Whenever our loftiest insights inadvertently reach the ears of people who are not constituted or destined to hear them they must—and should!—sound foolish, or in some circumstances even criminal.

Frederick Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*

University of Alberta

‘Criminal’ Utterances: An Interpretation of Plato’s *Lesser Hippias*

by

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A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

Political Science

Spring 2010
Edmonton, Alberta

Examining Committee

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To my family

Abstract

If wonder is the beginning of philosophy, then Plato's *Lesser Hippias* is not wanting in this regard. In it, we encounter a Socrates that appears to be very different than the one we meet in other Platonic dialogues for this Socrates puts forth strange and terrible views. Indeed, he seems to argue that the liar and truthful man are one and the same and that to do injustice voluntarily is better than to do it involuntarily. Needless to say, the unfolding of these arguments leave many perplexed. Yet since Socrates ends by doubting his own conclusion, explaining that it was the necessary result of the argument, we are invited to re-read the dialogue with an eye to examining the steps of the argument in hopes of making sense of this perplexing piece of work.

Acknowledgements

Allhumdulillahillaze bi-naemateehi tatimus salehatu

I am fortunate that there are many people who have contributed to the completion of this project.

I am blessed that my extended family is too numerous to name and I thank those who have helped me along the way. Thank you also to friends in Edmonton and Cleveland, and those who have moved away. From phone calls, prayers, and simple good company, I would have been unable to get through these years without your support. I would especially like to extend my appreciation to my in-laws for their well wishes and patience throughout. Thank you to my little guy, Zakir. Whenever I felt discouraged, all it took was holding you in my arms and seeing you smile to uplift me, reminding me of what was most important and thus worth striving for. Know that you were my inspiration to finish this thesis and it is my hope that it will serve as an example to you that "the beautiful things are difficult." Thank you to my brother Aatif. Aatif, from all of those countless hours of editing, numerous emails and international phone calls, this thesis could not have come to fruition without your help. I will not forget our late night readings when you painfully labored through editing my thesis examining everything from grammar to content and all for a token cup of hot chocolate. Thank you for not only believing in my abilities but also for making the completion of this thesis a reality. Your serious integrity matched by your light humor and quick wit adds much joy in my life. Wasif Hussain, my little brother, thank you for reading portions of this thesis and not only offering your insights but also your constant encouragement. In fact it was often your tenacity, determination and ability to get things done that motivated me to finish. As you come into your own, you continue to inspire me and I want to thank you for that. My mother, Abida Hussain, how do I begin to express my gratitude to a woman who gave me life and nurtured me ever since? Mom, thank you for your patience, forgiveness, and always trying to understand this process by allowing me the space and time that I needed to complete it. I want you to know that it was your prayers and unshakeable belief in me that got me through the most challenging of times. To my father, Mohammed Yousuf Hussain, Dad, thank you for introducing me to my first book and igniting, fueling and directing my curiosity. You made me wonder about the world and then encouraged and gave me confidence to search for the answers. You revealed to me the endless possibilities of the life of the mind, for that I will always be indebted to you. Thank you to my beloved husband, Shazam. To think that our first year of marriage was the beginning of my Masters degree, and now (many, many years later) we have finally finished. It is the simple truth that without you, I could never have completed this goal. Thank you for your unwavering love, and for always laboring to cultivate what is best in me, strengthening, enlivening and nurturing my virtues and uprooting my vices. I have grown much in the last few years and my life is fuller, richer, and more complete because of you.

I have had the good fortune not only to have the support of my family but also to be surrounded by wonderful friends. Rob De Luca, from the very beginning, I have

admired your integrity and the intensity that you bring to the study of political philosophy and I thank you for that. David Verbitsky, thank you for your support. From early discussions to early editing, you have been so generous with your time and effort. Rory McGovern, your excitement and joy have invigorated me by allowing me to relive the experiences of my own introduction to political philosophy and for that I express my gratitude to you. Rizwan Hussainaly, not only did you fuel my passion for these studies further but you also rekindled it when it began to dwindle. Your humor, genuine interest and thoughtfulness all inspire. Thank you for being my personal cheerleader. I would like to thank Sheldon Pelech, my fellow frolicker. Oh how we love our gardens! Some of what is best in this thesis is because you encouraged me to push the limits and never settle with a simple question mark which led me to deeper, more perplexing—and ultimately more pleasurable—puzzles. Andrea Kowalchuk, I always look forward to our conversations which uplift my soul and give me much to ponder. Natalie Elliot, I am indebted to you for your invaluable insights into the text and serving as a true dialogical partner. Without you, I would not have been able to articulate the major threads of this thesis; without you, I would not have had the motivation to finish this thesis in the first place for your determination and persistence have always served as an example. *I extend my gratitude to Laura Field—a constant and dear friend.* Laura, from proofreading and offering comments, criticisms, and insights, much of what is best in this thesis I owe to you. Through our relationship, you have enabled me to experience some of the highest ideals of friendship.

I would like to extend my gratitude to the political science department at the University of Alberta, especially Lois Harder, for being supportive and understanding throughout this process. Professor Michael Lynn-George, thank you for being a member on my examining committee and being so generous with your time and comments. Your passion for the classics and Homer in particular are contagious. Thank you for allowing me to listen to your lectures, which introduced me to a new way of examining these wonderful texts. Your knowledge of the Greek language and your ability to relay the depth and richness of it to your students is much appreciated. I have enjoyed our many conversations about the *Iliad* and life in general. To my supervisor and dear teacher Heidi Studer, you embody what is most remarkable and wonderful about an educator, for throughout this process you never cheated me the joy of discovery but rather artfully guided me towards it. From my undergraduate days to the completion of this project, you always pointed my gaze towards the high and enabled me to see things from more than one perspective. Thank you for your relentless support, understanding and patience. Professor Leon Craig, I cannot justly articulate all that you have done for me, and so in the following (inspired by *Lesser Hippias*) I voluntarily choose to commit an injustice. Simply put--you redirected the course of my life. You have risen my soul to experience heights which I never imagined possible. You have introduced me to the greatest and most bountiful of treasures, without which I would have remained impoverished. And because of this you have enriched not only my life but also the lives of those around me. Thank you for your rare and awe-inspiring magnanimity.

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Introduction

It is said that nothing else is the principle beginning of philosophy but wonder.[1] An example commonly used to illustrate a perplexing experience is that of the stick in water. When one places a stick in water, then it appears to bend but one trusts that it is not bending. Through this experience, we recognize that our senses deceive us and things may not really be as they appear. Although there is a distinction to be made between the appearances and the reality of a thing, this is not to say that the appearances are severed or altogether separate from the object that is casting them. Indeed, a full accounting of the phenomenon must also explain why the appearances seem the way they do. Systematically trying to account for these false appearances may lead to one's first investigation into nature, or natural philosophy. The distinction between the appearances of a thing and the thing itself is not only found in the natural world. Perhaps even before we recognize that our senses deceive us, we have already experienced an all too common psychological phenomenon, namely the lie. Our experience of creating a lie, or being lied to, leads us to recognize that there is a distinction to be made between what people say or reveal and what they hide. In other words, one's speech and deeds may not be a simple representation of one's intentions. Even though a person's speeches and deeds are manifestations of their soul, they may not be complete or whole. Reflecting upon those instances, and systematically trying to account for how a person appears and their possible inner motives, may lead to an investigation into human matters, or psychology or political philosophy. From the natural to the psychological, then, accounting for the relationship between appearances and reality is vital to understanding our surroundings and ourselves.

Turning to our dialogue, Plato's *Lesser Hippias*, which has the traditional subtitle "On the Lie," we see that nothing is quite what it appears to be, or at least what we first expect it to be.[2] First and foremost, we encounter a Socrates who in appearance is very different than the one we meet in other Platonic dialogues. The Socrates of *Lesser Hippias* puts forth strange and terrible views: he seems to argue that the truthful man and

[1] Plato, *Theatetus*, ed. and trans. Seth Benardete (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), 155d.
[2] All passages quoted from the *Lesser Hippias* will be from James Leake's translation in *The Roots of Political Philosophy*, ed. by Thomas Pangle (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1987) pg. 281-99. Any variations will be noted. References to the *Lesser Hippias* will be noted in parentheses within the text. All other references, unless noted, will be in footnotes.

liar are the same, and that to do injustice voluntarily is better than to do injustice involuntarily.[3] Moreover, Socrates, a man who is most often characterized by doubt and the profession of ignorance, suddenly believes very strongly in this seemingly perverse position.

The namesake and primary interlocutor of our dialogue, Hippias, also comes to sight as very different from what we might expect. Historical sources explain that he was one of the most illustrious and renowned sophists of his time. Sophists formally were men who traveled across Greece claiming to be capable of teaching 'virtue' to those who were willing to pay. Often, this 'virtue' entailed teaching young aristocratic men with political ambitions how to rise to political prominence, and as such frequently such teachings focused on the ability to manipulate speech. Aristophanes, in *The Clouds*, alludes to such sophistical skill as the ability to make the weaker speech appear to be stronger and the stronger speech appear weaker.[4] Although there are a number of dialogues which depict Socrates' conversations with various sophists, Hippias appears in the Platonic corpus more often than any other sophist. In fact, two of the dialogues are named after Hippias—our dialogue, *Lesser Hippias* is paired with the longer *Greater Hippias*. Hippias also appears in *Protagoras*.[5] Given Hippias' frequent appearances in Plato's works, we might expect him to be a figure of real substance and importance. Yet, a cursory reading of any of the dialogues makes his prominence perplexing, for Hippias hardly seems worth a second thought.

In *Greater Hippias*, we often find Hippias contradicting himself, and even unable to have abstract discussions and frequently failing to derive general definitions from particular examples.[6] Throughout *Lesser Hippias*, Hippias neglects to make proper

[3] Cf. Plato, *Crito*, trans. Thomas G. West and Grace S. West (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1984), 49a4-c.

[4] Aristophanes, *The Clouds*, trans. Thomas G. West and Grace S. West (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1984), 883-885. Strepsiades requests that his son be instructed in two speeches, "…the stronger, whatever it may be, and the weaker, which argues unjust things and overturns the stronger."

[5] Cf. Plato, *Protagoras*, see 315bc, 337c-338b, 347a.

[6]The translation of the *Greater Hippias* that is consulted is David R. Sweet's in *The Roots of Political Philosophy*, pgs. 307-339. *Greater Hippias* presents a wealth of matter for contemplation, ranging from the differences between regimes to attempts at defining 'what is the beautiful.' There is little doubt that much can be illuminated in each dialogue by trying to see how they fit together, though fully uncovering the relationship between the two dialogues first requires an understanding of each dialogue separately, a daunting but promising task. This thesis is less ambitious but (I feel) no less daunting: it is an attempt to

distinctions between important terms. When Socrates points to subtle but crucial nuances, Hippias seems oblivious and answers with complete disregard for such subtleties. Yet, in *Greater Hippias*, Hippias takes much pride in his ability to choose words and order them to construct powerful speeches.[7] There is hardly any evidence that Hippias has the ability that the sophists were famous (or rather infamous) for—tricky speech. Instead Hippias seems to be utterly vain and full of boasts that seem so obviously vacuous that one may come to the conclusion that there is nothing more to the man.

Now although the sophists were known for their ability to contrive sentences artfully and to make the weaker speech appear to be the stronger, through the course of our dialogue it is more often Socrates who seems to exhibit this sophistical skill. In order to argue that the liar and the truthful man are one and the same, Socrates seems to conflate the capacity to know the truth and to know lies with actually choosing to tell the truth or choosing to lie. In other words, he conflates knowledge with action. Moreover, Socrates seems deliberately to lead Hippias into ambiguous terrain by using vague words. For instance, he seems to use the word 'good' equivocally throughout the dialogue; he implies that voluntary action is good, and that such action only entails the intention to do something and the ability to carry it out, regardless of whether this intention is just or unjust.

On the other hand, it is the sophist, Hippias, who upholds the convictions of the common man. Faced with the question of human virtue as it relates to the better Homeric hero, Achilles or Odysseus, Hippias chooses Achilles. In explaining his choice, he praises honesty and simplicity as cardinal virtues. As a travelling teacher of virtue, he does not argue anything that would be deemed novel or radical; rather, his judgments appear to be nothing more than an echoing of childhood education. And regardless of the logical development of the argument, something with which he agrees at every step, Hippias is unwilling to concede the necessary conclusion. Thus in more than one sense, Hippias fails to fit the mold of a sophist, or teacher of tricky speech while Socrates fails to fit the mold of a philosopher, or pursuer of wisdom.

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offer interpretive insights on *Lesser Hippias,* and will be drawing details from *Greater Hippias* only to the extent that they directly elucidate matters that are raised in our dialogue.

[7] In *Greater Hippias*, Hippias explains, "For I have an altogether beautifully constructed speech about these pursuits which is well composed in many ways, especially its choice of words." 286a5-7.

Readers and commentators have felt so uncomfortable with Socrates' perplexing conclusion—that one who commits injustice voluntarily is better than the one who does so involuntarily—that they have often sought reasons to explain it away. In his introduction to the dialogue, Benjamin Jowett judged, "the sophistry of Socrates is more palpable and unblushing, and also more unmeaning."[8] Huntington Cairns and Edith Hamilton explain that *Lesser Hippias* "is inferior to all the others."[9] Such commentators are the norm—they do not doubt the authenticity of *Lesser Hippias* but try to judge it as nascent, less developed and thus a regrettable but more excusable part of Plato's intellectual development. It is likely that many who read *Lesser Hippias,* with its subtitle "On the Lie," would be tempted to judge it as counterfeit; were it not for Aristotle's mention of it in his *Metaphysics,* the dialogue would surely have been deemed by many as a perverse forgery.[10]

Such reactions to the dialogue are themselves worthy of consideration, for they reveal the readers' own sense of repugnance at witnessing unjust actions. In this case, we are struck by the seeming injustice of Socrates' arguing for such a reprehensible position. Yet, to be fair, at the end of the dialogue, Socrates himself says that he cannot agree that the better man is one who commits injustice voluntarily but that this is nevertheless the necessary result of the argument. Earlier, Socrates explains that the cause of his believing so strongly in this position is that he suffers from a seizure, an epileptic fit of his mind. He attributes the cause of the sickness to be the way in which the argument has developed. From both such statements on the part of Socrates, we see that Plato implicitly invites us to reconsider the arguments and judge for ourselves how it is that they come to this repugnant conclusion. With this task in mind, let us turn to the dialogue.

[8] Benjamin Jowett, *Plato, Complete Works,* ed. John M. Cooper (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1997). pp. 922- 923.
[9] Edith Hamilton and Huntington Cairns, eds. *The Collected Dialogues of Plato* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1961) p. 200. Quoted from Laurence Lampert's, "Socrates' defense of Polytropic Odysseus: Lying and Wrong-doing in Plato's *Lesser Hippias*" in *Review of Politics,* Vol. 64, No.2, Spring 2002, pp. 231-259.
[10] Aristotle's *Metaphysics,* 1025a6

Chapter One: (363a-364b3)

Plato's *Lesser Hippias* begins abruptly. The first to speak is Eudicus: "But you, Socrates, why are you silent after Hippias has made an exhibition of such great things? Why do you not either join in praising any of the things that were said, or even refute something, if it does not seem to you to have been finely spoken? Especially since we alone are left who would particularly make claim to share in the pursuit of philosophy." (363a)[11] Hearing only the latter part of the opening remark, it is as though we are latecomers to a conversation that has already begun. From Eudicus' remarks we surmise that Hippias has recently finished giving a speech and that some of the listeners are surrounding him, reacting to his presentation. Socrates, though part of that group, remains silent. Dissatisfied with his silence, Eudicus encourages Socrates to speak.

This peculiar aspect of the dialogue—its beginning midway through a remark—makes us wonder about what has just been spoken. If we turn to *Greater Hippias,* the other platonic dialogue that bears Hippias' name, in search for an answer, we are soon vindicated. There we not only learn that the conversation in *Greater Hippias* takes place before the one in *Lesser Hippias,* but also gain other key pieces of information which dramatically situate our dialogue.[12] Although we cannot be certain of how many people are listening to the conversation that ensues in *Lesser Hippias*, we do know that there are three people who speak.[13] Two of whom, Hippias and Socrates, were the only discussants in *Greater Hippias*. In that dialogue, Socrates remarks on how long it had been since he saw Hippias. After some discursive meandering, Hippias explains that he is in Athens because Eudicus—the third and pivotal speaker in our dialogue—invited him to present his famous speech. In *Greater Hippias,* Hippias relays the subject matter of this speech:

> Yes, by Zeus, Socrates, and just recently I gained a great reputation [in Lacedaemonia] regarding the beautiful pursuits by describing in detail what a young man ought to pursue. For I have an altogether beautifully constructed speech about these pursuits which is well composed in various ways, especially in

[11] Exhibition, refers to exhibition speeches, translates as *epideixeis*. According to David Sweet, "In the later fifth century these were ceremonial orations, as distinguished from speeches given before judicial or legislative bodies." The sophists use *epideixeis* to demonstrate their skills. See, note 7, p. 309.

[12] In Laurence Lampert's article, "Socrates' defense of Polytropic Odysseus: Lying and Wrong-doing in Plato's *Lesser Hippias*," he explains the important political events and the historical setting to which the drama of the Hippias dialogues unfold.

[13] At 369c, Hippias states "you may counter argument with argument, to the effect that the other is better, and *these people* here will know more fully who speaks better." (Emphasis added) This provides evidence that there are more people listening than the three who are named.

> its choice of words. The ostensible occasion for the speech and the beginning of it is something like this. When Troy was captured, the speech recounts how Neoptolemus asked Nestor what sorts of pursuits were beautiful, pursuits that would make a young man who practiced them most highly reputed. After this Nestor speaks and purposes to him very many things that are lawful and altogether beautiful. This speech I gave there as an exhibition, and the day after tomorrow in Pheidostratus' school I am also going to exhibit it here, as well as many other things worth hearing, because Eudicus the son of Apemantus has asked me to. So be there yourself, and bring others who are able, when they hear, to judge what is said. (*Greater Hippias*, 286a3-c)

Lesser Hippias begins after this promised speech is delivered and although we never get to hear the speech itself, we know from the above that part of it deals with a crucial political concern—namely, the education of the youth. In fact the theme of education is a reoccurring one in the dialogue. Our dialogue takes place in Athens, presumably in the vicinity of, or in, the school of Pheidostratus—a suitable place given the themes that emerge for discussion, and the lessons gained therein.

Hippias is here because of Eudicus. In this sense, Eudicus (whose name means "good justice") becomes the central figure who reunites Hippias and Socrates.[14] Whereas Eudicus is only mentioned in *Greater Hippias*, in *Lesser Hippias* he is an active participant who, at a key point, revives the discussion (373b, 373c).

From Eudicus' opening question, and from what we learn about him in *Greater Hippias*, we can discern certain elements of his character. Since Eudicus seeks out and invites Hippias to Athens, we gather that he enjoys listening to speeches and also has enough wealth and/or political influence to arrange Hippias' visit. Eudicus' request is also noteworthy in that he arranges the speech to be exhibited in Pheidostratus' school. By doing so, he chooses a public setting as opposed to a more private one, such as his home.[15] This public display, combined with Eudicus' interest in the subject matter of the speech (the noble and lawful pursuits that a young man should pursue) may indicate that he is civically minded, and perhaps that he entertains political aspirations. At the very least, his efforts reveal a tacit recognition of the importance of education.

[14] That Eudicus' name means 'good justice' is probably not coincidental; his role may have allegorical importance since, as we will see, the dialogue will bring forth questions on the relationship between justice and goodness.
[15] The conversation that Socrates has with Hippias in Plato's *Protagoras* takes place in a home.

Even though Eudicus arranges for Hippias' speech to be delivered at the school, he judges that the conversation that he is now initiating, the conversation that results in our dialogue, is somehow more private in nature. This brings us to another essential aspect of Eudicus' character—we glimpse how he characterizes himself. According to Eudicus, it is especially fitting for Socrates to speak now "since", as Eudicus explains, "we alone are left who would particularly make claim to share in the pursuit of philosophy" (363a). Eudicus hereby deems himself to belong to a special class of people, those who pursue philosophy, or are 'lovers of wisdom.' From what Eudicus says, we gather that he believes this elite class includes at least himself and Socrates; whether or not he includes Hippias is left uncertain.[16]

Eudicus wishes to hear Socrates' evaluation and, in this way, perhaps also to continue their discussion of what Eudicus judges to be 'such great things.' Socrates, not needing much convincing to engage with Hippias, neither praises nor refutes him; rather, he asks for clarification:

> Indeed Eudicus, there are some things, among those Hippias just now said about Homer, that I would ask him about with pleasure. For I used to hear from your father, Apemantus, that the *Iliad* of Homer is a more beautiful [noble] poem than the *Odyssey*, and more beautiful [noble] in the measure that Achilles is a better man than Odysseus; for he asserted that of these poems the one was composed about Odysseus, the other about Achilles. I would with pleasure inquire about that, then, if Hippias is willing—what his opinion is of these two men and which he asserts to have been better, for he has exhibited to us many other things of every kind, both about other poets and about Homer (363b-c).

At first glance, Socrates' question appears to be a straightforward literary one: whom did Homer represent as better, Achilles or Odysseus? However, this seemingly simple query brings a great number of considerations to the fore. In order to grasp the question's greater significance, we need to consider the power of the literary arts, and especially their role in educating the young.

[16] As we shall see, whether or not Eudicus includes Hippias is important because it may have implications for Eudicus' understanding of philosophy. If Eudicus includes sophists in the elite category of those who share in the pursuit of philosophy, he is either unaware of the distinction between philosophy and sophistry, or he does not know how to apply the distinction in a manner that enables him to differentiate Hippias' activity from Socrates'. This distinction and larger question, namely what it means to philosophize, is further complicated by the issue of appearing to be something which one is not. Therefore, from the outset it is ambiguous as to whether Hippias is identified as a philosopher.

In *Republic* when formulating the education of the most important warrior class, Socrates considers the tales that young children are told. Regarding the powerful effect of poetry, he asks,

> Don't you know that the beginning is the most important part of every work and that this is especially so with anything young and tender? For at that stage it's most plastic, and each thing assimilates itself to the model whose stamp anyone wishes to give to it.[17]

Socrates moves on to explain that,

> A young thing can't judge what is hidden sense and what is not; but what he takes into his opinions at that age has a tendency to become hard to eradicate and unchangeable. Perhaps it's for this reason that we must do everything to insure that what they hear first, with respect to virtue, be the finest told tales for them to hear.[18]

Clearly, for Plato, the education of the youth is of utmost significance. And among the Greek poets perhaps no one was as powerful as Homer. It is not surprising, therefore, that in *Republic*, in discussing the education curriculum, Socrates and his interlocutors contend with the poetry of Homer. The Homeric heroes were the exemplars of manly excellence and their deeds were celebrated in beautiful verses which were memorized, and then pleasurably recounted time and time again. In this way, Homer was vital in influencing what the Greeks believed to be virtuous and thus worthy of emulation. This helps us to understand why, even though Hippias has spoken about many things, Socrates focuses specifically on Homer and his depiction of heroes. We might further note that, of the Homeric heroes, Achilles held the most prominent place; the populace revered and loved him. From an early age, young men were impressed by his spirit and thereafter, aspired after his greatness. Achilles was depicted as a warrior of astounding courage, standing forthright and fearless in front of his enemies. He was loyal to his friends, demanded respect, and sought immortal glory on the brutal fields of battle. He was *the* model after which the youths would mold themselves. Accordingly, then, to call Achilles' worth into question, as Socrates does, is tantamount to questioning the dominant and prevailing view of virtue in Greece.

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[17] Plato's *Republic*, ed. and trans. Allan Bloom (New York: Basic Books, 1991), 377b.
[18] *Republic*, 378c-d.

Along with the content, the manner in which Socrates asks his question is noteworthy. He begins curiously by recalling Apemantus' judgment about ranking the relative merits on two Homeric masterpieces, the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. This serves a two-fold purpose. First, and more generally, it informs us that although Homer may have had a powerful influence over the Greeks insofar as he created the epic poetry that they were nurtured on, the interpreter of the poems is also of vital importance. Since poetry, and especially poetry which depicts heroes, is seminal in shaping the youth, the role of an educator must first and foremost deal with how they are represented. That is to say, the educator must consider how heroes are interpreted and presented to the youth. Secondly, the way in which Socrates asks his question reminds us that, in the case of Eudicus' childhood education, it was his father who interpreted the ancestral. Apemantus most likely nurtured his son on stories of Achilles from the *Iliad*. Because it implicates his formative education, Socrates' question (the one of who is the better man, Achilles or Odysseus) most likely resonates with Eudicus. By having Socrates refer to Apemantus explicitly as Eudicus' father, Plato introduces us to a veritable fourth 'character' in the dialogue: tradition and the conventional interpretation that it upholds. Apemantus' judgment, that Achilles is the more noble/beautiful (*kalos*) man and the *Iliad* the more noble/beautiful poem echoes the common Greek opinion.[19] Insofar as his father educated him with this view, Eudicus is the inheritor of it. Like Apemantus, tradition has a silent but important place in the dialogue—and in the background of any inquiry into human matters. By calling into question what Apemantus once said, Socrates may be leading us into a more fundamental examination of Greek education. As Plato has Socrates refer to this authoritative figure, he may be discreetly reminding us of the effect that tradition has on the present conversation.

With the reminder of a representative of the physically absent patriarch, we might well consider a prejudice in Apemantus' traditional view. Firstly, although Apemantus asserts that "of these poems the one was composed about Odysseus and, the other about Achilles"(363b6-7), when we read *Iliad* and *Odyssey* we see that both heroes have

[19] Explaining the translation of the term '*kalon*', in a note to *Republic*, Bloom writes, "The *kalon* is a crucial and ambiguous term in classical moral thought altogether, and we have no precise equivalent for it. It means, in the first place, fair or beautiful, and expresses nobility when qualifying speech or deed." Note 19, p. 442. He also refers readers to Seth Benardete's, "The Right, the True, and the Beautiful" *Glotta*, XLI (1963), pp. 54-62.

significant parts in both epics. In support of Apemantus' assumption, it could be argued that the protagonist in each poem is different and, thus each poem focuses on its respective hero. However, if it is a matter of truly understanding Achilles and Odysseus, nothing precludes that what we learn about the one character may help us better understand the other.[20] After all, we often learn a great deal about characters by studying their relationships with one another. This is true not only for understanding Achilles and Odysseus, but also for understanding the characters of our dialogue, Hippias and Socrates. Secondly, Socrates points to an implicit premise in Apemantus' logic, and perhaps his understanding. According to Apemantus the *Iliad* is a more beautiful/noble poem because Achilles is a better man than Odysseus. The assumption in Apemantus' reasoning is that the poem which centers on the better man is the more beautiful/noble poem. In other words, the poem that describes the good man is beautiful because it derives its beauty from depicting him. Such a conception seems to be founded upon a belief that there is a fundamental unity between good things and beautiful things, be it types of men or works of art. Whether this unity is always present is questionable.[21]

Apemantus' opinion hides the potential distinction between the good man and the beautiful man, or between the good poem and the beautiful poem. After all, we can readily see the problems that occur when attractive men are bad, or when good men appear repulsive. These problems, it seems, are exacerbated by the human ability to adorn things, whether it is the ability to dress beautifully or to speak beautifully. The latter, the skillful use of words, becomes especially pertinent to the question at hand. As we have mentioned, the effects of poetry can be powerful; they may form lasting impressions of our understanding of virtue. Yet the events that some poetry depicts may not be helpful in instilling virtue; in fact, some poetry may even encourage vice. Incidentally, recall that Hippias takes much pride in the way that his speech is *composed*, stating, "For I have an altogether beautifully constructed speech…which is well composed in various ways,

[20] To understand the characters we need to understand the totality of what Homer represents. Such synthetic understanding is neither obvious nor easy, hence not surprisingly it is uncommon and the results can run contrary to conventional opinions. And it is also noteworthy that whereas *Iliad* derives its title from describing Ilium, a city, *Odyssey* is based upon the name of Odysseus, an individual man.

[21] In our experiences there does seem to be a distinction between, on the one hand, what is good for us, and, on the other, what we find beautiful and thus are attracted to. Apemantus seems to be either unaware of this distinction, assuming that what is good will also be beautiful and that what is beautiful will also be good. Or he purposely collapses this distinction, believing that it is better to believe that what is good is always beautiful.

especially in its choice of words" (*Greater Hippias*, 286a7). We do witness that his speech is enjoyed by many because it receives much praise, adding to his great reputation (see *Greater Hippias*, 286a3 and *Lesser Hippias*, 363a3). Although Hippias boasts that his speech is well composed, he does not brag that his speech inculcates virtue or deals with grave political matters. Even though Hippias is silent about the importance of the subject matter of the speech, it is precisely this that Socrates wants to examine, and not how it has been constructed.

By asking Socrates whether or not Hippias' speech is *finely* (*kalos*) spoken, Eudicus implies that the beauty of the speech is the only or the most important criterion. Accordingly, Eudicus goes beyond his father's standard for judging speeches: whereas Apemantus mentions beauty and goodness, Eudicus mentions only beauty. In this way, we witness Eudicus either collapse the distinction between beauty and goodness, assuming that what is beautiful will be also be good, or makes beauty the only relevant criterion in judging speeches. Unlike Eudicus, Socrates is able to remind and add the criterion of goodness by mentioning Apemantus' judgment.[22]

Returning to Socrates' question, we notice a phrase that moderates the radical nature of this investigation. That is, Socrates "*used* to hear" Apemantus say which implies that his voice is either silent, not heard all that often anymore, or that he has changed his judgment. This may signal a transformation in traditional Greek education; the climate of Athens may be changing and with this the interpretation of the ancestral may no longer remain the same. And although the patriarch's voice may be changing there is another voice which is beginning to speak louder. Apemantus "used to" speak his judgment on Homer, but now it is Hippias who is doing the talking; by offering his interpretation, adorned in a beautifully constructed speech, he is becoming the surrogate educator of young men.[23] This shift in educators may also mark a shift in the way that the

[22] Although Socrates examines one part of Apemantus' judgment—who the better man is—he seems to neglect the other part—which is the more beautiful poem. This is never addressed explicitly which leaves us with many unanswered questions. Does Socrates share Apemantus' view that the poem about the better man will be the more beautiful poem? If, however, Odysseus proves to be the better man, it would then follow that the *Odyssey* is a more beautiful poem, yet the only poem that is discussed in the dialogue is the *Iliad*; the *Odyssey* is mentioned only in passing (here, 363b, and by Hippias at 365c). Can Odysseus be the better man yet *Iliad* be a more beautiful poem?

[23] This development is also cleverly mirrored in the speech within a speech, where Neoptolemus asks Nestor for fatherly advice, now that Achilles, in the depths of Hades, seems no longer to speak.

Greeks are beginning to understand their heroes, which may be why such an investigation is now pertinent.

Since there is another person educating, it would be appropriate to wonder how they are interpreting Homer: is Hippias saying something different, offering a novel view, or upholding the conventional understanding of virtue? If the interpreter has changed, the message may also be changing. Indeed, Hippias has not only spoken about Achilles and Odysseus, but "he has exhibited to [them] many other things of every kind both about other poets and about Homer" (363c). What Apemantus meant in proclaiming Achilles to be a better man remains unstated, and it is this part of the question that Socrates wants Hippias to address, beginning with "what his opinion is of these two men (Achilles and Odysseus) and which he asserts to have been better" (363b-c). Accordingly, Socrates is inquiring not only into Hippias' opinion about Achilles and Odysseus, but he also wants Hippias to reach a judgment about who is better. And any judgment of who is *better* will first rely on an idea of who is best. The importance of this question cannot be over emphasized—it is a question about human excellence, a concern for anyone who cares about the cultivation of what is highest in our nature, and most certainly a concern for those who educate the young.

We see that Eudicus is just as eager, if not more, to continue their discussion after Socrates' remarks. Without even asking Hippias, Eudicus immediately reassures Socrates that Hippias will answer. Then, on behalf of Socrates, Eudicus turns to Hippias and presses him for a response—will Hippias comply with Socrates' request or not? (363c). Much is riding on how Hippias answers Socrates' question, for Hippias' very reputation as a fine speaker may be at stake. Yet, far from viewing Socrates' question as threatening, Hippias seizes it as an opportunity to showcase his own accolades. Postponing answering the question of the better Homeric hero, Hippias takes a moment to explain what makes him important:

> I would certainly be acting strangely (or "terrible" *deinon*), Eudicus—I, who always come up from my home in Elis to Olympia to the solemn assembly of the Greeks when the Olympic festivals are held, and there present myself in the temple to speak on whatever anyone may wish from among those things I have prepared for exhibition and to answer whatever anyone who wishes should ask—were I now to flee the questioning of Socrates. (363d)

Hippias implies that, in light of his past honors—speaking before the Greek assembly in the sacred temple—Socrates' question seems simple enough.

Commenting on Hippias' confidence, Socrates states, "Blessed indeed, Hippias, is your experience, if at each Olympiad you have reached the temple being so hopeful about your soul with respect to wisdom." If Hippias actually does as he claims—that is to say, if he enters the sacred temple with such self-assurance—then he must feel wholly satisfied with his abilities (364a). Although Hippias never states that he competes for wisdom, he does not dispute Socrates' attribution. What Hippias does say is that he delivers speeches and answers any questions that the Greek assembly may have, and it is possible that he believes that this ability makes him wise. For Hippias' wisdom, understood here as the ability to speak well, seems to be the quality that makes him excellent. But the ability to answer questions will first depend upon what sorts of questions are asked and on who judges the answers as satisfactory.

