “elle [la image psychique] représente le plaisir *au moyen d'expressions et de signes dépourvues de toute ambiguïté*: l'homme qui s'aperçoit lui-même n'a pas de doute sur la signification de son visage et de sa conduite...”

to make plausible the idea of propositional pleasure, Frede says (“To placate the skeptics”...) that she has to admit that “only such pleasures can be true or false where there is a clear and precise proposition or a clear or precise picture of the supposed facts” (p. 175). It would be very difficult to placate the skeptics with this admission since there is “no clear and precise proposition” or supposed “facts” to be pictured in the example. For Plato’s readers, it becomes clear that Socrates’ example was replaced by Frede (and the others Propositionalists) only because Plato’s example didn’t fit in the pattern of propositional pleasure.

To understand the function of *logoi* in the structure of the introspection passage, we should understand it in relation to the corresponding example of external perception (38c5-e7). Externally, *logos* appear as the last link in a chained series: vision – *phantasma* – belief – *logos* (spoken). In the internal series (that gives continuity to the external in the reversed form) we have: (*aisthesis* + memory + *pathemata*) – *logoi* (written) – belief – *phantasma* – vision. They are mirror images. But *logoi*, as the text shows, are products of a stochastic activity: its truth or falsity depends on chance (if it hits the mark); there is no rational justification for these *logoi* as true or false *logoi*, although by hypothesis we can suppose this possibility. But why do *logoi* come in first place, before images, in the internal series? We know that in external perception *logoi* come from the *phantasmata*, after a process of decision; in the internal perception, on the other hand, there is no room for rational or stochastic decision. The soul is submitted to the writings and images that come from the outside, from the sensible world. All *logoi* are written by *aisthesis* and memory (which is mere conservation of *aisthesis*) and *pathemata* (affections). If we have only this kind of writings, they are the conditions of possibility of all mental writings and images. If this is so, it is clear that we are all full of empty hopes that came from our relation with the uncertainty of the world outside.

The second passage neglected by Propositionalists but essential to the argument of falsity of pleasures of anticipation is the following:

Socrates asks Protarchus, in the sequence of the argument, if we could “affirm that the paintings presented to good people, in the majority of cases, are true, because good people are dear to the gods (*theophileis*), but the paintings presented to bad people are exactly the opposite?” Protarchus emphatically says “Certainly we should say that.” Socrates concludes that “there are painted pleasures in bad people no less [than in good

people], although in bad people the paintings are false.” And he adds, “bad men most of the time enjoy false pleasures, good men, to the contrary, enjoy true pleasures”. Once more, Protarchus is convinced: “What you are saying is absolutely necessary.” Then Socrates and Protarchus agree that “there are false pleasures and pains in the soul of men that are ridiculous imitations of the true.” Protarchus’ agreement depends on the assumption that the men who are dear to the gods tend to have true paintings or writings while bad men tend to have false paintings or writings. This is one of the premises leading Protarchus to accept the existence of false pleasures (false pleasures “that are ridiculous imitations of the true”).

As we can see, the premise of the *theophileis* is essential for the conversion of Protarchus, but what do Propositionalists say about it? A good example is Delcomminette. He says “I shall not say a single word about the puzzling passage 39e8-40c3.” (p. 216 n. 2). His reason is predictable: “the epistemological aspect,” he says, “can be understood relatively independent of the rest.” But we can’t see how a successful interpretation of the argument can ignore one premise as unnecessary. Likewise Frede doesn’t discuss it probably because she thinks with Gosling that the *theophileis* passage is a “moralistic digression” (p. 111)<sup>44</sup>.

One of the few interpreters that face the “unexpected remark” with some attention is Kenny (p. 50): “Bad men, then, enjoy largely false pleasures, while good men enjoy true ones. Hence we conclude that there are false pleasures in the minds of men,” he says and asks, “Why this reference to the wicked man?” He correctly sees that we have to decide about the meaning of false to understand what a false *doxa* is. If it is a “false belief that an event will take place” (in the case of the example of a “man looking forward to receiving a fortune”), we have to answer: “why should the good man be more likely to be correct in his belief than the wicked man...” Kenny’s striking observations didn’t have any effect on the Propositionalists’ analyses. In fact, to assume a propositionalistic view is to decide about the meaning of truth as representational, as mere grasp of facts. But, as we can see in the passage, truth and false is simultaneously epistemic, ethical and ontological<sup>45</sup>. The mention to the mimetic context (*phantasma*, *mimeisthai*, etc) indicates

---

<sup>44</sup> Gosling’ *Philebus*.

<sup>45</sup> See Hampton (1987, p. 257): “But, for Plato, truth and false are ethical as well as epistemic

that we are stepping on ontological ground when the false pleasures are discussed. So, if the discussion of false pleasures demands for an interpretation that connects the epistemic, the ethical and ontological sense of truth, Propositionalism is not a good candidate for this.

### *Conclusion:*

From our exposition, I think that is clear that the Propositional Interpretation of false anticipatory pleasures in *Philebus* (i) does not have a textual basis, (ii) doesn't answer the fundamental ethical questions raised by the dialogue, and finally (iii) is not necessary to understand the passage but is an anachronism obstructing a sound reading of the Platonic text. And we can suggest that any good interpretation of the passage of false pleasure should explain false anticipatory pleasure as a function of the typical example that the text offers; should take the *theophileis* passage not as a digression, but as an integral part of the argument; and should show how it (false pleasure of anticipation) is related to the global strategy of the dialogue and, doing this, answer why it is decisive to the final judgment of the dialogue. In relation to the last point, it is important to remember that in 32c, when the question of anticipation (*prosdokia*) is introduced by Socrates, he says that it is in relation to this kind of pleasure and pain that the central question of the dialogue is going to be answered: if the genus pleasure will be welcome as a whole, or sometimes yes, sometimes not. And he adds: "Pleasure and pain--such as hot and cold, etc.--are not good in themselves but can take on in certain circumstances the nature of the good." This is evidence that, since the beginning of Socrates' exposition of false anticipatory pleasure, ethical and metaphysical aspects of pleasure are related and projected in the passage.

