A Story of Corruption: False Pleasure and the Methodological Critique of Hedonism in Plato's *Philebus*

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Abstract:

In Plato's *Philebus*, Socrates' second account of 'false' pleasure (41d-42c) outlines a form of illusion: pleasures that appear greater than they are. I argue that these pleasures are perceptual misrepresentations. I then show that they are the grounds for a methodological critique of hedonism. Socrates identifies hedonism as a judgment about the value of pleasure based on a perceptual misrepresentation of size, witnessed paradigmatically in the 'greatest pleasures'.

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Hedonism—the view that pleasure is the good, or the ultimate source of value—is a mainstay of philosophical discussions across cultures and ages, as is its staunch opposition. One natural question to ask about hedonism concerns its origin and basis: *why* does a person become a hedonist? What reasoning or experience could lead someone to hold this distinctive view about value? I argue that Plato's *Philebus* contains one answer, which at the same time serves as an anti-hedonist polemic. On the interpretation defended here, Plato's Socrates deploys a three-stage argument against hedonism. First, he establishes that there is a distinctive kind of 'false' pleasure at the level of perception (41d-42c): when we perceive pleasure and pain at the same time, the pleasure can appear to the subject as 'larger and more intense' than it is (42b4-5). Second, Socrates maintains a theory of a psychic economy, in which *judgment*—the internal assertion of some proposition, such as *that object is a statue*—depends on perceptual awareness, so that he can explain some *false* judgments as deriving from defective perceptions. Finally, I contend that Socrates applies this model to some of the most significant evidence for hedonism: extreme bodily pleasures. These pleasures appear to the subject as the 'greatest' (47b6) and are evidence for the plausibility of hedonism (cf. 21a-b, 27e, 37b, 47b, 65e-66a). Yet, what is attractive about them—their remarkable size and intensity—is a perceptual illusion created by the simultaneous experience of pleasure and pain. Thus, Socrates diagnoses hedonism as a doxastic error downstream of a perceptual error: the inaccessibility of the perceptual distortion involved in the greatest pleasures leads to the subject's false judgment that pleasure is the source of happiness (47b6-7). Hence, the *Philebus* contains a methodological critique of hedonism: an explanation of the psychological mechanisms by which hedonism emerges as an apparently plausible view that simultaneously demonstrates why this emergence is irrational.

The core of my argument is an interpretation of the false pleasures Socrates describes at 41d-42c, or the pleasures of 'juxtaposition'.[1] Section 2 argues that juxtaposition is a relation between perceptual states whose objects are bodily processes, and that these states are subject to critical inquiry by an agent capable of forming judgments on their basis. Section 3 argues that when this type of scenario occurs vis-à-vis pleasure and pain, a distinctive form of perceptual misrepresentation is possible: the pleasures and pains appearing larger than the bodily processes are. Section 4 returns to the polemic against hedonism and argues that, based on the mental model established in sections 2-3, Socrates argues that the greatest pleasures are both illusory and are the basis for the form of reasoning paradigmatic of hedonism. Section 1 sketches the role of the greatest pleasures and the background of Socrates' initial account of false pleasure.

I. Setting the Stage

There are two important pieces of dialectical context to establish before turning to the main argument. First, in the contest between pleasure and knowledge framing the dialogue, the defenders of hedonism hold a certain conception of the possibilities for living things to experience pleasure. Philebus maintains that 'what's good for all living creatures (πᾶσι ζῴοις) is enjoyment, pleasure and delight, and everything harmonious with this kind' (11b4-6), and that 'for my part, pleasure seems, and will seem, in every way the victor' (12a7-8). This confidence about the value of pleasure for living creatures is at least partially rooted in the contention that it

[1] Following Socrates' initial description of these pleasures as 'lying side-by-side at the same time' (41d1), and the terminology of Fletcher 2018b. Cf. Gosling and Taylor 1982, Frede 1993, 2006, and Mooradian 1995 for different labels.

is possible for sensitive beings to experience pleasure as great, intense, or overwhelming. Philebus suggests this, for example, when he insists that pleasure would not be 'entirely good, if it were not naturally unlimited in number and extent' (οὐ γὰρ ἂν ἡδονὴ πᾶν ἀγαθὸν ᾖ, εἰ μὴ ἄπειρον ἐτύγχανε πεφυκὸς καὶ πλήθει καὶ τῷ μᾶλλον, 27e7-9). Protarchus similarly claims that one can live an excellent life due to pleasure alone just because one can experience the 'greatest pleasures' (21a9-b5). Socrates affirms the dialectical centrality of this idea when he claims that while one might dispute pleasure sharing with judgment the 'qualities' (ποῖα) of false and true (37b10-c2), 'it is not hard to see' that pleasures and pains take on *some* qualities, because they have already said (πάλαι…εἴποιμεν) that these are 'great and small and intense' (μεγάλαι τε καὶ σμικραὶ καὶ σφόδρα, 37c8-10). Moreover, in a passage to which we will return, Socrates articulates a hedonist's reasoning from intensity to the value of pleasure, through the case of extreme mixed pleasures of the body: they make the person jump and shout, become discolored and breathe rapidly, desire to pursue these pleasures and call them 'greatest' (μεγίστας), such that the subject 'counts as the happiest the one who lives among them as much as possible' (τὸν ἐν αὐταῖς ὅτι μάλιστ᾽ ἀεὶ ζῶντα εὐδαιμονέστατον καταριθμεῖται, 47a3-b7).

Part of Socrates' anti-hedonist strategy, on my account, is to undermine this pattern of reasoning. For example, the extreme mixed bodily pleasures the hedonist calls 'greatest' are, according to Socrates and Protarchus, associated with intemperance and ignorance (45d-e), and Protarchus eagerly condemns them at the end of the dialogue: he says that the pleasures that 'seem greatest' (μέγισται δοκοῦσιν) are 'most preposterous' (ἀλαζονίστατον, 65c4-7), and specifically that the pleasures concerning sex (τἀφροδίσια) make a person 'ridiculous' (γελοῖον) and 'obscene' (αἴσχιστον), so that we feel shame, 'as if light should not see such things' (65e9-66a3). Undermining the appeal of great and intense pleasures, on my account, is a central step

for Socrates to dethrone hedonism. This is the methodological criticism of the hedonist's reasoning I find in the dialogue.

Further, it is natural to expect the argument for *false* pleasures to be relevant to this project (36c-44a). This is because showing that some pleasures are false is, in general, Socrates' indirect strategy for establishing that some pleasures are *bad*.[2] The contention over bad pleasures goes back to the start of the dialogue, when Socrates asserts that pleasure is not only one, but many (12c4-8), insofar as some pleasures belongs to the foolish (τὸν ἀνοηταίνοντα) and intemperate (τὸν ἀκολασταίνοντα), whereas others belong to the wise (τὸν φρονοῦντα) and temperate (τὸν σωφρονοῦντα, 12d1-4). This, Socrates says, is evidence that pleasure has 'shapes…in some way unlike each other' (12c7-8). Protarchus, to the contrary, maintains that pleasure cannot fail to be 'most like pleasure, this very thing to itself, of all things' (12d7-e2), and insists on the absolute uniformity of pleasure insofar as all are good (13c5): he cannot believe that 'anyone would agree, having posited that pleasure is the good, to uphold your saying that some pleasures are good, while other pleasures are bad' (13b6-c2). As we have seen, the extreme mixed bodily pleasures turn out to be evidence for Socrates' thesis, but it is important to appreciate how the discussion of false pleasure reproduces crucial aspects of the dialectical scheme vis-à-vis bad pleasures. When Socrates introduces the topic, he asks whether all pleasures and pains are true, or all false, or some true, and others false (36c), just as he earlier

[2] As scholars widely observe: see Carpenter 2006, 14, Delcomminette 2006, 397-398, Evans 2008, Frede 2006, 451, Marcuse 1968, 177, Marechal 2022, Mooradian 1996, Ogihara 2009, 292-294, Russell 2005, ch. 5, Thein 2012, 131-137, Warren 2014, 140-154, and Waterfield 1983, 103n2.

suggests that some pleasures are good and others bad; once again, Protarchus reverts to invariability, this time about pleasure always being *true* (rather than *good*) (36c8-9). Moreover, Socrates calls the dispute over there being false pleasure 'no small argument', one that has always made him 'wonder' (θαῦμα) at the many 'puzzles' (ἀπορήματα, 36e1-3; cf. *Sophist* 236e2, 239b1-4), which arguably mirrors the 'wonderous' (θαυμαστόν) statement that 'the one is many and the many are one' (14c7-10) introduced by the heterogeneity of pleasure and knowledge at the start.[3] It is no surprise, then, that Socrates indicates that the point of the discussion of pleasure is to develop a consensus about its *ethical* status—that is, whether pleasure, 'the kind as a whole (ὅλον…τὸ γένος), is admittable (ἀσπαστόν)', or rather 'sometimes they should be admitted (ἀσπαστέον), while sometimes they should not, since they are not themselves goods, but on some occasions take on the nature of goods' (32c6-d6; cf. 37a-e)—and that he focuses on pleasure's truth-aptness to this end. Therefore, we should expect the anti-hedonist project represented by Protarchus conversion to be supported substantially by the conclusions reached in the discussion of false pleasure.