Socrates goes on to add, "and I would marvel if any of the athletes concerned with the body comes there to contend as fearlessly and confidently trusting in his body as you assert you do in your mind" (364a). In order to understand Hippias' confidence, and perhaps why Socrates refers to it as 'blessed', we must first understand the difficulty that we have of measuring an attribute such as wisdom, which becomes clearer when we are invited here to compare it with the body and the measure of its excellence in the Olympic Games. There are numerous ways in which we could measure physical excellence, whether it is speed, accuracy, or strength and often this is done in and through competition. These physical skills manifest themselves outwardly and thus can be, for the most part, objectively seen and judged (373d-374b). But how are we to measure the excellence of the mind? And consequently, how can one know that one is making progress, and thus be confident in one's abilities? Is it mnemonic skills? (367b4, 369a8-9). Solving logic puzzles? Or, is it the ability to perform mathematical computations swiftly and precisely? (366c13). Is wisdom reducible to a skill of the mind? Is wisdom even quantifiable? Perhaps Socrates calls Hippias' experience "blessed" because it would have to be so if, despite all these complications, he still *trusts* his wisdom enough to contend fearlessly and confidently with it.

Hippias replies matter-of-factly that, "It is fitting, Socrates, that I should have experienced this; for since I began contending for victory at Olympia, I've never yet met anyone better than I am in anything" (364a6-8). Here we see clearly that Hippias believes not only that wisdom is something one competes in, but also that he deems himself to be the wisest; in fact, he claims to be the best in everything. Hippias' claim seems especially absurd since Socrates has just mentioned the Olympic Games, which includes a host of events with various categories of excellence. Surely Hippias does not mean he is better in each and every event. This demonstrates how little Hippias has thought about the claim that he is the best in everything. Perhaps to sharpen the contrast between an actual Olympic champion and Hippias' boasts, Socrates describes Hippias' reputation as "a monument of wisdom both for the city of the Eleans and [Hippias'] parents," (364b) reminding the listeners that Hippias does not have an actual statue erected in his honor.

At first glance, the comments regarding Hippias' confidence and the mention of the Olympic Games seem out of place, but then we remember that Socrates is asking a question about what may be the most important of ancient competitions—the competition between the relative merit of Achilles and Odysseus. Although our dialogue began with the literary question of the better Homeric hero, through the course of addressing the question, Hippias himself implies that he is the best of men. In fact, Hippias goes as far as to say that he is the best at everything.

The mention of the Olympics and an allusion to competitions in speeches demonstrates that there are different areas of excellences, with accordingly different standards of measuring that excellence. Yet many of the issues that arise in reaching a judgment of the better man are similar to judging the better athlete or better speaker. As we have seen, such concerns include who is doing the judging, what is being judged, and how is it being judged along with who is competing, for what prize they are competing, in what competition are they engaging, and why they are competing. We should keep these questions in mind as the dialogue unfolds, for Socrates will implicitly highlight various different standards of measuring excellence.

Chapter Two: (364b3-365d6)

After this interlude about competition, wherein Hippias' willingness and confidence are determined, Socrates returns to the question at hand. But the point to which he returns is not identical to the point where he left off. Socrates re-states his question with an important addition: this time he asks Hippias not only to assert which man is better, Achilles or Odysseus, but also adds, "in what respect" (364b). Perhaps this is because, as we have seen in the previous chapter with the example of the Olympic Games, there are various areas of human excellence. Accordingly, there may be different standards whereby one judges these excellences. Similarly, the Homeric heroes were superior men, excellent in their own particular skills, and it may be possible that both Achilles and Odysseus have their respective virtues. Achilles may be more excellent in the fields of battle, for example, whereas Odysseus may be better at diplomacy. By adding, "in what respect," Socrates wants Hippias not only to evaluate Achilles and Odysseus but also wants him to explain the grounds for his evaluation. In this way, Socrates encourages Hippias to focus on the standards he is using when he is judging one hero to be better than the other.

Socrates explains that he had this question in mind all throughout the speech but refrained from asking it: "I hesitated to question you, both because there was a large crowd inside, and lest I interfere with your exhibition through my questioning, but now, since there are fewer of us and Eudicus here bids me to ask, speak out and teach us clearly…" (364b4). Since it is difficult to have a conversation with many people around, Socrates, perhaps like Eudicus, realizes that a situation with fewer people would be more conducive to a discussion (364b). Part of this difficulty lies in simple logistics: the ability to hear clearly, the time to consider, reflect and respond to what is said, and the opportunity to discuss back and forth. The other difficulty may lie in the nature of the subject matter. As we had mentioned, Socrates is examining a prevailing view of Greek virtue. If Socrates were openly to question the basis of Greek education, then some among the crowd may view this as an attack on their way of life.[24] Socrates makes it clear that he did not want to interfere with Hippias' speech. Asking questions of clarification

[24] After all, it is the city of Athens that eventually prosecutes Socrates for his investigations. See Plato's *Apology of Socrates.*

can potentially destroy the beauty of a rhetorical speech, a beauty that Eudicus and probably others in the audience were moved by. If Hippias was presenting something beneficial or pleasurable to some, perhaps Socrates did not want to detract from this benefit or spoil this pleasure. If Socrates were to examine Hippias' statements, he may end up embarrassing him through his questioning, thus diminishing Hippias' authority. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, Socrates now asks his question because Eudicus bids him to speak (364c). Eudicus, the young aristocrat, nurtured on stories of Achilles, who prides himself in sharing in the philosophic pursuit, wants to hear Socrates' evaluation. Perhaps Socrates wants to let Eudicus decide for himself whether Hippias' teachings are beneficial to everyone, especially since Eudicus singles out those who remain as those who he believes share in the philosophic pursuit. In all these different ways, Socrates may be aware of the political implications of his query and therefore seems to be mindful about those before whom he speaks. Socrates' care to speak politely is contrasted with Hippias' very public exhibitions, whether they are delivered at a school or the temple in Olympia.

Socrates, standing in (or nearby) the school of Pheidostratus, plays the role of the student and on behalf of the class asks Hippias "to speak out and teach [them] clearly" (364c). With this request, the initial question has now changed for the third time with the element of teaching added to the latest formulation (see 363c, 364b, and 364c). Hippias' answer will not only demonstrate his knowledge of the good man but also his ability to teach this understanding to others. Despite all that is packed into Socrates' three questions, Hippias replies, "I am certainly willing, Socrates to explain to you still more clearly than before what I have to say about these two men as well as others" (364c). He assumes that Socrates' question is so easy that in addition to answering it, he can generously give more: "I assert that Homer represented Achilles as the best man of those who came to Troy, Nestor as the wisest, and Odysseus as the most versatile" (364c). For Hippias the answer is simple: Achilles is not merely better (*ameion*) than Odysseus, he is the best (*ariston*).

Hippias' answer does demonstrate an awareness that the other heroes excel in, and thus are better in, certain respects: in regards to wisdom, Nestor is best hence he is deemed wisest; in regards to versatility, Odysseus is best hence he is deemed most

versatile. Although Nestor and Odysseus are both described with superlatives—the wisest and most versatile—it is Achilles that is described with a comprehensive superlative. He is the best simply. Yet, when Hippias judges Achilles as the best man, he does not explain the basis of his judgment. Disregarding both of Socrates' requirements, "in what respect" (363c) and "how are you distinguishing them," (364b) Hippias fails to elaborate what in fact makes Achilles better.

As we see, Hippias' 'clear' explanation requires much clarification, but before Socrates proceeds he requests a favor, which incidentally serves as a polite warning. Socrates beseeches Hippias not to laugh if he should have difficulty understanding; instead, when he often raises questions, he should answer him gently (364c-d). If, after all, Hippias is as wise and confident as he maintains, then no inquiry should be too difficult for him to address; indeed, from his high perspective, a student's questioning may seem amusingly innocent and naïve. Perhaps Socrates' request might even suggest that Hippias had answered Socrates' question in a condescending manner. But as the discussion unfolds, we will see that Hippias will be animated more by anger than by amusement.

From the outset of the inquiry, Socrates professes a willingness to reveal his ignorance for the sake of learning, while Hippias continues to respond in his grandiose manner: "it would indeed be shameful, Socrates, if I, who educate others in these very things and think I am worthy to take money for this, should not myself be indulgent and answer gently when questioned by you" (364d). Hippias is aware that his ability to answer this question will demonstrate simultaneously his ability to teach and perhaps justify his collection of tuition fees. Here, we are reminded of another defining feature of sophists like Hippias: they claim to be able to teach virtue to those who are willing to pay the price. With this reminder the question of the better man takes on another dimension. The subject into which Socrates is inquiring—that of human virtue—is one that ought to be near and dear to the sophist, the professional professor of virtue. If Hippias charges money to teach human excellence, then one would hope that he knows something about it. Unlike Hippias, Socrates does not charge money to teach virtue; unlike Hippias, he never publicly professes to know what human virtue is.

The ensuing conversation, then, is an expression of Hippias' 'generosity.' Even though Socrates is not paying him money, Hippias will indulge him by freely (and easily) giving him the answers that he is seeking. Yet, because this exchange is taking place before Eudicus (and perhaps other wealthy potential students), we should recognize that this is an advertising opportunity and, it would seem, an easy one at that—after all, Hippias' answer does not appear to be novel. By deeming Achilles as the best, he merely seems to echo what Apemantus and the majority of Greeks already believe. After Hippias clarifies his opinion, Socrates tells him that he is still confused:

> Now, when you asserted that Achilles has been represented as the best, I seemed to understand what you were saying, and also when you asserted that Nestor was the wisest, but when you said that the poet has represented Odysseus as the most versatile, in this case, to tell you the truth, I absolutely do not know what you are saying. Tell me, then, and perhaps I will understand it better this way: has Achilles not been represented by Homer as versatile? (364e)

Socrates is puzzled about a particular part of Hippias' interpretation—and not the part that we might expect. Socrates wants to know whether Homer represented Achilles as versatile, and not what makes Achilles best. This is a surprising turn in the argument for it seemingly fails to address the original question of who is the better man. Instead of asking Hippias to elaborate in what ways Achilles is represented as the best, Socrates says that he "seemed to understand" what Hippias was saying. At least Socrates' supposed understanding should now be followed by a clarification of what Hippias means. Nevertheless, this is not what directly transpires. Instead, Socrates shifts the focus onto Hippias' use of the word 'versatile.'

Socrates, it seems, is confused with Hippias' use of the term "most versatile," (*polytropotaton*). In Greek the word is commonly rendered as "much turning" or "much wandering" and is a superlative of Odysseus' epithet, *polytropos*. However, it can also be translated as "much travelled." On a note to the dialogue, the translator, James Leake writes:

> The Greek word is *polytropotatos*, superlative of the Homeric epithet of Odysseus, *polytropos*. In the Odyssey it appears twice and seems to mean "much turned," "much wandering" (I1, X 330). The other, more common epithets of Odysseus—*polymetis* ("crafty," "shrewd"), *polymechanos* ("much contriving"), *poikilometes* ("with versatile mind"), *polyphron* ("very sagacious")—seem to color the meaning "versatile" given the word by Hippias and some modern editors

(e.g., Merry and Riddell). Liddel and Scott insist that in Homer the word means not "versatile" but "much travelled." [25]

The disagreements on the translation are fitting since the Greek word itself may be ambiguous and perhaps it is this ambiguity that Socrates wants to clarify. When we think about it, even the phrases "much turned" and "much wandering" need further explanation. Yet even if Socrates is perplexed by Hippias' opinion that Odysseus is represented as most versatile, Socrates does not explain the source of his confusion. Questions such as, What do you mean by versatile or, How is Odysseus represented as such? could be asked, but are not. Rather, and most peculiarly, Socrates says that he will perhaps understand it *better* if he answers the question, "has Achilles not been represented by Homer as versatile?" (364e).We may wonder how answering this question makes Socrates better understand what Hippias means. How does this question elucidate Odysseus' versatility? And how does answering this explain how Achilles is best? Indeed, this sort of question seems to compound the problem rather than clarify it. Socrates asks if the quality that Hippias uses to differentiate Odysseus is not actually what makes him similar to Achilles. Perhaps Socrates is implying that Hippias' criterion of distinguishing between Achilles and Odysseus is not altogether accurate. Consequently, instead of finding ways to distinguish the best man from others (in this case Odysseus and Achilles) it seems that Socrates is using Hippias' criterion to blur this very distinction.

Returning to the word, *polytropotatos,* as mentioned, Leake translates the word to mean most versatile, arguing that he derives this term from the other epithets that Homer uses to describe Odysseus. Supposing we did not know that the connotations of "crafty" and "shrewd" colored the meaning of the word, we could get the impression that the phrase "much turned" or "much wandering" refers to a person who is indecisive or confused. And perhaps this is why Socrates asks Hippias whether Achilles has not been represented as one who is "much turned." After all, the very action of the *Iliad* portrays Achilles questioning the worth of heroic virtue, vacillating between a long private life of simple pleasures and a short life which promises immortal glory.

[25] Leake's Note 3, p.283.

In response to Socrates' question about whether Homer represented Achilles as one who was versatile, Hippias is quick and forceful: "No indeed, Socrates, but as most simple"(364e7). Hippias is emphatic, and in order to support his claim, he recalls one of the most famous passages of the *Iliad*. Ironically, this passage is from Book IX of the *Iliad*, the very book that portrays Achilles' confusion about the good life. In Book IX, Achilles has withdrawn from the war because his honor is insulted by the leader of the Achaeans, Agamemnon.[26] Because of this insult, however, divine Zeus makes the Achaeans suffer losses at the hands of the Trojans. Recognizing that the Achaeans need Achilles, Agamemnon sends an embassy to Achilles' tent with hopes of placating him with honors and numerous gifts. The first to speak is Odysseus, who lists the gifts that are offered by Agamemnon. Probably sensing that these gifts will not appease Achilles, Odysseus includes the additional reward of glory:

> But if the son of Atreus [Agamemnon] is too much hated in your heart,
> himself and his gifts, at least take pity on all the other
> Achaians, who are afflicted along the host, and will honour you
> as a god. You may win very great glory among them.
> For now you might kill Hektor, since he would come very close to you
> with the wicked fury upon him, since he thinks there is not his equal
> among the rest of the Danaans the ships carried hither. (*Iliad*, IX: 300-306)

However, Odysseus is unable to change Achilles' mind. Hippias recalls Achilles' response to Odysseus, intending to illustrate Achilles' simplicity:

> Son of Laertes, sprung from Zeus, much-devising Odysseus,
> One surely must speak out without regard to consequences,
> Just as I am going to do and as I think it will be fulfilled;
> For that one is hateful to me as the gates of Hades
> Who hides one thing in his mind but says something else.
> But I will speak, as it is also going to be fulfilled. (365a-b2)[27]

Hippias ends by explaining that in this passage Homer "clearly shows the manner of each man, how Achilles was both truthful and simple, Odysseus both versatile and lying, for

[26] All passages quoted from the *Iliad* will be from Richmond Lattimore's translation (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951). References to the *Iliad* will be noted in parentheses within the text. Any variations will be noted.

[27] To be clear, this is Hippias' recollection of the *Iliad* found in the *Lesser Hippias* and not Lattimore's translation of the Homer's text. To avoid possible confusion, when Hippias and Socrates recollect sections of the *Iliad*, it will be noted in a foot note.

he represents Achilles speaking these verses to Odysseus"(365b). According to Hippias, Homer clearly shows that Achilles is both truthful and simple, yet neither quality is synonymous with being best. Rather, truthful and simple, understood as best, is not Homer's formulation as much as it is Hippias.' Consequently, it is Hippias who interprets that being best is equivalent to being simple and truthful, while most versatile is akin to being a liar.

We should also note that Hippias' judgment that Achilles' virtue lies in his simplicity and honesty is not simply a representation of common opinion. Traditionally, Achilles is best because he is first and foremost a warrior of astounding courage.[28] His virtue manifests itself in his deeds of war, and thus is most evident in the forefront of battle. That said, judging this virtue directly on the basis of deeds seems to allow for more certainty since it is impossible to feign being a good warrior when one is not.[29] And it is this unity—between the appearances of a man's virtue and his actually possessing this virtue—that Hippias eulogizes, rather than Achilles' courageous deeds. He does not praise Achilles' deeds but quotes his words; it is the speech of Achilles that is praised. Achilles is best because he is simple and his words are truthful. Achilles presents himself as a man of his word, insofar as his words clearly indicate his intentions. Achilles hates liars as much as he hates death ("the gates of Hades"). The courage of Hippias' Achilles (in other words, his interpretation of Achilles) lies in his transparency: he is what he shows himself to be, and shows himself to be what he is. Anyone who fails to show himself by his words, based on this understanding, would then be a coward. Liars (like Hippias' Odysseus) are cowardly because they resort to tricky and clever speech to reach their desired end.

We cannot deny that Achilles' words—"For that one is hateful to me as the gates of Hades who hides one thing in his mind but says something else"—are poetically effective; they may even be emotionally stirring. Certainly, there seems to be something

[28] In a note explaining the term Leake writes, "The Greek word here, *aristos* ("bravest," "best"), is the superlative of *agathos* ("brave," "good"). The primary meaning of this crucial word in Homer is "brave." As one sees from the case of Achilles above all, however, the heroes believes that to be brave and fight in the forefront of battle with ardor is to be good simply, to do what is right. The expectations connected with such actions become apparent when honor is denied, as is the "baleful wrath" of Achilles and his demand that he be honored for his goodness by Zeus. He even comes to doubt whether brave action is the core of goodness (see *Iliad* IX 313ff).

[29] Although the reverse does not hold true; that is, it is possible to be a good warrior—and a 'versatle/crafty' one—when one feigns to be a poor one.

noble and beautiful about the simple honest man. Part of the appeal, at least, lies in his straightforwardness. At any given moment, we believe to truly see the soul of this man because he openly presents himself with his words. Consequently, there is no second guessing, no hypothetical reasoning, and no wondering of his intentions. Because of this lucidity, trusting the honest man seems to be easier than trusting one who we know to be capable of dissimulating. There is something refreshing about the former's forthrightness, especially in light of the extravagant decorum and false pretenses which are characteristic of human interactions. It may be this perceived unity, between the honest man's outer appearance and his inner intentions, that leads to his natural attractiveness.

Yet a moment's reflection places the attractiveness of the simple truth-teller on unstable ground. Not recognizing why and when it is imperative to lie, the simple honest man may inadvertently cause more harm than good. Perhaps an example will illuminate the problems with a strict stance against lying. Sophocles' play *Philoctetes* depicts Achilles' son, Neoptolemus, refusing to lie, because he thinks such actions are beneath noble men. However, with this ultimate refusal, he places the very survival of the Greeks in jeopardy. Consequently, the honest and simple man may, in the final analysis, not make the lives of those around him easier; on the contrary, his honesty may be to others' detriment. As to his natural appeal, this may be more idealistic than real, for it assumes that the soul of the honest man is in fact beautiful. If a man has an ugly soul and is willing to show this simply by his words, this makes him neither virtuous nor attractive.

Returning to Hippias' recollection, in order to insinuate that Achilles is directing this statement to Odysseus, Hippias omits a crucial line: "that you may not come one after another, and sit by me, and speak softly."(*Iliad*, IX: 310) The omission of this line is puzzling to say the least, especially because it explains Achilles' motive for his straightforwardness, the very straightforwardness that Hippias praises. Remember, Hippias states that Homer has represented Odysseus as a liar. To support this, Hippias quotes Achilles' supposed admonishment of Odysseus. However, as we have seen, Achilles never directs his hatred of liars towards Odysseus. Rather, Achilles describes his hatred of liars in order to distinguish his own honesty. Achilles wants to be clear about his thoughts so that his companions, Odysseus, Ajax, and Phoenix, do not pray and thus hope for something that will not happen. Yet, in order to suggest that Achilles is directing

these lines of admonishment against Odysseus, Hippias must leave the other lines out. If he were to include them, then he could no longer use Achilles' words as evidence that Odysseus was a deplorable liar. Ironically, in presenting the simplicity and truthfulness of the best man, Hippias lies. Although he offers an interpretation of Achilles' intention which is patently false, he does it convincingly, at least insofar as Eudicus either fails to notice or fails to correct him here.

In addition to this already significant irony, upon examination several other complexities to Hippias' claim emerge. Even if we were to take Achilles' claim as Hippias interprets it—that it is directed to Odysseus—then it ends up proving the opposite point. Hippias wants to show that Achilles is stating that he is better than Odysseus because, unlike him, he is forthright and honest. But if Hippias' Achilles is in fact addressing Odysseus, then why does he not state it more simply and directly? By stating, "For that one is hateful to me as the gates of Hades who hides one thing in his mind but says something else," Achilles is speaking in generalities. If this were an accusation, instead of a general statement, then, by his own account, Achilles ought to say: "I hate it when Odysseus lies and I will not do the same." Hippias' Achilles, therefore, is not straightforwardly saying that he despises Odysseus and his ways; far from it. Rather, he uses an abstract poetic simile to direct an accusation against Odysseus. Moreover, to say that one hates a liar as much as one hates death is hyperbolic, which may be poetically effective but is not simply truthful. Furthermore, Hippias presents Achilles' (alleged) charge against Odysseus as if it is sufficient proof of Odysseus' duplicity. Yet Achilles could accuse Odysseus of being a liar, but that would not in itself prove that he is one; in the same way that Achilles could claim to be honest without being so. Therefore, contrary to Hippias' explanation, Achilles' charge does not in itself reveal "clearly the manner of each man, how Achilles was both truthful and simple, Odysseus both versatile and lying" (365b).

We should also note that Hippias not only takes the liberty to interpret what Achilles' hidden motives are by omitting lines, but he also creatively changes Homer's text. In order to see this more clearly, we will quote Hippias' recollection again followed by Homer's actual verses.

Hippias recollects Achilles' words as follows:

> Son of Laertes, sprung from Zeus, much-devising Odysseus,
> One surely must speak out without regard to consequences,
> Just as I am going to do and as I think it will be fulfilled;
> For that one is hateful to me as the gates of Hades
> Who hides one thing in his mind but says something else.
> But I will speak, as it is also going to be fulfilled. (365a-b2)

Now this is Homer's text, as translated by Richmond Lattimore:

> Son of Laertes and seed of Zeus, resourceful Odysseus:
> without consideration for you I must make my answer,
> the way I think, and the way it will be accomplished, that you may not
> come one after another, and sit by me, and speak softly.
> For as I detest the doorways of Death, I detest that man, who
> hides one thing in the depths of his heart, and speaks forth another.
> But I will speak to you the way it seems best to me:…(*Iliad*, Book IX:
> 308-314)

In verse 310 Hippias changes "as I think" to "as I am going to do" and in verse 314 he changes "as it seems to me to be best" to "as it is also going to be fulfilled." Both types of change allow for more certainty regarding whether it is certainty in Achilles' actions or his thoughts. In the first change, when Achilles explains that he will do what he thinks is best, Hippias renders thereto be a simple correlation to his actions by emphasizing that there is a necessary connection between what Achilles says and what he in fact does. Furthermore by replacing "as it seems to me best" with "as it is also going to be fulfilled," Hippias literally takes the *seeming* out of the action. By insisting on a direct connection between Achilles' words and the end result, Hippias introduces a level of certainty, predictability and effectiveness in Achilles' actions that are not there in the original.

Returning to the text, Socrates reveals that his activity of questioning is in itself an essential form of interpretation. That is, Socrates attempts to interpret what Hippias really opines from what he appears to say. By doing so, he also humorously implies that the qualities that Hippias praises, simplicity and straightforwardness, are the very qualities that Hippias may lack. Up until this point, Hippias has first said that Odysseus is most versatile and that Achilles is simple. Hippias misquotes the *Iliad*, with the stated intention that it demonstrates that Achilles has been represented as being simple and truthful while Odysseus as being versatile and lying. Socrates tests whether there is a

conceptual connection in Hippias' mind: "Now, Hippias, I am perhaps beginning to understand what you are saying; you are saying that the versatile man is a liar, at least as it appears" (365c). By posing this question to Hippias, Socrates tries to uncover whether his particular view about Odysseus is indicative of a general supposition. Does what Hippias say about Odysseus stem from a larger conception that he professes about the world—namely that all versatile men are liars?

Hippias responds by asserting, "Precisely, Socrates. For Homer has represented Odysseus as this sort of man in many places both in the *Iliad* and in the *Odyssey*" (365c). Instead of proceeding into an abstract discussion of liars, Hippias immediately brings the discussion back to Odysseus. Not only does he mention the *Odyssey*, the poem's last mention in the dialogue, but he also brings Homer back into consideration. Indeed, every time that Socrates has spoken about Achilles and Odysseus, it has been Hippias who constantly reminds everyone that they are poetic representations (see 364c5, 364e5, 365b3). Recall that Socrates asked Hippias who the better man *was*, not which man was represented to be better (363c). Unlike Socrates' original question (and Apemantus' judgment) Hippias insists on describing Achilles and others as being "represented as," thus acknowledging and bringing to the forefront that they are inventions of Homer.

Instead of getting Hippias to give examples from the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* that prove that Odysseus lies, Socrates instead asks whether it seemed to *Homer* that "the truthful man is one sort and the liar another, and they are not the same" (365c3-4). After Hippias reminds everyone that Achilles and Odysseus are poetic creations, Socrates may be reminding everyone that Hippias is interpreting Homer. The fact that Homer needs to be interpreted is in itself revealing, for it demonstrates that Homer does not speak clearly, nor does he speak simply. He possesses a rare creative ability to present these characters as if they are/were real, captivating generations of Greek men, and many others thereafter. In this sense, he may even be described as versatile. Even though Hippias is aware that Achilles and Odysseus are poetic inventions, he does not criticize Homer for being a liar, even though by his own judgment, all versatile men are liars.

Hippias does not directly answer the question but instead implies the ludicrousness of the alternative: "How could it not have seemed so, Socrates?" (365d). The next question is posed not in terms of what Homer thinks but rather what Hippias

himself thinks: “and does it seem so to you yourself as well?” (365c6). Hippias responds, “Most certainly!” explaining, “For indeed it would be a strange thing if it were not so” (356c7). In one sense, the alternative does seem ridiculous because it appears to go against the law of non-contradiction: how could one who is lying also be truthful at the same time that they are lying? Linguistically, if one lies, one is not truthful and if one is telling the truth then one is not lying. The very definition of lying is understood to be in opposition to truth. Indeed, would most not agree with Hippias regarding the necessary opposition of the liar and the truthful?

But in another sense, taking account the context in which Socrates’ question arises, we see that Homer himself may be both a liar and a truth-teller. Indeed, as Hippias reminds us, Achilles and Odysseus are Homer’s poetic representations. And if Achilles is the simple and truthful man, he is created by Homer; even if Odysseus is a liar, he too is created by Homer. That is, since both Achilles and Odysseus are Homer’s poetic creations he must be both the truth- teller and the liar. He, after all, has mastered and presented both of these creations in such a powerful way that those who are affected by the poems actually imagine Achilles and Odysseus to be distinct individuals. This poetic ability of being both lying and truth-telling not only holds for Homer and his writings, but it also is reflexive on our dialogue and its author. If Homer is both the liar and the truth-teller—if Homer is both Odysseus and Achilles—then it follows that Plato is both the sophist, or bombast, and the philosopher, or ironist; he is both Hippias and Socrates, since these two are also Plato’s creations.

Socrates replies, “Well, let us leave Homer aside, since it is impossible to ask him what he was thinking when he composed these verses anyway, but since you are evidently taking upon yourself the responsibility, and you agree with these things you assert Homer said, answer on behalf of Homer and yourself in common”(365d). With this Socrates temporarily silences Homer by making Hippias answer for Homer and himself in common, based on the highly suspect premise that they both agree on the same things. Notably, throughout this part of the dialogue, Socrates tries to get Hippias to clarify what he himself thinks, as opposed to what Homer thinks. In order to do this, he must collapse the distinction between Hippias’ interpretation of Homer and what Homer in fact intends. We are left to consider what it would in fact mean to answer on behalf of oneself and an

author in common. What would it mean to represent your own views as that of an author's? Such a representation would first have to be based upon one believing that they in fact knew what the author was saying and teaching. One would have really to know what Homer meant, his intentions, before they could judge whether they agreed with him or not. Yet Socrates indirectly reminds Hippias that it is impossible to ask Homer what he was thinking when he wrote his verses; for Hippias to accept the request may once again be a sign of his pretentious confidence. It means that Hippias is certain that he understands what Homer is in fact saying. We may wonder, then, where Hippias is deriving his interpretation from. It cannot be simply from reading the *Iliad*, because nowhere is it made blatantly clear that Achilles is by far the best of the Achaeans. In fact the very choice of his life and how he proceeds is presented as a profound question. As we had previously mentioned, the passage that Hippias quotes, or rather misquotes, is from the very book that portrays Achilles' vacillation. Moreover, it is far from easy to know what Homer is directly, simply, and truthfully saying because he rarely speaks. Homer only speaks in his voice at the beginning of the *Iliad* to invoke the muses (*Iliad*, Book 1:1-7). Thereafter, he recounts the events of the *Iliad* in and through divine inspiration. In a similar way, it is now impossible for us to ask Plato directly what he was thinking because very much like Homer, Plato never speaks directly in his own voice. Unlike Homer, he does not invoke a muse. While some may argue that Plato's views are presented through his mouthpiece, Socrates, what Socrates believes is not clear because he is portrayed as questioning, and his speech is highly ironic.

Any act of interpretation is necessarily limited but this does not preclude the possibility that an interpretation may be done well, and it certainly does not preclude the possibility that an author could anticipate this very difficulty and seek to compensate for it. Rather, one must proceed as Socrates suggests, by taking responsibility and being aware of these limitations. It is revealing that Socrates mentions responsibility as the guiding principle behind interpretation. Notably, the principles of truth or beauty are not directly mentioned. A good interpretation, then, is a responsible interpretation, one that accounts for all of its potential effects.

With this standard in mind, we recall that Socrates has asked Hippias to speak out and teach them clearly. That is, when one is interpreting a text, especially one that is as

foundationally important as the *Iliad*, then one needs to think through the effect that the interpretation will have on others, in this case potential students. Hippias, like all sophists, is a professor of virtue. And thus, he needs to take into consideration the natures of his students and present interpretations that will exhort students towards being virtuous. Remember, it was Socrates who showed restraint in questioning Hippias in front of a large crowd of people, demonstrating that he was aware of the effects of his actions. Instead of acknowledging any of these difficulties, which does not mean that Hippias is unaware of them, Hippias with characteristic hubris accepts, "So be it; just ask briefly what you want"(356d6). For him—perhaps considering Socrates' warning of his onslaught of questions to come—brevity becomes the essential quality of speech! Hippias' indulgence will last only so long.

Chapter 3: (365d7-366c7)

As Socrates attempts to draw forth Hippias' conception of liars, there is a notable shift in the direction of the discussion. With his suggestion to "leave Homer aside" (365d), we temporarily move away from examining the particular characteristics of Achilles and Odysseus, towards the general topic of liars. Although in this section Achilles and Odysseus are not explicitly addressed, we ought to keep in mind that the development of the argument will have a bearing on ranking the two, based upon the criterion of truth/truth-telling and lies/lying. To mark the turn, Socrates intriguingly inquires into the subject of capacity (*dunamis*).[30] Specifically, he asks whether "liars are incapable of doing (*poiein*) anything, like sick men, or are they capable of doing (*poiein*) something?" (365d7-8).[31] When discussing the act of lying, Socrates always uses the Greek word "*poiesis*," meaning to do, or produce, or make, or create (see 365d7, 365d8, 365e10, 366c); Hippias, conversely, never does. The discussion of liars, therefore, begins with the question of whether they are capable of action or, understood more literally, of making something. In order to illuminate this action, Socrates uses the analogy of sickness. That is, he likens the incapacity that sickness causes to the inability to perform any action. Whether Socrates is speaking about a sickness of the body or of the soul is not altogether clear here, although later he will liken ignorance to a sickness of the soul. In fact, the topic of sickness and health is a reoccurring one throughout the dialogue (for example at 366c, 373a).[32] Socrates' phrasing is curious, for it suggests that sickness is an absolute condition; when we reflect upon it, we see that this is not the case. Rather there are many types and degrees of sickness. We will return to this peculiarity as the discussion unfolds.

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[30] In a note on the term *dunamis*, Leake writes, "Here and in the following exchanges, the words rendered "incapable" and "capable" might also be rendered "lack of power" (or "powerless") and "have the power" (or "powerful"). Note 6, p. 285.

[31] Bloom explains that the term *poein*, "…means "to make" and is characteristic expression for the activity of the poet. Poetry is just one form of making, but it is the most revealing kind of making, and the poet becomes *the* maker...It should be remembered that the word is always *poiein*; for the notion that a thing has been made, and made by the poet, is often part of Plato's meaning." He also explains that in English usage it is impossible to translate it consistently as "making," and so "writing" and "composing" are often used. Note 37, p. 449.