Fernando Muniz  
*Universidade Federal Fluminense*

---

notions and both are grounded on an ontological sense (...) For it is the idea of the falseness of an inadequate imitation that suggests how the pleasure of the would-be rich man is false (...) The good man is good in the sense of being just and pious and thus is called "a friend of the gods".

## References

- ANSCOMBE, G.E.M (1957). *Intentions*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.
- BRAVO, F. (1995). 'La critique contemporaine des faux plaisirs dans le *Philèbe*'. in Dixsaut (ed.). *Contre Platon 2*. Paris: J. Vrin.
- BRAVO, F. (2003). *Las Ambigüedades del Placer*. Sankt Augustin: Academia Verlag.
- BREWER, T. (2006). 'Three Dogmas of Desire'. In Timothy Chappell (ed.) *Values and Virtues: Aristotelian in Contemporary Ethics*. Oxford, Clarendon Press.
- BURY, R. G. (1973). *The Philebus of Plato*. New York: Arno Press.
- DELCOMMINETTE, S. (2003). 'False Pleasures, Appearance and Imagination in the *Philebus*'. *Phronesis* 48/3 3: 215-237. DOI: 10.1163/156852803322519226
- DELCOMMINETTE, S. (2006). *Le Philèbe de Platon: Introduction à l'agathologia platonicienne*. Lieden/Boston: Brill.
- DYBIROWISKI, J. (1970). 'False Pleasures in the *Philebus*'. *Phronesis* 15: 147-165. DOI: 10.1163/156852870X00116
- EVANS, M. (2008). 'Plato on the Possibility of Hedonic Mistakes'. *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy* 35: 89–124.
- FREDE, D. (1993). *Platos Philebus*. Indianapolis: Hackett.
- FREDE, D. (1985). 'Rumpelstiltskin's Pleasures'. *Phronesis* 30/2:151-180. DOI: 10.1163/156852885X00039
- GOSLING, J. and TAYLOR, C. (1982). *The Greeks on Pleasure*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- GOSLING, J.C.B. (1959). 'False Pleasures: *Philebus* 35c-41b'. *Phronesis* 4/1: 44-54. DOI: 10.1163/156852859X00065
- GOSLING, J.C.B. (1961). 'Father Kenny on False Pleasures'. *Phronesis* 6/1: 41-45. DOI: 10.1163/156852861X00053
- HACKFORTH, R. (1972). *Plato: Philebus*. Translated with an Introduction and Commentary. Cambridge University Press.
- HAMPTON, C. (1987). 'Pleasure, Truth and Being in Plato's *Philebus*: A Reply to Professor Frede'. *Phronesis* 32/1: 253-262. DOI: 10.1163/156852887X00136
- HARTE, V. (2004). 'The *Philebus* on Pleasure: the Good, the Bad and the False'. *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 104/1: 113–130. DOI: 10.1111/j.0066-7373.2004.00084.x
- KENNY, A. (1960). 'False Pleasures in the *Philebus*'. A Reply to Mr Gosling'. *Phronesis* 5/1:45-92. DOI: 10.1163/156852860X00144
- MERRICKS, T. (2009). 'Propositional Attitudes?'. *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 109: 207-232. DOI: 10.1111/j.1467-9264.2009.00265.x
- MONTAGNE, M. (2007): 'Against Propositionalism', *Nous*, 41: 503-18.

- MOORADIAN, N. (1996). 'Converting Protarchus: Relativism and False Pleasure of Anticipation in Platos *Philebus*'. *Ancient Philosophy* 16.
- MUNIZ, F. (2012). *Filebo de Platão*. Tradução, apresentação e notas. São Paulo: Edições Loyola.
- PENNER, T. (1970a). 'False Anticipatory Pleasures'. *Phronesis* 15: 166-178.
- PENNER, T. (1970b). 'Verbs and the Identity of Actions — A Philosophical Exercise in the Interpretation of Aristotle'. in Oscar R Wood and George Pitcher (eds.). *Ryle*. New York: Anchor Books, Doubleday: 393-460.
- PRIOR, A. N. (1971). *Objects of Thought*. Ed.: P. T. Geach and A. J. P. Kenny. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- QUINE, W. V. O. (1944). *O sentido da nova lógica*. Livraria Martins Editora.
- RODIER, G. (1969). 'Remarque sur le *Filèbe*'. in *Étude de Philosophie Grecque*. Paris: J. Vrin.
- RYLE, G. (1949). *The Concept of Mind*. Penguin Books
- RYLE, G. (1954). *Dilemmas - Tarner Lectures*. Cambridge University Press.
- Teisserenc, F. (1999). 'L'Empire du Faux ou le Plaisir de l'Image' in Dixsaut, M. *La Fêlure Du Plaisir. Études sur le Philèbe de Platon* 1. Paris: J. Vrin.
- WILLIAMS, B. and BEDFORD, E. (1959). 'Pleasure and Belief'. *Proceeding of Aristotelic Society*: 57-72.