In fact, here we find an intimate connection between false and bad pleasures in the conversation. In the first and most widely studied part of Socrates' argument for false pleasure, he establishes that pleasures can be false through *anticipation*, to shake Protarchus from his skepticism that pleasure can be false at all (37e-38a). This argument rests on an epistemological theory according to which pleasures can depend on judgments via images (38a-39c): the soul's formation of a judgment is like a scribe writing in a book, based on what it perceives externally

[3] Cf. Fletcher 2017 and Muniz and Rudebusch 2004 on pleasure's initial heterogeneity and its connection to the broader metaphysical issues.

(39a), and after the judgment is formed, the soul can represent its judgment as an image (εἰκών), like a painter illustrating the words in the book (39a-b). Thus, the image has a truth-value corresponding to the truth-value of the judgment. In turn, a subject can take pleasure in the image by anticipating it, and when the image is false, so is the pleasure (39c-40e). Socrates' example is someone envisioning himself enjoying gold in the future: 'someone sees a bounty of gold frequently coming to be for him, and many pleasures for him as well; and in particular, he sees himself in his inner painting taking intense pleasure for himself' (τις ὁρᾷ πολλάκις ἑαυτῷ χρυσὸν γιγνόμενον ἄφθονον καὶ ἐπ᾽ αὐτῷ πολλὰς ἡδονάς: καὶ δὴ καὶ ἐνεζωγραφημένον αὐτὸν ἐφ᾽ αὑτῷ χαίροντα σφόδρα καθορᾷ, 40a9-12). Here, the person is taking pleasure in 'painted appearances' (τὰ φαντάσματα ἐζωγραφημένα) in his soul (40a9), so that the pleasure is false because the appearance in his soul, which he anticipates, depicts the content of a false judgment.[4] This proves that there are false pleasures arising in a variety of psychic states connected to desire, in which the subject takes 'pre-pleasure or pain' (τὸ προχαίρειν τε καὶ προλυπεῖσθαι, 39d3-4), such as anticipation (32c1, 39e4, 40a3), as well as 'fear and anger and all such things' (40e2-4).

Yet, we see in the conversation that Socrates' argument, intricate and powerful as it is, fails to construct an effective bridge to bad pleasures from false pleasures, in Protarchus' view. When Socrates *tries* to establish that false pleasures are bad in this context (40e6-10), Protarchus responds: 'It's absolutely the opposite of what you say, Socrates! For it is not at all because of

[4] This argument is highly controversial, and I do not intend to address it here. For recent work, see Delcomminette 2003, 228-230; 2006, 362-399, Evans 2008, Fletcher 2018b, 382-386; 2022, Harte 2004, Marechal 2022, 283-289, Muniz 2014, Russell 2005, 176-182, Thein 2012; 2021, Warren 2014, 129-136, and Wolfsdorf 2012, 80-84.

their being false that someone would posit pleasures and pains as bad, but because of another great and varied badness attending them' (πάνυ μὲν οὖν τοὐναντίον, ὦ Σώκρατες, εἴρηκας. σχεδὸν γὰρ τῷ ψεύδει μὲν οὐ πάνυ πονηρὰς ἄν τις λύπας τε καὶ ἡδονὰς θείη, μεγάλῃ δὲ ἄλλῃ καὶ πολλῇ συμπιπτούσας πονηρίᾳ, 41a1-4). Protarchus may, of course, be wrong, but his resistance suggests that more is needed to explain his eventual conversion. My argument is that the next stage of Socrates' elaboration on false pleasure provides a crucial step to this end.

The hedonist assumes, as we have seen, that the capacity for greatness and extremity in the experience of pleasure is a fundamental source of pleasure's value and a core premise upholding the hedonist worldview. On my interpretation, Socrates' next argument after the anticipation argument establishes that a condition of possibility for this experience is *perceptual representation*, distinct from the *doxastic* representation articulated as the work of the painter vis-à-vis the scribe. Specifically, when we take pleasure, we perceive a motion occurring in our body, and for human beings, this involves representing that motion as appearing to be a certain size and intensity before arriving at any judgments about it. As a result, pleasure can be *false*, not only because of how it is bound up with false judgement, but also because our experience of pleasure can be constituted by a misrepresentation of the size and intensity of the bodily motion we are experiencing *as* pleasure. On these grounds, Socrates can show that illusory appearance is partly constitutive of the reasoning that grounds the hedonist view of pleasure.

II. A New Kind

In response to Protarchus' skepticism about the badness of false pleasure at 41a1-4, Socrates changes gears: he says that they will return to bad pleasures and what makes (διά) pleasures bad 'a little later', but now they must discuss 'the pleasures false in another way, being

many and frequently present in and coming to be in us' (τὰς δὲ ψευδεῖς κατ᾽ ἄλλον τρόπον ἐν ἡμῖν πολλὰς καὶ πολλάκις ἐνούσας τε καὶ ἐγγιγνομένας λεκτέον, 41a5-b2). His redirection raises two important interpretative issues: (1) where, then, will we find an account of *bad* pleasures,[5] and (2) how, in turn, does this new class of false pleasures differ from the first?[6] In brief, my

[5] Many return to false anticipatory pleasure itself: Carpenter 2006, Evans 2008, Irwin 1995, 329-330, Mooradian 1996, Ogihara 2009, and Warren 2014, ch. 6. The problem is that this approach steps back from the dialectic to find something Protarchus missed, tucked away beneath the surface, and so cannot explain how Protarchus is himself converted (cf. Mooradian 1996, 98). Hackforth 1945, *ad loc* n1, turns to the construction of the mixed life (59e-64a); Evans 2008 and Carpenter 2006, 21-23 to the *genesis* argument (54a-55c); Marechal 2022 (cf. Frede 2006, 449-451) to the mixed psychic pleasures (47d-50e). But Socrates says that the rationale for turning to new false pleasures is that this will be useful for the 'judgments' (τὰς κρίσεις, 41b1-2), that is, the resolution of the contest for second prize (22c-e; cf. Waterfield 1983, *ad loc* n1), which creates an expectation that the new class of false pleasures are relevant to the ethical conclusion. I propose, as an alternative, that Socrates does not want Protarchus to evaluate the new argument with his mind on the question of bad pleasure. This is consistent with his practice of intervening when Protarchus inappropriately treats the discussion as a contest (13c-14b, 19a-21d), despite his merits as a conversational partner in contrast with Philebus (cf. Frede 1996, 217-222).

[6] One relevant issue is the philological dispute about the translation of 41a7-b1: whether κατ᾽ ἄλλον τρόπον modifies the predicate, ψευδεῖς, so that Socrates is introducing another 'mode' of falsehood (cf. Fletcher 2018b, 386-387n25; Mooradian 1995, 92n5; Frede 1993, *ad loc*), or modifies the participles, ἐνούσας τε καὶ ἐγγιγνομένας, so that the difference applies to how false

position is that the new class of pleasures addresses the ethical question by providing a new model of false pleasure suited to explaining away the appeal of the so-called greatest pleasures; and, moreover, this model is *new* because it involves identifying falsehood in a distinctively perceptual domain.