[32] The way in which Socrates phrases his question implies that sick men are unable to produce things, and therefore only those who are not sick have the capacity to do so. Accordingly, the capacity to make things becomes the standard of whether one is presumably healthy or not, and seemingly this is irrespective of what one is making.

Hippias responds: "I, for my part, say that they are very [exceedingly] capable of doing many things and particularly of deceiving people" (365d9-10).[33] However, this deception is only *part* of their greater capacity, for they are capable of "many things." We may wonder then, besides having the ability to deceive, of what are the liars capable? Bringing to mind Hippias' earlier characterization of liars, Socrates now asks whether liars are capable and versatile; "Apparently, then, they are capable, according to your argument, as well as versatile, or not?" (365e). By asking whether the liars are capable and also versatile, Socrates seems to differentiate capacity from versatility. Yet, when we think about it, versatility seems to be a *type* of capacity and it may also be construed as possessing *various* capabilities. After all, the versatile man is resourceful; he has the capacity to adapt to changing circumstances. Separating capacity from versatility seems to be an odd move on Socrates' part, but he does stress that this is "according to [Hippias'] argument," and since Hippias agrees, this may indicate that he does not object to Socrates' attribution (365e). If Hippias does not think that versatility is a type of capacity, we may wonder at his peculiar understanding of versatility. Moreover, by not specifying the capacity that liars have, in this sense, Hippias seems to leave what they are capable of open ended.

Previously, we saw that Hippias was using versatility and lying interchangeably, such that the versatile man was necessarily also a liar (365c). In Socrates' next question, Socrates uses versatility and capacity interchangeably, perhaps in accordance with our suggestion that versatility seems to be a type of capacity. Socrates asks, "Are they versatile and deceiving (*apateones*/cheating) by foolishness and imprudence or by unscrupulous wickedness and a certain prudence?" (365e4-5). As we have suggested, versatility may be understood to be a type of capacity—the ability to adapt to varying circumstances. And deceiving is also a type of capacity—the ability to effectively deceive others. In one sense, then, both versatility and deceiving are types of capacities. Socrates now seems to trace versatility and the capacity to deceive to some form of thoughtfulness. Since versatility and deception require the ability to reason, we could see

[33] Since Hippias immediately professes to understand liars from the perspective of those who are lied to, here he seems to empathize with those who are affected by lies, the *people* who are deceived. Contrary to this, Socrates' focus is not on the people who are deceived but rather on those who are doing the deceiving.

how both of these types of capacities could fit under the larger category, the capacity of the mind.

The manner in which Socrates asks this last question is remarkable, for within the question, there are at least three important subtleties. First, he no longer uses the word "*pseudes*" lying or its cognates, but instead uses the word "*apateones*" which is commonly rendered as cheating. By doing so, he calls to mind the common pejorative understanding of liars as being cheaters, which, as we will soon witness, seems to accord with Hippias' professed opinion of liars. Second, Socrates proceeds by creating pairs of characteristics and seems to be setting them in opposition. By placing "foolishness and imprudence" together against "unscrupulous wickedness and a certain prudence," he stacks the deck against the latter pair. One could easily understand the undesirability of imprudence and the desirability of its opposite, a certain prudence. But what about the undesirability of foolishness and the desirability of its opposite…unscrupulous wickedness?! Are foolishness and unscrupulous wickedness really opposites? Are not "cleverness," "good sense," or "astuteness" more fitting opposites to foolishness? We are left to account for why Socrates chooses to pair unscrupulous wickedness with a 'certain prudence.' This pairing may be related to the third subtlety, which is that Socrates seems to make a distinction within the class of prudence itself by asking if the cheating liar acts out of a *certain type* or *kind* of prudence. Remember that the apparent opposition is not between imprudence and prudence, but rather imprudence and a certain kind of prudence. Successfully being versatile and cheating does in fact require some form of thoughtfulness; it requires foresight and calculation, an ability to adapt both to varying circumstances and to different people. Consequently, this type of liar is effective because he does utilize certain powers of reason. Namely, he uses reason instrumentally to calculate the most effective means to his end. Yet, this thoughtfulness neither makes the cheating liar simply wise nor does it make him simply foolish.

Hippias seems to disregard the distinction Socrates raises between prudence and a certain kind of prudence. Hippias could say that the cheating liar is capable and that his capacity comes from a certain form of thoughtfulness—he is clever at using the means of deception to get to his end. This kind of prudence may be a capacity which questions, evaluates and calculates the best means to an end, but may leave the ends themselves

unquestioned. In fact, Socrates' discussion of prudence in the *Republic* relies on this very distinction. In describing the sort of thoughts that are borne from the union of 'wise but vicious' men with philosophy, Socrates asks:

> And what about this? When men unworthy of education come near her and keep her company in an unworthy way, what sort of notions and opinions will we say they beget? Won't they be truly fit to be called sophisms, connected with nothing genuine or worthy of true prudence?[34]

In this passage, Socrates distinguishes thoughts that are to be called sophisms, and others which are called true prudence. Working with this distinction later in the *Republic,* he explains:

> Therefore, the other virtues of a soul, as they are called, are probably somewhat close to those of the body. For they are really not there beforehand and are later produced by habits and exercises, while the virtue of exercising prudence is more than anything somehow more divine, it seems; it never loses its power, but according to the way it is turned, it becomes useful and helpful or, again, useless and harmful.[35]

Hippias, failing to acknowledge any of Socrates' subtleties, answers, "By unscrupulous wickedness, most certainly, and by prudence" (365e6). He neglects to make (or avoids making) a distinction between this 'sophistical' prudence and true prudence; he includes all such thoughts under the single word 'prudence.' In reiterating Hippias' answer, Socrates drops the unscrupulous wickedness and the certain prudence stating, "*Apparently,* therefore, they are prudent" (365e7). In response, Hippias becomes stirred enough to swear his first of two oaths in the dialogue, "Yes, by Zeus—too much so!" (365e8). According to Hippias, not only is such a liar prudent but he in fact possess "too much" of this capacity.

Hippias has judged the liar to be simply prudent and Socrates now inquires into the character of his prudence. At this point, we are directly introduced to theme of knowledge, as Socrates inquires, "And since they are prudent, do they not know what they are doing (making), or do they know?" (365e4-5).[36] A certain prudence seemed to be a *type* of knowledge: it enabled the liar to know the particulars about his environment

[34] *Republic*, Book VI: 496a4-8.
[35] *Republic*, Book VII: 518d9-e4.
[36] Once again, Socrates uses a verb of "*poiesis*" (poiousin) to describe the creation of lies.

so that he could calculate the means that are most conducive to his end. A successful liar, in one sense, is aware of what he is doing and therefore he uses deception consciously and effectively. Hippias wholeheartedly agrees that the liar is aware of his actions: "They know very well; that is why they do evil" (365e). [37] Hippias seems to believe that the liar's knowledge gives him the capability to perpetrate lies effectively, which for Hippias is equivalent to committing evil. Hippias believes that the liar perpetrates evil out of knowledge, not from ignorance; if he were foolish and imprudent, he would not be a successful liar. As we witness, Hippias feels compelled to bring back the derogatory notions associated with liars, which it seemed Socrates tried to omit when he moved from the cheater to the prudent liar.

Socrates' next question is, "Since they know what they know, are they ignorant or wise?"(365e5-6). At first glance, the question seems to be redundant for we have already considered that the liar knows what he is doing and therefore, in this sense, he does not seem to be ignorant. But Socrates is not asking if the liar is knowledgeable because he knows what he is doing. Rather, he seems to be asking whether this *type* of knowledge amounts to wisdom or to ignorance. Stated another way, we may ask: since he does not seem to be wholly ignorant, does this make him wise? Notice the way in which Socrates phrases the question: he implies that wisdom and ignorance are simply opposites. Yet when we think about it, wisdom and ignorance may not be as opposite as they appear. First, being knowledgeable in one area, whether it be in 'deception' or 'resourcefulness' does not seem to be absolute. That is to say, there may be varying degrees of how knowledgeable one is in a particular area. In any given field, one could always gain more knowledge and thus become less ignorant. Secondly, there are different types of knowledge. Within the example of lying, we see that knowing *how* to lie may be different than knowing *when* to lie. And in the context of Platonic/Socratic thought, we might wonder about a possible distinction between knowledge in general and self-knowledge in particular. And, more generally, we see that having the type of knowledge that enables one to deceive may be different than having self-knowledge.

Responding to Socrates' question Hippias states, "They are surely wise, at least with respect to this very thing: deceiving thoroughly" (365e14-15). Hippias' formulation

[37] The Greek word is "*kakourgeousin*," meaning to do bad work, or to do evil work.

is intriguing for it reveals a peculiar understanding of 'wisdom.' Before, according to Hippias, the deception of liars was the result of their capacity (365d9). Now, it seems that they are able to deceive because they are wise in matters of lying. Whereas Socrates had earlier used lying and capacity interchangeably, now Hippias uses wisdom and capacity interchangeably (365e4). In this instance, Hippias may be conflating capacity with wisdom. Socrates bids him to stop and recollect the argument; we ought to do the same.

Hippias' conception of a liar has been much elaborated from the one that we began with. As Socrates reasserts, liars "are capable, prudent, knowing, and wise in those things in which they are liars" (366a). Hippias uses all of these terms interchangeably and thereby fails to make distinctions between them. First, we saw how he failed to make a distinction between a certain type of prudence and true prudence. Moreover, he failed to make a distinction between different types of knowledge, especially the type of knowledge which is referred to as self-knowledge or self-awareness, and between the different forms of ignorance. As we have seen, liars have been shown to possess a type of capacity, which seems to be coeval with a type of prudence and a type of knowledge. Here Hippias is quick to name this type of knowledge 'wisdom.' Although Hippias fails to make distinctions between the different types of prudence or between types of knowledge, with his previous statement, "they are surely wise, at least with respect to this very thing: deceiving thoroughly," he does make a distinction between different types of wisdom, such that the liar is wise in deception. For Hippias, the liar cannot be wise simply because he earlier implied that wisdom was something to be coveted and celebrated (364a). Therefore, in his conception of 'wisdom,' there are types of wisdom that enable one to commit evils, such as deceive people. And presumably, there are types of wisdom that enable one to do good, such as answer any questions from speeches that one has prepared for exhibition. How and in what ways these types of 'wisdom' differ from one another or are similar to one another (such that they can all be referred to as 'wisdom') is never explained.

Building upon Hippias' earlier statement that the liar was one sort and the truthful man another, Socrates asks "And the truthful and the liars are different and most opposite to one another?"(365c5, 366a5-6). There are two distinct considerations presented in this question. The first is whether these two sorts, the liar and the truthful, are different; the

second consideration is whether they are most opposite. Indeed, two things can be different without being most opposite. For instance, as we have just seen, a certain kind of prudence can be different from imprudence, without being its opposite. Hippias seems to believe that the liars and truthful men are not only different but are most opposite for he agrees "I say these things too" (366a7).[38]

Once Hippias has asserted that liars are capable, prudent, knowing, wise in those things in which they are liars, and that they are not only different from the truthful but are most opposite, Socrates could have come to the logical conclusion of Hippias' argument: the truthful—since they are most opposite—must be incapable, imprudent, ignorant, and unwise. By doing so, Socrates could have won the argument and shown Hippias that he has finally met someone who is better than him at something! But Socrates chooses not to do so, perhaps revealing that winning the argument is not Socrates' primary concern. On the contrary, he moves on by inquiring if there is a subclass *within* those who are capable and wise, asking if these would be liars, "…according to [Hippias'] argument" (366a8-9). Again, Socrates stresses that this follows from Hippias' argument which, among other things, suggests that Hippias' premises are responsible for the direction of the discussion.

Hippias, it seems, believes that *some* who are capable and wise are liars. Consequently, this implies that some who are capable and wise are not liars. Differentiating between these two categories—the capable and wise who lie and the capable and wise who do not lie—is critical for Hippias since he prides himself in being the best at everything, which includes wisdom. It would be safe to assume that Hippias wants others to believe that he belongs to the latter category of men, those who are capable and wise but are not liars.

To elucidate the capacity and wisdom of these liars, Socrates asks a rather perplexing set of questions: "Now, when you say the liars are capable and wise in these

[38] Socrates' question calls attention to the complex problems inherent in language, specifically on understanding oppositions created in and through language. These oppositions are often the result of commonplace definitions, but thinking through Socrates' presentation reveals that two words that are understood to be antonyms may in fact be corresponding to concepts that are more similar than they are believed to be. By calling attention to the distinction between the names that we use to describe phenomena and the actual phenomena itself, Socrates makes it plausible that those who are liars may be different from those who are truthful without necessarily being most opposite. Recall Hippias' reaction when Socrates asked whether it seemed to him that liars were different from the truth-tellers—he was appalled at the question exclaiming, "it would surely be a terrible/clever thing if it were not so" (365c5).

very things, are you saying they are capable of lying if they should wish to *or* that they are incapable with respect to these things about which they lie?" (366b1-4, emphasis added). Socrates' phrasing is most curious. Although it seems to be a 'whether or not' question, the second clause is not the opposite of the first. Rather, Socrates is asking two very different questions in regards to their capacity: first, are they capable of lying *if* they should wish to lie and second, are they incapable *with respect to these things* about which they lie. Socrates uses the word capacity in different ways, perhaps demonstrating the complexity of the term. The first use refers to the capacity to lie when one wishes to do so and the second refers to the capacity to accomplish things, presumably without lying.[39]

With the first clause, Socrates asks whether the liars are wise and capable because they are capable of lying if they should wish to lie. By calling attention to the fact that these wise and capable men are liars when they should wish to lie emphasizes that these men choose to lie. Consequently, not only do they deliberately create lies, but they also choose when it is best to lie. Having the capacity of choosing when to lie is related to the next part of Socrates' question. Moreover, it is only when these wise and capable men wish to lie are they then labeled as liars, for presumably there are times when these do not wish to lie, and thus are indistinguishable from the wise and capable men who do not wish to lie.

Let us examine the second part of the question where Socrates asks whether the wise and capable liars are "incapable with respect to these things about which they lie?" (366b2-4). Do these capable and wise liars resort to lies because they lack the capacity to effect what they lie about? Those who are imagined to be simply powerful, it would seem, need not lie to achieve their desired end.[40] If an intended effect could always be produced by simply declaring the truth, then lies would be unnecessary. Lies are created because telling the truth does not result in the effect that one desires. Therefore, it is true

[39] Earlier we saw the problem of not making distinctions between types of capacities and types of knowledge, now we see the problem of not accounting for gradations of power and gradations of knowledge.

[40] Earlier it was suggested that Hippias' interpretation of Achilles' power was based on a similar conception. That is, Achilles was best because he said what he willed and what he willed would be the end result. Consequently, his honesty was an indication of the capacity of his will. Contrary to this, liars, like Odysseus, were deemed to be cowards because they had to resort to trickery and cleverness in speech to achieve their intended end; in this sense, they would be judged incapable when it came to the things that they lied about.

to say that those who lie recognize that there are limits to their capacity when it comes to the things that they choose to lie about—which may be precisely why they resort to lies in the first place. Yet, in another sense of the word capable, when a wise and capable man chooses to lie about certain things, he in effect is becoming more capable 'with respect to these things' that he lies about. This points to a linguistic paradox (which may not be a conceptual one) wherein by realizing that one is not all powerful, one becomes more powerful. In other words, recognizing the limits to one's capacity, which will always depend upon one's rational ability to assess a situation, one can act more effectively and thus more capably.

Without acknowledging that Socrates is in fact asking two different questions in regards to capacity, Hippias quickly affirms that they are simply capable. Socrates sums up the argument by restating that "the liars are the wise and capable of lying" (366b6). He then uses this agreement to conclude, "[t]herefore, a man incapable of lying and ignorant would not be a liar" (366b8-9). We can readily see that a man who is incapable of lying would not be a liar; yet we can also now see that the ignorant one could still be a liar, just not a very capable one. Although Hippias readily agrees to this, he does not fully realize the implications. Recall, that according to Hippias' argument he made a distinction between the wise and capable who lie, and those who do not. Now this second category of wise and capable men that never lie, are no longer wise and capable if they do not recognize when they have to lie and thus also wish to do so. Wishing not to lie among friends would be different than wishing not to lie to an invading enemy, for instance. Since they fail to recognize when lying is necessary, any absolute stance against lying will render these men both incapable and ignorant.

Socrates begins his next question with a qualification, perhaps suggesting that Hippias should not be too quick to agree that a man incapable of lying and ignorant would not be a liar. Socrates asks,

> But each one is capable who does what he wishes when he wishes. I am not speaking of one who is prevented by sickness or such things; I simply mean someone who is in the situation you are in with regard to the power of writing my name whenever you wish—that is what I mean. Or do you not call one who is in such a condition 'capable'? (366c)

With this question, we get a formal definition of capacity that is reasonable enough: capacity is doing what one wishes *when* one wishes to. Notably, this introduces, and also emphasizes, the element of time. Following this definition, Socrates is quick to add that he is not talking about one who is prevented by sickness or 'such things,' whatever those things may be. The qualification of sickness seems to be curiously out of place. After all, when we imagine the epitome of one who is capable, the last image that comes to our mind is one of a sickly person. As Socrates proceeds, his explanation only gets more peculiar. To spell out what Socrates means, he explains to Hippias that he is *simply* referring to someone who is in the same situation that Hippias is in with regards to the power of writing Socrates' name whenever he wishes (366c4). This is a rather strange example. Presumably, the condition of being able to write Socrates' name is somehow meant to shed light on one who is understood to be capable.

In order to understand Socrates' question, it may serve us well to begin with the relationship between capacity and sickness. This is the second time that sickness is mentioned in the discussion of capacity. When Socrates began his more abstract discussion of liars he asked whether liars were "incapable of doing anything, like sick men, or [were] they capable of doing something?" (356d). The general sense from Socrates' question was that the ability to act, or more precisely, the ability 'to make' seemed to be an indication of one's capacity. Moreover, we noted that later Socrates will liken ignorance to be a type of sickness of the soul. Earlier, Socrates' phrasing was curious for it suggested that sickness was an absolute condition. If we are to understand the sickness that prevents one from acting/making capably is referring to ignorance, then we see why ignorance and therefore sickness may not be an absolute condition. Throughout the discussion, we have seen how there may be different types and varying degrees of ignorance, just as there are different types and varying degrees of sicknesses of the body. Some of these can be remedied while others may be not.

It may be easier to understand this by use of an example that deals with the sickness of the body. If the best warrior is suffering from sickness, he may at that time be unable to fight at his best and thus use his skills most effectively. But this does not mean that once he recovers from this sickness he will not still be a capable warrior. All of this, of course, depends upon the degree and type of sickness. If the warrior is suffering from a

cold, he may not be as capable as his potential; however he may recover to a state of health. If he is suffering from gangrene, however, and the only cure is to cut off his leg, then he will never be as capable as he once was. Similarly, the sickness of the soul may be understood in a similar light. If the sickness of the soul corresponds to varying and different types of ignorance, then presumably there may be varying forms of ignorance, the lesser kinds of which may be remedied, which would enable one to act capably again.

The way in which Socrates phrases his question—"I am not speaking of one who is prevented by sickness or such things"—seems to imply that each one is potentially capable of doing what he wishes when he wishes, barring any severe natural deformities. Therefore, the capacity to act effectively is somehow more innate but it is ignorance that impedes. The role of an educator then may first and foremost aim at trying to restore the health of the soul by judging the types and degrees of ignorance that students may have. In relation to this, we may begin to make sense of Socrates' example of writing as a simple demonstration of someone's capacity. Recall, that when discussing the act of lying, Socrates always used the Greek word "*poiesis,*" meaning to produce or create whereas Hippias never does. Hippias uses the word in reference to Homer's characters and later he will use it in discussing the activity of the runner, but never to describe the activity of lying. The activity of lying that Socrates may have in mind, then, may refer to the making of tales or myths. And tales, not being wholly true, are commonly understood to be lies. Perhaps, this is why Socrates follows his statement of capacity with the example of writing Socrates' name.[41] Socrates explains that a capable person is one who is simply in the same condition as Hippias, in that he is able to write Socrates' name whenever he wishes. As far as we know, there are no surviving dialogues or documents where Hippias writes Socrates' name. However, we do know of an ancient writer who

[41] What is Socrates trying to point out here? Capacity free from the ailments of ignorance is somehow supposed to be represented in the activity of writing. One way to approach this example is to consider what type of capacity is entailed with writing 'Socrates'. First and foremost, in order to write Socrates' name, Hippias must be literate, therefore, he would have to know how to read and write, and thus be versed in a language. Writing for the most part is a public activity. It is based upon communicating one's thoughts to another in a form which enables others to recognize such thoughts. Names essentially are thought to define the objects that they refer to. But the power of language and that of naming would first be dependant upon one's ability to recognize what they were in fact naming. In this case naming and writing about Socrates entails recognizing who Socrates is then being able to represent the complex person he is by the use of words.

wrote Socrates name—the author of our dialogue, Plato. Indeed, the entire Platonic corpus is often understood to be a eulogy to Socrates' philosophic pursuit.

Chapter 4: (366c7-368a12)

Through his questioning of Hippias, Socrates has suggested that there are different types of capacities and different types of knowledge. Once Socrates has demonstrated that the capacity to deceive requires a certain type of knowledge, he turns to examine the character of knowledge of particular subjects. Specifically, he inquires about the subjects in which Hippias was a famous teacher: arithmetic, geometry, and astronomy. After establishing that Hippias claims to be knowledgeable in these subjects, Socrates tests whether Hippias' possession of that knowledge also gives him the capability to lie in those subjects.

He begins with the question: "Now tell me, Hippias, are you not experienced in calculations and in the art of calculating?" (366c5-6). After Hippias affirms that he most certainly is experienced in calculations, Socrates asks, "If, then, someone were to ask you how great a number is three times seven hundred could you not say the truth about this most swiftly (*tachos*) of all and most precisely, if you wished?" (366c8-10). The request to answer the calculation 3x700 is immediately followed by a qualification: could Hippias "say the truth about this…if he wished." Such a qualification recalls Socrates' earlier questions regarding capacity, where he asked whether a capable liar was "capable of lying if he wished to" (366b2, 366c). Now, however, the question is whether Hippias is able to tell the *truth* if he wishes. Just as the wise and capable liar chooses to lie, the one experienced in calculations chooses to tell the truth. Thus, in both instances, one's capacity—whether it is to lie or to tell the truth—is judged by the ability to carry out what one chooses to do.

Socrates next asks whether Hippias would be able to say the truth about a particular calculation, most swiftly and precisely. The most precise and swiftest answer to this question would be 2100. However, even in a field like mathematics, where operations are performed by application of rules, there are still variations as to what counts as the correct answer. For instance 3x700=21x100=4200/2 would all be mathematically true answers. Still, there is an excellence that is attributed to the simplest one, 2100, not least because of its clarity. However, if one were to move on to more complex mathematical questions, the standards of swiftness and precision (and for that matter, simplicity and clarity) are not only more difficult to meet but, in some cases, may

not even be possible. He then asks whether the ability to answer the mathematical equation 3x700 swiftly and precisely is due to the fact that he is "most capable and wisest in these matters?"(366d2-3). Socrates' use of these terms is notable, for he does not ask Hippias if he is simply capable and wise, but rather uses both terms as superlatives, implying that Hippias is better in these regards in comparison to all others. And though we might assume that being most capable and wisest would entail being best, Socrates' next remark questions this assumption. Intriguingly, he asks Hippias, "are you then only wisest and most capable in matters of calculation or are you also best" (366d7-8). Hippias nonchalantly answers, "Of course also best." But we may wonder what—other than being wisest and most capable—constitutes being best? In posing the question in a manner that appears to reduce the importance of wisdom and capacity in relation to being best, Socrates seems to be suggesting that being best is superior to these and must include something else besides them.[42]

The subsequent question gives us insight into what Socrates believes makes one best in matters that one is most capable and wisest, in this case calculations. He asks, "You would then most capably speak what is true about these things? Or not?" (366e) Whereas before Socrates seemed to be referring to the ability to calculate effectively, now he is referring to the ability to *speak* effectively about calculations. As we saw with the particular computation, 3x700, there were many variations that counted as the true answer even though the answer that readily came to mind was 2100. This answer may be precise in the given situation because it meets the demands of swiftness and magnitude. However, if one were teaching someone about division, 4200/2 may be more fitting. Or if one were learning about the order of arithmetical operations then the longer and more complicated equation, [5(5)-2(2)]x100, may be a more appropriate answer. The precise arithmetically true answer then will depend upon one's purpose, which may vary with circumstances. Accordingly, the best calculator will be able not only to calculate true answers but will also know how to choose the best true answer amongst the others. This ability to choose the best answer may mark the essential difference between one who is experienced in calculations and the one who is best in calculations.

[42] Socrates' use of the word wisdom here seems to be in accordance to Hippias' earlier usage. Recall that Hippias used wisdom and knowledge interchangeably such that the liar was wise in deception. Therefore, according to Hippias' understanding, each area or subject had its particular wisdom.

Being capable in calculations comes from understanding the subject of mathematics. It is a type of knowledge that is gained through deductive certainty and demonstrable proof. In contrast, being able to choose the best answer, and thus speak most capably about the truth, seems to be a type of knowledge that consists of understanding circumstances, including whom to which one is speaking. In this sense, being most capable of speaking the truth could be understood to be in the domain of politics. In fact, the one who is very best in calculations should understand how these subjects, mathematics and politics, relate to one another. Upon consideration, it is clear that speaking the truth—even about the simplest calculations—requires skill and is not always as simple as we may first assume, and certainly not as simple as Hippias first professed. Recall that when Hippias judged Achilles as the best, Hippias praised Achilles' simplicity and truthfulness. Indeed, now it seems that speaking the truth may require versatility, the very quality that Hippias admonished Odysseus for possessing. Perhaps it comes as no surprise, then, that this is the first place in the dialogue where Hippias is unsure of himself. Not answering in his brazen manner, he says he at least *supposes* he would (366e3).

After Hippias answers that he is best in calculations, Socrates now asks about lies in these same matters. Suggestively, the issue of lying immediately follows the distinction of speaking about the truth most capably. Socrates asks if Hippias could lie most precisely about the same calculation that Hippias could answer the truth about, 3x700:

> But what of lies about these same matters? And as before, answer me in a well-born and magnificent way, Hippias. If someone asked you how much is three times seven hundred, could you lie most precisely, and could you always speak lies in the same respects about these things if you wished to lie and never answer the truth, or would one ignorant in calculations be more capable of lying than you if he wished? Or would the ignorant one involuntarily speak the truth many times if he should chance upon it through not knowing, though he might wish to speak lies, whereas you, the wise man, would always lie in the same respects, at least if you were to wish to lie? (366e4-367a6) [43]

[43] The locution of "if you (or he) wished" appears four times in this short section. Notably, the only time that one's wish is not in accord with one's intention and thus one's capacity is the one who wishes to lie but chances upon the truth. All other times, the one who knows the truth, the knower, is characterized by the accord between what he desires and what he in fact accomplishes.

There are many things to take notice of in this tight succession of questions, which appears more as an onslaught than an inquiry. Socrates describes the one who is capable in calculations as one who lies "precisely" and "in the same respects." Both qualifiers describe lies that are chosen with a specific end in mind. Therefore, the capable liar knows precisely what type of lie to construct and this ability may be the same ability that enables him to speak capably about the truth. That is, both truth and lies are in accord with the purpose of the truth teller/liar. Just as choosing the best true answer required both knowledge of mathematics and a type of political knowledge, similarly choosing the best lie requires both.

Related to this, recall that when Socrates first asked Hippias about his mathematical ability, he included the qualities of swiftness and precision, but now when it comes to lying, swiftness is altogether excluded from the consideration. As we noted previously, speaking precisely about the truth requires making a choice amongst various mathematically true answers. However, even though there are a great variety of true answers, there is still a conceivable limit to their number. This limit does not apply to lying about a calculation because the possibilities are endless. Furthermore, one cannot formulate an opposite for 3x700, and Hippias initially assumed that lies are the opposite of the truth. In mathematics this appears especially nonsensical. If the precise answer was 2100, we may ask, what is the precise opposite of that? Is it 0012, or 3/700? Therefore, if in lying one ought to look for the opposite of the truth, the task of lying about 3x700 becomes quite difficult. Perhaps it is because of such complications that Socrates excludes 'swiftness' here and emphasizes precision.

Socrates next invites Hippias to compare himself with one who is ignorant in calculations, asking if the ignorant one would be more capable of lying. Socrates explains that even though the man who is ignorant in calculations wishes to lie, he "involuntarily speaks the truth many times if he should chance upon it because he lacks knowledge of the truth" (367a2). This is the first time in the dialogue that the word "involuntarily" occurs and, as the discussion unfolds, it will become of central importance. Here, the word is used to describe the actions of one who wishes to tell lies but ends up telling the truth. This liar proves to be less capable in comparison to the most capable liar, precisely because he lacks knowledge of the truth. As a result, the actions of this man are governed

more by chance than by knowledge and, due to his ignorance, he is unaware of his actions.

This reminds us of Socrates' earlier definition of capacity, "But each one is capable who does what he wishes when he wishes" (366c). At that point, Socrates explained that he was "not speaking of one who [was] prevented by sickness or such things," (366c2) and we had suggested that this sickness referred to ignorance. Now we have more support that ignorance prevents one from acting according to one's full capacity. The one ignorant in calculations may still lie but he may not prove to be as capable a liar as the one who is most capable. That is to say, ignorance prevents such a liar from being most capable but it certainly does not make him simply incapable. One ignorant in calculations may prove to be a capable liar, in so far as he convinces others of his lies. From this standpoint, since he gets what he desires, his lies may be judged as effective. It is only in light of the most capable liar that this one appears to be less capable. The one who is best in calculations knows what the truth is and also knows when he is lying. His actions are in accord with how things really are and not just how they appear to be; there is a unity between his intentions and actions. Moreover, because the most capable calculator knows the truth about calculations, he could also judge if someone else was lying. Someone concerned about being best, and not just appearing to be best, would likely be more concerned about the distinction between being capable and being most capable, for the latter requires fuller knowledge of the truth. What category Hippias belongs to is not yet clear.

After Hippias agrees, Socrates next asks if the liar is "a liar only about other things but not about number, and would he not lie in counting?" (367a8-9). Hippias is quick to answer and he does so by swearing his second oath of the dialogue, "Oh, yes, he would by Zeus, he would lie about number as well!" (367a8-9). With the swearing of Hippias' second oath, Plato may be inviting us back to the context in which the first oath appeared, alerting us to the type of liar who Hippias has in mind. Hippias swore the first oath to affirm that liars ("*apateones*," meaning cheaters) were excessively prudent. Now, we see that the liar Hippias has in mind may be one who cheats in number and counting and one of the most common things that is counted is currency. With this example, we also see how matters of calculations are not unrelated to or separate from human matters;

counting and calculations may apply to abstract mathematical questions but they also apply to every day transactions. Lying in mathematics, then, is not as innocuous as it may first appear, something of which Hippias seems to be well aware of here.

Socrates proceeds by asking if they should establish this liar, one who lies about calculation and number, as a certain sort of human being (367a11). If the type of man Hippias has in mind is one who cheats people of money, then only a certain type of man would lie about money in order to get more. Hippias readily and eagerly agrees. This suggests that money, number and calculation are only some of the things that a man would choose to lie about. There may be many other reasons to lie. In Plato's *Republic*, Socrates explains that lies in speech can be useful and offers other reasons for lying:

> Isn't it useful against enemies, and, as a preventive, like a drug, for so-called friends when from madness or some folly they attempt to do something bad? And, in the telling of the tales we were just now speaking about — those told because we don't know where the truth about ancient things lies — likening the lie to the truth as best we can, don't we also make it useful?[44]

Since there are many things to lie about and also different reasons to lie, there also may be many types of liars. Two types of liars may lie about the same subject but for different reasons. For instance, a lover of wisdom may lie about number not to get more money but because he does not know about ancient things whereas a lover of money may lie about both precisely to get more money. The reasons why a man lies may reveal something essential about his character. As we had earlier suggested, lying is often a way of becoming more capable at getting what one desires. One's entire way of life may be governed by one's desire and seeking its fulfillment. Perhaps this is why Socrates implies that lies can be used to classify men.

After establishing the one who lies about numbers and calculations as a type of man, Socrates reminds Hippias of an earlier part of the argument:

> And who would this be? Must it not belong to him to be capable of lying, if he is going to be a liar, as you just now agreed? For if you remember, it was said by you that he who is incapable of lying would never become a liar. (367b2-5)

[44] *Republic*, Book II: 382c7-382d3.

Hippias says that he remembers yet he forgets the precise manner in which it was said, for he does not seem to notice that "ignorance" is missing from Socrates' recollection (366b7-8). [45] Recall, after agreeing that liars were wise and capable, Socrates used this agreement to state, "Therefore, a man incapable of lying and ignorant would not be a liar" (366b8-9). Now, Socrates excludes ignorance and asks only about capacity. Perhaps he does so because the one who lies about number and calculation may be ignorant yet still be a capable liar. Such a liar may be judged to be ignorant because of *what* he chooses to lie about and not because, as we had earlier suggested, he his ignorant about knowing when and how to lie. Again, we see that the word 'ignorance' can be used to refer to different types of ignorance; here the liar is judged to be ignorant because of his ends and not his inability to lie.

Socrates uses Hippias as an example of the sort of liar that they were just describing by asking, "Then did you just now appear as one most capable of lying about calculations?"(367b7-8). This seems to be a repetition of an earlier part of the discussion when Hippias was asked if he could say the truth about 3x700, and then asked if his ability to answer this made him most capable: "And is that because you are most capable and wisest in these matters?"(366d) The comical difference between the two questions is that Hippias has just *appeared* as one most capable, which does not necessarily make him most capable.

In order to highlight the difference between being most capable and appearing to be most capable, Socrates asks, "Are you, therefore, also most capable of speaking truth about calculations?"(367c) This question is pivotal: is the one who appears to be most capable of lying about calculations therefore most capable of speaking truth about calculations? Noticeably, the question is not whether the one who appears to be most capable of lying could also appear to be most capable of speaking the truth. Rather, Socrates is asking whether one who appears most capable of lying is most capable of speaking the truth. We readily see that appearing to be most capable is different than being most capable, even though both may require knowledge. The former requires knowledge of how to appear as though one knew the truth about calculations whereas the

[45] Another change in Socrates' recollection of Hippias' agreement is that Socrates has changed *being* (estin) a liar to that of *becoming* (estinoin) one.

latter requires actually knowing the truth about calculations and being able to speak capably about this truth. The one appearing to be most capable may have a type of political expertise—he knows which lies will convince whom—but he does not necessarily know the truth about calculations. With the introduction of this type of political knowledge—one who is a capable speaker—there is a potential confusion between distinguishing between the one who appears to know the truth and the one who actually knows it. Indeed, only the one who knows the truth about calculations would be able to tell these two men apart.

Socrates draws part of the conclusion which he has been working towards: "Then isn't the same man most capable of speaking lies and truths about calculations? And this is the one who is good at these things, the expert calculator" (367c8-10). This conclusion—that the same man is most capable of speaking lies and truths about calculations—has been demonstrated. The knowledge gained in a particular field enables one to know truth and falsehood. However, in Socrates' formulation, there is no seeming—only the man who is most capable of speaking truth about calculations will also be most capable when it comes to lies in these same matters. In contrast, the one who *appears* to be most capable of speaking about calculations will not be the one who *is* most capable of speaking lies and truths about calculations. Again, the problem that may arise is that the master of appearances might appear capable of speaking both truth and lies about calculation. And those who do not know the truth, will be unable to distinguish between the man who appears to know the truth about calculations and the man who actually knows it.

Socrates establishes that the man who is able to speak both truth and lies about calculations is good (*agathos*) at 'these things' and accordingly is the expert calculator (367c4-6). This is the first mention of the word *good* in the dialogue, a peculiarly late occurrence since we have been speaking about who is best, and what qualities count for being so, for some time now. The goodness of the expert in calculations is equivalent to his skill—he is the most capable. We can understand this capacity in two ways. First, he is most capable in his particular field, that of calculations, for he knows and can distinguish true answers from false ones. In this sense, the standard of goodness is found within the confines of the particular expertise. The second way in which we can

understand his capacity is similar to our earlier suggestion, namely, that such a man not only knows mathematical truths (and falsehoods) but also knows how to speak capably about these things. Accordingly, he is judged to be good because his capacity is not solely limited to his particular field; rather it includes his political expertise.

Continuing the inquiry, Socrates asks, "Who then, Hippias, becomes a liar about calculations other than one who is good? For the same man is also capable, and this man is truthful as well?"(367c8-10) The way in which Socrates uses the word 'good' here is ambiguous. Before he characterized the expert as being "good at these things," implying that "these things" referred both to mathematics and politics, but now the goodness of the liar is left uncertain. Does this mean that one who becomes a liar about calculations is good at calculations? This seems patently false. As we have seen, a man who does not know the truth about calculations could still appear to know the truth about them and thus convince people of his lies; he may be an effective liar and thus judged to be good at lying, but this does not make him capable in calculations nor does it make him good at calculations. Most likely due to Socrates' ambiguous use of the word 'good', Hippias hesitates with, "it appears so" (367c11).

Socrates collects their agreements in the following summary statement: "Do you see, then, that the same one is a liar and truthful about these things, and the truthful is no better than the liar? For indeed he is the same man, and he does not possess characteristics which are most opposite, as you supposed just now"(367c10). Hippias concedes Socrates' point that this is the case in mathematics but seems reluctant to concede it in other subjects. In order to demonstrate that the same man is lying and truthful in other areas of expertise, Socrates lists studies that are traditionally thought to fall under the domain of theoretical sciences. The next subject mentioned, which builds upon knowledge learned in arithmetic, is geometry. Presumably, what we learned about the most capable calculator also has implications for the most capable geometer.

After establishing that Hippias also considers himself experienced in geometry, Socrates asks, "Well, then, is it not this way in geometry as well? Is the same one most capable of lying and speaking the truth about geometrical figures—that is, the expert in geometry?"(367d9-11). Hippias concedes the point. Socrates then inquires: "Is anyone else good in these things other than this one?" (367e). Socrates leaves "these things"

ambiguous since they may refer to geometrical things and political things, or it may refer only to the (political) ability to lie and speak the truth. As we discussed earlier, there is someone else who is good at these things who may not necessarily be the expert geometer; he may be the liar that appears to know the truth about geometry. This man may lie, and because of his political expertise may be able to convince others of his lies. In this sense, he is good at lying but he is not the expert geometer.

Socrates draws forth a further implication from the earlier agreement, "Accordingly, is not the good and wise geometer most capable, at least, with respect to both? And if anyone else could be a liar about geometrical figures, it would be he, the one who is good? For this one was capable of lying, while the bad one was incapable of it, so that he would not become a liar who is unable to lie, as has been agreed"(367e3). Socrates asks two questions and these bring forth two very different answers. First, he asks if the good and wise geometer is most capable of both, presumably truth and falsehood. We note here that Socrates asks if this man is *most* capable, and an earlier version of this question referred to the calculator who possessed knowledge in his particular field, in addition to possessing a type of political knowledge. This man, then, may be judged to be good and wise. But again, we wonder how both of these terms—good and wise—are being used. For if 'good' is referring to being capable in both geometry and being capable in politics, in this case, the most capable geometer would be good and capable of both. But what of 'wise'? How are we to understand Socrates' use of this word? As we have seen, Hippias seemed to have a peculiar understanding of wisdom; he had used wisdom and knowledge interchangeably, such that the liar was wise in deceiving. In other words, wisdom was related to particular domains, corresponding to different types of knowledge. And if wisdom is understood to be synonymous with knowledge, as per Hippias' understanding, then again the most capable geometer will also be the most knowledgeable since he knows the most about two different domains; accordingly, he will be 'wise' in both. But in another sense of wise, Socrates may be suggesting that one who understands the interrelationship between the domains of geometry and politics, may be the one who is good and wise.

After stating that the good and wise geometer was most capable with respect to truth and lies, why does Socrates go on to explain that if *anyone else* could be a liar about

geometrical figures, it would be the one who is good. Moreover, the one who is incapable of lying about geometry is now judged to be bad (*kakos*). Yet again, Socrates reminds Hippias about an earlier part of their argument: "For this one was capable of lying, while the bad one was incapable of it, so that he would not become a liar" (367e4-5). The standard of lying capably about geometrical figures, then, seems to become the basis of judging who is a good and bad geometer. In this case, presumably what makes such a man good is his ability to lie capably which is a result of his political knowledge. This seems to be a strange conclusion but the strangest is yet to come with Socrates' example of astronomy.

Socrates next inquires about a third man, the astronomer, stating that Hippias thinks that he is more knowledgeable in this art than those that were taken up before (368a). At this point, what was implied in geometry becomes more explicit. Socrates asks, "In astronomy too, therefore, if anyone is a liar, the good astronomer—that is, the one who is capable of lying—will be a liar" (368a6). With this Socrates quietly suggests that anyone capable of lying in astronomy will be a good astronomer and, furthermore, suggests that this judgment may no longer be based on knowing the truth about astronomical phenomenon at all. Moreover this same one, "…will not be the one who is incapable, for he is ignorant" (368a7-8). Now the one who is incapable of becoming a liar is judged to be ignorant. Socrates thus indicates for a moment that one might judge astronomers by virtue of their ability to lie in astronomy. By doing so, he moves the standard of goodness towards whether one is capable of lying, and away from his earlier suggestion that the most capable liar is one who also knows the truth in his particular field. Now, a capable liar, who possesses political knowledge about speaking, is judged to be a good astronomer. Accordingly, being a good astronomer no longer requires knowledge of truth in one's field, but requires only a type of political knowledge. This argument seems to be so problematic because we assume that a good astronomer must be knowledgeable in his field, namely the heavens. We may wonder, then, why Socrates puts forth this false argument. Could the mere appearance of knowledge (obtained through lies) somehow constitute a kind of knowledge that constitutes being good and wise after all? After Hippias reluctantly concedes that the good astronomer is the good liar, Socrates concludes, "In astronomy as well, therefore, the same one will be truthful

and a liar" (368a10-11), and with this emphasizes the relationship between being a capable liar and having a certain type of knowledge and thus a certain form of truth. Yet this type of knowledge need not be knowledge in the subject that one chooses to lie about; rather it may solely be a type of political knowledge that enables one to be a convincing liar.

In examining Hippias' various expertises, Socrates first asked if Hippias was experienced in calculations and the art of calculations (366c8-9). In so doing, Socrates made a distinction between the subject and the art of that subject. Moreover in asking about astronomy, Socrates explicitly described the subjects that have been considered as arts (*techne*), "Yet further, let us also investigate the third man, the astronomer, in whose art you think you are still more knowledgeable than in those taken up before" (367e9-368a2). Mathematics, geometry and astronomy are usually examples of contemplative sciences (*episteme*). Therefore the fact that the sciences are referred to as art forms is in itself peculiar. Traditionally, the intellectual sciences were pursued for the sake of knowing, and thus were thought to be separate from productive knowledge or what was conventionally believed to be useful. Although the intellectual sciences can be pursued for the sake of knowledge, this does not preclude that such knowledge will be put to use and thus be more characteristic of productive knowledge. Indeed, we have already seen that numbers and calculations can refer to abstract mathematical calculations but can also refer to the many conventional things that we count, money being a prime example. Similarly, as geometry is essential for knowing how to construct infrastructure or to measure and allocate plots of land, astronomy is used for agriculture and the marking of the calendar. Therefore, to think that the sciences are somehow separate from practical human affairs may be to misconstrue their pervasive role on our daily lives. In fact, it is not until we realize that the sciences have an effect on human affairs that we begin to realize the vast array of motives behind why someone would choose to lie about them.

Chapter 5: (368b-369a3)

We concluded the previous chapter with Socrates' example of astronomy, where he strangely tried to establish that the good astronomer was necessarily a liar and therefore anyone who was capable of lying in astronomy might also be judged a good astronomer. By doing so, Socrates managed to shift the standard of being an expert in one's field from knowing the truth about their subject area to the ability to lie capably in that subject. This argument was very different than the one he established in calculations, the subject that he began with when he inquired into Hippias' particular skills. In arithmetic, we saw that the capacity to lie could be understood to come from two different types of knowledge. The first dealt with the particular subject area and knowledge of the subject's truth while the second knowledge dealt with a type of political expertise linked to speech. One who knew the truth of his subject, then, could distinguish truth from falsehood. In this sense, possessing knowledge in a particular subject meant knowing truth and knowing falsehood. But we also saw that to be a capable liar entailed knowing *how* to lie and we deemed this knowledge to be more political in nature since the capable liar knew how to create convincing lies and appear as though he were speaking the truth. With his definition of the good astronomer, Socrates seems to imply that there might be a kind of astronomer possessing only a type of political knowledge and, moreover, this made him *good* in his field.

Perhaps in order to elucidate further this shift in standards, Socrates asks Hippias to consider his vast array of skills, asking whether the same man is also a liar and truthful.

Socrates' request is as follows:

> Come then, Hippias, consider freely in this way in the case of all the sciences whether matters are anywhere in a condition other than this: you are altogether the wisest of all human beings in the greatest number of arts, as I once heard you boasting, when you yourself narrated your extensive and enviable wisdom in the marketplace beside the banking tables. You asserted that you had once come to Olympia, having all you had about your body as your own works: first, that the ring you were wearing (for you began with that) was your work, since you knew how to cut rings, and that another signet too was your work, and a scraper and an unguent bottle, all of which you yourself made; then you said that you had cut from leather the footwear you were wearing and that you had woven your outer clothing and tunic, and then, what seemed most unusual to all

> and a display of the greatest wisdom, was when you said the belt of your tunic, which you were wearing, was like the very expensive Persian ones and that you had plaited this yourself. In addition to these things, you said that you came having poems—epic verses, tragedies, dithyrambs—and many speeches of all sorts in prose. And you said that you came with knowledge, distinguished from that of others, concerning the arts of which I have just spoken, and about rhythms, harmoniae, correctness of letters, and very many other things in addition to these, as I remember. And further, I forgot your artful device (as it seems) for remembering, in which you suppose you are most splendid, and I suppose I have forgotten very many other things. But as I say, look both at your own arts (for they are sufficient) and at those of others, and tell me if anywhere you can find, from among those things to which you and I have agreed, where one is truthful and another—a separate one, not the same—is a liar. Consider this in the case of whatever wisdom you wish, or whatever unscrupulous wickedness, or whatever you are pleased to name it. But you will not find it, comrade—for it does not exist. But speak up! (368b-369a) [46]

In asking his question, Socrates enumerates a bizarre but astonishing list of the skills Hippias claims to possess. Markedly, this is the first place in the dialogue that we get Socrates' description of Hippias' activities or deeds. This question serves, at least partly then, as an opportunity for Socrates to reveal what Hippias takes most pride in and thus what he thinks is most excellent. And although we know that he delivers speeches across Greece, this is not his only achievement. Exhibiting speeches is only one talent amongst many others, for it is his ability to be an expert in *many* fields that makes him famous. His highest achievement, then, seems to be his *polymathia*; that is, he is well-versed in an assortment of subject areas. In fact, according to Socrates, Hippias boasts that he is "the wisest of all human beings in the greatest number of arts"(368b4). Ironically, his *polymathia* makes him versatile: he diversifies himself to such an extent that his skill set can change with the winds of fortune; whatever garb is in favor, whatever style is in fashion, he will be able to adapt to the times and maintain his affluence.

Socrates mentions the location of Hippias' boast, and this, in itself, is revealing. Hippias makes his boast in the marketplace beside the banking tables, the suggestion being that Hippias' wisdom is the exchangeable good that he can sell for common currency, money and praise. Dabbling in all the arts and sciences, Hippias magnificently

[46] Intriguingly, whereas Socrates had referred to the contemplative sciences as arts, in what follows he refers to the arts as sciences (*episteme*).

displays his knowledge before the gathered crowds, hoping he can sell his 'wisdom' to the highest bidder.

Hippias believes himself to be 'the wisest of all human beings in the greatest number of arts' and this is displayed in a most peculiar manner. For, as Socrates recollects, when Hippias came to Olympia he asserted that he had made all of his own adornments. The first thing that Socrates lists, which is what Hippias supposedly began with, is his ring. We are told that this is only one signet amongst others that he made. Proving that he possesses the knowledge of metallurgy, Hippias crafts his own ring. In ancient times, rings, often a symbol of power and affluence, were used as a seal to authenticate ownership by making an impression on clay or wax, in lieu of a person's name. Hippias' ring, however, is neither a family heirloom nor does it designate a certain political position. On the contrary, he himself has made the ring and now displays it publicly. One who does not hear his boasting, then, might assume that Hippias comes from an influential family or holds a high political post, without realizing that neither of these is necessarily true. The immediate effect of the ring is that it does give an impression—not one on wax or clay, but rather an impression of power that stamps the imagination. This impression itself wields more power politically by contributing to Hippias' public reputation.

Following the signets, we get a list of concoctions that enable one to beautify the appearance of the body. The first is to cleanse, with the stirgils (or scrapers), after which the body is anointed with the scent from an unguent bottle. Interestingly, and probably not coincidentally, both the stirgil and unguent bottle were commonly used by the Olympic athletes who would ritually purify before competing. Once again, Hippias seems to mimic the Olympic athletes, harkening us back to the beginning of the dialogue and foreshadowing what is to come. We next learn that Hippias cuts his own leather to make his shoes and even weaves his own tunic. One would imagine that both activities would be terribly time-consuming to say the least. If we take him at his word, then, it is a real wonder that Hippias has any time to do anything else. But, as the list continues, we see that he has enough time to make many other artifacts and master many other art forms.

Strikingly, much of Hippias' efforts are directed towards the adornment, covering up, and beautifying of his body. In this part of the list, we see evidence that Hippias uses

the senses, both of sight and smell, in hopes of immediately affecting the minds of those who perceive him. In imagining Hippias, we are reminded of how different he must look in appearance to Socrates. This creates quite a comedic disjunction. Unlike Hippias, Socrates' efforts, for the most part, are not directed towards beautifying his body. He too enters the marketplace, but is notorious for being barefoot, and dressed in the same old tunic. Hippias invests much time and energy into appearances. And in order to be a master of appearances, one would assume that Hippias would need to be a keen observer of them. As Socrates' recollection of Hippias reveals, Socrates too is a keen observer of appearances but his motives for being so may be quite different than Hippias.' Socrates' attention and efforts seem directed towards understanding what is behind the surfaces. The task of his philosophizing is a stripping away to arrive at the truth whereas Hippias is busy weaving tunics to cover and adorn.

Socrates singles out Hippias' ability to imitate Persian belts by remarking, "what seemed most unusual (out of place/most absurd) to all and a display of the greatest wisdom, was when you said the belt of your tunic, which you were wearing, was like the very expensive Persian ones and that you had plaited this yourself" (368c5-6). In explaining that it is like the belts that one sees in Persia, Hippias, notably, is taking his standard from a region which is notorious for its extravagance and opulence. Hippias believes that such ostentation is powerful and worthy of imitation. And in the plaiting of his belt, he is hoping to prove that he is capable of this imitation. Yet Hippias, curiously, is not pretending that the belt is an expensive Persian one. Hippias could have sold his belt as genuine and made a handsome profit but he chooses not to. On the contrary, he wants others to know that he was able to imitate this expensive belt and, therefore, not pay the full price for it. Hippias is showing off his imitation as an imitation. In this sense, he may unconsciously reveal that his activity is largely one of mimicking the appearances of things. As a master of appearances, this is the first place where Hippias calls attention to the distinction between the genuine belt and his imitation. He seems to derive pleasure from others realizing how good he is at imitating and replicating this object: his belt is an imposture of the expensive Persian ones but for all intents and purposes, they are in appearances identical, and one does not have to journey all the way to Persia to get one.

That Hippias seems to be boasting about his ability to produce knock-offs is surprising, to say the least, since he professes to uphold honesty and simplicity as the highest virtues!

According to Socrates, Hippias boasts that he is 'wisest in the greatest number of arts' but, for the most part, his arts are aesthetic. That is to say, they are in the service of producing and perfecting appearances. Much of aesthetics is to appear to be more perfect, more beautiful, than one is naturally. This enhancement could be construed as a type of lying, which would require some knowledge of beauty. Augmenting how the body is received through the senses artificially creates a more beautifully striking image. Visual impressions are powerful because they are so immediate and almost everyone can partake in them. This is not to say that they affect everyone in the same way, or to the same degree. Nevertheless, it is precisely because we judge so much on appearances, that it is common advice not to judge solely on them.

Visual reception is usually prior to and more immediate than speeches, which is what follows next in Socrates' enumeration of Hippias' repertoire:

> In addition to these things, you said that you came having poems—epic verses, tragedies, dithyrambs—and many speeches of all sorts in prose. And you said that you came with knowledge, distinguished from that of others, concerning the arts of which I have just spoken, and about rhythms, harmoniae, correctness of letters, and very many other things in addition to these, as I remember (368d).

Thus far, Socrates has listed Hippias' various crafts. Now, Socrates lists Hippias' speeches. And although his speeches may seem separate from his crafts, speech may also be understood to be a *type* of craft. In this regard, recall Socrates earlier used the word '*poiesis'* in describing the activity of liars. We had suggested that this was because '*poiesis'* referred to creating or making of speech. In this way, speech can be an artifact, even though it cannot be seen materially. Like his crafts, Hippias' speeches affect the souls of others. Notably Hippias' mastery of speech includes tragedy, the imitative art par excellence. A tragic presentation often flatters our longings and fears, making them more beautiful by painting them in a dramatic light. Many get solace from seeing that ill-fortune is a shared experience and that even the strongest amongst us are still victims to fate, or forces outside of our own control, like Achilles appears to be in the *Iliad*. With such an extensive list of the types of speeches, one would get the impression that Hippias

had mastered all forms. But on closer examination, we realize there are other important ones missing, especially in light of our dialogue: comedy and philosophy.[47]

Another strange thing about this list is Socrates' reference to Hippias' mnemonic ability. Socrates playfully states that he forgot Hippias' artful device for remembering, in which Hippias holds himself to be most splendid. Yet, as we have seen, and will continue to see throughout the dialogue, Hippias seems to fail at remembering key aspects and developments in the argument. As we saw in the section on calculating, when Socrates recollected an earlier part of the agreement, Hippias failed to remember the precise manner in which it was said (366b8, 367b2-5, 367e7). In addition, when recollecting parts of the *Iliad*, Hippias had not only misquoted words but he had also omitted crucial lines of Achilles' speech. At those points, we could not be sure whether Hippias had simply forgotten these things or whether he had purposely chosen to omit certain lines or exclude certain parts of the agreement. Now, since Socrates has commented that Hippias himself is an inventor of an artful device to remember, doubt is shed as to whether Hippias is as forgetful as he seems. Indeed, in *Greater Hippias*, Hippias brags, "If I hear fifty names just once, I recollect them."[48]

For Hippias, superiority does not simply mean being knowledgeable in various subjects. Of crucial importance to him is making a memorable display of that knowledge. Hippias seems not only to know things but he can also do something with that knowledge—he can make things. That is to say, he is technically proficient and this ability to produce things from his knowledge is (to himself and the gathered crowds) a demonstrable proof of his 'wisdom.' This capacity to make things is the source of Hippias' great pride. Indeed, Hippias boasts (*megalaukhoumenou*) that he is "wisest of all human beings in the greatest number of arts" (386b3-4). Earlier, remarking on Hippias'

[47] The comedic, which is the predominant tone of this dialogue, usually plays upon calling differences and disjunctions to the fore. There have been numerous occasions in the dialogue, especially here in particular, where we take delight in Hippias and laugh at him because he appears to be superficially vain and self-satisfied. Hippias often finds himself entangled in a mess of contradictions, some of which he seems oblivious to. However, before we get carried away by laughter, we often forget that Hippias may be closer in resemblance to ourselves than what seems. Often the faults of others seem to be more obvious and ridiculous than our own. Our own faults are harder to recognize and thus can be reflected to us dramatically in and through another character. Comedies enable us to artificially experience this separation; philosophy tries to account for it. When we realize this, we pause to reflect on this affinity and account for what we found to be so ridiculous in Hippias. In this sense, Plato's comedic presentation may also have a pedagogic function.

[48] *Greater Hippias*, 285e8.

confidence, Socrates had described his experience as blessed if he had "so much hope about his soul with respect to wisdom" that he could contend fearlessly with it. Hippias replied by explaining, "It is fitting, Socrates, that I should have experienced this; for since I began contending for victory at Olympia, I've never yet met anyone better than I am in anything" (364a-b). At that point in the conversation, we could only hypothesize that he deemed himself wise because of his ability to answer questions about his speeches. Now we are able to get a clearer idea of Hippias' understanding of wisdom: he judges himself to be wise because he is skilled in the greatest number of arts.

By becoming technologically proficient, thus being able to manipulate cause and effect, Hippias seems to believe (or demonstrates to others) that he knows everything about a particular area; he has acquired the knowledge and thus the 'wisdom' in that field. In this sense, he conflates skill with wisdom and his calculations seem to rest on the assumption that each individual art, or area of expertise, has its own distinct amount of wisdom. By doing so, he reduces wisdom to distinct units such as numbers, and then performs simple addition with these 'units.' By adding these distinct 'wisdoms' he, then, claims to have the greatest amount—'he is the wisest!' Hippias does not claim that he is knowledgeable or that he is most skilled in the greatest number of arts, although both seem to be more accurate declarations. This is not the first time we see Hippias' peculiar understanding of wisdom for when Socrates earlier inquired, "since the liars know what they know, does that make them wise or ignorant?"(365e13) Hippias replied, "They are surely wise, at least with respect to this very thing: deceiving thoroughly" (365e14-15). Even at that point, as we had discussed, Hippias seemed to conflate capacity and knowledge with wisdom. The liars were able to deceive because they were wise in deception. Based upon Hippias' understanding, different subject areas had different types of wisdom. The ability to lie was a type of wisdom but the ability to perform mathematical computations was also a type of wisdom (366c15).

It is true that each area of expertise has a distinct domain of knowledge. A part of understanding that knowledge may entail understanding the causal relationship of its potential effects. But there is an important difference between technological proficiency, a manipulation of cause and effect, and understanding the principles that are involved in the subject matter that one is manipulating. The domain of knowledge may extend further

and deeper within a subject matter than the type of knowledge that is required to produce effects. Surely, one cannot deny the difference between the cable repair man and the one who is knowledgeable about fiber optic transmissions. And whereas one who is knowledgeable about fiber optic transmission could apply his knowledge to fix a cable box, a cable man could not explain fiber optics. Consequently, there may be an important distinction to be made about a certain skill and the type of knowledge which it requires, and a deeper understanding of the theoretical principles involved within such an area of expertise.

As there is a distinction to be made between a particular skill and knowledge, there may also be one between knowledge and wisdom. A part of wisdom entails understanding the interrelationship and interconnectedness of various things. Gaining wisdom involves not only grasping how things fit together but also how they can be hierarchically arranged. Wisdom, in this sense, is essentially comprehensive. Hippias thinks that being capable, where capacity is the power to produce things from one's knowledge, is what constitutes being wise. Needless to say, being skilled in the greatest number of arts is not the same as being wise, but it may, significantly, count as proof of wisdom to the unwise. We ought to keep in mind that Hippias is a sophist. He purports to teach wisdom and it now seems likely that most believe that he is wise because he is able to produce things. In this sense, Hippias is a living portrayal of most people's conception of a wise disposition. This is crucial in understanding Hippias: he is a reflection, an imitator of what is around him.[49]

Returning to the example of the Persian belt, we see that it serves as an analogy of Hippias' 'wisdom.' Many may desire the reputation of wisdom (the veneer of wisdom) without having to 'pay the full price for it' and 'make the painstaking journey' to acquire it. In other words, they want the wise disposition without having to labor. And Hippias seems to offer them this costume, which they can parade for others to be impressed by. In this sense, Hippias is displaying a certain kind of skill akin to lying; he instinctively recognizes what sells and knows how to sell it. His customers will be satisfied with having the appearance of wisdom, perhaps believing that they fit what they portray. Accordingly, perhaps the second part of Socrates' comment—that Hippias' claim

[49] *Republic*, Book VI: 493a7-493e.

regarding his ability to make imitation belts was 'a display of the greatest wisdom'—refers to Hippias' ability of knowing about the people that he sells to. Hippias seems to recognize that most people desire to appear wise and in the marketplace, for the most part, this appearance becomes mistaken for the real thing. To some degree, then, if Hippias is aware of this tendency, he has a vested interest in ignoring the distinction between appearances of a thing and the thing itself. If there are any extrinsic rewards that come from being wise, they may also be given to the imposter, the one who appears to be wise, or rather one who appears to fit the criterion of what most believe to be wisdom (including the imposter). Yet, if wisdom has its own intrinsic rewards that have little to do with the recognition of others, then Hippias, as well as the people who buy into his teachings, may be the ones who are ultimately cheated.

Socrates uncharacteristically ends the question by a command; he forcefully demands Hippias to answer the question.

> But as I say, look both at your own arts (for they are sufficient) and at those of others, and tell me if anywhere you can find, from among those things to which you and I have agreed, where one is truthful and another—a separate one, not the same—is a liar. Consider this in the case of whatever wisdom you wish, or whatever unscrupulous wickedness, or whatever you are pleased to name it. But you will not find it comrade—for it does not exist. But speak up! (368e-369a) [50]

We may wonder why Socrates becomes harsh with Hippias at this particular point. In concluding the previous chapter, we noted that Socrates put forth a clearly false argument about the good astronomer. Namely, that anyone who lied capably about astronomy was judged to be a good astronomer. By so doing, Socrates disregarded that the astronomer had to be knowledgeable in his own field and thus know the truth about astronomical phenomena. In this case, the liar and the truthful were not one and the same for the liar did not know the truth about astronomy. Yet, the capable liar did possess some knowledge, which we had argued was a type of political expertise, a type of political truth: he knew what others imagined the truth to be about particular subjects and he used this knowledge to appear to be truthful, when in fact he was lying. This political ability

[50]Remarkably, Socrates calls direct attention to what was only hinted at earlier (365b7), which is the fact that different names can be attributed to the same phenomena. When asking whether the truthful one and the liar are separate, he requests that Hippias consider it whether one names that capacity or skill "wisdom" or "unscrupulous wickedness" or "whatever you are pleased to name it."

made him a capable liar but it did not mean that he knew the truth about the subject matter that he chose to lie about.

Socrates rhetorically shifts the standard of goodness of an expert away from being knowledgeable about a subject, to the ability to lie effectively about that same subject. Perhaps, Socrates presents this false argument because it indicates something about Hippias' understanding of being good in an area of expertise. That is, the standard he uses to judge a good mathematician, geometer and astronomer. And now, after examining Hippias' various arts, we have more evidence that Hippias' standard of goodness is strange, to say the least. We have observed that Hippias believes that being technically proficient makes one good in a particular field and this ability need not include a complete mastery of the knowledge in that field. When we first glance at Hippias' repertoire, he appears to be one who is a polymath. However, on closer examination, we see that he is more of a poly-technician. Through the production of his crafts, he has the ability to appear as though he knows everything that there is to know about an assortment of subjects. It is towards mastery of a certain political knowledge—the knowledge of appearances—that Hippias' efforts seem to be directed. Hippias does seem to have a sense of what most people believe wisdom to be and he has the capacity to cast such appearances. Just like Socrates' suggested definition of the good astronomer, then, Hippias has a type of political knowledge that makes him capable of lying to others. But this does not make him the most capable in all of his various arts, nor does it make him best; it is even questionable whether this singular capacity to lie makes him good at all. Again, uncovering whether or not Hippias is fully aware of the implications of his actions and what they suggest about his standard of goodness is not altogether clear but it is a key interpretive challenge, something to which we will return towards the end of the dialogue.

Chapter Six: (369a4-372a7)

Faced with Socrates' latest question—concerning whether it is the case in all the arts and sciences that one man is truthful and another a liar—Hippias replies that he does not understand what Socrates is saying. Socrates responds by interpreting Hippias' confusion as an inability to remember the result of the argument. He jests that this is because Hippias is not using his artful mnemonic device because Hippias does not feel the need. Reminding Hippias of his judgment that "Achilles was truthful while Odysseus was a liar and versatile" Socrates draws the logical conclusion of their argument: "Now then, do you perceive that the same man has come to light as being both truthful and a liar, so that if Odysseus was a liar, he becomes also truthful, and if Achilles was truthful, he becomes also a liar, and these men are not different from one another or opposite but similar?" (369b). [51]

Far from conceding the point, Hippias fronts a charge against Socrates (369b8). He suggests that Socrates 'weaves' arguments by picking out and holding on to tiny difficulties and not contending with the whole matter (an ironic accusation coming from a man who literally weaves his own tunic).[52] In one sense, Hippias is right in his condemnation, for in judging the better man Socrates is not contending with the whole matter, which is to say he is not contending with the entire character of the man. Rather, basing his standard solely on the capacity to tell the truth or lies, Socrates is arguing that since both men possess this capacity they are similar. But in order to argue this point, Socrates collapses the distinction between knowing how to do something and thus having the capacity for such action, with actually choosing whether to do it or not. Yet in judging the better man, we readily see that one needs to consider not only what a man knows but also, and perhaps more importantly, what he chooses to do with his knowledge.

Declaring that he is ready for a real fight, Hippias challenges Socrates to "counter argument with argument"(369c). In the realm of arguments, Hippias implies that he is

[51] Notably, the simplicity of Achilles is left out of this reminder and henceforth is dropped from the consideration. By now, it has been demonstrated that speaking the truth capably requires versatility. Perhaps still oblivious to this development, Hippias accuses Socrates of displaying a type of versatility in arguments, namely, Socrates weaves arguments by holding onto small difficulties.

[52] In both the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* weaving is an important motif, the task of which is traditionally delegated to women, and thus falls under their domain. With this connotation in mind, Hippias attacks Socrates and his 'womanly' ways. In the realm of arguments, Socrates is imitating the 'weaker' sex and is managing to cover the truth by craftily weaving a veil over it.

like Achilles, for he too has the power to combat his enemy face-to-face, letting the outcome of the battle be the grounds for judging the victor (369c4). But just as there is a question of whether or not the best man is the bravest, when bravery is understood in terms of face-to-face combat, there is also a question of whether the best speaker is one who is able to present the truth openly and forcefully, as opposed to one who proceeds stealthily by design. After all, in the case of mathematics, we saw that speaking the truth required skill; it required political expertise.