Let us turn, then, to this new class of false pleasures, which I call the pleasures of 'juxtaposition'. Socrates asks Protarchus to think through the following scenario: 'Whenever these things obtain, that pain and pleasure lie side-by-side simultaneously, and simultaneously perceptions of these beside each other, though they are opposites, come about, as was just now shown' (ὁπόταν ᾖ ταῦτα, ἅμα παρακεῖσθαι λύπας τε καὶ ἡδονάς, καὶ τούτων αἰσθήσεις ἅμα παρ' ἀλλήλας ἐναντίων οὐσῶν γίγνεσθαι, ὃ καὶ νυνδὴ ἐφάνη, 41d1-3). This describes the first and arguably most basic element of the argument from juxtaposition: pains and pleasures, and perceptions of those pains and pleasures, lying together at the same time, or, as I call it, 'juxtaposed'. Socrates' indication that they have already seen this type of case ('as was just now

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pleasure is present and comes to be in us (Benardete 1993, *ad loc*; Gosling 1975, *ad loc*; Marechal 2022, 288; Rudebusch, Niehus, and Zgurich 2020, 157; Waterfield 1983, *ad loc*). I have adopted the former translation, as the word order seem to me to favor this option; cf. 40c4-5 for a similar construction. But it is reasonable to translate the text in the other way. Yet, this dispute itself will not settle the relevant philosophical questions. Hackforth 1945, *ad loc* n2, for example, adopts the second sort of translation, but gets the philosophical upshot of the first. More broadly, the predicative translation seems supported by Socrates' contrast between hedonic falsehood by 'infection' and intrinsic illusion at 42a5-9; Fletcher 2018b, 387n25 also points to 42c8, where 'still more false' pleasures are introduced.

shown', 41d3) picks up on his invocation of the previously established theory of desire, according to which the body undergoes some experiences or affections (τοῖς παθήμασι) while the soul simultaneously seeks out the 'opposite states (ἕξεων) of the body' (41b11-c7). Socrates earlier describes this as the soul grasping (ἐφάπτοιτ', 35a7) the body's experience through the internal representational capacity of memory (cf. 34c-35e).[7]

This suggestion that juxtaposition is witnessed in the relation between the anticipating soul and the experiencing body has led many commentators to identify juxtaposition as simply identical to anticipation,[8] but I argue that this is a mistake. Socrates goes on to identify mixed bodily pleasures as the subject undergoing truly simultaneous bodily experiences (πάθη) at the same time (ὁπόταν ἐν τῇ καταστάσει τις ἢ τῇ διαφθορᾷ τἀναντία ἅμα πάθη πάσχῃ, 46c6-7), for instance, pain in the body's exterior but pleasure in its interior (46c-e).[9] His invocation of desire in 41d1-3 can instead be read only as saying that desiderative configurations of the body and soul, such as anticipation, are *cases* of juxtaposition, but only in the extended sense in which memory allows the subject to undergo perceptual events.[10] Instead, Socrates' account of

[7] See Harte 2014 on memory as the means of internal representation underlying all desire.

[8] E.g., Gosling 1975, 219-220, Gosling and Taylor 1982, 445-446, Irwin 1995, 328, Moss 2006, 507n9, and Warren 2014, 119-127. For contrasting views closer to the one defended here, cf. Delcomminette 2003, Fletcher 2018b, Pearson 2019, 158-162, and Wolfsdorf 2012.

[9] Generally, interpreters avoid the pressure of connecting these passages by separating the mixed pleasures and the juxtaposed pleasures as distinct categories (e.g., Wolfsdorf 2012, 100, Irwin 1995, 238-239, and Frede 2006, 443).

[10] See Delcomminette 2003, 232-234 for a similar argument.

juxtaposition should be read as picking up on his initial account of 'one form' (ἓν εἶδος) of pleasure and pain, which focuses on the body alone (31d-32b).[11] Here, pain is identified as an unnatural destruction (φθορά, λύσιν) of an animal's condition or harmony as a mixture (cf. 25d-26d) and pleasure as its 'pathway' (ὁδός), 'returning' (ἀναχώρησις), 'harmonizing' (ἁρμοττομένης), or 'going back' (ἀπιούσης) to the natural condition (31d-32b; cf. *Timaeus* 43a-c, 64d-65b). This turns out to be a single form of pleasure and pain found 'in each of these experiences' (πάθεσιν, 32b6-7), that is, the loss and restitution of harmony through bodily processes such as drying, cooling, and filling.

The identification of pleasure and pain with determinate bodily processes in this earlier phase of the conversation is a plausible basis for understanding what it means for pleasure and pain to be juxtaposed in 41d1-3: two bodily processes occur at once. In turn, this explains why Socrates distinguishes between juxtaposed pleasures and pains and *perceptions* of pleasures and pains (τούτων αἰσθήσεις, 41d1-2). When he initially moves on to the form (ἕτερον εἶδος, 32c2-3) of pleasure and pain where anticipation is located—the soul's expectation of the bodily experiences of the first variety (32b9-c7)—Socrates develops a model of perception that nonetheless applies to the bodily pleasures and pains of the first form. He defines perception (αἴσθησις) as the soul registering a bodily experience (πάθημα), motion (κίνησις), or upheaval (σεισμόν, 33c-34b; cf. *Theaetetus* 186b), whereas when the motion is 'extinguished' in the body, there is 'non-perception' (ἀναισθησίαν, 33e10-34a1). Perception, then, is an experience and movement 'unique' to the body and soul, respectively, and 'common' to both (ἴδιόν τε καὶ

[11] Thus, my argument cuts against a tendency in the literature to insist that bodily pleasures cannot be false (e.g., Fletcher 2018a, 37 and 2022, 205).

κοινὸν; κοινῇ, 33d2-5, 34a3-5). Taking Socrates' theory of perception along with his identification of pleasure and pain with bodily processes, therefore, provides us a plausible explanation of juxtaposition in 41d1-3: for pleasures and pains to arise in juxtaposition is for restorative and destructive bodily experiences to be juxtaposed, whereas for perceptions of them to come to be in the same relation is for these motions to reach the soul, such that we *feel* the pleasure or pain.[12]

We might be tempted to resist this view, however, on the grounds of a distinction between the *objects* of perception—a man in the distance, or a bowl of stew—and the *impressions* in virtue of which we perceive them—an image of a certain shape in a certain light, or the sensation of heat on the tongue. Nonetheless, there is a plausible response that preserves the view of 41d1-3 defended above. When Socrates turns to the false pleasures of the neutral state after the case of juxtaposition (42c-44a), he distinguishes between the body's undergoing some change (μεταβολαί, 43b7) and perceiving that very change. The purpose of this distinction is to revise the model of the first form of pleasure and pain: whereas before he gave a one-to-one account of destruction/restoration and pain/pleasure, he now insists that only 'great changes produce pains and pleasures', while 'moderate and small' ones do not (43b7-e6; cf. *Timaeus*

[12] This arguably reflects an ambiguity in the first 'form' of pleasure and pain: sometimes Socrates identifies pleasure and pain with these processes (31e6, 32a1-4); other times he only says that *whenever* one of these processes occurs, pain or pleasure comes to be (31d3-10, 32a6-b4; cf. Delcomminette 2006, 299). For the view of pleasure as both 'phenomenal' and 'ontic' reality, see Wolfsdorf 2012, 65-70, 77, 81-90, 99-100; cf. Fletcher 2018b, 391n32 for identification of the real component with the motion in the body.

64d), because some of the things we experience (τὸ πάσχον) are perceived (αἰσθάνεται), whereas others, such as growing, escape our notice (λανθάνομεν, 43b1-4), that is, are cases of non-perception. The significance of this argument for my purposes is that Socrates explains failing to take pleasure or pain in terms of failing to perceive *the underlying bodily process* that, as a bodily process, is typologically such as to cause perception (e.g., growing). By turning this reasoning around, we can infer that the successful case of taking pleasure or pain involves a perceptual awareness of the very bodily process that causes the perception: the changes or experiences of the animal (πάσχει τι, τὸ πάσχον). For example, we perceive our skin drying and so feel pain; we experience our mouth filling with stew and so feel pleasure.[13] This is what I propose Socrates means when he says that we perceive pleasures and pains in 41d1-3. Moreover, understanding hedonic perception as an awareness of bodily processes is compatible with those processes remaining inaccessible to us, despite our awareness: for perception may be *de re*, and not *de dicto*, aware of the underlying bodily motions. For example, I perceive my skin drying and so feel pain, but it is not necessary for me to feel pain that I am also aware of it *as* my skin drying.