Hippias is confident that if they have an open battle of wits, then those who are present will clearly be able to judge the better speaker. Not surprisingly, Hippias, the master manipulator of public opinion, wants the people to judge.[53] The better speaker is not always understood in terms of who speaks more truthfully; the judgment of who is better—and ultimately best—will often rest on the one who *appears* to do so.[54] For his part, Hippias' foremost concern does not seem to be the question of whether Achilles or Odysseus is the better man, but rather whether the better man is he or Socrates. Hippias has thrown down the gauntlet, setting a competition of speeches in place, and he—quite apart from the logical development of the argument—wants to be victor. Amusingly, Socrates has moved from being Hippias' innocent student to his worthy adversary. From a shift in Hippias' tone, we can see that his generosity in answering Socrates has run out; what started as patronizing has now become indignant.

Seemingly to quell Hippias, Socrates feeds him a morsel of flattery, albeit one that is coated with qualifications. Socrates begins by reassuring Hippias that he is not disputing the idea that Hippias is wiser than he. On the contrary, Socrates' questioning of Hippias is apparent evidence that he regards Hippias as wise:

> Hippias, I certainly do not dispute that you are wiser than I, but I am always accustomed to pay attention whenever someone says something and especially when the speaker seems to me to be wise. And since I desire to learn what he is saying, I question him thoroughly and consider again and compare the things said, so that I may understand. If the one speaking seems to me to be of little account, neither do I ply him with questions, nor is what he says of concern to me. And you will know from this which ones I hold to be wise. For you will find me being

[53] At the beginning of the dialogue, we saw that Hippias' speech was celebrated by most of the crowd. In praising Hippias' speech, Eudicus had focused solely on standard of beauty.

[54] Earlier, Socrates alluded to the different modes of speech: a dialectical approach to inquiry and a rhetorical display of speech. Although Hippias appeared to be confident in both, he now seems more confident in his rhetorical abilities and less confident in dialectics. (364b8)

> indefatigable about the things said by one of that sort, questioning him so that by understanding I may be benefited in some way (369d-e3).

Taking Socrates' statement in earnest, recall that he never initiated a conversation with Hippias; on the contrary, after hearing Hippias' speech he was silent. Unsatisfied with this silence, it was Eudicus who compelled Socrates to engage with Hippias (363a). Previously, in the *Greater Hippias*, Socrates pursues a conversation with Hippias for his own intents and purposes. Yet at that place in time, there were no observers of that conversation, whereas here it is Eudicus, as well as others, who serve as an audience. And, as we are reminded in the few places where Socrates invites Eudicus to interject, these observers are not just passive observers. Some (as we shall see with Eudicus' pleading) have a stake in the argument (373c).

What qualifies Socrates' praise of Hippias' display of wisdom is the quiet suggestion that the wisdom may be merely apparent, and it is this concern to decipher whether it is apparent or real that explains his efforts: Socrates pays attention "when someone *seems* to be wise" (369d3). As we have seen, appearances exert much power over human affairs. And if the real thing is not completely separated but in fact importantly related to the appearances, then one is left to explain this complex relationship. Presumably Socrates is interested in those who have the appearance of wisdom because he supposes there is this important connection. Next, Socrates speaks of his method of discriminating and distinguishing, his dialectical manner/approach. [55] The aim of Socrates' method is to understand what someone is saying and he does this by questioning them thoroughly and considering again and comparing the things already said, "so that he may understand" (369d4-5). Although Hippias accuses Socrates of weaving arguments by holding onto small difficulties, we see here that his method is not just one of analyzing but, importantly, it is also one of synthesizing.

Having distracted Hippias with flattery, Socrates opportunely employs an element of surprise. Moving swiftly, Socrates reveals that he is not only capable of speaking dialectically but also rhetorically. In marked contrast to his earlier approach, Socrates now proceeds by leveling one quote after another from Homer—allowing the audience to

[55] It is probably not a coincidence that dialectics is the study that arithmetic, geometry and astronomy lead to in Plato's *Republic* where Socrates formulates the education curriculum of the warriors and philosophers. *Republic*, Book VII.

judge who is the better speaker. We too are invited to judge this compelling battle of wits. Socrates initiates his attack by recalling Hippias' quote from the *Iliad*. At the beginning of the conversation, Hippias recounted Achilles' words to prove that Achilles was simple and truthful and that Odysseus was versatile and a liar (365a). Calling attention to Hippias' evidence, Socrates says, "…it seems to me strange, if you speak the truth, that Odysseus, the versatile, is nowhere shown to be a liar, while Achilles is shown to be someone versatile, according to your argument; at any rate, he lies" (370a). This confirms that Hippias was using the word versatile imprecisely; the more fitting word, according to Hippias' elaboration of what he means, would have been a liar, since he seems to be believe that Odysseus' resourcefulness is used to deceive others. In the quotations to follow, Socrates will try to demonstrate, contrary to Hippias' interpretation, how Achilles is in fact a liar.

In the first part of Socrates' argument, he contrasts three statements of Achilles to prove his point. Of initial note is that these occur in two very distinct parts of the *Iliad* and there is a time lapse between them. Furthermore, they are out of temporal order; the second being taken from Book IX of the *Iliad*, the third from Book I. Socrates himself draws our attention to this. As he recalls, Achilles begins with, "For that one is hateful to me as the gates of Hades, who hides one thing in his mind but says something else."[56] Following this statement, Achilles goes on to say that he is not persuaded by Odysseus and Agamemnon but that,

> Tomorrow, when I have performed the sacrifices to Zeus and
> all the gods,
> Having loaded well the ships after I have drawn them down to
> the sea,
> You will see if you want to, and if indeed these things concern
> you,
> My ships sailing very early on the fishy Hellespont,
> And in them the men eager to row:
> And if the glorious Earth-shaker should give a fair voyage
> I would arrive at rich-soiled Phthia on the third day. (370b3-c3)[57]

[56] This is Socrates' recollection of the *Iliad* and not Lattimore's translation of Homer's text. It refers to *Iliad*, Book IX, 314-315.
[57] Socrates' recollection of the *Iliad*. Book IX, 357-63.

But, as Socrates reminds Hippias, it is not the first time that Achilles has made such a threat. In Book I, at the beginning of the *Iliad*, Achilles also vows to leave. In anger against Agamemnon, he rails:

> Now I am going to Phthia, since it is much better
> To go home with the curved ships, nor do I think
> I will draw full draughts of wealth and riches for you, since
> I am dishonored here. (370c6-d2) [58]

Yet days after these threats Achilles is still sitting by his tents and has made no visible preparations to return home. As Socrates pointedly reminds Hippias, the audience that Achilles addresses is different in each case and Socrates characterizes them accordingly. Socrates describes Achilles' response in Book IX as "before his own comrades," whereas the response in Book I, he describes as "before the entire army" (370d3-4). Since, however, Socrates uses these two instances to reveal that Achilles threatens *the same thing* (even though much time has lapsed) we may wonder what difference does it make to whom he is speaking? On closer examination, we realize that although the formal point of Achilles' threat is the same—that he is leaving for Phthia—his assertions are substantively different. This difference has radical implications and it may reveal that Achilles has the political knowledge that enables him to be a capable speaker. That is to say, Achilles (like Socrates) seems to be aware of the different capacities of the people to whom he speaks and takes this into consideration.

When Achilles speaks before his own comrades, he gives prominence to "Zeus and all the gods" (370b3-4). He begins by establishing the primacy of the gods in speech (he mentions them first) and in deed (he first performs sacrifices for them). In the middle, he gives prominence to his own actions: "loading all the ships and drawing them down to the sea." Lastly, the place of the gods is reaffirmed: "if the glorious Earth-shaker should give a fair voyage." Accordingly the origin and the end of the action are somehow outside Achilles' complete control; indeed the last point suggests that his arrival to Phthia will be in large part, but not wholly, dependant upon the will of the gods. In other words, when Achilles is speaking to his comrades (people he thinks of as his own, as Socrates stresses) he may feel freer to strip himself from his 'armor' and to admit that his success

[58] Socrates' recollection of the *Iliad,* Book I,169-71.

depends upon forces that may be outside of his control. Achilles may realize that there may be significant limitations to his capacity—doing what he wishes whenever he wishes to do it—and he is willing to reveal this to those to whom he feels closest.[59]

By contrast, when Achilles is railing against Agamemnon before the entire army, he chooses to present his own will as supreme. In contrast to the passage from Book IX, here there is not a single mention of the gods. The origins and causes of Achilles' actions are attributed not to mysterious forces in the cosmos—but rather to Agamemnon's dishonoring 'the best of the Achaeans.' Achilles states that culpability lies solely in the actions of a man, whom he believes to be inferior. The implications of this are clear; Achilles can freely choose to withdraw from the battle: "Now I am going to Phthia…" In front of the army, Achilles maintains a posture of self-sufficiency epitomized in the sheer strength of his will and his ability to effect whatever he desires.

Socrates points out that although Achilles threatens to withdraw, he makes no preparations to leave on either occasion. Rather, Socrates suggests that Achilles shows "a well-born contempt of speaking the truth" (370d6).[60] Contrary to Hippias' earlier interpretation of Achilles as one who not only is certain but also does not say one thing while hiding another—which Hippias characterized as one who was versatile—Socrates points out that such a person is a liar, and, more importantly, that Achilles is such a person.

By indicating that there is a contradiction between what Achilles says (his speech) and what he is seen to be doing (his deed), Socrates demonstrates the errors of Hippias' interpretation. Hippias presented Achilles as one who was certain and resolute. Due to this resolution, there was a unity between Achilles' speech and deed—his inner thoughts were accurately represented by his words and his actions. Indeed, this very unity made Hippias' Achilles brave and beautiful. Socrates now suggests that Achilles says one thing but hides another, the very thing that he professed to hate more than Hades, and the very thing that Hippias alleges against Odysseus. If Achilles really thought that it was best to

[59] This is not to say that there is no connection between Achilles' will and the will of the gods—it seems that the will of the gods can still be appeased by sacrifices and prayers. But Homer's depiction seems to suggest that even the acceptance of these offerings will rely on their personal likes and dislikes.
[60] Recall that Hippias' response to Socrates' questioning was also described as, and encouraged to continue as, 'well-born and magnificent' (366e5).

leave, as he says, he would be seen making preparations to do so. Instead, Achilles keeps threatening to leave, but never does.

Contrary to Achilles' supposed "well-born contempt for speaking the truth," Socrates openly professes thorough confusion about these two men. He reveals his intentions to Hippias, and to the others:

> Now I, Hippias, have been questioning you from the beginning because I am at a loss as to which of these two men was represented as better by the poet, holding that both are excellent and that it is hard to distinguish which one might be better with regard both to lying and truth and to the rest of virtue; for in this respect too both are quite similar (370e).[61]

The end of Socrates' remark reminds us of the initial purpose of the discussion: judging between Achilles or Odysseus. As Socrates implied, and we had suggested, in ranking Achilles and Odysseus one would have to consider the essential differences between them. Hippias suggested that the essential difference consisted in Achilles' being truthful and Odysseus' being a liar. Instead, Socrates' efforts thus far seem to be directed at using Hippias' criteria to blur any distinction between Achilles and Odysseus. As a result, Socrates makes them appear more similar. Accordingly, we might be quick to think that the problem is in Hippias' criterion—lying and truth-telling. But this is not supported by what Socrates says here. He admits that "with regard both to lying and truth *and to the rest of virtue*…both are quite similar"(370e).[62] It seems that we are entangled in thread spun by the master weaver himself, Socrates.

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[61] By explaining, "Now, I, Hippias have been questioning you from the beginning because I am at a loss as to which of these two men was represented as better by the poet" he brings Homer, without explicitly naming him, back into consideration. While Hippias was speaking, Socrates was busy reflecting on what Hippias was saying about *Homer*. Here, Socrates reveals that he is trying not only to sort through Hippias' interpretation but also to account for Homer's presentation, which, consequently, he never abandoned. Contrary to what he had earlier said—that Hippias should represent himself and Homer in common because it was impossible to ask Homer questions—Socrates now reveals that he never stopped questioning Homer; in fact, he has been questioning Homer this entire time. In the process of questioning Homer and comparing what Hippias says about him, Socrates has resurrected the distinction between Homer and Hippias, indicating that he had never genuinely laid this distinction to rest. Even though Socrates suggested at that point that Hippias should answer on behalf of Homer, perhaps he no longer thinks that Hippias is capable of doing so. Socrates questions Homer more vigorously than does Hippias, his public presenter. By reflecting and questioning Homer, Socrates has come to the judgment that Hippias' interpretation does not hold together.

[62] Is Socrates now saying that Achilles and Odysseus are essentially similar? Yet, there is a crucial nuance to what Socrates says. Namely, that Achilles and Odysseus are '*similar/alike*' with respect to lying and truth and, therefore, that the two are not identical. Accordingly, there must be something which makes them different in regards to lying and truth, something other than what Hippias has suggested.

Hippias retaliates by directing an insult against Socrates. Unlike Socrates' characterization of Hippias' answers as 'magnificent and well-born,' Hippias accuses Socrates of not examining the issue in a noble manner (370e5). For Hippias, the key problem is not that of distinguishing Achilles and Odysseus—the problem is with Socrates' perspective, and his petty interpretation of Achilles. To correct this perspective, Hippias offers his own noble explanation of the Homeric text: "where Achilles lies, it is evident that he is lying not out of design but involuntarily since he was compelled on account of the misfortune of the army to stay behind and bring aid, but the lies of Odysseus are voluntary and from design" (370e6-9). Hippias explains that Achilles' lying is involuntary whereas that of Odysseus' is voluntary and out of design. Yet voluntary liars have already been proven to be better than involuntary ones. In mathematics the voluntary liar was judged to be more capable because his lies were created with knowledge of the truth; the involuntary liar lacked this knowledge. Based upon Hippias' prior agreement, Socrates could have brought out the logical conclusion of their argument, which he will later do (371e7). But he chooses not to do so here. For his part, Hippias explains that Achilles was going to leave for Phthia, as he truthfully said but, when he saw the devastation to the army, he was compelled out of a higher sense of the common good to stay behind and help. Hippias' Achilles forsakes his indignation for the greater good.

Hippias' interpretation of why Achilles stayed at Troy to fight is not the most common one. Achilles is more commonly believed to re-enter the war to take vengeance for the death of his beloved, Patroclus. It is his death that is traditionally thought to precipitate the rejoining of Achilles to the army, and the eventual killing of Hector. In this sense, Achilles forsakes his own life in order to avenge his friend's death and this is celebrated as the ultimate sacrifice. Hippias does not interpret Achilles' actions along these lines. Rather, he seems to reinterpret Achilles' action from the perspective of the city and the good of the citizens. Perhaps Hippias does this in an attempt to appease the city and offer an interpretation that is politically salutary. It is better for civic virtue that a celebrated hero be seen to act out of concern for the common good than out of personal grief and anger.

In one of the many ironic highlights of the dialogue, Socrates responds to Hippias' interpretation by stating that Hippias is deceiving him, and, moreover, that he does so intentionally, in the manner of Odysseus. Hippias could interpret this as a horrific insult, but, coming from Socrates, it may contain a note of praise. Hippias' interpretation of Achilles, according to Socrates, seems to be a lie. If we are to take Socrates' remark seriously, we wonder what type of liar (at this point) Hippias is, and how this type of lying might shine light on Odyssean-type lies. As we suggested, Hippias seems to offer an interpretation that is more civic-minded.[63] Odysseus, in the *Iliad*, seems to be primarily motivated by such a concern. In the midst of the Trojan War, Odysseus tries craftily to use all of the resources at his disposal to win the war not only for his own survival, but in order to achieve the greatest good for his people.[64] Perhaps Socrates has this connotation in mind when he says that Hippias is intentionally deceiving him and is thus like Odysseus.

When Hippias demands that Socrates offer an explanation of his characterization, Socrates explains that although Hippias asserts that Achilles does not lie from design, Achilles is

> …such a cheat and a designing plotter in addition to his imposture, as Homer has represented him, that he appears to be so much more prudent even than Odysseus with regard to easily escaping detection as an imposter that right in the presence of the latter he dared to contradict himself and escaped detection by Odysseus (371a3-4).

Socrates will reveal how Hippias' latest interpretation of Achilles—that he changes his mind about Phthia for the sake of the common good—is a lie. He begins by characterizing Achilles as someone who is a cheater (he takes more than his just share), a designing plotter (he has a long term plan), and an impostor (he creates an image of himself contrary to who he really is). According to Socrates, all of this is carefully projected by Homer, who also makes Achilles seem to be even more prudent than Odysseus.

[63] Time and again, Odysseus' interpretation of the situation and his thoughtfulness as to what ought to be said publicly helps to calm and quell the potential for chaos within the army.
[64] Another over-looked scene, which depicts the means that Odysseus will employ to win the war, is *Iliad* Book X: 480-500.

Socrates baits Hippias by saying that Achilles dared to contradict himself in front of Odysseus and that there is no indication that Odysseus even notices (371a6). Hippias asks, "What are these things you speak of, Socrates?" (371b3) Socrates explains that although Achilles affirms to Odysseus that he will be leaving, he then tells Ajax something different. Hippias, in his bewilderment, seems to have forgotten the passage that Socrates is referring to, asking "Now where is this?"(371b7). To Hippias' embarrassment (as the supposed expert on Homer with a special mnemonic technique!) this comes from the last passage of the scene from Book IX, the very scene that Hippias himself begins to quote at the start of their conversation.[65] Ajax, whose plea is also unsuccessful, is the last member of the embassy to speak. After Ajax states that the embassy ought to leave and deliver the news of the failed diplomatic mission to Agamemnon, Achilles reveals what he wants Ajax to tell Agamemnon:

> Indeed I will not take thought of bloody war
> Until divine Hector, the son of prudent Priam,
> Comes to the huts and the ships of the Myrmidons
> Killing the Argives, to burn up the ships with blazing fire;
> But at my tent and my dark ship
> I think Hector himself will be stopped though eager for battle.[66]

After quoting this passage, Socrates asks Hippias,

> Well, then, Hippias, do you think that son of Thetis, who was educated by the most wise Cheiron, could have been so forgetful as to affirm to Odysseus that he would sail away but to Ajax that he would remain, when just a little before he had railed against imposters with the most extreme abuse; do you think he was not a designing plotter who believed Odysseus was someone of primitive simplicity whom he could get the better of precisely by such artful contriving and lying? (371d-e7)

In posing this question, Socrates points to two pieces of evidence which, he says, prove that Achilles was a designing plotter. By explicitly mentioning Achilles' natural (super-

[65] Notably, the only place where Achilles reveals his uncertainty is the passage that Socrates, probably in mimicking Hippias, explicitly leaves out of the Book IX. The second and central plea is that of Phoenix, a father-like figure to Achilles. It is to Phoenix who Achilles concedes postponing the decision until they have had a good night's rest. This speech is crucial in making the case that Achilles was neither forgetful nor plotting, but rather was confused. This part of the scene, it seems, is willingly excluded by Socrates and by Hippias.

[66] Socrates' recollection of the *Iliad*, Book IX, 650-655.

natural) lineage and his unconventional nurture, Socrates, tries to prove that Achilles could not have simply forgotten what he earlier said.

Reminding Hippias and the others of Achilles' goddess mother, Thetis, Socrates may be harkening them back to an earlier part of the poem, where she plays a significant role in the development of the action. [67] After insulting Agamemnon publicly and withdrawing from the war, Achilles is left to mourn the disrespect that he has suffered. At the end of Book I, he begs Thetis to supplicate Zeus on his behalf in order to ensure that the Achaeans will regret their loyalty to Agamemnon. [68] In this scene, which immediately follows his 'imprudent' dealings with Agamemnon, Achilles reveals that he in fact knows much about the art of persuasion and attempts to teach his mother a few things:

> Sit beside him and take his knees and remind him of these things
> now, if perhaps he might be willing to help the Trojans,
> and pin the Achaians back against the ships and water,
> dying, so that thus they may all have profit of their own king,
> and Atreus' son wide-ruling Agamemnon may recognize
> his madness, that he did no honour to the best of the Achaians. (*Iliad*, Book I: 393-412)

Moreover, Socrates calls attention to the belief that Achilles was nurtured by Cheiron, "the most wise centaur," (371d) whose higher part, his upper body, consisted of the human and the lower of the horse.[69] The mention of Achilles being raised by Cheiron is also present in Book III of *The Republic*.[70] It is explained that one who is educated by such a wise creature—who understands man's nature because he himself is an extreme manifestation of it—cannot be as unruly as he appears.[71] Socrates implies that his

[67] The mention of Thetis as his mother may partly serve to remind us that Achilles, unlike Odysseus, was the child of a goddess—as a result he is half-man and half-god.
This was never mentioned by anyone as one of the things that sets him apart from men and makes him more excellent than Odysseus. Rather, as Socrates explicitly expresses, they are both very similar. This means that either heroes, who are half-divine, are no better than wholly human men, or that some humans can challenge even the children of the gods without being born from them.
[68] In this scene which immediately follows his 'imprudent' dealings with Agamemnon, Achilles reveals that he knows much about the art of persuasion and attempts to teach his mother a few things.
[69] In Homer, the significance of Cheiron is that he teaches Achilles the art of medicine. In turn Achilles teaches this art to Patroclus who is then able to treat the injured Achaeans. In Homer, the emphasis seems to be on the ambivalence of Achilles' power: he can heal sick bodies and restore them to a healthy life or he can brutally bring death by slaughtering masses of strong healthy men.
[70] *Republic*, Book III: 391c3.
[71] This aspect of Achilles' education is craftily resurrected and elaborated upon by Machiavelli's teaching in *The Prince*. There he incites intrigue by revealing that it was a secret teaching of the ancients that

Achilles could not have forgotten what he said. Rather, Socrates' Achilles consciously orchestrates a situation that was most conducive for his particular end, namely, immortal glory. Socrates' Achilles does this by first withdrawing from the battle and then getting his mother to convince Zeus to change the course of the war, so that the Achaeans suffer great losses. Therefore, Achilles prays for the Achaeans to be slaughtered. After this contriving, he awaits the right moment to re-enter, that moment being one in which not only the Achaean army is devastated but also when he loses someone that he loves, Patroclus. Socrates' Achilles' plotting, then, intensifies his return, making it more climactic and tragic, and thus more memorable.

Hippias seems unaware, forgets, or chooses to conceal that Achilles prayed that the Achaeans would be slaughtered since he uses their loss as the primary motive for Achilles' return: he is civically minded and is concerned with the common good. On closer examination of Socrates' recollection of Achilles' words, we see that there may be a possibility that Socrates is aware of Hippias' motivation behind this new interpretation of Achilles. [72] In fact Socrates, like Hippias, changes lines from the *Iliad* and focuses on the political effect of Achilles's actions. Recall that we had discussed the strong impression that Achilles' character left on the youth. Achilles was celebrated as a hero and believed to be a role model. Therefore, the way in which his actions are interpreted is of great political significance.

We now turn back to Socrates' recollection of Achilles' words:

> Indeed I will not take thought of bloody war
> Until divine Hector, the son of prudent Priam,
> Comes to the huts and the ships of the Myrmidons
> Killing the Argives, to burn up the ships with blazing fire;
> But at my tent and my dark ship
> I think Hector himself will be stopped though eager for battle (371b9-371c5). [73]

Achilles was educated by the most wise Cheiron. This education was fitting because it enabled one to understand the bi-form nature of man, the wily versatile fox as well as the straightforward strong lion, XVIII, 69. Earlier Machiavelli teaches that if one aspires to greatness oneself, one ought to imitate the models of those who were previously great: "just as Caesar imitated Alexander and Alexander imitated Achilles," XVI, 60. *The Prince*, 2nd ed., trans. Harvey Mansfield (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985).

[72] Whether Hippias offers this political salutary interpretation for the sake of a healthy polity or for the sake of making his speeches more acceptable and thus his trade more lucrative, is another question. But the point seems to be that the interpretation is still better in regards to cultivating civic virtue.

[73] Plato's/Socrates' recollection of the *Iliad*, Book IX, 650-655.

Notably, Achilles has changed the rudimentary political category of 'us versus them,' namely between what distinguishes his own from others. 'Us' no longer refers to the Argives and 'them' to the Trojans. Now, after Achilles has withdrawn from the battle, his own are the Myrmidons and he is against everyone else. In fact, Achilles will not rejoin even if Hector kills the rest of the Argives and burns their ships. Perhaps in response to Achilles' harsh stance against the Argives, Socrates takes poetic license to change Achilles' words, like Hippias had before him. But Socrates' change seems to be of a more subtle nature and perhaps is more fitting; in short, it may prove to be more powerful. Socrates moderates Achilles' wrath by changing the time when he will re-enter the war from when the ships of the Argives are "smoldering" to when they are "blazing."[74] Although the words are similar, there is an important characteristic difference of how much time there is left to save people from the fire. A fire that is blazing has not caused as much damage as one that is smoldering; the latter being a description of one that has already engulfed everything in its flames. Similar to Hippias' interpretation wherein he made Achilles' act out of a concern for the common good, Socrates seems to be following suit. By so doing, perhaps he demonstrates an approval in the shift in interpretation—the shift from a restricted sense of Achilles' own (the Myrmidons) to one that is more inclusive (the Achaeans).[75] However, whether this is what Homer intended is still left a question.

In answer to Socrates' question about Achilles' taking advantage of Odysseus, Hippias replies, "it does not seem so to me, at least; rather with regard to these things too it was his guilessness that led him to say different things to Ajax than to Odysseus. When, however, Odysseus speaks the truth he always speaks by design, and whenever he lies it is the same" (371e). Significantly, and in marked change from his earlier statements, Hippias admits that his interpretation stems from his own particular understanding. Recall, Hippias was confident that Homer's thoughts were in perfect agreement with his

[74] I have based this interpretation on Leake's note that cites Socrates' change but I was unable to check this change with Lattimore's text because it does not come across in the English translation. Is there a change in the Greek? Check with Professor Lynn-George.

[75] From the perspective of the city, it is a better interpretation that Achilles' quest for immortal glory be essential related to the common good for this connection (or lack thereof) makes the difference between glory and infamy, respectively. An educator does not want the example of Achilles to inspire and thus breed potential tyrants but rather to breed kings. Therefore, an educator must be concerned about how Achilles' actions are interpreted taking into account their psychological affect on those who are inspired by his example.

own and thus he could easily represent Homer and himself in common. Now—in and through the experience of the discussion—he no longer is so sure.

Earlier in the discussion, Hippias had argued that Odysseus speaks lies out of design, but now in this latest formulation, he includes that Odysseus also speaks truth from design (370e6-9). Hippias' addition almost begs the conclusion that Socrates now provides: "Then it looks as if Odysseus is, after all, better than Achilles" (371e5).

<Hippias denies this outcome but Socrates persists by reminding him of a prior part of their agreement, "What? Did not those who lie voluntarily just now come to light as better than those doing so involuntarily?"(371e7-8). We also had suggested that when Hippias had argued that Achilles' lies were involuntary, that at that point, Socrates could have come to this same conclusion. This is because Hippias had previously agreed that voluntary liars were more capable than involuntary ones. Remember that in examining Hippias' capacity in mathematics, and after establishing that the one best in calculations not only knew the truth of his subject but also knew how to speak capably about the truth, Socrates asked:

> But what of lies about these same matters? And as before, answer me in a well-born and magnificent way, Hippias. If someone asked you how much is three times seven hundred, could you lie most precisely, and could you always speak lies in the same respects about these things if you wished to lie and never answer the truth, or would one ignorant in calculations be more capable of lying than you if he wished? Or would the ignorant one involuntarily speak the truth many times if he should chance upon it through not knowing, though he might wish to speak lies, whereas you, the wise man, would always lie in the same respects, at least if you were to wish to lie? (366e4-367a6).

The voluntary liar was more capable of lying precisely and in the same respects because he actually knew the truth of calculations and his lies were made in contradistinction to this truth. In contrast, the involuntary liar never knew the truth about the subject matter of his lies and thus his actions were not in accord with the way things really were; therefore, he was more likely to tell the truth inadvertently. At that point in the discussion, Hippias had no problem agreeing that the voluntary liar was better than the involuntary one. Now, however, when the lies of Odysseus are characterized as voluntary and the lies of Achilles as involuntary, he refuses to agree that Odysseus is

better than Achilles. We may wonder what accounts for this difference. And we get a better sense of why Hippias refuses to agree with his next remark:

> And how, Socrates, can those who are voluntarily unjust, who have voluntarily plotted and done evil, be better than those who do so involuntarily, when for the latter there seems to be much forgiveness—when someone unknowingly acts unjustly or lies or does some other evil? And the laws, surely, are much more harsh toward those who do evil voluntarily and lie than toward those who do so involuntarily (372a-b).

Remarkably, this is the first time that a cognate of justice is mentioned in the dialogue. This is surprising since we have been considering the question of what makes a man most excellent for some time now and justice is one of the classical virtues. Hippias accuses Socrates of publicly putting forth an argument that goes against the conventional and commonsensical understanding of justice, usually reflected in the laws. Hippias seems infuriated with Socrates' judgment that Odysseus has been shown to be better than Achilles because he lies voluntarily. We see now that this is because, for Hippias, lying voluntarily is equivalent to committing an injustice. Before, when Hippias had agreed that the voluntary liar was more capable than the involuntary one, he seemed to be agreeing that this was the case when it came to this person's capacity. That is, the voluntary liar was better because he had more knowledge in a particular domain (in that example, mathematics). Now that Socrates is not focusing on the issue of knowledge in a particular area, but on the question of human virtue, Hippias disagrees that the voluntary liar is better than the involuntary one.

Therefore, despite Hippias' confidence being slightly qualified in a few instances, there is very little change in his over all perspective. All in all, Hippias still seems to believe strongly that when it comes to judging a man based upon his virtue, then the man who lies voluntarily is evil. Moreover, the man who lies voluntarily is the same as the man who is voluntarily *unjust*. When we reflect on this connection, we realize that this was always implicit in Hippias' understanding. In fact, since the start of the discussion he began and continued to judge a liar by his seeming injustice. From his perspective, this same man voluntarily plots and does evil; how could this intentional villain be better than the man who does wrong unintentionally; and thus innocently? To support his case, Hippias calls upon the laws, often the conventional authority on justice. If things are the

way that Socrates seems to present them, then why do the laws pardon those who commit injustice involuntarily? Hippias appears to have a formidable point.

The reasoning behind the laws and their adjudication of right and wrong seems to be based upon culpability. Those who commit injustices unintentionally are not as responsible as those who commit injustices intentionally. The involuntary criminal does not intend the results of his actions; the outcome of his action is judged to be out of his complete control. In contrast, a cold calculated act of injustice implies that one fully had all of one's rational capacities in working order and nevertheless chose to commit the crime. A crime committed with such awareness implies that the criminal was aware enough to know that there would be repercussions for his actions. Consequently, it is this awareness, and thus possible control of the situation, that makes the criminal more culpable. Hippias thinks that Socrates is saying that this person—the well-aware, well-ordered, calculating person who commits any action, even a crime—is better than the one who commits a disordered crime of passion or an accidental man-slaughter. For Hippias, Socrates' (apparent) judgment is contrary to the laws and thus an extreme perversion of justice.

The underpinnings of the spirit of the law are similar to the position that Socrates articulates here. However, the conclusions that they reach differ significantly. Both Socrates and the law affirm that one who commits injustice willingly is more culpable precisely because he is more capable. The difference seems to lie in what a person *chooses* to do with this greater capacity, namely their intention. If the standard of judging action is based solely upon capacity, then the voluntary evil doer will be better than the involuntary one. It is precisely because this actor is more capable that he is better—no matter what action he engages in. The better man, then, is one whose intention is in accord with his action, regardless of whether he commits a just or an unjust act. Hippias seems to be justified in his indignation, for Socrates does seem to put forth an argument that is repugnant. We may wonder why Socrates chooses to do so.

Chapter Seven: (372b-373c4)

Hippias is unwilling to concede that the voluntary liar is better than the involuntary one because such a judgment goes against the spirit of the laws and the basis of justice. For him a better man is one who has just intentions, regardless of whether he is able to carry out those intentions successfully. Even though Hippias appears to have a valid point, in making his case he equates voluntarily lying with voluntarily committing an injustice. Yet this connection still needs to be demonstrated, for certainly not all lying is unjust. Instead of pointing this assumption out, Socrates turns to another matter. When the issue of justice is raised, Socrates intriguingly attempts to reveal the inner workings of his own soul. Reminding Hippias and others when he had earlier spoken of his actions, Socrates now asks Hippias to confirm whether what he previously said was true:

> Do you see, Hippias, that I speak the truth, when I say that I am indefatigable in questioning the wise? And I run the risk of having only this one good thing, all else I have being of little account. For as to the actual condition of things I am baffled, and I do not know how they stand. I find it sufficient proof of this that when I am together with one of you who are highly reputed for wisdom and to whose wisdom all Greeks bear witness, it is evident that I know nothing; for nothing, so to speak, seems the same to me as it does to you, yet what greater proof of ignorance is there than when someone differs with wise men? But I have this one marvelous good which preserves me: I am not ashamed to learn, but I inquire and I question and I am very grateful to the one who answers, and I have never deprived anyone of gratitude. For I have never denied it when I learned something, pretending that what I had learned was my own discovery; instead, I praise the one who taught me as a wise man and proclaim what I learned from him. (372b-373d)

In accounting for his behavior, Socrates professes to reveal, along with other things, his intentions. He is tireless in his activity of questioning wise men. Due to his actions, he "run[s] the risk of having only this one good thing" and "all else" that he has is "of little account" (372b2). Socrates' questioning, then, is no slight activity; it is a risk to forsake other goods in life in order to possess only one good. Accordingly, it requires courage. Socrates' perplexity arises from a peculiar and, potentially, alienating experience. He is all too aware that he does not have knowledge of the actual condition of things: "For as to the actual condition of things I am baffled, and I do not know how they

stand" (372b4). Yet, unlike others, Socrates is aware of this vital distinction—that is, the one between the actual condition of things and the apparent one.

Recall in discussing the capacity of the voluntary and involuntary liar in mathematics, it was only the voluntary liar that knew the actual condition of things. That is, he had knowledge of his subject and could most capably lie about it. There was an accord between his actions and the way things really were. In contrast, although the involuntary liar was capable of convincing others of his lies, he lacked knowledge of the truth about his subject; therefore there was a greater likelihood that his actions would be in opposition to the way things really were. Because of this, the actions of the involuntary liar were governed more by chance than by knowledge. We had suggested that only one who cared about being the best would be concerned about whether their actions were in accord with the way things really were and not just how they appeared to be. Here, we see that Socrates seems to be an example of one who strives to be best for he tries to account for the differences/relationship between the appearances of things and the way things really are.

To cite proof of his alienating experience, he explains, "that when I am together with one of you who are highly reputed for wisdom and to whose wisdom all Greeks bear witness, it is evident that I know nothing" (372b6). This statement seems to echo the experience that Socrates had at the very start of our dialogue. Remember that Eudicus, along with others, were in the midst of praising Hippias' display of wisdom but Socrates was silent. Moreover, we had seen that Hippias had boasted that he was wisest because he knew the greatest number of arts. And that the display of his crafts served to prove to people in the marketplace that Hippias was wise. Both later instances also may reveal that when Socrates looks upon Hippias, he does not see the "wisdom" that the other Greeks witness.

When Socrates examines those who are reputed to be wise, it is evident, he says, that he knows nothing, and as he explains "…for nothing, so to speak, seems the same to me as it does to you, yet what greater proof of ignorance is there than when someone differs with wise men?"(372c). Throughout our discussion, we have seen some of the immense complexities inherent in understanding the connection between names and the concepts to which they refer. A large part of the discussion has been dedicated to refining

the ideas associated with the liar in an effort not only to make such a 'name' more precise but also to understand the different nuances of the term. Earlier when Socrates states, "Consider this in the case of whatever wisdom you wish, or whatever unscrupulous wickedness, or whatever you are pleased to name it" (369a), we saw how different names, with different connotations, could refer to the same thing. Here, in contrast, the same word, 'nothing' could refer to different things.

Socrates professes to have knowledge of "nothing." If most people understand "nothing" to mean the absence of something, how could one have substantial knowledge *of* nothing? Would it not refer to the lack of all knowledge? But this may be the very core of the disagreement between Socrates and others. Namely, they disagree about what "nothing" means. Many may understand "nothing" to refer to a nonentity, a void but Socrates seems to understand it as "ignorance." That is, he has knowledge of what he lacks. He claims that he has proof of his ignorance—which may precisely consist in the awareness of his condition. But all is not despair for Socrates' next remark is most remarkable. Socrates claims that he has a *marvelous* good that he confidently says he possesses, something which he has no doubt about. This most marvelous good—which arises from the awareness of his ignorance—is an unabashed desire to learn and this, presumably, refers to his philosophic pursuit (372c). He is a lover of wisdom and his life is a testament to that love.

Socrates goes on to say that "I have never deprived anyone of gratitude. For I have never denied it when I learned something, pretending that what I had learned was my own discovery; instead I praise the one who taught me as a wise man and proclaim what I learned from him" (372c-d). With this statement, Socrates may subtly indicate that he failed to learn anything from Hippias, for even after this extensive conversation with him, Socrates neither expresses any gratitude nor does he praise. In this way, Socrates tacitly reveals how wise he judges Hippias to be to potential students, like Eudicus.

In fact, in this very section we see an image of Socrates that stands in stark contrast to Hippias. Whereas Socrates claims that he knows nothing, but is always searching for wisdom, Hippias claims that he has not met a man better than himself in anything. This includes not only the exhibition of Hippias' wise speeches but also his manifold arts. Socrates continues to question, while Hippias believes himself to be

capable of answering whatever anyone asks. Socrates seeks out wise men whereas Hippias professes not to flee from the questioning of any man (especially Socrates). Hippias forgets, Socrates reminds. And for all of their various differences perhaps nothing is as glaring as their manner of speech. Hippias constantly boasts, proclaiming his greatness to anyone who listens. He overstates his significance and seems consumed by showing his 'assets' off to those that he believes are less endowed than him. Socrates' speech is full of irony and dissimulation. He presents himself to be lesser than he is, perhaps even knowing that most will mistake his self- professed ignorance for less than what it is worth, precisely because of how they understand the word 'nothing.' Socrates openly reveals his confusion and vacillation, but usually knows more than he expresses. Due to Hippias' vanity, he is caught up in the realm of appearances to such a degree that he cannot see that there may be something that is worth seeking behind such appearances. And although Hippias has a confident and, in this sense, powerful demeanor there may not be anything substantive behind such a posture. If 'know thyself' is the corner stone of the wise man, then Hippias remains in oblivion. One may add that although it may be blissful, it is quickly disrupted when one encounters a man the likes of Socrates. Through his questioning, Socrates has managed not only to infuriate Hippias but also to shake his confidence to the point where Hippias no longer wants to 'answer' anymore of Socrates' questions.

In light of his professed ignorance and his constant search for wisdom, Socrates' next statement becomes all the more momentous:

> And indeed, with regard to what you are now saying, I do not agree with you, but I differ very strongly, and I know well that this happens because of me—because I am the sort that I am, not to say anything greater of myself. For to me it appears, Hippias, that all is the opposite of what you say it is—that those who harm human beings, who do injustice, lie, deceive, and go wrong voluntarily rather than involuntarily are better than those who do so involuntarily. Sometimes, however, the opposite of these things seems to me to be the case, and I vacillate about these things—clearly because I do not know. But at the present a sort of seizure has overtaken me, and those who voluntarily go wrong about something seem to me to be better than those who do so involuntarily. I blame the previous arguments as causes of my present experience—of making it appear at present that those who do each of these things involuntarily are more good-for-nothing than those who do so voluntarily (372d-e).

Even though Socrates has just explained that he knows 'nothing,' suddenly he differs "very strongly" with Hippias. In fact, the truth seems opposite to what Hippias had said about the involuntary liar. If Hippias had found Socrates prior conclusion—that the voluntary liar was better than the voluntary one—infuriating, now he must find Socrates' statements to be maddening. For now, Socrates not only includes what Hippias had presumed about the voluntarily liar, namely that he also voluntarily commits an injustice, but also says that those who voluntarily harm human beings, deceive, and go wrong voluntarily, are better than those who do so involuntarily. Although Socrates lists these actions, when reiterating his position he singles out the most peculiar one, going wrong voluntarily, as if it were all inclusive. When we reflect upon it, all the other actions (harming others, doing injustices, lying, deceiving) could all be conceived as ways in which one "goes wrong." With his position, it is as though Socrates has affirmed/confirmed Hippias' worst suspicions. And along with Hippias, we too may find Socrates' statement to be shocking. Yet, Socrates goes on to explain that sometimes he thinks the opposite of what he has just stated, and thus partly agrees with Hippias' position. Currently, however, he is suffering from an illness that is hindering his full capacity of reasoning and affecting his judgment. These fits are compelling him to this (what most would judge to be terrible) conclusion. Moreover, the cause of this intellectual sickness are the previous arguments for they have made "…it appear at present that those who do each of these things involuntarily are more good-for-nothing than those who do so involuntarily" (373a). The manner in which they have examined the issue, thus far, has lead to Socrates' sickness indicating that a cure to such seizures may be to re-think, assess, and then after due reflection, reformulate the argument.

Recall that earlier in the dialogue we were introduced to the issue of capacity as a sign of health (365d7). The one who was sickly, could not act to his full capacity (366c2). Here, Socrates explicitly states that ignorance is the cause of the sickness of the soul. Previously, we had suggested that there were different types of knowledge and different types of ignorance (365b7-9). The type of ignorance that Socrates is suffering from cannot be the type of ignorance which he earlier spoke of, namely, being aware that one does not know how things stand; this type of ignorance, presumably, is what leads to his

vacillation. Rather, the type of ignorance that Socrates appears to be suffering from now makes him feel very strongly.

Socrates has a request for Hippias:

> Do me a favor, then, and do not begrudge to heal my soul; for be assured you will do me a greater good by giving my soul rest from ignorance than my body from disease. But if you wish to speak a long speech, I warn you in advance that you would not cure me—for I could not follow; but if you wish to answer me just as before, you will benefit me very much, and I do not suppose you yourself will be harmed. And I might justly call for your help, son of Apemantus, for you stirred me up to converse with Hippias: now, if Hippias does not want to answer me, ask him on my behalf. (373d-e)

Of all the arts and sciences that Hippias was capable of, medicine was never mentioned. Regardless, Socrates asks Hippias to act as a physician not one of the body but one of the soul. He also warns that if Hippias uses the mode of speech which he is famous for, that is epideictic, he will be unable to heal Socrates. Rather, only by moving slowly and continuing in the manner in which they have examined the questions thus far will help. Thus, it is only in and through dialectics that Socrates can be cured from his ignorance. Dialectics will benefit him, and presumably not harm Hippias (373a8).

From this we gather that ignorance causes a disorderliness of the soul. Once one becomes aware of one's ignorance then it is only the activity of dialectics that can restore one's health, or at least begin to heal one's disease. However, unlike those who are unaware that their bodies are diseased, mistaking their condition for one of health, the one who is aware of one's sickness is the only one who can seek to be healed. In this sense, many people who are unaware of their ignorance (unlike Socrates) will not recognize their sickness and thus will not seek knowledge. And what follows next serves as a reminder that there are others whose health may also be in question.

In Socrates' first use of a cognate of justice, he exclaims, "And I might *justly* call for your help, son of Apemantus, for you stirred me up to converse with Hippias: now, if Hippias does not want to answer me, ask him on my behalf" (373a). This is a very strategic move by Socrates. Inferring that Hippias may have had his last straw, he reminds Hippias what is at stake—the patronage of a young and affluent observer, Eudicus. Indeed, Eudicus is quick to come to the service of Socrates and reveals a strong

desire to hear the rest of the argument. Eudicus begins by reminding Hippias of his initial statements, "I do not suppose, Socrates, that Hippias will need our request. For his initial statements were not of this sort, but he said he would flee the questioning of no man" (373b). Socrates' timing to get Eudicus involved is impeccable for Hippias responds: "I did. But Eudicus, Socrates always causes confusion in the argument and seems to want to make trouble" (373b5-6). As we see, Hippias was ready to leave the discussion abandoning not only his statements but also the observers. Even though, Hippias may feel that Socrates is being tricky, he is unable to point out how precisely Socrates is doing this. Perhaps Hippias' failure indicates his lack of thoughtfulness on the subject.

Socrates' response jestingly plays upon Hippias' position on involuntary action:

> Hippias, best of men, it is not voluntarily, at any rate, that I do this—for I would be wise and tricky, according to your argument—but involuntarily, so please forgive me, for you assert that whoever makes trouble involuntarily ought to have forgiveness.(373b)

Although Hippias' charges against Socrates are two-fold, first, that he causes trouble and second that he causes confusions, Socrates replies that one who causes trouble involuntarily must be forgiven, being silent about the one who causes confusions. Pleading with Hippias to continue for their sake and the sake of Hippias' initial statements, Eudicus reveals that he takes arguments, in general, seriously and this one in particular seems to be of utmost importance: "By no means do otherwise, Hippias, but for our sake and for the sake of your initial statements, answer what Socrates asks you" (373c). Earlier we had suggested that Eudicus, being Apemantus' son, was probably nurtured on Homer. Consequently his education and his conception of human virtue, something which he seems to care about, may be at stake. Yet even though there is much at stake, Hippias is ready to quit, abandoning not only his initial statements but also the listeners, his potential students. In this sense, he does not seem to take Socrates' standard of interpreting Homer seriously. Namely, when presenting an interpretation one must treat it as a grave responsibility. And part of this responsibility was being aware of the effects that one's speech has on others. Unlike Socrates, Hippias does not seem to want to learn from the wise—by comparing and reflecting upon what they said, whether that is Socrates or Homer. This may be because he already judges himself to be the wisest. Yet,

if Hippias was serious about being best and not just appearing to be so, he would treat the discussion as a revelation of his own ignorance and thus a catalyst for further learning.

Chapter 8: (373c5-374a2)

Exasperated by Socrates' nit picky questions, Hippias refuses to answer any further. Eudicus' prodding, however, compels him forward. After all, as Eudicus reminds Hippias, his initial statements are at stake. Hippias had claimed not only that it would be strange for him "to flee from the questioning of Socrates" (363d6) but also that he had "never yet met anyone better than [himself] in anything" (364a8). Moreover, he said that Achilles was best because of his simplicity and honesty. If Hippias were now to flee from Socrates' questioning, it may prove that Socrates is not only a better speaker but also that Hippias lied when he said that he never yet met anyone better than him in anything. And Hippias, professing to uphold honesty as the highest virtue, would not want to be caught in a lie!

Reluctant as Hippias is, he conveys a half-hearted willingness to answer Socrates' questions, making it clear that he is only doing so because of Eudicus (373c3). His reluctance does not seem to dampen Socrates' enthusiasm who, wasting no time at all, gladly restarts the examination. Even though voluntarily harming other human beings, doing injustice, lying, and deceiving were all mentioned in the examination, Socrates singles out the question of, "whether those are better who go wrong voluntarily or those who do so involuntarily" perhaps indicating, as we earlier suggested, that this category includes the others (373c6).

After assuring them that this is the "most correc[t] approach [to their] investigation," Socrates continues in a most peculiar manner. He strangely inquires, "…do you call a certain one a good runner?"(373c9). Hippias replies that he does. Socrates then asks if he also calls one a bad runner; and again Hippias affirms that he does (373d3). Socrates' questions seem to be simple enough, yet his approach is puzzling. However, if we take Socrates' approach seriously, we are invited to sort through the significance of what is asked here by relating it to what has gone before. Socrates may be trying a different approach to the same problem and with him we have an opportunity to start anew. By answering these straightforward questions, Hippias reveals that he has a certain understanding of running, and based upon this he also has a standard to judge a good runner from a bad one. Generally speaking, Socrates' efforts seem to be directed at bringing this standard, the standard of judging the actor to the

foreground. Focusing on Hippias' standards of judging a good runner, Socrates then asks, "is not one who runs well good, while one who runs badly is bad?" (373d4). Hippias is quick to answer 'yes.' Socrates calls attention to the implicit standard that is within any activity—namely, that the one who does his activity well, will be *good at* his activity, and thus judged as a good actor. Thus, a good runner is one who runs well.[76]

Socrates next examines the criterion by which one judges the activity of running. He inquires about the appearance of the activity which enables one to judge it. He asks, "And does not he who runs slowly run badly, while he who runs swiftly runs well" (373d6). Swiftness (*tachos*) is re-introduced here as one of the defining qualities of a capable actor.[77] Earlier, swiftness was used to describe one who was capable in calculations, now it describes the good runner. Just as in the case of calculations, however, Socrates does not leave swiftness as a quality that is unqualifiedly good.[78] Rather, as we see in the next question, swiftness is good within a particular context—that is, in the context of a race. By asking, "in a race, therefore, and in running, is swiftness good and slowness bad?" Socrates emphasizes the context in which an activity takes place (373d10). We are reminded here that all action takes place within a context; in this case, running takes place in a race. Competitions entail judging and ranking participants who are usually driven by a desire to win. The context, then, influences how the actor is expected to perform his activity. But a race is not the only context in which swift running takes place; indeed, it is only one amongst many others. For example, Achilles' epithet, 'swiftness of feet,' characterizes his terrible speed in battle and not his ability to win races.

Returning to the question then, "in a race, therefore, and in running, is swiftness good and slowness bad?" we now recognize that Socrates is asking two different

[76] We see that Socrates' use of the word 'good' is ambiguous. Surely, in agreeing that the one who runs well is good, we are agreeing, along with Hippias, that such a runner is good at running. This is not to agree that this man is good simply, or is a good man. But it is precisely this ambiguity, namely the ambiguity that will be present unless one specifies the standard of goodness that one is using to judge, that Socrates will highlight in the examples.

[77] Although the same term, swiftness, is used there is an important difference. Before, swiftness was a quality that described a mental activity—the ability to do quick mathematical computations. Here, it describes the physical activity of running—the ability to run quickly with one's feet.

[78] It is probably no coincidence that Socrates' approach begins with the example of the swift runner because this is what Achilles was known for. Indeed, Homer's most frequent epithet of Achilles refers to the swiftness of his feet.

questions. The first question examines running within the particular context of a race, whereas the second concerns running in general. Instead of noticing Socrates' subtle distinctions, Hippias looses patience and disdainfully asks "what else should it be?" (373d12). Ironically, this seems to be Socrates' larger point, namely, what other criterion can be used to judge the activity of running. Is swiftness the only measure of good running and is it the same in all contexts where running takes place? Even in the context of a race, swiftness still has to be paired with other qualities to be good. Lest we forget, in one of the oldest fables about a race, the slow but determined tortoise did outrun the swift but arrogant hare.[79] Looking at an example of running that does not take place in a race, we see that swiftness is not always the measure of good running. For instance, in the context of training, the technique and form of running may be more important than swiftness and often an instructor will run slowly to teach his students. Furthermore, running can be done for a variety of different reasons—whether it is for play, for fitness, to catch the last bus, or charging towards an invading army. Coeval with the purpose, then, is choice—one will have to choose how they are going to run according to their end. Of significance is that these ends—the purpose of the action—may differ. Consequently, an awareness of the different ends that the activity is directed towards becomes essential in judging the action. This leads us to Socrates' next question.

He asks the general question—is it better to go wrong voluntarily or involuntarily—in its particular form, pertaining to the example at hand, "which, then, is the better runner, he who voluntarily runs slowly or he who does so involuntarily?"(373d13-14). Hippias agrees that the better runner is one who runs slowly voluntarily as opposed to involuntarily. Before, when Socrates was examining the runner, badness was associated with slowness and thus the runner who was bad also ran slowly. Now Socrates has introduced another standard to judge the runner, and this is not solely tied to the outward manifestation, or the appearance of his activity. This other standard is, namely, whether or not the runner voluntarily runs badly and thus chooses to do so.

[79] This is not the first time that the quality of swiftness was brought up only to be excluded as a criterion in which to judge who was best, and thus better. Recall, that swiftness in calculations, along with precision, was also a quality that the best calculator possessed. Even at that point, there were problems with how swiftness was combined with precision in regards to truth-telling and lying. Aesop's fable and Zeno's paradox. ***

When we think about it, the one who voluntarily runs slowly has a choice to run swiftly or slowly. Because he chooses to run slowly his choice must be related to his end, the purpose of his running. Conversely, the one who involuntarily runs slowly never intended to do so. He intended to run well but proved that he was incapable. Consequently, the one who chooses to run poorly is one who is capable—he has control over his activity; he does what he wishes when he wishes (366c).The new standard of goodness, then, is voluntary action: the one who chooses to run badly and does so is better than the one who chooses to run well but is unable to. This definition of goodness is no longer based on the visual impressions of the good activity: whereas before the good runner was identified with running swiftly, now the good runner can also be the one running slowly. If judging the runner was entirely based upon appearances, then there would be no distinction between the one who runs slowly intentionally and the one who runs slowly unintentionally. Indeed, if we were to imagine both runners, their actions would look identical. Part of voluntary action involves keeping an eye on one's purposes and ends—something which cannot be seen, it can only be intuited. Notably, Socrates has persuaded Hippias to agree to a standard of excellence that is contrary to his own actions. Remember that Hippias' arts were in service to creating a powerful image of himself. Now, however, Socrates has made appearances irrelevant to judging the good man.

The runner who voluntarily runs slowly is still technically able. Recall, this is Hippias' understanding of a good artisan—namely, one who is skilled in his art has the ability to create his intended effect. Because this actor is effective, he is capable; because he is capable, he is good at his art. We had witnessed that Hippias believed himself to be the wisest because he was most skilled in the greatest number of arts. As we had suggested, the effect of Hippias' arts were at least two fold: first, he affected materials to make crafts and, second he affected souls to make impressions. It is this aspect of affecting different types of things through one's actions that Socrates highlights in the next few questions.

Socrates inquires, "And isn't running doing (*poien*) something?"(373d16). Common sense would dictate that since running is an activity, it would constitute doing something. Thus Hippias replies, "Doing something, certainly" (373d17). But Socrates pushes the consideration further—he is asking whether running is a form of *poiesis*, of

making or creating something. If running is understood to be a form of making/creating, it follows that it also has an effect. Further reflection reveals that running may have an effect on numerous things and, like Hippias' arts, these may be both physical as well as psychological. An example of a physical effect is that running, in the form of athletic training, can affect the body of the runner, sculpting his muscles and increasing his strength and agility. An example of a psychological effect is the outcome of an Olympic race; the spectators may be struck by the beauty of the race, they may share in a sense of pride for the winner or a sense of shame for the loser. When running is not taking place in a race, running swiftly to inform a city of a potential siege may have an effect on whether one wins a war; running away from a fire may have an effect on a man's life, as well as the livelihood of his family. By asking whether running is also doing something, Socrates seems to be highlighting the relationship of the action to its consequences. As was said, the activity of running is not carried out in isolation; it takes place within a context and the more complex this context, the more diverse the effects. Trying to understand the manifold implications of an activity that is as seemingly straightforward as running, shines light on how much more complicated other activities may be; these are important considerations to keep in mind as we move through Socrates' upcoming examples.

In the particular context of a race, Socrates focuses on the effects of running by asking, "does he who runs badly effect what is bad and shameful in a race?" (373e1). Notably, when Socrates asks about the effect of running in a race, he uses two different words and thereby makes an important distinction between two types of effects. The first is whether the action is done "badly" (*kakon*), referring to badness in a technical sense. The second is whether the action is done "shamefully" (*aischron*), referring to badness in a psychological sense.[80] To cause shame seems more appropriate in describing an action that affects human beings. In this way, Socrates may be emphasizing the difference of effects that have a psychological and/or political dimension. With the distinction between "badly" and "shamefully," we also have two corresponding standards to judge the effects of the action. Unlike judging whether an action is done badly in a technical sense,

[80] To affect something shamefully readily calls to mind a conception of what is noble. Presumably, to do what is shameful is to work in contradistinction to what is noble. In a note on *Republic*, Bloom explains, "The Greek word *aischron* is the opposite of *kalon*, which is always rendered as "fine," "fair," or "noble." It means "base," "ugly," or "shameful." Note 40, pp. 50.

judging whether it is done shamefully seems more relevant in accounting for the larger context in which the action takes place. Since Socrates has just made much of the health of the soul, we might also add that such a judgment considers not only other people and how their souls are affected by the action, but also one's own soul and how it is affected by one's actions

Regarding the runner, Hippias replies, "what is bad (*kakon*); how could he not?"(373e4). In his response, Hippias only uses the term "*kakon"* and thus does not make a distinction between "bad" and "shameful." He does this either because he is unaware that this distinction exists, or because he believes that what is technically bad will always be psychologically bad. That is to say, when running is done poorly then it also causes shame and will be judged as bad. This may evidence that Hippias is conflating the two terms and thereby the two standards to judge the effects of the action. Such a conflation of standards hides a significant problem: what happens when the effects of the action are at odds; how do we reach a synoptic judgment about the action and the actor? With two different standards, we also have two different grounds on which to judge the actor. When there is a disjunction between technically bad and shameful, what standard becomes more important? It is this problem that Hippias never seems to face and thus contend with.

As was said earlier, the context can change our judgment. For instance, a runner who runs slowly towards a child in play can be judged from two different perspectives. Technically speaking, the running may lack speed and form and thus be poor, but psychologically speaking, the runner may be enabling the child to experience joy by running slower voluntarily. Conversely, a runner with great form and speed can shamefully run away with a lady's purse. And judging this action as good because it is technically so, is readily seen to be unfitting. Since Hippias does not make the distinction between what is technically bad and what is shameful, he does not have to rank these different standards of goodness, recognizing that some effects are more essentially related to what is comprehensively good while others are less so. In this sense, Hippias seems to be unaware of the effects of an action with respect to the broader context.

Returning to the text, once again—in a manner in which we are now growing accustomed—Socrates asks a question that seems to have already been answered.

Previously he had asked, "And does not he who runs slowly run badly (*kakos*), while he who runs quickly runs well?"(373d6). Now he asks, "He who runs slowly runs badly (*kakos*)?"(373e5). First, since this question has just followed Hippias' conflation of the two terms, *kakos* and *aschiron*, perhaps Socrates may be alerting us to this occurrence. Second, when Socrates had asked the earlier question, badness was contrasted with goodness. In this formulation, there is no longer a contradistinction to be made with the good runner as one who runs well. On the contrary, by asking, "Does not the good runner voluntarily effect this bad and shameful thing, while the bad one does so involuntarily?" (373e7-9). Socrates affirms/confirms the redefinition of a good runner. It is not simply that one who voluntarily runs poorly is *better* than one who involuntarily runs poorly. Now this same one, the one who is relatively better, is judged to be a *good* runner. Moreover, the good runner not only chooses to run poorly but he also is aware of and chooses to cause bad and shameful effects. Hippias reluctantly agrees by stating, "it seems so, at any rate" (373e9).

By shifting the focus—from the actor to the effect of the action—Socrates may also be separating the judgment of the actor from the judgment of the effects. As a result, the effect of the action on the race can be judged as bad and shameful but this does not necessarily imply that the actor, the runner, is judged as bad or shameful. In fact, the actor who voluntarily chooses to effect what is bad and shameful is judged to be a good actor. Once he has established that judging the good runner is based upon the criterion of volition, Socrates affirms that this is the case even in a race, the larger context in which the activity takes place. Accordingly, he asks, "In a race, then, is the one who effects what is bad involuntarily more good-for-nothing than he who does so voluntarily?" (373e-374a). Whereas before we were determining which of two was better, now it seems that Socrates makes it explicit that those who effect bad involuntarily are worse. As a consequence, those who do not have the capacity to effect what is bad are worse than those who have the capacity and also choose to do so.

Returning to when Socrates had first asked the question—"which, then, is the better runner, he who voluntarily runs slowly or he who does so involuntarily"—we notice a subtlety that now seems relevant. In asking this question, Socrates acts contrary to what he had done earlier in the dialogue (see 373d12, 370c6-d2). In his second and

central quote from the *Iliad*, when Achilles had threatened Agamemnon in front of the army, Socrates had changed Achilles' words (370c6). There he changed the word for 'better' (*pherteron*), as "Now I am going to Phthia, since surely it is much better to go home with the curved ships…" which was associated with braver, to a word that meant better (*loion*) in terms of 'more agreeable' or 'more desirable,' which does not have the same connotations of bravery. Here, he uses the word "*ameinon*" meaning better in terms of "abler", "stronger" and also "braver." Accordingly, Socrates is asking not only who is the 'more agreeable' or 'more desirable' runner, but also who is the 'braver' and 'abler' runner. The voluntary actor is aware that he is engaging in an activity poorly—not reflecting his potential—and is willing to be judged so by others, who likely will not recognize his potential. Perhaps, it is in this sense that Socrates describes this actor as "braver." Such an actor is brave because he is fully aware that he is engaging in a lower form and thus, in this sense, *is* bad and shameful when it comes to the activity of running. Importantly, Socrates is not creating a full trans-valuation of values: He is not saying that because the voluntary actor is better, his actions are no longer shameful. His activity still appears to be ugly and causes shame.

When one judges this actor—the one who voluntarily performs a given activity poorly—as better, this 'better' can be understood in two different ways. The first standard is derived again from the technical standards within any given activity. According to this standard, the one who voluntarily performs an activity poorly is better because he also has the ability to perform his activity well. That is, he has knowledge and the skill to be able to execute both. That he voluntarily chooses to perform the activity poorly still demonstrates that he is technically capable; unlike the one who wants to perform the activity well but is incapable. The voluntary actor is better than the involuntary one because he has control over his intended effect. The standard of judging the action becomes the accord between the intention and the end result; he is able to do what he wishes when he wishes to do it. The problem with this standard—where judging goodness is based solely upon effectiveness or capacity—is that the actor's choice becomes irrelevant. Yet, when we were judging the runner in terms of the effects that he caused, part of what justified his running poorly in a technical sense was that it was redeemed in a psychological sense. But here, Socrates is asking whether the good runner

voluntarily affects these bad and shameful things. Accordingly, in terms of the effects of the activity, there is no disjunction between technically bad and shameful: this actor is causing both bad and shameful effects. Socrates may be simultaneously establishing another standard where the end is of utmost importance in judging the actor. If one chooses to do an activity, which will be judged by appearances to be both bad and shameful and will also effect what is bad and shameful, then presumably one has an end in mind which justifies such a choice. But this end is not necessarily related to recognition by the majority of people. When one is making a choice, then they are also cognizant of alternatives. It is a greater good, perceived or otherwise, which enables one to make rational sense of such an action. Once reason shows you what is necessary, including the means in which one has to achieve an end, then, presumably one voluntarily engages in the action. Based on this understanding, it seems no one would choose to do what was bad simply. Rather in making a choice of bad and shameful effects, one would be ranking the various effects in any given activity. This rational capacity is a type of power and may also result in a type of unity. It is a unity that arises from a person *assessing* what is good in any given situation—or what is worst—and being able *to do* what is better. This is based upon an excellence not found within a particular area of expertise. On the contrary, it is the ability to understand the complex relationship between competing areas of expertise and their ends and rank what action is better in any given situation; this more comprehensive activity is part of human virtue and the activity of the healthy human soul.

Because Socrates treats the first example extensively, we also have focused our energies on understanding and analyzing it. From here on, Socrates will examine different examples that follow this same pattern: the question in each case is whether the better actor voluntarily or involuntarily effects what is useless, bad, and evil. Although it will seem to be an enumeration of different examples that lead in each case to the same conclusion, in actuality, there are qualitative differences between the examples which prove to be significant.

Chapter 9: (374a3-374e4)

In the previous chapter, Socrates began with the example of running, explaining that it was the most correct approach to the question of "whether those are better who go wrong voluntarily or those who do so involuntarily" (373c6-8). Along with Socrates, we too examined this case extensively. Through the analysis, Socrates redefined the standard by which one judged a good actor, namely, that of voluntary action or the capacity to carry out an intended course of action. The good actor was no longer one who did his particular activity well, but one who voluntarily did his activity poorly, causing bad and/or shameful effects. Having obtained Hippias' agreement about voluntary action, Socrates now turns to other works and parts of the body, seeing if their prior agreements also apply to these other examples.

The first set of examples, which includes running, is comprised of athletic contests. Wrestling is the next competition that is examined and Socrates begins by reaffirming the standard of voluntary action. He asks, "Which is the better wrestler, he who voluntarily falls, or he who does so involuntarily?"(374a3-4). Hippias reluctantly agrees that the better wrestler is one who falls voluntarily. Reminding Hippias of the standard which is being replaced, Socrates asks, "Is it more good-for-nothing and more shameful in wrestling to fall or to throw one's opponents?"(374a6-7). Hippias states that it is more good-for-nothing to fall. Socrates sums up the example by stating, "In wrestling, too, therefore, the one who voluntarily effects what is good-for-nothing and shameful is better than the one who does so involuntarily" (374a9-11). As we have considered in running, also in wrestling the definition of bad is both good-for-nothing, in a technical sense, and shameful in a psychological sense. Hippias again reluctantly answers, "Apparently" (374a12).

The ability to throw and the type of body that would be more suitable for such a task, remind us that although running and wrestling are athletic competitions, the better body in each competition is significantly different. While excellence in running requires agility and speed, in wrestling it requires gravity and strength. Unlike running, wrestling is a contest which entails face-to-face combat. When one is facing their opponent, they must be able to predict an opponent's moves while at the same time be unpredictable

themselves. Moreover, running in a race usually involves competing within a group of racers. To purposely run poorly in a race would not necessarily entail being the worst. One could run a race badly and still finish second or third among a group of runners. If a person finished second, most would not consider this person as a 'loser' per se. However in wrestling, there is a direct competition between two rivals. The losing wrestler is exactly that: the loser. And while racing involves a destination, the finish line, wrestling involves submission of the opponent. It would be far more shameful to submit to an opponent and admit defeat one on one as opposed to losing to a single race winner and being amongst a group of losers.