Philebus 41d1-3 describes the first element of the scenario Socrates identifies with juxtaposition; but there is a second, especially important component of juxtaposition required for

[13] Indeed, Socrates' discussion of desire implies that the types of processes he calls 'experiences' are not discrete sensations but what we might call unified actions, e.g., we do not desire the warmth of the broth on its own but being filled with food (cf. 34e-35b).

Socrates' argument: the subject's critical inquiry into the comparative sizes and intensities of the dually perceived pleasures and pains. He describes it thus:

> and both of these—pain and pleasure—admit of the more and the less, and that they are among the unlimited… Well, what device is there for discerning these correctly...[i]f the purpose of our discernment of them, in some such cases, is that we want to distinguish, on each occasion, which of them is larger with respect to the other, and which smaller, and which greater and more intense, pain with respect to pleasure and pain to pain and pleasure to pleasure? Is it the case that in vision, seeing magnitudes from near and far hides the truth and make us judge falsely, but in pains and pleasures this same thing does not come to be?[14] (41d8-42a3)

Here we discover that the juxtaposed perceptions of pleasures and pains from 41d1-3 are the subject of 'discernment' (κρίνεσθαι) by the experiencing agent, who tries to determine which pleasure or pain is larger or more intense than the other, given that they belong to the unlimited

[14] ὡς τὸ μᾶλλόν τε καὶ ἧττον ἄμφω τούτω δέχεσθον, λύπη τε καὶ ἡδονή, καὶ ὅτι τῶν ἀπείρων εἴτην…τίς οὖν μηχανὴ ταῦτ᾽ ὀρθῶς κρίνεσθαι;… εἰ τὸ βούλημα ἡμῖν τῆς κρίσεως τούτων ἐν τοιούτοις τισὶ διαγνῶναι βούλεται ἑκάστοτε τίς τούτων πρὸς ἀλλήλας μείζων καὶ τίς ἐλάττων καὶ τίς μᾶλλον καὶ τίς σφοδροτέρα, λύπη τε πρὸς ἡδονὴν καὶ λύπη πρὸς λύπην καὶ ἡδονὴ πρὸς ἡδονήν…ἐν μὲν ὄψει τὸ πόρρωθεν καὶ ἐγγύθεν ὁρᾶν τὰ μεγέθη τὴν ἀλήθειαν ἀφανίζει καὶ ψευδῆ ποιεῖ δοξάζειν, ἐν λύπαις δ᾽ ἄρα καὶ ἡδοναῖς οὐκ ἔστι ταὐτὸν τοῦτο γιγνόμενον;

kind (cf. 27e, 31b).[15] These are the conditions of possibility for the falsehood Socrates will go on to attribute to this new class of false pleasure, which he suggests by analogy: what he has in mind is akin to when we try to discern, visually, an external object, from afar or nearby (τὸ πόρρωθεν καὶ ἐγγύθεν), and distance 'hides' (ἀφανίζει) the truth from our vision, leading to false judgment (41e9-42a3). The distant seeing scenario picks up on Socrates' nearly identical example earlier, when he imagines a person seeing from afar the appearance (φανταζόμενον) of an object by a rock under a tree, and after 'seeing what appears' (κατιδὼν φαντασθέντα), saying to himself (εἰπεῖν…αὐτῷ, 38d1-3), 'what ever is this thing appearing' (τί ποτ᾽ ἄρ᾽ ἔστι τὸ…τοῦθ᾽…φανταζόμενον, 38c12-d1), and then (μετὰ ταῦτα) answering (ἀποκρινόμενος), 'it is

[15] On the different sense of 'degree' or 'amount' in the unlimited kind, see 24b10-d6. Initially, 'the more and less' (τὸ μᾶλλόν τε καὶ ἧττον) is the general character, with 'the hotter and colder' as an example, and 'larger and smaller' could delimit a specific domain in the same way, but by contrast, 'intense and gentle' (σφόδρα καὶ ἠρέμα) are put on a par with 'the more and less' (24b10-c6). Moreover, the relationship between the two categories for pleasure and pain in this passage—size and intensity—is similarly unclear. Socrates frequently lists both in a conjunction (e.g., 37c8-10, 42b4-5), but he also sometimes uses them interchangeably (e.g., 45a1-8). Perhaps the best approach is to see Socrates as trying to develop a way of capturing, theoretically, the dimensions in which pleasure can be identified as having its own domain-specific scale of difference as the hedonist views it. Philebus emphasizes 'number' and 'extent' (τῷ μᾶλλον) (27e7-9).

a man' (38c-d5-7).[16] That is, here we find Socrates introducing a two-stage model of the mind, in which the subject starts with their perceptual awareness of an external perceptible and then engages in a critical inquiry to arrive at a judgment about the object. This is arguably the same two-stage theory at work in 41d1-3 and 41d8-42a3-4: 41d1-3 describes the subject starting with a perceptual awareness of their own pleasure and pain, and 41d8-42a3 asks how that subject can form a judgment about the object of their awareness. Thus, Socrates' account targets the evidential relation between perception and judgment. We are asked to consider this relation to comprehend how it is possible for a distinctive type of falsehood to emerge at the level of perception, and thereby corrupt judgments through their evidential reliance on perception. As we will see, the aim is a critique of the method by which hedonism emerges as apparently plausible: it relies on the evidential connection between perception and judgment for the types of perceptions that suffer from intractable defect.

III. Appearance and Reality

Let us now turn to the stage of Socrates' argument where he locates perceptual defect, that is, a problem with the way pleasure as a perceptible object appears to the pleased subject:

> In fact, this is opposite to what came about a little earlier… At that time, the judgments, false and true, infected the pains and pleasures simultaneously with their own conditions… But now they, on account of being viewed while shifting

[16] This comparison is widely noted: see Fletcher 2018b, 390, Gosling and Taylor 1982, 447-448, Hackforth 1945, 78, La Taille 1999, 116, Muniz 2014, 71, Russell 2005, 183-184, Warren 2014, 122-123, and Wolfsdorf 2012, 85-86.

> from far away and nearby on each occasion and placed simultaneously beside each other, the pleasures beside the pain appears larger and more intense, and the pains in turn on account of [being] beside the pleasure [appears] opposite to these.[17] (42a5-b6)
>
> Well then, by as much as each appears larger or smaller than they really are, cutting this off from each—what appears, but is not real—neither will you say that it appears correctly, nor will you dare to claim, in turn, that the part of the pleasure or pain taken in this comes to be correct or true.[18] (42b8-c2)

In 42a5-b6, Socrates says that looking at the juxtaposed pleasures and pains as they shift (μεταβαλλόμεναι θεωρεῖσθαι) puts them in a certain condition on their own, unlike the earlier case, where the condition (παθήματος) of the judgment 'infected (ἀνεπίμπλασαν) the pains and pleasures'. As we have seen, this last point refers to the earlier consensus that the soul can form imagistic representations—'painted appearances' (40a9)—whose content and truth-value

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[17] ἐναντίον δὴ τὸ νῦν τῷ σμικρὸν ἔμπροσθε γέγονεν…τότε μὲν αἱ δόξαι ψευδεῖς τε καὶ ἀληθεῖς αὖται γιγνόμεναι τὰς λύπας τε καὶ ἡδονὰς ἅμα τοῦ παρ᾽ αὐταῖς παθήματος ἀνεπίμπλασαν… νῦν δέ γε αὐταὶ διὰ τὸ πόρρωθέν τε καὶ ἐγγύθεν ἑκάστοτε μεταβαλλόμεναι θεωρεῖσθαι, καὶ ἅμα τιθέμεναι παρ᾽ ἀλλήλας, αἱ μὲν ἡδοναὶ παρὰ τὸ λυπηρὸν μείζους φαίνονται καὶ σφοδρότεραι, λῦπαι δ᾽ αὖ διὰ τὸ παρ᾽ ἡδονὰς τοὐναντίον ἐκείναις.