Socrates moves on to the rest of the body and asks Hippias to make a synoptic judgment about the use of the body and how this relates to the new standard of goodness which he is establishing:

> What about every other use of the body? Is not he who is better with respect to his body able to effect both—what is strong as well as what is weak and what is shameful as well as what is noble—so that, whenever he who is better in body effects what is good-for-nothing with respect to the body, he effects it voluntarily, while he who is more good-for-nothing does so involuntarily. (374a13-b4)

Whereas before we considered particular activities, whether running or wrestling, now Socrates is inquiring more generally about the excellence of the body. Socrates stresses that the better actor is one who is "able to effect both" what is strong and what is weak, as well as what is shameful and noble. Here we have confirmation of our earlier suggestion, namely, that one who chooses to effect what is weaker and shameful still has the capacity to effect what is stronger and noble. This implies that there may be times when the better man will choose and be able to effect what is stronger and noble. By answering, "it appears so also in matters of strength," Hippias remains silent about the noble and shameful effects of the body (374b5). Not allowing him to agree partially, Socrates forces Hippias to focus on grace: "What about gracefulness, Hippias? Is it not characteristic of the better body to assume voluntarily the shameful and good-for-nothing postures, while it is characteristic of the more good-for-nothing body to do so involuntarily? Or how does it seem to you?" (374b5-9). Hippias agrees that it seems, "Just so." Again, by asking how it appears, Socrates plays on the word 'seems.' Unlike

the strength of the body, which may derive its excellence on the use of various parts, gracefulness is a judgment that concerns the aesthetic excellence of the entire body. That is, on how the body appears as a whole and not just on the excellence of a particular part. In fact, throughout this upcoming section, Hippias usually answers that 'it seems to him,' or that it is 'apparently the case,' even though Socrates is divorcing the seeming from the judgment. When it comes to the body, however, the judgment is based largely upon the seeming and there is little way around this; the posture either seems graceless and is so, or does not seem graceless and is not so. Consequently, the standard of aesthetics also demands a different judging capacity on the part of the observer that relies primarily on the senses.

Socrates' focus changes from the effects of the action to the appearance of the actor. Making explicit an element that was implied in the example of the runner, Socrates asks, "As for gracelessness, therefore, if voluntary, it is associated with the virtue (*arête),* if involuntary, with the good-for-nothingness of the body" (374c). Now the actor who chooses to appear in the weaker and shameful form is not only better/braver but his activity is associated with virtue or excellence, *arête*. Again, in choosing to present the body in a graceless manner, one is doing so because it is related to an end that is judged to be good. The actor's control of the body to effect whatever he wants is part of the virtue of the soul. In such an action, one form of excellence, the grace of the body, is being subjected to another form of excellence, the rational part of the soul.

Moving from the grace of the body to the grace of the voice, Socrates inquires about one who voluntarily sings out of tune. Although he follows the established pattern, this time the voice that sings out of tune involuntarily is described not as 'good-for-nothing' but as 'wicked.' Accordingly he asks, "the one singing out of tune involuntarily is the more wicked (mochtheros)?"(374c9). We may wonder why this may be the case?[81] In fact, the difference between singing out of tune and the other activities mentioned is quite revealing. Recall that Hippias' mastery of various subjects included an array of speeches (368c9-d). As we had suggested, at that point, speeches affected the souls of

[81] Singing poorly to an audience not only fails in benefitting them in anyway but it may harm the performance of others who are also singing in the chorus. Therefore to do so involuntarily could be considered wicked; it pains the audience to hear it and ruins the entire performance for everyone.

those who listened and were moved by such words. The one singing may also be transmitting speech in the form of lyrics. Indeed, the first lines of the *Iliad* are of Homer invoking the song of the muses:

> Sing, goddess, the anger of Peleus' son Achilleus
> And its devastation, which put pains thousandfold upon the
> Achaians. (*Iliad*, Book I: 1-3)

If we understand singing out of tune to be a metaphor for transmitting speech, perhaps Socrates judges involuntary actions in this regard to be wicked because the consequences may be graver. The singer, who is unable to sing in tune but wishes to do so, reveals that he not only has little command over his own voice but also may be tone-deaf; he is unable to harmonize his voice, precisely because he cannot hear and thus judge his own sound. One who involuntarily sings out of tune may be ignorant of the effects of his speech; he may fail to know whether his speech accords with the way things really are. Like Hippias, who we had suggested seemed to be unaware (or did not care about) the effects of his interpretation, such a 'singer' may be unaware of how he 'sounds' to others and thus how he effects them. Moreover, judging the voice that sings out of tune brings forth the matter of judgment. Although majority of people can recognize a voice that sings horribly out of tune, only the expert will be able to judge whether it is off by a fraction. Most may even praise a man's speeches but only a few (those who know the truth) will recognize the errors of a convincing interpretation or the faults of a persuasive teaching.

In this next section, Socrates inquires about one's natural possessions, as parts of the body. He asks a general and pivotal question: "Would you prefer to possess what is good or what is bad?" (374c11). Although the answer to this question—for any rational human being—is a simple, "what is good," it reveals much about human nature and the issue of desire and choice. So far, Socrates has created a different standard by which to judge a good actor. It is the standard of volition, namely, the ability to choose what one wishes when they wish to do it. And no one ever wishes for what is bad or shameful to them, even though their actions may cause bad and shameful effects. Since these actions are chosen voluntarily, they presumably aim towards some good. Accordingly, everyone wants to possess what is good, even the voluntary actor who chooses to do things badly

and shamefully. But our examples, thus far, have demonstrated that judging what is better in any given situation is a very complicated assessment. Since it is so difficult, it is not surprising that people's substantive understanding of what is good or better differs, and may often be incorrect. Regardless, no one wants to be ignorant about, and thus pursue, what is apparently good and not really so.

In the category of natural possessions, we begin with one's feet. Socrates asks, "then would you prefer to possess feet that limp voluntarily or involuntarily?" (374c13). Hippias answers voluntarily. The rationale behind this, again, seems to be that if one has feet that limp voluntarily, then they have the capacity not to limp. In terms of natural possessions, the issue seems to be about feigning to have a limp rather than choosing to have a permanent limp.

Socrates then asks, "Is not a limp good-for-nothingness and gracelessness of the feet?"(374d2). When we reflect on it, the feet serve a natural function. Part of this function is to support and thus enable a balanced movement of the body's weight. If feet limp, they are good-for-nothing and useless in fulfilling this function. A limp not only affects the functioning of the feet but it also effects other more complicated activities that rely on this namely, (from the examples earlier considered) running and wrestling. If one voluntarily has a limp then, at that time, they can neither run nor wrestle. Socrates is not only inquiring about the usefulness of the feet but also about their aesthetic beauty. The aesthetic beauty, it seems, has more to do with the entire movement of the body and how this is effected by the feet. Interestingly, when one part, the foot, does not perform its function, the result is a limp which then affects the look of the entire body—the body becomes graceless.

Next, Socrates inquires about the eyes—the very part that enables us to see and thus judge a limp and grace. He asks, "What of this? Is not dullness of sight good-for-nothingness of the eyes?"(374d5). Notably, and understandably, in assessing the eyes, the question is now solely a matter of function and not one of grace. Unlike the gracelessness of a limp, no one else can immediately see the dullness of someone else's eyes; the limp is more apparent to others whereas the condition of one's vision is more directly related to oneself.[82] Socrates asks, "Which eyes would you prefer to possess and which to be in

[82] Unlike limping of feet, it seems that we would have to test dullness of sight.

the presence of? Those with which one voluntarily sees dully and sees incorrectly or those with which one does so involuntarily?" (374d8-10). There is something peculiar about sight that makes it different. Although both feet and eyes are parts of the body (and both have their corresponding virtue), what distinguishes the eyes is that vision seems to effect the functioning of so many other parts of the body. Poor vision affects our body and mind in more ways than do limping feet. Vision is essential in making all sorts of judgments, including a limp and grace. With this, we are reminded that there is a natural hierarchy of the functions of a body. Even though the excellence of the eye is only a part, it seems to be more essential in carrying out other actions. Due to this, it seems that no one would want to voluntarily see dully. If, however, someone did choose this, then the good that comes from this choice must be great indeed.[83]

The second part of Socrates' question shifts the attention away from one's own possession to the possession of others. And the effect, in this case, reflects on how you are being seen by others, and presumably judged by them. Coming to a decision about which types of eyes are better to be in the presence of, those that do not see clearly voluntarily or involuntarily, depends upon one's purpose. If one is hiding and wants to deceive others then they would want to be in the presence of eyes that do not see clearly involuntarily for these eyes could be easily tricked. However, if these eyes were going to judge a person and if that judgment brought grave consequences, then one would want to be in the presence of eyes that voluntarily do not see clearly for presumably these same eyes could see clearly if they choose.

Socrates sums up natural possessions, as parts of the body, by asking, "Then do you believe that those of your own things that voluntarily effect what is good-for-nothing are better than those that do so involuntarily?"(374d12-15) Hippias concedes but qualifies it by, "…with respect to these kinds of things at least"(374d16). What Socrates does next is curious; he explains that this is *one* argument (which seems to imply that there are others). This argument "…comprehends all things such as ears, nose, mouth, and all the senses: those that involuntarily effect what is bad are not to be possessed, since they are good-for-nothing, while those that voluntarily do are to be possessed, since they are good"(374d17-e3). Once again, we have a redefinition of goodness; in this case

[83] *Republic*, Book VII: 518a-b.

good possessions. When Socrates began his inquiry into natural possessions he had asked whether one wanted to possess what was good or what was bad. When Hippias answers, "what is good," most might conceive that this means that each part does its natural function to the best of its ability. This may be the other argument that Socrates refers to, namely, that the standard of good possession is more natural and thus innate. Yet Socrates has re-defined good possessions; they are no longer understood as parts which fulfill their innate, natural function but rather those that are subservient to the human will. They can be used for the good that the soul directs them towards, which can be counter to the excellence of that part. In fact, the human will can abuse and force parts of the body towards good-for-nothingness. Now this ability—to use one's body parts as one chooses—is understood to be good. The next chapter will take Socrates' new standard much further.

Chapter 10: (374e5-375c8)

Next, Socrates moves on to the third set of examples, inquiring about tools and instruments. Unlike the natural parts of the body, these instruments are created by the use of human reason. That is, they are created artificially in order to fulfill a function. Often, this is an improvement and augmentation of the parts of the body, and thus it is not surprising that these examples follow from the previous ones. Socrates begins these examples by emphasizing that there is a partnership with these tools, and thus changes the analysis. Whereas before he was inquiring into which actor was better, now he is inquiring into which sort of tool is better: "A partnership with which sort of tools is better, those with which one voluntarily effects what is bad or those which one does so involuntarily?" (374e5-7).

Socrates first asks whether a rudder "with which one will voluntarily steer badly better or one with which one will do so involuntarily?"(374e7-9). Again, as feet and eyes are parts of the body, similarly a rudder is part of the ship.[84] Yet since the rudder is an instrument that steers the entire ship, it may be a more significant part. This is similar to our earlier suggestion of the eyes, namely, that they were more essential in the functioning of the over-all body. But this is not the only affinity between the rudder and the eyes for the use of the rudder will depend on the vision of the helmsman. Based upon his sight, the mind of the helmsman will judge the direction that the ship is heading, and will turn the rudder according to where he wants to go. The rudder steers the ship towards what the eyes and the mind have already judged. The functioning of both, the eyes and the rudder, is important for an action to be carried out effectively.

In order to use the rudder, the user must have knowledge of how it works and thus understand its ascribed function—the purpose of its design. How badly one uses the rudder, the degree of abuse, impacts its effectiveness. Presumably, the helmsman would not want to use it so badly that he ends up breaking the rudder, rendering it utterly useless; or turn it so quickly that the entire ship tips over. After all, the helmsman who chooses to steer badly is also on the ship, and thus is affected by how badly he uses the

[84] *Republic*, Book VI: 488-489.

rudder. Furthermore, if others are on the ship, then the harm done from using the rudder badly becomes incrementally greater.

Judging the rudder which one will voluntarily steer badly as better is a very odd formulation: can there be a rudder in which one cannot steer badly? Strangely, the voluntariness seems to be ascribed not only to the actor but also to the tool. In the next question, Socrates asks whether it is also not the same with "a bow, a lyre, auloi, and all other things?" (375e11).[85] But we readily see that a tool is an inanimate object; not possessing a soul, it lacks the capacity of will. Their purpose solely comes from human design which, at any point in time, can change that function. Using a tool badly affects the tool perhaps only by making it useless in the future; the tool may break down from abuse but it does not rebel against such treatment, feeling fear or anger. We may wonder Socrates has in mind when he inquires about the voluntariness of tools?

From examining the use of inanimate instruments, tools that we craft in order to perform a function, Socrates makes a pivotal turn; he moves from inanimate instruments to animate ones. Curiously, in this part of the discussion, Socrates describes these various souls as 'possessions' and not as 'partnerships,' the word he uses to describe tools. When we think of it, 'possession' seems more appropriate for/in describing the relationship between man and inanimate tool, as opposed to 'partnership,' which seems more appropriate for/in describing the relationship between man and animate soul.

The consequences of using an animal badly seem to be different than using a tool badly and, perhaps it is this qualitative difference that Socrates is highlighting. By doing

[85] When Socrates asks this question there does seem to be some similarities with the example of the rudder. Notably, the first item on the list is different than the two that follow. The bow is a tool used in archery, whether that it be for hunting, war or game; the other two are musical instruments. Using either instrument badly, can cause one to break it. If one is practicing for war or if one is practicing the sport of archery, and example that is soon to follow, then the consequences do not seem to be as bad. But if this is done in the context of an actual war, then the repercussions of using a bow badly seem to be greater, because again the effect is not only your own life but the life's of others, both your fellow fighters and your enemies. With the example of the lyre the effect again depends on whether there are other people listening to one's playing and furthermore whether playing the instrument so poorly that one in fact breaks the instrument. Interestingly, there is a similarity in using the bow poorly and the lyre because they are made out of the same material—taught strings. Just as stringing a bow too tightly or too loosely then has an effect on one's ability to shoot an arrow, so too does the stringing of a lyre have an effect on one's ability to play the instrument. Like, the auloi, if there are others around who are listening to one's playing then there is a problem if one is playing it poorly. But there is a question if playing the lyre or auloi badly affects your own soul in a way in which steering a rudder badly can affect your own life. Musical instruments do seem to affect one's soul whether one is listening or actually doing the performing themselves.

so, he may be reminding us that effects can also be ranked according to the harm and good they produce—an essential consideration in voluntary action. Inquiring into the *use* of animal souls, he begins with, "What of this?" Is it better to possess the soul of a horse with which one will voluntarily ride badly or involuntarily?"(375a2-3). Immediately, we are struck by the peculiar phrasing of his question. What does it mean: first, to *possess* the soul of a horse; and second, to say that one will voluntarily ride badly or involuntarily with such a possession?

First, we examine what it would mean to 'possess' the soul of a horse. In one sense, 'possessing' the soul of a horse, refers to owning a horse, and being its master. When one owns a horse, then they also have a designated use for that horse. Even though Socrates specifies that the intended use of the horse's soul is to ride it, how one rides it may differ significantly, and be determined by the purpose of the riding. For instance, riding a horse for a race would be different than riding a horse for a parade; just as riding a horse in battle would be different than riding it to transport weight. The use, then, will determine how the horse is reared and trained, both in body and in spirit.[86] The very fact that we use the term 'training' for a horse's soul is in itself revealing. This is because, unlike a tool, an animal psychologically reacts and responds to the rider. As was said, tools are designed (and thus given a purpose) by humans. A horse's soul has to be trained because it has its own purpose ingrained by nature—an internal principle that guides the development of the horse.[87]

Understanding this innate nature becomes essential in effecting the horse's soul in a way which is most conducive to human ends. In order to use the horse's soul effectively, the rider has to become aware of the inner workings of cause and effect. This

[86] Before one begins to train a horse for a specific purpose, they will first try to find a breed of horse that is more suited for that purpose. This reminds us that humans—in order to achieve effectively their different ends—also create different types of horses in and through selective breeding.

[87] Horses have their own natural purpose to fulfill, something which humans can shape and mold. By domesticating a horse, we are in fact imposing another purpose on it—a purpose which may be quite different than its original end. Yet, no matter how hard a rider may try, he cannot train a horse to swim in deep waters or fly across dangerous terrain. The innate nature of the horse dictates what is possible and impossible in the works of a horse. Therefore, although a horse's soul may have some adaptability, some plasticity, this still is confined by its nature. Because the horse's soul has its own governing principle, and if this is to be changed, it must be understood; understanding how the animal reacts to its environment and what it associates with pleasure and pain becomes crucial. The rider must learn about his subject, not only horses in general, but about the idiosyncratic constitution of his own horse.

is similar to tools—one has to understand the design of the tool in order to use it effectively. There is, however, an important difference. The interrelationship between the rider's soul and the horse's soul is of great significance, especially when choosing to use the horse's soul badly. The horse must be appeased and trained slowly—gaining a relationship of trust with its rider, and not just one of abuse and fear, before it can be used badly. As in the case of the 'partnership' with tools, the effect of using something badly has consequences both for the user as well as what is used. Just as abusing a rudder can destroy its function and have negative effects on the helmsman, so too abusing the horse's soul can render it useless for the rider. Again, there is an important difference: whereas the tool will never rebel against its owner, the horse's soul may rebel. This reminds us partly of why the horse's soul is animate—it is sentient and when it is affected, it may respond in a more powerful way.

Socrates, however, is not simply asking about using a horse's soul badly. Rather he is asking which of two horse's souls are better to possess: one in which one will voluntarily ride badly or one in which one will do so involuntarily. The voluntariness is not a quality ascribed simply to the rider, but rather to the interrelationship between the rider and his horse; it is understood in terms of what is needed to carry out an action successfully. That is, when the rider wants the horse to ride in a bad way, presumably a way which is contrary to its nature, perhaps even to its own survival, then the horse will comply. Only if the horse obeys can one use it effectively. From the perspective of human use, a horse's soul in which one will voluntarily ride badly is better. Indeed, there are horses which are unable to be 'broken,' and remain wild.

Hippias answers the better horse is, "That which one will do so voluntarily" (375a4). Breaking with his usual pattern, Socrates strangely reaffirms Hippias' agreement: "Then it is better" (375a). Has Socrates gotten Hippias, whose very name means horse, to agree that it is better to possess the soul of a horse that one can voluntarily ride badly with? Has Socrates been voluntarily leading Hippias into tricky arguments, professing that they follow from Hippias' arguments? In any case, there is a comedic play on the Greek word for horse, '*hippias*', which does not come through the English translation.

In the next step, Socrates employs this agreement to base the next step of the argument. He states, "with the better horse's soul, therefore, one would do voluntarily the good-for-nothing works of this soul but with the soul of the good-for-nothing horse involuntarily" (375a7-9). [88] There is an important change in this question from the preceding one: when Socrates was inquiring into whether it was better to possess the soul of a horse where one would voluntarily ride badly, better was judged from the perspective of the one who was doing the possessing, not from the perspective or natural standard of the horse. The present question is inquiring not about the better possession, but the better horse—there is an important shift in the perspective.

Remember, it has not been established that this horse's soul—the one which one can ride badly voluntarily—is better simply. Rather, it is better to possess such a soul that allows one to ride badly according to one's own purpose. From the perspective of human use, then, this may be the better horse. But from the perspective of the horse, or more precisely, the natural fulfillment of the horse's nature, it may be the worse horse. Accordingly, when Socrates reaffirms, "then it is better", this 'better' is ambiguous. Accounting for this ambiguity leads us to two different standards in which to judge goodness: human utility—and the purpose that it imposes on the horse's soul—and the innate fulfillment of the horse's nature. Despite the ambiguity of the word 'better', Hippias does not interject. On the contrary, perhaps for the first time in this section, he strongly agrees, "Very much so" (375a10).

Socrates asks if it is the same case for dogs and all other animals (375a11). Pausing at this point, we note that although Socrates adds all other animals to the end of his remark, the two examples that he chooses to name are horses and dogs. Both of these animals have a special prominence in *Republic* as they are analogous to different parts of the spirited, or *thoumoedic*, part of the human soul. Socrates introduces spiritedness by reminding his interlocutors of the nature of horses and dogs,

> Then, will horse or dog—or any other animal whatsoever—be willing to be courageous if it's not spirited? Haven't you noticed how irresistible and

[88] Leake's mistranslates "horse" as "mare." See note 9 to Liz Alexander's thesis, "An interpretation of Lesser Hippias," where she refers readers to Loeb's Greek text, 375a7-8.

> unbeatable spirit is, so that its presence makes every soul fearless and invincible in the face of everything?[89]

In light of this reference, there is an added dimension to Socrates' question about possessing a horse's soul, inquiring about which one was better: the one in which one could voluntarily ride the horse's soul badly or involuntarily. Possessing a horses' soul may serve as an analogy to understand the spirited part of the human soul. The spirited part of the soul essentially animates it making it qualitatively different than inanimate instruments. Training, educating, and rearing this part, becomes vital in effectively ruling it. Spiritedness brings power, and the education of spiritedness brings courage. As we have seen the voluntary actor effects what is bad and shameful. His actions may cause shame in other people, but may also cause an innate sense of shame within his own soul; because of this capacity he was judged not only to be better but also braver. The courage of his choice, therefore, may be related to the reigning in and directing of his spirited part. In this sense, the voluntariness of the action is no longer just the accord between the intention and the end result but the power to carry out the action effectively.

After inquiring about the power to carry out an action, and examining how the spirited part of the soul is related to this, Socrates asks about the intended end or aim of the action. In this sense, the next question follows from the previous one; Socrates clues us in by stating, "What of this, then?" and asks, "for a human being who is an archer, is it better to possess a soul which voluntarily goes wrong and misses the target or one which does so involuntarily?" (375a13-14). Linguistically, this brings us back to the phrase that began this section of the investigation—that is, whether those are better who "go wrong voluntarily or involuntarily"(373c6-7). Socrates utilizes the example of archery to highlight the complexity of understanding what 'going wrong' voluntarily would entail. Here the judgment of 'going wrong' plays on a crucial ambiguity, which can also be understood from two different perspectives. First, missing the target can be a judgment

[89] *Republic*, Book III: 375a12-b. Utilizing and thereby educating the spirited part of the city, and soul, proves to be essential for the health of the city and soul. This is because the spirited part, as Socrates describes it, is a very powerful part. And because it is powerful, its nurture and education becomes of utmost importance. From this class, then, is born the city's protectors and guardians, fearless men that will be able to risk their own lives in defense of their city. These men are useful for the city, and provide a very important good—the very survival of the city and the lives of its citizens. But from this class, also comes the highest part of the city and the soul, which is the class that is most suitable for the philosophic life.

based on the target set in the activity of archery. In this case, the target was missed and the archer has gone wrong. But, we must remember that the question is one of voluntary action. This brings us to the second perspective, that of voluntary choice and effectiveness. When one misses the target in the activity of archery and has chosen to do this voluntarily, then, by missing the mark purposely, they have also hit another, (presumably) more important target—one that was set by the rational aim of the mind. In this sense, there is also another aiming that is occurring when one chooses to 'miss the mark' (in archery). Accordingly, from this perspective, the action cannot be judged as 'missing the target' or as 'going wrong.' This higher more comprehensive perspective judges the badness of missing the mark in archery and ranks this lower than another aim, which is judged to be 'right on the mark.'[90] In answer to Socrates' question—"A soul which involuntarily goes wrong is, therefore, more good-for-nothing than one which does so voluntarily"—Hippias follows with his own qualification, "in archery, at least" (375b5-7). This is a significant qualification; it indicates that although Hippias recognizes that the better archer would be able to miss the mark if he chooses to do so, he still does not want going wrong voluntarily generally to be the quality of a better man.

Perhaps to elucidate whether or not Hippias is judging these actors to be better solely based on their skill, Socrates directly focuses on it. He does so by inquiring into the medical expertise, "What about medicine? Is not he who willingly effects what is bad with regards to bodies more skilled in medicine?" (375b8-9). Once again, Socrates is asking who the better actor is in terms of voluntary action and then, whether this voluntary action is a display of skill. Technical proficiency in medicine may entail manipulating parts of the body to achieve an intended end. In order to do this effectively,

[90] Yet, there is an important qualitative difference on how one chooses to miss the mark. Unlike the examples of running and wrestling where the shameful or bad action was described (in running it was lack of speed, with wrestling it was falling), in archery it is blanketed under 'missing the target.' However, how one misses the mark seems to make a significant difference. Aiming higher than the mark, and missing it, seems to be very different than aiming lower than the mark and missing it. In Machiavelli's *Prince*, when he is advising future Princes that have the potential to establish new modes and orders, he uses the metaphor for archery. He explains that in terms of greatness, it is better to imitate those great men that came before. And that it is better to aim higher than the mark, so one can actually hit it. Moreover, missing the mark and hitting another mark may indicate the killing of another man; whether one does so voluntarily or involuntarily, we see that such an example highlights the grave consequences of these seemingly straightforward actions. Although, formally, in both cases the mark is missed, there is a substantive difference in the quality of the action. The stringing and releasing of the bow is one the major events in the *Odyssey* and there are many Platonic dialogues that deal with this theme.

the skilled doctor would have to understand how the parts of the body work and their interrelationships. The same knowledge can cause health or sickness; it's the application of that knowledge that determines the end result. The one skilled in medicine, then, is capable not only of causing health but also sickness in the body. Consequently, also in medicine, the one who chooses to effect things badly and is able to do so proves to be more skilled. But curiously, Socrates does not ask whether this one is more skilled than the one who does so involuntarily. He waits to hear Hippias answer before he presents the terms of comparison, which then turn out to be subtly different than we expect. After Hippias agrees, Socrates asks, "this [soul] is accordingly better in this art than one not skilled in medicine?"(375b10-11). Socrates breaks with his usual pattern, which asks if the voluntary actor is better than the involuntary one; now "the one who effects what is bad involuntarily" in respect to bodies is replaced with "the one who is not skilled in medicine." Based on our discussion thus far, Socrates' replacement seems to be reasonable. The ability to cause whatever intended effect one wants proves that one has control and thus is technically more skilled in medicine. Hippias agrees. Yet Socrates' has another subtle change: whereas before he was asking about the one who is more skilled in causing an intended effect, now he is explicitly asking about the relationship between skill and art. From the outset, we see that the object of the art of medicine is the body—and not simply the body, but rather the good of the body. The art of medicine attempts to understand how the body functions, all of its parts and their interrelationships. By doing so, the art aims at producing, maintaining, and restoring good health, or preventing further deterioration. Accordingly, the art of medicine is comprised of two major components, which are essentially related. Part of its domain is the collection of data (what works and what does not work), into an organized body of knowledge which aims at understanding the over-all health of the body. The art, then, properly conceived has its own end. Based on this end is derived the standard of goodness which it is subservient to, namely the good health of the body. The other domain deals with the application of this knowledge to particular bodies. Properly conceived, this is part of the skill of medicine—the application of the knowledge gained in the science of medicine. That is, the ability to cause the intended effect of health in a particular body.

Although Hippias agrees—that one who voluntarily effects what is bad in bodies is not only skilled but is also skilled in the art of medicine—there are important considerations about the interrelationship and possible separation between the natural end of the art and the end of the skilled practitioner of the art. The problem with judging a good practitioner solely on the basis of skill, and therefore technical ability, is that the intended end is not of significance in the assessment. The action is measured by how it is done, and not why it is done. Even though the art will always aim at perfecting the health of the body (and in this sense will be directed towards the good of the body), learning this art however, does not necessarily entail that it will be put to this original use. It is precisely because this knowledge can be used for good or for ill of the body that physicians need to take the Hippocratic Oath—a promise that the knowledge gained will be used to help bodies and not harm them. If one chooses to use the art of medicine to effect what is bad in the body, then they are ranking some other good higher than the health of the body. [91] With this disjunction—between the implicit good at which the art aims and what can be procured from the using the power of that art—we potentially have problems with the use of knowledge gained in the art.

Socrates next asks about whether the more skilled actor is always the one who is able to effect evil and shameful things voluntarily in all the arts and sciences,

> "What of this? In the case of [the soul] that is more skilled at playing the cithara and the aulos and everything else connected with the arts and sciences, is not the one better which voluntarily effects evil and shameful things and goes wrong, while the more good-for-nothing one does so involuntarily?"(374c)

Once again, we see that the question focuses on skill. The more skilled soul voluntarily effects evil and shameful things and goes wrong in these arts and sciences. Inversely, the more good-for-nothing soul involuntarily effects evil and shameful things and goes wrong. Again, this latter soul is judged as worse because it intends to do what is virtuous, noble, and what is right in the arts and sciences but fails because it proves to be

[91] Once again, the Hippocratic Oath helps us understand this problem of the skilled practitioner. Besides taking an oath that the knowledge will not be used to harm bodies, the practitioner must also revealingly promise: "Into whatever homes I go, I will enter them for the benefit of the sick, avoiding any voluntary act of impropriety or corruption, including the seduction of women or men, whether they are free men or slaves." Translated by Michael North, *National Library of Medicine*, 2002.

incapable. Even though this soul never intended to do what was evil and shameful, it still ends up producing such effects. The one who voluntarily chooses to effect evil and shameful things does so purposely. Nevertheless, because such a soul chooses this action, it indicates that there must be some good that this soul aims at. Successfully reaching this end, then, makes him a better soul.

Hippias is reluctant when it comes to this judgment, answering with an "Apparently" (375c6). His hesitation arises whenever Socrates attempts to extrapolate a general conclusion from the agreement in a specific area. Hippias is willing to judge that voluntary actors are better in particular arts and sciences yet unable to reach a more general conclusion about the soul and how it relates to the arts and sciences. Nevertheless, despite Hippias' hesitation, he still agrees.

After asking about all the arts and sciences, Socrates inquires into the subject of ruling slaves. He asks, "But presumably we would prefer to own the souls of slaves that voluntarily go wrong and effect evil, rather than those which do so involuntarily, on the grounds that they are better in these matters." (375c5-7). Socrates inquires into the voluntariness of the slave to go wrong and effect evil not in a particular area but more generally. Even though Socrates is asking about going wrong voluntarily and doing evil in general terms, Hippias does not object here. He agrees that he would prefer to own the soul of a slave that does these things voluntarily.

Recall that riding a horse the way one wished, especially if this meant riding the horse badly, could only be achieved when one ruled the horse's soul. Effective ruling occurred once there was a relationship of trust established between the rider and the horse. It was this interrelationship between human and animal, both being sentient beings, that was qualitatively different than the relationship between human and tool. A human soul, like the horse's, is also sentient and has the potential to rebel. Yet in ruling a slave, one is ruling another human being. In reforming a horse, one has to manipulate the animal's associations of pleasures and pains; humans not only have feelings of pleasure and pain, but unlike horses, they also have a sense of nobility and shame. In order to rule the human soul effectively, then, one must understand these ideas and be able to reform them. It is imperative that the master's orders become more important than the slave's

sense of shame. The better slave is willing to obey the orders of his master, regardless of the evil and shameful effects of the action.

An essential part of a human soul, which also makes it qualitatively different than the horse's soul, is the capacity for volition. Being master of a slave entails owning not only its body but, more importantly, its psychological freedom. Yet the issue of the slave's psychological freedom is complicated since Socrates ascribes the quality of voluntariness to the slave. We may wonder what it means for a slave to *choose* to go wrong? The very fact that the slave is freely choosing implies that he, in this sense, is not a slave. Since the slave is choosing to be under the rule of his master his choice only makes sense if his own good is (and always will be) in accord with his master's. If one owned a slave who voluntarily went wrong and effected evil, he would only be doing so to achieve some perceived good. But there is a potential dilemma in owning a slave who can voluntarily go wrong and do evil. If there is a conflict of interest between the master's good and the slave's own good, then what course of action would the slave choose? This potential conflict makes it unclear whether the better slave is one who voluntarily affects evil and shameful things.

Perhaps this predicament also shines light on the substantive meaning of owning a slave's soul. As we saw in the case of possessing the soul of a horse, Socrates' reference to this 'possession' was ambiguous: did it mean to own a horse or the ability to rule the spirited part of one's own soul. Similarly, possessing a slave may refer to owning another human being, or enslaving certain parts of one's own soul. If it is the latter, Socrates may be describing the proper condition of one's soul. That is, the parts that are more suited for rule, govern the parts which ought to be enslaved. Often the parts of the soul that ought to be enslaved are certain base desires. Perhaps, effecting evil and going wrong for these parts is a denial of the pleasures that such base desires seek. In this case, one would want such parts voluntarily to submit to the higher parts, even if this entails effecting evil and going wrong for such parts.

Throughout the various examples considered, Socrates has worked towards a redefinition of goodness. As we saw most activities, parts of the body, tools have a particular excellence or goodness that is attributed to them. This natural, innate, or original standard of goodness was ranked lower than and was thus replaced by another

standard of goodness, namely that of volition. That is, the unique human capacity to know, to chose, and to be able to effect whatever one wants, even if there are bad and shameful consequences that result from such actions. Voluntary action, then, entailed the capacity to order, rank and use things as the mind deemed fit. Part of the process of this capacity entailed having knowledge while another part entailed carrying out the decisions that the mind had made. As we suggested, both may require ruling certain parts of one's own soul, whether it is the spirited part and/or certain desiring parts of the soul. These parts may also seek their own satisfaction counter to the ends of the chosen action but in the voluntary actor's soul they will be reigned in and ruled.