[18] οὐκοῦν ὅσῳ μείζους τῶν οὐσῶν ἑκάτεραι καὶ ἐλάττους φαίνονται, τοῦτο ἀποτεμόμενος ἑκατέρων τὸ φαινόμενον ἀλλ᾽ οὐκ ὄν, οὔτε αὐτὸ ὀρθῶς φαινόμενον ἐρεῖς, οὐδ᾽ αὖ ποτε τὸ ἐπὶ τούτῳ μέρος τῆς ἡδονῆς καὶ λύπης γιγνόμενον ὀρθόν τε καὶ ἀληθὲς τολμήσεις λέγειν.

depends on the judgment out of which it is formed. Notice, however, that the contrast is not that one case involves an appearance, and the other does not. Indeed, in 40a9-12, the subject *looks* (καθορᾷ, ὁρᾷ, 40a10-11) at himself taking pleasure in his inner image, just as in 42a5-b6 the subject views or beholds his own pleasures (42b3). The difference is that in the case of anticipatory pleasure, the object at which we look is an appearance formed from a judgment; now, the pleasures and pains appear defectively, but they have not been formed from judgment.

Socrates describes this type of defective appearance as the pleasures and pains appearing 'larger and more intense…than they really are (τῶν οὐσῶν)', or, equivalently, appearing without reality (τὸ φαινόμενον ἀλλ᾽ οὐκ ὄν) and incorrectly (οὔτε…ὀρθῶς φαινόμενον), so that the pleasure is not 'correct or true' (οὐδ᾽…ὀρθόν τε καὶ ἀληθές). In fact, in initial distant seeing we considered above, where someone views a distant object and tries to say what it is, Socrates also claims that the subject's formation of a judgment can be rendered false when and because the initial appearance is unclear or obscure (μὴ πάνυ σαφῶς): 'Would you say that often when someone sees something from afar, and the things at which he looks are not very clear, it follows that he wants to discern these things which he sees?' (πολλάκις ἰδόντι τινὶ πόρρωθεν μὴ πάνυ σαφῶς τὰ καθορώμενα συμβαίνειν βούλεσθαι κρίνειν φαίης ἂν ταῦθ᾽ ἅπερ ὁρᾷ; 38c5-7; cf. *Theaetetus* 191b, 193c). Here Socrates describes an unclear appearance of a distant object due to the perspectival effects of being seen from afar (πόρρωθεν), and in the subsequent discussion he claims that the subject can form a false judgment—that the object is a statue when it is actually a human (38d9-10)—as a result. This is analogous to his account in 42a5-b6 of the subject viewing the pleasures and pains at relative distances (τὸ πόρρωθέν τε καὶ ἐγγύθεν) while they shift back and forth (42b2-3) and in 41d8-42a3 that juxtaposed pleasures and pains are akin to objects being seen from afar and up close (τὸ πόρρωθέν καὶ ἐγγύθεν) such that they produce false

judgment (41e9-42a1). Moreover, in 38c5-7 the subject sees something from a distance and 'wants to discern' the identity of the appearing object, as the subject of juxtaposed pleasures and pains 'wants to distinguish (διαγνῶναι βούλεται)' the comparative properties (41e2-6). Therefore, it is plausible that Socrates develops, in 38c5-7 and 42a5-c2, the notion of an intrinsically defective appearance: one that is unclear and as such is opaque to critical discernment, that is, is bad *evidence* for judgment.[19]

However, whereas in 38c5-7 Socrates identifies the conditions for intrinsically defective appearance with viewing from a *distance*, in 42a5-c2 he identifies these conditions with the 'shifting' of pleasures and pains while *juxtaposed*.[20] Experiencing pleasure and pain together, in other words, affects our experience of each of them, in the way that distance affects our experience of a distant object. Now, to make sense of this commonality, we might be tempted to reduce juxtaposition to a type of distance, perhaps, for example, the type of temporal separation

[19] As the basis for false judgment, these are indirectly at the root of the false painted appearances: so suggests Muniz 2014, 71, which calls the external-internal processes 'mirror images', since we go from an (external) appearance to a judgment, and from a judgment to an (internal) appearance; cf. Thein 2012, 122, 137-138.

[20] Frede 1993, *ad loc* and Pearson 2019, 158 distinguish the distance condition from the simultaneity condition, that is, they understand 'shifting from far away and nearby' and 'being placed simultaneously beside each other' as different and independently satisfiable scenarios, but this is unlikely, given that 41d1-3 only mentions simultaneity.

involved in anticipatory pleasure.[21] But this is a mistake. While Plato uses distance as an analogy for temporal separation of pleasures and pains in *Protagoras* 356b-e, the imagery also has a more general application to illusions of various types, such as verbal deception (*Republic* 602c-d, *Sophist* 234b-e) and intelligible paradox (*Parmenides* 165c-d).[22] For example, in the seventh deduction of the *Parmenides*, Parmenides argues that if the one is not, the others would be a 'mass' or 'bulk' (ὄγκον), so that it is not possible to 'grasp in thought' (λάβῃ τῇ διανοίᾳ) their beginning, middle, or end (165a-b). He then uses distance imagery, arguably, as a mere metaphor for the cognitive illusions that arise in such a case: for someone seeing the bulk 'from afar (πόρρωθεν)', it appears to be 'a dim (ἀμβλύ) unity', but when someone thinks of it (νοοῦντι) 'keenly up close (ἐγγύθεν)…each one necessarily appears unlimited in multitude'; again, for someone 'standing apart from a shadow-painting (ἐσκιαγραφημένα ἀποστάντι)', the image will appear unified and homogeneous, whereas 'to the one approaching (προσελθόντι) [everything appears] many and different' (165b7-d2; cf. *Theaetetus* 165d2-5, *Republic* 523a-b). Thus, vision and distance are deployed as metaphors to capture our intellectual attention to (non-spatial)

[21] The temporal reading is quite common: see Benardete 1993, 187-188, Frede 2006, 447, Gosling 1975, 219-220, Gosling and Taylor 1982, 445-446, Hackforth 1945, 78-79, Hampton 1990, 60-62, Irwin 1995, 328, Mooradian 1995, Moss 2006, 507n9, Russell 2005, 183-186, Thein 2021, 102, Warren 2014, 119-127, and Waterfield 1983, note *ad loc*.

[22] Cf. Delcomminette 2003, 231-232 and Wolfsdorf 2012, 85-86 for a similar view. Although he reads juxtaposition temporally, Russell 2005, 192 highlights having perspective on our own pleasures.

objects of understanding and the inability to focus on them.[23] Therefore, it is plausible that viewing juxtaposed pleasures from 'distances' does not correspond to temporal separation but a feature of *perceptual* attentiveness. When we experience pleasures and pains at the same time, it is difficult for us to focus our perceptual awareness on just one of them: we tend to feel them both, but in a way that makes it hard to feel each determinately. This is what it means for our perceptions of pleasures and pains to be μεταβαλλόμεναι, which I rendered 'shifting', but may also be understood as 'alternating' or even 'changing'.[24] Socrates is, in other words, pointing to the phenomenal character of the bodily processes as they are received by the soul.[25] This

[23] It is true that earlier Parmenides the mass changes appearance 'instantaneously' (ἐξαίφνης, 164d; cf. 155e-157b), but the issue in the quoted text is independent of time.

[24] See LSJ A.II and A.III. I am departing from the translations that take μεταβαλλόμεναι with θεωρεῖσθαι (see Frede 1993, *ad loc*, Hackforth 1945, *ad loc*, and Gosling 1975, *ad loc*), instead taking the participle to modify the subject αὐταί (see Benardete 1993, *ad loc*). This issue matters as to how one understands the source of the defective appearance. On my rendering, the defect emerges from the juxtaposition of perceptions; if we were to take the participle with the verb, then it is from going back and forth *in our investigation* that they appear defectively.

[25] Delcomminette 2003, 232-234 makes a similar point about viewing a pleasure or pain from the 'perspective' of the other. It is also worth emphasizing that 41d1-3 speaks of perceptions of pleasures and pains occurring *at the same time*, which speaks against the temporal interpretation. This is independent of interpreting juxtaposition as a type of anticipation, since Socrates says that the work of the painter is not restricted to the future (39c-d). For example, a person may eat an unsavory meal while picturing themselves eating a more appetizing meal. (Whether this

inability to focus creates the form of illusion characterized as having appearance but no underlying reality: the soul takes the motion it registers to have a certain character, when it does not.

But how, exactly, are these defective appearances *false*? Socrates describes the appearances of juxtaposed pleasures and pains as incorrect, and the pleasure taken in these appearances as both incorrect and not 'true' (42c1-3). Dialectically, this is a loaded assertion: Protarchus arguably begins with a view of pleasure in the spirit of perceptual relativism, where pleasure does not represent an external the world such that it is subject to accuracy standards,[26] so in the absence of the propositional structure of judgment encoded within the appearance, it might seem unwarranted for Socrates to assert that pleasures can appear incorrectly or be false.[27] Arguably the most well represented scholarly response, therefore, finds the propositional structure of judgment in juxtaposed hedonic appearances, but this is a mistake.[28] One general

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picturing nonetheless involves the temporal separation implied by memory hinges on what we make the elusive 'painter', on which see below and n35; cf. Thein 2012 and Fletcher 2022).

[26] See Fletcher 2022, Mooradian 1996, and Muniz 2014, 66. Protarchus does not dispute that pleasures and pains can be true (36c8-9), which Socrates recognizes when he asks whether, unlike judgment, pleasure admits *only* truth (37b5-8).

[27] Thus, Fletcher 2018b, 389-392, Evans 2008, 106, and Mooradian 1995, 111 deny that the pleasures of juxtaposition can be false even as misrepresentations.

[28] For the general sentiment, see Frede 2006, 447 and 1993, lxix. More specifically, one widespread but unlikely such view is that juxtaposition is a case of anticipation: see n8 above. Socrates emphasizes the differences between the two types of false pleasure (e.g., in the relation

problem is that Socrates is not interested in propositional structure even in the 'painted appearances' at work in anticipation: he characterizes them as *ontologically* defective, or 'imitations of the true pleasures taken in more laughable things' (40c4-6).[29] Moreover, any view on which the falsehood of these appearances hinges on their encoding doxastic content is inconsistent with 42a5-b6's emphasis on the independence of incorrect appearance from judgment: these pleasures and pains appear incorrectly entirely without being infected by false judgment. Thus, a more plausible view in the scholarship denies that juxtaposed pleasures and pains are representational at all. On this view, juxtaposition is a relation between non-representational perceptual states, which are *taken* as representative by the critical faculty responsible for the formation of judgment. Incorrect appearance is, therefore, a *causal* relation

to judgment) and the simultaneity of the perceptions. A different approach is to build doxastic structure into appearances, as a 'mixture' of judgment and perception (as outlined at *Sophist* 263e-264b): see Delcomminette 2003, 232. But this is closer to the model of a 'painted appearance', where the appearance *encodes* a judgment (cf. Fletcher 2018b, 390). A third such approach locates propositional structure in perception itself, on the authority of *Republic* 523a-524b: for the suggestion, see Thein 2012, 122n26. Nonetheless, whereas in the *Republic* Socrates speaks of perception 'discerning' (κρινόμενα) perceptible objects (523a-b, 524a-b), in 42a5-c2 and 38c5-7, this discernment belongs to judgment.

[29] μεμιμημέναι μέντοι τὰς ἀληθεῖς ἐπὶ τὰ γελοιότερα. On ontological significance against the emphasis on propositions in the literature, see Muniz 2014.

between non-representational perceptual content and false judgment.[30] But the cost of this view is a weakening of Socrates' conception of *false* pleasure: it would turn out that pleasure and pain are not themselves truth-evaluable, but stand to truth and falsehood in the same way that any form of evidence does, even types of evidence that are not mental states (e.g., the bloody boot prints of the person who is in fact not the killer, or the chocolate-covered fingers of the person who is in fact not the cookie thief).

The importance of the capacity for representation is crucial to understanding Socrates' dialectical target: the hedonist's favored conception of pleasure as *great* and *extreme*. For example, in his argument for the failure of the life of pleasure without knowledge (21a-d), Socrates emphasizes what the loss of 'wisdom or intelligence or reasoning…or everything related to these' (21a14-b4) means for Protarchus' contention that the life of pleasure alone would be excellent due to the presence of the 'greatest pleasures' (21a9, b3-4). Without wisdom (φρονέσεως), you would be ignorant (ἀγνοεῖν) about whether you experience pleasure or not (21b7-9); without memory, you could never remember previous pleasures or experience a single pleasure over time (21c1-4); without true judgment, you could not truly judge that you are experiencing pleasure, and without reasoning, you could not determine future pleasures (21c4-6). This is the life of a jellyfish, not a human being (21c6-d1). Although this argument is outside the scope here, it plausibly implies that the value of pleasure for human beings requires representational awareness, in which the subject comprehends their own pleasures as being in a

[30] See Fletcher 2018b, 395-399, following Mooradian 1995, 110-112, which makes the case for Aristotelian *pros hen* homonymy; cf. Fletcher 2018a, 37: 'bodily pleasures cannot be false in the way that beliefs are false'.

certain condition for them.[31] A natural conclusion, then, is that Socrates puts forward a view on which the experience of pleasure such that some pleasures can be called 'greatest' requires representational awareness subject to standards of accuracy set by the represented object and susceptible to falsehood in the sense of misrepresentation.[32]

Thus, I want to sketch an alternative reading of how juxtaposed pleasures and pains are false, which preserves their representational nature. The most straightforward such approach would be to claim that perception itself is the representational capacity responsible for pleasures and pains appearing of a certain magnitude: that is, we perceive our own bodily conditions as having quantitative profiles. However, attributing a representational capacity to perception is controversial, for a variety of reasons. For example, animals incapable of experiencing their pleasures as of a certain size (e.g., the jellyfish) are still capable of perception,[33] and Plato elsewhere appears to deny that perception is itself truth-evaluable (*Theaetetus* 183-187).[34] One

[31] See O'Reilly 2019 for a thorough analysis to a similar conclusion and Mouroutsou 2016, 146-147 for a briefer such statement. Mouroutsou 2021, 402-408, draws a similar conclusion about the dialectic vis-à-vis the quantity of pleasure, while reading 41a-42c temporally, which I reject.

[32] It is worth noting that size is one of Aristotle's 'common perceptibles', about which we are prone to perceptual error (e.g., *De anima* iii 3.428b24-5).

[33] But cf. O'Reilly 2019, 283 on the 'irrational sensation' of plants and fish at *Timaeus* 64-65.

[34] At *Theaetetus* 186b-d Socrates denies that perception grasps the 'being' of a perceptible, so that it is not truth-evaluable, whereas earlier he has suggested that one simply perceives perceptible qualities or qualified objects (e.g., 184d-e). However, we might be able to understand perception as representational but not truth-apt in the sense of expressing propositions—thus,

way to avoid these problems, instead, would be to posit a power distinct from both judgment and perception to represent perceptual content, in just the way that the painter is said to take up doxastic content in an image. That is, in contrast to *doxastic representations*—the painted appearances in the soul that the soul can anticipate or fear—a possibility is that the soul is capable of structurally similar *perceptual representations*, that is, representations *of* its perceptions. A natural candidate for this representational capacity is the same imagistic power responsible for the painted appearances in the soul: the painter, who would now operate on perception rather than judgment. The soul, on this view, represents its own perceptions as indicating magnitudes of bodily motions by taking the perceptions to be representative appearances of the motions.[35]

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there would be accuracy conditions for perceptions (the subject of the argument from juxtaposition) but not truth-conditions *per se* (the subject of the *Theaetetus* argument).

[35] Thein 2012 defends a view of the painter—which he argues is the 'modal imagination'—that fits well with this view. E.g., Thein highlights the importance of choosing between distinct beliefs for the operations of the modal imagination (137-143), and we could make a similar observation about comparing pleasures and pains and asking which is larger and more intense than the other (41e3-6). This identification of the power to be appeared to with the painter also has the advantage of anticipating the Caston 1996 account of Aristotle on the common sensible objects, namely, that *imagination* is for Aristotle the faculty responsible for awareness of sensible properties such as size and motion. However, it is worth noting that my account is also compatible with readings that do not identify the painter with imagination: e.g., for Fletcher 2022 the painter is simply the capacity to take pleasure. Thus, the claim defended here would be that

This account has its own strengths and weaknesses. It explains the significance of our 'viewing' our own perceptions for the illusion of size to occur (θεωρεῖσθαι, 42b3), but Socrates also never invokes the painter in the argument from juxtaposition, and as we will see below, he claims that juxtaposition is causally relevant to the condition of the body itself (e.g., causing changes of pigmentation, 47a), which may indicate a specifically perceptual (and not imagistic) character of mis-appearing pleasures. Nonetheless, what is convincing is that juxtaposition involves a distinctive type of perceptual representation, such that the soul takes the hedonic perceptions it shares with the body to bear on the sizes and intensities of their own pleasures and pains. Whether it is perception or a distinct imaginative power that is responsible for this representation is not of central concern here. In either case, juxtaposition distorts hedonic perceptual representations, such that the agent cannot fix the content determinately and illusion arises. Thus, we are in a position to understand what it means for 'the part of the pleasure or pain taken in this' not to be 'correct or true' (42c2-3).[36] On the view defended here, pleasure is false

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the power to take pleasure allows the subject to represent their own perceptions as pleasant to a certain degree. More generally, scholars sometimes consider an independent power of representation in these texts: e.g., Harte 2014, 53-59 and Fletcher 2022, 229n49.

[36] Hackforth 1945, *ad loc* n1 complains that τὸ ἐπὶ τούτῳ μέρος is 'strictly illogical, since τούτῳ can only denote the unreal part of a pleasure of pain'. But Socrates describes the false pleasure of anticipation as being pleasure even though it is not 'taken in (ἐπί) things that are or ever came to be' (40d7-10; cf. 40a10 and c8-10), which allows for a non-existent bodily motion as the object of pleasure. 42b8-c1 begins by describing 'by how much (ὅσῳ)' a pleasure appears greater than it is, and that we must cut 'this' (τοῦτο) appearing but not being entity off, which is a natural

in this way due to our inability to focus on our own sensations appropriately when they are juxtaposed, so that the pleasure is felt as being larger than is warranted by the bodily process such a feeling registers.

IV. A Story of Corruption

We can now turn to the broader dialectical upshot promised at the outset: Socrates' use of the model of juxtaposition to subvert the appeal of hedonism. As we have seen, the argument from juxtaposition crucially deploys a two-stage model of the mind, in which the subject critically investigates the contents of perception to form judgments. A significant feature of this model is that it has the resources to explain doxastic error in terms of perceptual error. According to the painter-scribe analogy, the scribe writes in the book only 'when memory meets together with perceptions on the same thing and other things which are experiences of these' (39a1-3). Insofar as memories are recorded perceptions (34a10-11),[37] Socrates presents a theory of how doxastic content is based on perceptual content. Since juxtaposition is an example of problematic

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antecedent of the 'part' of the pleasure: that is, the 'part' is the mere appearance, so that the 'this' in τὸ ἐπὶ τούτῳ μέρος is the (non-existent) motion and the false pleasure its appearance. Another possibility is that the pleasure is taken in the appearance itself, in parallel to anticipation: see Bury 1973, note *ad loc*, Gosling 1975, *ad loc*, and Gosling and Taylor 1982, 444-447. Nonetheless, it is more natural to pair ὅσῳ with μέρος and so take the false pleasure as the appearance. On pleasure as representative appearance, cf. Fletcher 2022.

[37] But cf. 34b11 for the suggestion of non-perceptual memory

perceptual conditions that apply to our perception of pleasure, it is a powerful tool for explaining false judgments about pleasure.

This is precisely what Socrates does, I claim, when it comes to the value hedonists attribute to the class of pleasures they identify as 'greatest'.[38] He returns to these pleasures within a general account of mixed bodily pleasures, which he defines as the subject undergoing restorative and destructive experiences at the same time (ἅμα, 46c6-7), such as a sick person who is hot while shivering or cold while sweating. In such cases, the pleasures and pains come in relative quantities, that is, equal or unequal amounts. For example, scratching an itch, or using a hot metal to treat a skin condition, involves a mixture where the pain is greater than the pleasure (46d-e). The greatest pleasures, by contrast, involve the preponderance of pleasure over pain:

> So, whenever, in all such cases as when more pleasure is mixed in, the element of pain in the mixture tickles and produces a gentle irritation, but the predominance of greater pleasure pouring in exerts itself and sometimes produces leaping,

[38] Davidson 1990, 362, Russell 2005, 192, and Wolfsdorf 2012, 87 gesture at this view, though there are areas of disagreement with what I defend here (e.g., the significance of time). Delcomminette 2006, 410-412 comes close but rejects it, on the grounds that a hedonist can take refuge in the superficial reality of subjective experience. For Delcomminette, only the concession that some pleasures are mixtures of pleasure and pain convinces the hedonist otherwise (cf. 437-8; cf. Waterfield 1983, 103n1). However, it is unclear why the same point about subjective reality would not apply to mixtures (cf. Fletcher 2018a, 38: 'the mixed pleasures do not lead to a subjectively bad life'). On the value of reality in relation to hedonism in the *Philebus*, see also Evans 2008, 106, Marcuse 1968, 177, and Russell 2005, 192.

> bringing about all sorts of colors, shapes, and breathings, it gives the person every disturbance and makes him shout with foolishness.[39] (47a3-9)
>
> And it makes him say about himself, and another person [about him], that by enjoying these pleasures he is, as it were, dying; and indeed, he pursues these pleasures constantly and by all means the more intemperate and unwise he is, and in fact calls these greatest (μεγίστας) and counts as the happiest the one who lives among them as much as possible.[40] (47b2-7)

That is, in 47a3-9 Socrates describes certain mixed pleasures involving an 'element of pain', which 'tickles and produces a gentle irritation', experienced in contrast to the 'the predominance of greater pleasure'. The result of the predominance of pleasure is that the subject turns different colors and shapes, changes their breathing, and in general has 'every disturbance', so that they will 'shout with foolishness'. This is plausibly a case of juxtaposed pleasure and pain: mixed bodily pleasure in general, we have seen, involves the simultaneous experience of restorative and destructive processes, and here Socrates picks out a specific type of such simultaneous

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[39] οὐκοῦν ὁπόταν αὖ πλείων ἡδονὴ κατὰ <τὰ> τοιαῦτα πάντα συμμειχθῇ, τὸ μὲν ὑπομεμειγμένον τῆς λύπης γαργαλίζει τε καὶ ἠρέμα ἀγανακτεῖν ποιεῖ, τὸ δ᾽ αὖ τῆς ἡδονῆς πολὺ πλέον ἐγκεχυμένον συντείνει τε καὶ ἐνίοτε πηδᾶν ποιεῖ, καὶ παντοῖα μὲν χρώματα, παντοῖα δὲ σχήματα, παντοῖα δὲ πνεύματα ἀπεργαζόμενον πᾶσαν ἔκπληξιν καὶ βοὰς μετὰ ἀφροσύνης ἐνεργάζεται.

[40] καὶ λέγειν τε, ὦ ἑταῖρε, αὐτόν τε περὶ ἑαυτοῦ ποιεῖ καὶ ἄλλον ὡς ταύταις ταῖς ἡδοναῖς τερπόμενος οἷον ἀποθνῄσκει: καὶ ταύτας γε δὴ παντάπασιν ἀεὶ μεταδιώκει τοσούτῳ μᾶλλον ὅσῳ ἂν ἀκολαστότερός τε καὶ ἀφρονέστερος ὢν τυγχάνῃ, καὶ καλεῖ δὴ μεγίστας ταύτας, καὶ τὸν ἐν αὐταῖς ὅτι μάλιστ᾽ ἀεὶ ζῶντα εὐδαιμονέστατον καταριθμεῖται.

experience based on a precise configuration of the amounts of pleasure and pain. Moreover, his point is about the unique consequences of having pleasure and pain simultaneously: changes in the body and in the felt experience of one's own body.

47b2-7 extends these consequences to the agent's *self-understanding*. The person enjoying these mixed pleasures names them 'greatest' and 'counts' (καταριθμεῖται) anyone 'living among them' as the 'happiest' (εὐδαιμονέστατον, 46b6-7). The account I defended previously gives theoretical significance to this transition: the subject goes from a *perceptual* awareness to a *judgment*, that is, from *experiencing* the greatest pleasures to picking them out as such and attributing a certain nature to them. Moreover, this movement should be understood as a reconstruction of paradigmatic hedonist reasoning. For example, the subject's esteem for *living* (ζῶντα) among the greatest pleasures (46b7) echoes Philebus' initial position that pleasure is best for *living creatures* (ζῴοις, 11b5); the same subject's belief that such living is the 'happiest' is arguably an answer to the very contest between pleasure and knowledge, that is, the competition between two states of soul for the power of rendering a *life happy* (ἕξιν ψυχῆς καὶ διάθεσιν…τὴν δυναμένην…τὸν βίον εὐδαίμονα παρέχειν, 11d-4-6; cf. 32e9-33b9 and Davidson 1990, 369, Delcomminette 2006, 438, and Irwin 1995, 330).

But Socrates' account of the greatest pleasures undermines this reasoning in at least two ways. First, he associates the activities underlying extreme mixed bodily pleasures emerge with vice: greater pleasures 'exceeding by intensity and extent' (τῷ σφόδρα δὲ καὶ τῷ μᾶλλον ὑπερεχούσας) occur in the 'hubristic life' (ὕβρει… βίῳ) rather than the 'temperate life' (τῷ σώφρονι βίῳ, 45d2-5). Protarchus proposes that temperate people obey the Delphic saying, 'nothing too much', whereas the 'intense pleasure' of the 'unwise and hubristic' (ἀφρόνων τε καὶ ὑβριστῶν) brings them to 'madness' and 'shrieking' (45e2-4), as 47a3-9 amplifies, and it is

agreed that these pleasures and pains come to be 'in some defect (πονηρίᾳ) of the soul and body, but not in virtue' (45e5-7). This clearly echoes Socrates' initial claim that some pleasures are intemperate and foolish (12d1-6), as well as his claim that Aphrodite removes our excess (ὕβριν) and badness (πονηρίαν) regarding pleasure, 'since there is no limit in any of the pleasures or of their satisfaction', by putting 'law and order, which have limit, in them' (26b7-10).

However, this alone is not an adequate argument against hedonism. It seems that when Socrates and Protarchus agree to the intemperate and ignorant nature of the extreme mixed bodily pleasures, there is some background, unargued consensus that the activities vaguely described in this passage are bad. The language of wild bodily changes, and the invocation of *hubris*, suggest that sex is at least a major concern,[41] which Protarchus appears to confirm when he later associates the greatest pleasures with τἀφροδίσια (65c6). But notice that this is compatible with Protarchus' defense of pleasure against Socrates' charge of vice at the beginning of the discussion, namely, that intemperate and foolish pleasures are 'from opposite things, Socrates, but are not themselves opposed to each other' (εἰσὶ μὲν γὰρ ἀπ᾽ ἐναντίων, ὦ Σώκρατες, αὗται πραγμάτων, οὐ μὴν αὐταί γε ἀλλήλαις ἐναντίαι, 12d7-9), that is, Protarchus could claim

[41] Specifically, a form of sexuality associated with pederastic culture, political competition, and the desire for humiliating domination: see Arruzza 2019, 139-183, Fisher 1992, 86-150, and Ludwig 2002, 171-172. Fisher 1992, 478 discusses *Philebus* 26b and 45d-e as a continuation of Plato's understanding of *hubris* as 'that force that creates that state in the soul where excessive, and "maddening" sexual pleasures rule over reason', also noting the political connection with 'the new aristocracy'. Davidson 1990, 370 and Hampton 1990, 66 point to *Gorgias* 494c-e.

here, as he does initially, that with the greatest pleasures, the *source* is vicious, but the *pleasure* is not.

Instead, to explain the success of Socrates' argument in converting Protarchus, we should look to a second thread in the dialectic, which Protarchus suggests when he calls them 'preposterous' (ἀλαζονίστατον, 65c5) and emphasizes that they *seem* (δοκοῦσιν) greatest (65c6-7). As a type of juxtaposed pleasure and pain, extreme mixed bodily pleasures provide the perceptual basis for misrepresentation, that is, the subject perceptually misrepresents the bodily motions causing the perceptions, as I argued above. It is plausible that *this* is why Protarchus accepts that the extreme mixed bodily pleasures are *intrinsically* defective: he realizes that the types of activities that give rise to them, because they are simultaneously destructive and restorative, cause perceptual illusions. Indeed, this is an attractive strategy on Socrates' part, since 47b2-7's emphasis on how the subject takes their experience at face value and forms a self-understanding shows that the hedonist worldview rests on an experience shot through with illusion. Thus, Socrates, on my reconstruction, accomplishes a dialectically impressive feat: he takes the evidence at the core of paradigmatic hedonist reasoning and shows that the conditions of its possibility at the same time block the inference the hedonist thinks it warrants.[42]

[42] One might object that this assumes that pleasant experience represents something as *good* or *fine*; cf. Frede 2006, 447, Marechal 2022, Moss 2006, and Russell 2005, 185. But if so, then it is not simply the concession that the feeling is quantitatively illusory, but the moral content of the perception, that is doing the critical work. We should note, however, that the inference from the great feeling of pleasure to the hedonistic worldview could be explained as a consequence of socialization to treat pleasure and pain as normative categories. Plato often associates hedonism

By way of conclusion, we may note an implication of Socrates' argument. Since the so-called greatest pleasures involve a perceptual, *pre*-doxastic form of misrepresentation, there is no possibility of the agent self-correcting, that is, it is not conceivable that someone could 'fix' their own awareness. The defect is not at the level of rational persuasion, but perceptual experience. Thus, Socrates develops a methodological critique of hedonism by showing that it is based on the wrong *kind* of evidence: perception of one's own bodily conditions cannot, in principle, be a reliable guide to living well (cf. 67b). However, this is not to say that we lack all agency when it comes to dealing with extreme mixed bodily pleasure. The discussion between Socrates and Protarchus is itself the counterexample: this conversation demonstrates that it is possible to acquire knowledge of the true nature of what the hedonist calls the greatest pleasures, and to use that knowledge as an instrument for leading a better life. Knowing that these pleasures are misleading gives us a reason to avoid the activities that cause them. This knowledge does not affect our experience, but it does give us a way of dealing with potential sources of badness in our lives. Notably, this is also an epistemic justification for the badness of the activities viewed as intemperate and foolish. Their intemperance is a reflection of the perceptual deception they involve: just as they give pleasure that appears greater without end, so we come, by pursuing that illusory pleasure, to pursue actions without limit. They are foolish because being caught up in the activity itself requires being in the grips of illusion; valuing it over the course of a life is the

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with social position and political ambition. Regardless, 47a3-b7 describes the hedonist's *own* thought process: it is flawed because what *they* take to be the source of pleasure's value is an illusion.

doxastic output of such deception. Thus, a story of epistemic corruption internal to the mind of the agent underlies the ethical inadequacy of the view that pleasure is the good.[43]

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[43] Cf. the need for an 'art of measurement' to 'save' our lives in *Protagoras* 357b (see also *Gorgias* 508a) and the dialogue's own theme of needing knowledge to govern pleasure (e.g., *Philebus* 21a-e, 26b, 63d-64e; cf. Delcomminette 2006, 410-412, Frede 2006, 447-448, Hampton 1990, 62-63, Moss 2006, 504n3, and Warren 2014, 117-128).

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