Chapter Eleven: (375c9-376c6)

Turning to a matter of paramount importance, Socrates asks directly about the condition of our soul: "What of this? Would we not wish to possess our own [soul] in as good a condition as possible for these matters?" (375c9-10). The matters about which Socrates is speaking are those concerning voluntary actions. Earlier Socrates posed a similar question; he asked whether Hippias preferred to possess what was good or bad and moved on to considering what having good parts, tools, and possessions entailed (374c11). Good parts, tools, and possessions were redefined as extensions of our will, ways in which we were better enabled at getting whatever we wanted, even if that meant that such things were affected badly and shamefully in the process. If the soul is also to be conceived as a tool, examining its use, Socrates asks, "Will it be better if it effects evil/bad voluntarily and goes wrong or if it does so involuntarily?" (375d2).

Up until this point, Hippias has agreed (sometimes hesitatingly, other times wholeheartedly) that the voluntary actor is better than the involuntary one, regardless of what he effects. But now, even though Socrates follows his usual pattern, Hippias obstinately objects. Refusing to concede that the better soul could voluntarily effect evil and go wrong, Hippias retorts, "It would, however, be a terrible thing, Socrates, if those doing injustice voluntarily are to be better than those doing so involuntarily" (375d5-6). [92] For Hippias, the 'good' condition of the soul that Socrates inquires about—the soul that can be used voluntarily to effect evil and go wrong—is not a good soul. Quite the contrary, it is the condition of an unlawful and unjust soul.

Here, Hippias' use of the word "terrible" (*deinon*) to describe such a possibility reminds us of the start of the discussion when Socrates examined liars. There, Hippias exclaimed that it certainly would be "terrible" (*deinon*) if the liar and the truthful turned out to be the same (365c7). But through the course of the discussion, Hippias eventually agreed to what he found so terrifying—that is, the most capable liar knew the truth and because of his knowledge, the truthful man and the liar were the same (369a4). And we may wonder if something similar will develop about the one who commits injustice

[92] Hippias has said it would be a "terrible thing," three times in the discussion and each time he ends up agreeing to whatever it is that he thought was terrible.

voluntarily: will doing injustice voluntarily prove to be better than doing injustice involuntarily?

Yet nowhere has Socrates said that those who do evil and go wrong voluntarily are the same as those who commit injustices voluntarily. Notably, it is Hippias' inference that those who are voluntarily doing evil are also voluntarily committing injustices. This is not the first time that this formulation—that the one who does injustice voluntarily must be worse than the one who does so involuntarily—appears. Recall that the first time injustice is explicitly mentioned in the dialogue is when Hippias claims that the voluntary liar is a voluntary evil-doer. And he assumes that affecting evil voluntarily is equivalent to committing an injustice voluntarily. Hippias judges voluntary lying to be a type of injustice, *assuming* that the voluntary liar knowingly plots and does evil (372a).[93] Earlier, when Hippias explained that Achilles lied out of his "guilelessness," Socrates announced the logical implications of the argument. That is, Odysseus is better than Achilles because those who lie voluntarily were found to be better than those who did so involuntarily (371e7). Backed into a corner, Hippias resorted to the authority of the laws to sustain his case: "And how, Socrates, can those who are voluntarily unjust, who have voluntarily plotted and done evil, be better than those who do so involuntarily…" (372a1-3). Again, Hippias seemed to be outraged at Socrates' audacity of publicly putting forth an argument that went against the conventional and commonsensical understanding of justice, usually reflected in the laws. Echoing his earlier condemnation of voluntary liars, then, Hippias brings injustice explicitly back into consideration.

Hippias' understanding of injustice, which he inextricably connects with his idea of evil-doing, is still left for us to uncover. By examining his previous use of these words, we may get a clearer idea of what he means. Prior to this point, Hippias uses some form of the word "evil-doing" (*kakourgia*) in three different places: the first two in reference to the liar (365e9, 372a), the third in reference to Socrates (373b5).

When examining the capacity of liars, Hippias agrees that they are capable of doing many things, particularly of deceiving people (365d9). After Socrates asks whether their prudence comes from knowledge of their actions, Hippias exclaims, "They know

[93] Cf. Xenophon's *Memorabilia*, trans Amy L. Bonnette (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994), Book IV: 19-20.

very well; that is why they do evil (*kakourgousin*)" (365e9). From the outset, we see that Hippias conceives liars as evil-doers who take advantage of other people. They do so through their powers of deception, presenting themselves to be contrary to who they are. Moreover, he judges these liars not only to be capable but also to be knowledgeable and even to be wise (366a4).

Hippias' second use occurs when he refuses to concede that Odysseus (the voluntary liar) is better than Achilles (the involuntary liar), even though Socrates insists that those who lie voluntarily were found to be better than those doing so involuntarily (372e7).[94] Instead of admitting to the logical implications of the argument, Hippias, indignantly asked,

> And how, Socrates, can those who are voluntarily unjust, who have voluntarily plotted and done evil (kaka ergasamenoi), be better than those who do so involuntarily, when for the latter there seems to be much forgiveness—when someone unknowingly acts unjustly or lies or does some other evil (kakon)? And the laws, surely, are much more harsh toward those who do evil (kaka ergazomenois) voluntarily and lie than toward those who do so involuntarily. (372a)

Curiously, this paralleled much of what occurs here in the examination of the voluntary evil-doer. That is, Hippias tacitly agreed that the voluntary liar is better than the involuntary one in regards to being most capable in calculations (366e4-367a6). However, in regards to judging men—the characters of Achilles and Odysseus—he disagrees that the voluntary liar is better than the involuntary one. Hippias disagrees either because he fails to understand the complete implications of the earlier agreement, or because he believes that the lying of Odysseus is somehow more evil in nature, and thus more repugnant than the lying of the able mathematician.

And finally, after Eudicus encourages Hippias to answer Socrates, Hippias accuses Socrates of being a voluntary evil-doer. Hippias states, "But Eudicus, Socrates always causes confusion in the argument and seems to want to make trouble (kakourgonti)" (373b5). Hippias thinks that Socrates wants to cheat him through trickery.

[94] This agreement is reached earlier when Socrates demonstrates that the one who is a capable calculator is able to speak precise lies whenever he chooses but the incapable calculator who wants to tell lies will involuntarily end up telling the truth (367a). In that section Socrates established the negative case of involuntarily doing something before he established the positive case for voluntary action. Moreover, that this notion of voluntary action is dependent upon knowing the truth before one chooses to lie.

If it is a matter of genuine worth, set to be revealed on fair terms, Hippias believes he would easily prove to be the better speaker.

Taking all of this into consideration, we reach a better understanding of Hippias' perspective on justice. Hippias, it seems, understands injustice to be a type of evil doing when someone intends to, and successfully, harms another. This harm, in large part, is understood as cheating others of their rightful share of goods. In other words, his perspective seems to be informed by the effects of evil on *others* and therefore he seems to sympathize with those who suffer from injustice. Most remarkably, Hippias' views on justice are largely and perhaps exclusively informed by ideas of injustice.[95] Stated in another way, his ideas of justice seem to be negative in character, stemming from an understanding of 'what one ought not to do,' as opposed to 'what one ought to do.' Perhaps it is for this reason that he cites the authority of the laws to support his case. The character of the laws explicitly focuses on injustices, punishing them in hopes of deterring future offenses. The laws, then, make what is unlawful clear and from this one can gather the underpinnings of what is considered to be unjust. But to derive a complete understanding of justice simply based on the laws may severely reduce and limit the scope of justice.

Returning to the text, Socrates directly examines the character of justice by asking, "Answer once again: is not justice either (1) a certain capacity or knowledge or (2) both? Or isn't it necessary that justice should be at least one of these?" (375d9-12). We may pause to consider when Socrates had asked this question. Indeed, this is the first place in the dialogue where he directly speaks of justice. But the fact that he says "answer once again" suggests that a certain conception of justice may have always been present in the consideration. In fact throughout the entire dialogue, Socrates has artfully been able to establish two standards of goodness simultaneously. The one standard, that Hippias often seemed to agree with, was that of skillful execution. That is, the one who was judged to be good was capable of reaching his intended end. The other standard was that the better actor was not only skillful but also more just. Earlier in discussing the one who was most capable in calculations, Socrates suggested that such a man had knowledge not

[95] This is not surprising because most people do not really take notice of justice until they realize its absence. This 'noticing' of justice is usually in and through some *experience* of injustice, either by personally suffering from a perceived injustice or witnessing an injustice towards another.

only of arithmetic but also had a type of political knowledge that enabled him to be a capable speaker. Accordingly, this man was judged to be good and wise because he understood how the two domains—that of arithmetic and politics—interrelated. Part of understanding this interrelationship may have entailed understanding how these domains ranked according to what was more comprehensively good in any given circumstance. Such concerns primarily deal with understanding justice. This especially seemed to be the case in the last section that examined voluntary action. Much of what justified causing evil and shameful effects, we argued, was an end that was judged to be better and more important than the harm of the action. This end, properly conceived, may be a course of action that is more just.

Hippias agrees with a blanket 'yes'—presumably that justice should be at least one of capacity or knowledge. Yet, the fact that Hippias does so may prove to be problematic for him. Even though Socrates never explicitly addresses whether justice is a certain capacity, or knowledge or both, recall that capacity and knowledge were both considered in relation to the activity of the liar. In fact, when Socrates initiated his investigation into lying, he began by inquiring about capacity. In the course of that examination, Hippias had asserted that both knowledge and capacity enabled the liar to be effective (365d9, 365e11) but the liar was also judged to unjust (372a). Now he is agreeing that these same elements, or at least one of them, are in fact synonymous with justice.

Trying to specify what Hippias' "yes" means, Socrates first inquires into whether justice is a certain type of capacity. He elaborates: "if justice is a capacity of the soul, is not the more capable soul more just? For one of this sort seemed in some way better to us, best of men" (375e3-4). By qualifying that they had seen this before implies that throughout the examination, at least one of the actors who was judged to be better was also judged to be better because he was more just. Socrates' use of the phrase "best of men" to describe Hippias may remind us when this had occurred for there was another time in the dialogue that Socrates asked Hippias if he were best. Turning back, we see that this was when he was inquiring into whether Hippias was best at calculations (366d5-10). Recall, one who was best at calculations not only knew the truth of his subject but also knew how to speak capably about the truth. Thus he knew which

mathematically true answers amongst the others was the best for the given situation, which included knowing the capacity of the people to whom he spoke. This, we had suggested, was due to his political knowledge. Accordingly, he also proved to be the most capable for he understood how these two domains, mathematics and politics, related to one another.[96] Perhaps, if justice is a capacity of the soul, then part of being just will entail *understanding* how things interrelate. This brings us to the second possibility, that is, that justice may be a type of knowledge.

Inquiring into the second possibility Socrates asks, "But what if it is knowledge? Is not the wiser soul more just and the more ignorant more unjust?" (375e6-9) Notably, Socrates does not ask whether the more 'knowledgeable' soul is more just but rather if the *wiser* soul is more just. This may accord with what we have just suggested, namely part of understanding justice may entail understanding how things interrelate and this is often how wisdom is conceived. Namely, wisdom aims at understanding all the parts and how they fit together.

Unlike the preceding question where Socrates does not ask if 'the more incapable soul is more unjust,' here Socrates asks if 'the more ignorant soul is more unjust.' When we reflect upon it, incapacity in itself does not result in injustice. The problem of injustice seems to occur in the soul of a man who is capable but is also ignorant, for this soul can potentially create greater injustices. If the more capable soul can also commit greater injustice, precisely because of his increased capacity, then it follows that justice cannot simply be capacity. There has to be something besides capacity that enables one to be just. And Socrates implies that the root of injustice may lie more in ignorance. But as we had earlier seen, there are many types and degrees of ignorance. If the man is ignorant of his ignorance then his actions may cause even greater injustices than the one who is aware of his ignorance. This is an important distinction for in this regard recall that Socrates professed to be aware of his ignorance, which he likened to a sickness of his soul, and because he is aware of this he sought wisdom, the cure of such sickness. If justice is a type of knowledge, which can be more accurately called 'wisdom,' then the

[96] If we are correct that Socrates has the best in calculations in mind, then the precision of his lies begin to take shape for they are dictated by his understanding of justice.

ignorance of the unjust soul must lack this wisdom. And one who fails to recognize that they lack such wisdom is doubly ignorant and thus may be more unjust.

In the next question, Socrates shifts the emphasis to understanding a just action. Starting with a soul that is characterized as being both more capable and wiser, (and thus presumably more just) Socrates reminds Hippias, "Now the more capable and wiser [soul] came to sight as better (braver) and as more capable of doing both what is noble and what is shameful with regard to all that it effects?" (375e11-3762a). It was in the last section of the argument—the one which examined voluntary action beginning with the runner—that shameful and noble effects were explicitly discussed. Hippias had agreed that the actor who was capable of effecting both was better. The fact that this man had already come to sight as better again indicates that when Socrates was asking Hippias to judge the better man, Socrates was considering that the judgment was taking into account the justness of the action. Although at that point, the standard of goodness seemed to be solely based upon effectiveness, now we see that Socrates may have evaluated not only the capacity of the actor but also his end. We had argued that because of his capacity to effect both, it meant that when such an actor chose to effect what was shameful, this action was judged to be necessary in pursuing some good. If this soul were a just soul, then, the course of action that it chose was also more just. In other words, the necessity behind the action was based upon recognizing what was better in any given situation. This entailed the capacity to rank various goods and seek a course of action that entailed procuring the most good while doing the least harm.

Socrates then asks, "Therefore, whenever it effects shameful things, it effects them voluntarily through capacity and art, but these things are evidently characteristics of justice, either both or one of them" (376a4-6). Before Socrates had asked whether justice was a certain capacity or knowledge but now, after highlighting that justice requires not only the capacity to know but also the capacity to act, "art" takes the place of "knowledge." Socrates has changed the question. It seems that in the realm of action, then, either capacity or art is *characteristic* of justice. Moreover, in speaking of action, Socrates not only raises the issue of justice understood as an art but he also brings the term voluntarily back into consideration. Not surprisingly, Hippias responds with a reluctant, "Apparently" (376a7).

If justice is to be understood as an art, how one understands the relationship between art and skill becomes imperative. Previously, we considered the relationship of art and skill as it related to the domain of medicine. We had argued that each art had its own standard of goodness, and that was because the art was in the service to perfecting the good of its object. In medicine the art aimed at the good health of the body. Skill, on the other hand, referred more to the application of knowledge and thus the manipulation of cause and effect. Therefore, whereas knowledge of the art would aim at the good of the object, the application of that knowledge could be used for good or ill. Moreover, there was nothing in the art itself that dictated one use over the other; the use was solely based upon the judgment of the user. Accordingly, we may wonder whether the art of justice is similar to the other arts. Does the knowledge of justice aim at understanding the good whereas the skillful application of justice can be used for good or evil? Or is there something different about the art of justice? Unlike the other arts, does gaining knowledge of justice also affect the soul of the user such that this soul always prefers to do justice over injustice?

We move on to what seems to be a very strange question, indeed. Socrates asks, "And to do injustice at least is to do what is bad, while not to do injustice is to do what is noble" (376a8-9). First, we note that with this peculiar phrase, the qualities Socrates suggests are not parallel. Socrates does not say "to do injustice is to do what is bad, while not to do injustice is to do what is *good*." And, he does not say "to do injustice is to do what is *shameful*, while not to do injustice is to do what is noble." Rather, based on this account, doing injustice is bad and refraining from doing injustice is noble. Consequently, noble actions are not positive actions, they are negative in character. That is, noble actions are an abstaining of doing what one is capable of doing, if that action is judged to be unjust. Hippias seems to have no problem agreeing to this formulation. As we suggested earlier, his understanding of justice seems to be formed by his ideas of injustice and thus an abstinence from certain actions.

Yet we can also understand Socrates' prescription from a higher perspective, not one that is based solely on obeying the laws. As we had suggested, the better and more just man may be aware of his ignorance and because of this awareness he seeks to know what justice is. Although he may constantly be refining his ideas of justice, he may know

what constitutes injustice. Often knowing that something is not just is more rudimentary and one is able to articulate injustices better than articulating justice. Therefore knowing that injustice is bad, such a soul will refrain from doing injustice, which could be understood to be noble.

Now Socrates' use of the word 'braver' to describe this just actor is more meaningful. Seeking knowledge of justice may be of utmost concern for the soul who desires to be just but at the same time, this soul still engages and carries out actions. Part of acting while trying to understand justice may entail bravery for even though the just soul will always desire to act well, it will recognize that some of his actions may still cause shame and bad effects.

If justice is to be understood as an art, then Socrates' remarks will parallel what we had seen in the previous sections. That is, Socrates will now apply the same standard of voluntary actions to the soul who practices the art of justice, namely, "will the more capable and better (braver) soul not do injustice voluntarily—at least whenever it does injustice—while the more worthless will do so involuntarily?" (376a11-13). Again, this echoes the latest discussion on voluntary action where Hippias always judged the better man as one who was able to do both what was good and bad voluntarily in whatever action he engaged. Theoretically, if justice is an art, then, one who engages in this activity with more skill will prove to be the better actor. Socrates does add an important qualification, explaining, "at least whenever it does injustice" which seems to imply that this soul attempts not to do injustice but if it is compelled, then it will have the strength and courage to carry out such an action. Again, Hippias reluctantly agrees.

From this agreement Socrates swiftly asks, "And is not the good man the one who has the good soul, while the bad is the one who has the bad soul?" (376b). This is a very critical question for by asking it, Socrates directly connects the good man (the good actor) with the good soul (the good tool). Although Hippias agrees wholeheartedly with a simple, "yes," the matter is far from simple. As we saw in the examination of voluntary action, both the actor and tool were redefined. The good actor was a voluntary one who chose to and was able to effect what was shameful or bad. The good tool was one which enabled the actor to do whatever he chose to do with it, even if that meant the tool was used poorly or shamefully in the process. Presumably, with this connection in mind,

Socrates now explains, “Well then, it is characteristic of a good man to do injustice voluntarily, while it is characteristic of a bad man to do so involuntarily, if, that is, the good man has a good soul” (376b4-6). In his apparent bewilderment, Hippias states, “But surely he does have one” (376b7).

Socrates draws their final conclusion exclaiming, “Well then, he who voluntarily goes wrong and does what is shameful and unjust, Hippias, if indeed there is any such person, would be no other than the good man” (376b8-10). Once again, Hippias says that he simply cannot agree with Socrates on this point. Remarkably, despite all of the twists and turns of the argument, Hippias will not change his judgment about the better man. Socrates, in turn, curiously agrees with Hippias’ stance explaining,

> Nor I with myself Hippias. But this appears now, at any rate, as the necessary result of our argument. As I said before, however, I vacillate back and forth about these things, and they never seem the same to me. And it is nothing marvelous that I should vacillate, or any other ordinary man. But if you who are wise will also vacillate, this is a terrible thing for us as well, if we shall not cease from our vacillation even after we have come to you (376b12-376c6).

Socrates concludes the dialogue in a most peculiar manner. He reveals that his fits have stopped and that he no longer believes strongly in one position or the other. Remember that Socrates asked Hippias to heal his soul. The sickness that Socrates suffered from was not his vacillation and wandering but rather it was believing strongly in the position that one who chooses to go wrong voluntarily was better than one who does so involuntarily. The cause of his sickness, as he explained, was the prior development of the argument. Presumably, then, through the course of the last section of the discussion, Socrates has corrected the errors of the arguments and he no longer suffers from seizures. His current state of wandering and vacillating indicates that he is recovered from his previous ailment. As Socrates describes he “vacillates back and forth about these things, and they never seem the same to [him].” Accordingly, his vacillating back and forth may allude to his dialectical method which importantly enables him to see things from different perspectives. Perhaps such vacillation and wandering is fitting since knowing what human virtue is and seeking wisdom are complex multidimensional problems which may require the very wandering Socrates mentions.

Vacillation may be fitting for Socrates' soul for as he expresses, he always questions and seeks wisdom. This is because he is of a particular sort while for others who are not suited for the task of philosophy, this vacillation and wandering may result in more harm than good. Perhaps this is why Socrates concludes by pronouncing his judgment on what he thinks is "terrible." While Hippias has used the word terrible twice throughout the dialogue, this is the first time that Socrates uses this word. Namely, that if the wise men also vacillate about these things, then others who come to them will not cease from their vacillation even after seeking their help. Remember, it is Hippias who is "much travelled," travelling across Greece interpreting Homer and teaching others about human excellence. Yet, throughout the discussion with Socrates, Hippias is unable to defend his position rationally and logically. It is terrible that Hippias, who claims to be the wisest, cannot teach others about the most important things because he himself fails to understand them fully.

Conclusion

Even after the twists and turns of the discussion, Hippias refuses to agree that the better man is one who voluntarily commits any evil, whether that is understood to be lying voluntarily or committing an injustice voluntarily. And, it is of vital importance that we try to understand Hippias' position, since, from a certain perspective—perhaps that of the public —he may be right in his judgment and justified in his repugnance. After all, believing that the voluntary evil-doer is far worse than the involuntary one is a commonsensical view. In one sense, we are comparing the well-intentioned simpleton with the unscrupulous scoundrel, and Hippias is arguing that the scoundrel is far worse than the simpleton. Now, in terms of voluntary and involuntary actors, although both create the same bad and shameful effects, what differentiates them is their *intention*: the former intend to create these bad effects whereas the latter do not. Presumably, because the voluntary actor chooses to create bad effects, he also does so knowingly, willingly, and calculatingly. Conversely, the involuntary actor never chooses to do evil; rather, he chooses to do what is good but fails. The evil that is produced is done erroneously, ultimately because he lacks capacity over things which inhibit his good intentions from being realized. Therefore, on grounds of intent and culpability, public opinion will judge the involuntary evil-doer to be better than the voluntary one.

Yet, in this last part of the examination, Hippias always judges the voluntary actor to be better than the involuntary one, even though the former intends to effect evil and shame. Earlier when Socrates asks about particular activities and the use of specific parts, tools, and even souls, Hippias agrees that the voluntary actor who uses parts, tools, and souls to create bad and shameful effects is better. When Socrates asks about preferring to own the souls of slaves who voluntarily go wrong and effect evil (*kakourgei*), Hippias answers that he would prefer to own such slaves (375c5). Indeed, Hippias grants that the better actor is one who voluntarily effects evil and shameful things and goes wrong in *all* the arts and sciences (375c).

Earlier, it was suggested that Hippias was agreeing that the voluntary actor in all of the activities mentioned was better because of his technical prowess. According to this standard, the one who voluntarily performs an activity poorly is better because he also has the capacity to perform his activity well. That is, he has knowledge and the skill to be

able to perform both. That he voluntarily chooses to perform the activity poorly still demonstrates that he is technically proficient; unlike the one who wants to perform the activity well but is incapable. This former actor is better than the latter because he has control over his intended effect. Accordingly, the standard of goodness becomes the accord between the intention and the end result. In other words, the standard of goodness becomes effectiveness or capability. The voluntary actor proves to be more capable—he is a skillful executioner. Based on this formulation, the actor's choice—the end to which his actions aim and the resulting effects—is insignificant; rather it is his capacity, his ability to effect what he wants, that is of importance.

If Hippias believes that the better man is just and part of being just means having good intentions, why does he not judge the involuntary actor, whether he is a runner, wrestler, or singer (to name only a few of those considered), who hopes to effect things well and nobly as better than the voluntary one who intends to effect things badly and shamefully? Hippias could have argued that even though the involuntary actor fails, at least he intends for the best and tries his hardest to achieve it. Part of the puzzle, then, is figuring out why Hippias has agreed, prior to this point, that the voluntary actor is better than the involuntary one regardless of what he intends to effect. With this we are faced with the challenge of figuring out what Hippias' perspective on voluntary action actually is. From the outset, we have to contend with Hippias' seeming inconstancy on the issue. As we said, up until a certain point, he agrees that the voluntary actor who produces bad/evil and shameful effects is better than the one who does so involuntarily. Yet when Socrates asks about the use of one's own soul to effect evil, Hippias accuses the voluntary evil-doer of being unjust. Is there a significant difference between using one's own soul voluntarily to create evil effects and using particular tools or the souls of slaves to create evil effects? Is there an important difference in Socrates' question which would warrant Hippias' strong disapproval?

There was at least one apparent difference in Socrates' phrasing which may have provoked Hippias' response. Earlier, Socrates considers particular activities and asks about creating bad effects in those activities. And in examining the use of particular parts, tools, and possessions, he asks about using them voluntarily in a bad way. Each of these particular activities could be conceived as relating to a specific art: running tied to the art

of racing, steering to the art of sailing, riding to the art of horsemanship, etc. As long as the questions dealt with matters of skill related to particular arts, Hippias agreed that the more capable soul was the better soul. As we said, for Hippias the standard of goodness in the arts is measured by skill, or technical capability. According to Hippias, a capable artisan is a good artisan. When Socrates asks about the activity of one's own soul and whether the better soul is one that could voluntarily affect evil, Hippias refuses to agree. For Hippias, creating bad effects or going wrong with one's own soul seems to be different than these activities, arts, or sciences even though similar words, '*kakos'* and '*kakourgia'* are used throughout. Moreover, the activity of the soul may not only be different than all the arts and sciences, but it may be more important, and thus more essential, in judging the better man.

Again, Hippias conceives voluntary evil-doing as equivalent to doing injustice voluntarily, which he understands as harming free humans. Presumably, when it comes to harming the souls of others voluntarily or breaking the law of the city voluntarily, such a soul is no longer good. On the contrary, such a soul is bad; it is positively evil. And what makes this soul bad is precisely what makes the artisan good: it is the use of his capacity for whatever end he wants. The capable and evil man uses his capacity skillfully to maneuver the laws, deceive others, and use justice to his own advantage. Consequently, embedded in the law, and public opinion, is a disjunction between the skillful man and the good man. According to the law, the good man is one who refrains from doing injustice. Therefore his virtue is negative in character; that is to say, the good man is excellent not because he engages in just or noble deeds, but rather because he abstains from unjust ones (376a8). The activity of the soul then, if done well, is to do justice. Yet, if the just man is one who refrains from doing injustices, then the activity of the soul is abstaining from certain actions; that is, not doing what one wants when one wants to do it. Therefore, Hippias upholds two different standards of goodness: the good artisan is capable whereas the good man is just. This is an important distinction, a distinction upon which Hippias bases his judgment of Odysseus; he is the versatile, wily liar who, though skillful, is unjust. He is capable, but does not refrain from unjust actions like a good man.

If Hippias thinks that the activity of the soul is altogether separate from the activity of the artisans, then he can agree without contradiction that the one who creates

bad effects voluntarily is better than one who does so involuntarily in all the specific activities that Socrates mentions (mathematics, geometry, sailing, horse riding, and archery, to name just a few) yet disagree that voluntary evil-doing is worse when it comes to the activity of the soul.[97] If in fact Hippias believes that all of the arts and sciences are distinct from the activity of a good man, it is as though he conceives the world to be divided into separate and unrelated parts—each having its specific virtue, containing its specific capacity, knowledge, and 'wisdom.' Justice, thus understood, is the specific and isolated excellence of the good man. It is the specific ability to refrain from specific activities having to do with the soul. Only if Hippias truly believes this, is the apparent contradiction in his speech reconciled. Any alternative rendering of his thoughts or deeds may reveal a deeper contradiction, a disunity that Hippias' Achilles deplores. That is, disunity between what a man says and what he does, which shows him to be a detested imposture.

Has Hippias' apparent contradiction disappeared, or have we reconciled an apparent contradiction in speech only to reveal a deeper contradiction in his character? Contradictions can be found not only by paying attention to what someone says and comparing and reflecting on these instances, as Socrates suggests, but they can also be found by comparing what someone says to what someone does (369d). And Hippias' deeds may in fact contradict his own understanding of the good man. Remember that Hippias is not only a polymath but also a technician (368b-e). He prides himself in being the wisest man in Greece because he is the most skilled in the greatest number of arts. He invests his time and energy in displaying his technical prowess. By doing so, he believes that he is demonstrating his capacity and wisdom thereby proving that he is the best at everything. Comparing his deeds to his speech, we recognize that there is a contradiction between them. If he truly believes that the standard of a good man is justice and not capacity, then why does he spend his own time mastering various arts and sciences?

[97] After all when Socrates directly examines justice, in the concluding portion of the dialogue, Hippias agrees that justice is both a certain capacity of soul and that the wiser soul is also more just. Moreover, throughout that section, Socrates reminds him that through the examples that they had gone through one such man seemed in some way better when it came to justice (375e3). But the examples that they considered were all derived from the arts and sciences. If justice is altogether separate from the arts and sciences then how can one such man have appeared better to them in regards to justice?

Applying his standard of the good man reflexively to his own activities renders them all the more absurd.

If Hippias' deeds contradict his own ideal of the best man then this may be rooted in a deeper error. Hippias has created an ideal that he himself cannot measure up to. And what is more, his confidence seems to demonstrate that he is largely ignorant of his own incapacity. In this sense, he seems to desire that men be simple and honest, direct and unified, perhaps because he longs for a unity that is lacking in his own soul. His theoretical ideals are separate from his actions and, being ignorant about the contradictions within himself, Hippias never progresses based on his own standards. Not only does Hippias fail to progress towards his ideal of the good man (measured by his justice) Hippias may also misunderstand the very content of justice. This stems from misunderstanding the activity of the soul. As we said, in order for him to be logically consistent in his argument, Hippias must conceive of the arts and sciences as separate from the domain of the soul, and thus to have separate measures of excellence.

Hippias may fail to understand the deeper connection between the arts (and sciences) and the effects that they have on other human beings. Recall that Hippias conceived of voluntarily harming other human beings as a form of injustice. If Hippias believes wrong-doing to other humans to be evil, but holds wrong-doing within particular activities to be innocuous, this may be a strong indication that he fails to understand the larger implications of the activities that Socrates enumerates. Although these potential consequences were discussed in the example of the runner, they were present throughout the entire list of examples. In fact, an important part of the extensive examination of running was to demonstrate that all activity takes place within a given context. Even an activity such as running, as Socrates suggests, is a form of '*poiesis*'—an act of making or creating. Because running is doing something, it also is affecting something. But the effect of this activity is varied in character and can also reverberate elsewhere, again depending on the context in which it occurs. Actions are never carried out in isolation; quite to the contrary, the substantive meaning of the action is inextricably linked to the context in which it occurs and it is the context which compels one to recognize the interconnectedness of things.

Part of this interconnectedness is recognizing that activities can affect other people—those same people that Hippias seems to sympathize with. As a result, in examining the different types of bad effects in running, remember that Socrates uses two different words: the first '*kakos*,' to refer to the technical badness of the activity; and the second, '*aischron*,' to refer to the shameful effects of the activity. We saw that shameful effects more appropriately described bad effects on the souls of others. Hippias, not taking heed of the distinction, assimilated both effects under bad, '*kakos*.' By doing so, he failed to see that there is an important distinction in the type of effects that an activity can cause or produce. In fact, it is not until we are faced with this distinction that we become aware of at least two different standards of judging the actor: the technical execution of the action and psychological/political effects of the action.

Moreover, in our examination of the runner, we had touched upon another crucial distinction. That is, when one voluntarily chooses to do an activity badly (poorly and shamefully) they are simultaneously engaging in another, perhaps more important activity. When we decide on how to do an activity, part of what we are doing is trying to decide the best way to reach a given end, and by carrying this out effectively, we prove to be more capable actors. This decision-making, reflecting and calculating are all also types of activities—they are activities of our soul. Moreover, when we become aware that there are different standards of goodness, in choosing a course of action we at the same time are ranking these different standards. The activity of the soul, therefore, is not separate from the activity of the arts and sciences; indeed they are intimately related. They are related insofar as the mind is usually engaged in all the different facets of an activity at once.

Is Hippias really unaware of this connection? Or do his deeds reveal that he understands this connection, between the arts, sciences and the activity of the soul, all too well. After all, Hippias is famous for being well versed in all sorts of subject matters and skilled in all sorts of arts. His arts augment and beautify his physical appearances, whereas his knowledge of various sciences augment and beautify his intellectual appearances. All in all, he gives the impression of the all-beautiful and all-wise man. He uses the arts not to produce the best product of the art, but rather orders the arts to his own end. In this sense, Hippias may be the voluntary actor that Socrates describes. That

is, he is not the actor who chooses to do what is best in the arts, but rather he voluntarily uses the arts badly to create his own intended effect. Perhaps his use of the arts is even voluntarily aimed at creating shameful effects on others.

In this sense, Hippias may prove to be a voluntary and capable liar—the very liar that he publicly deplores. If this is the case, then it is in his best interest to teach others to be honest and simple like *his* Achilles. If people strive for this simplicity and honesty it makes them all the more easy to manipulate. Recall, one of the first things that we noted about Hippias' interpretation of Achilles is that he lies in order to make his case. When citing evidence from the Homeric text, Hippias omits crucial lines which then end up recasting Achilles in a light which may have been different than Homer's original intention. Moreover, when Socrates seems to demonstrate that Achilles lies, Hippias again invents his own reasons as to why Achilles is nowhere seen to be leaving for Phthia. According to Hippias, Achilles stays out of a higher sense of the common good for he stays to save the Achaeans; an interpretation that simply does not bear up under scrutiny (370e6-9). We might explain this as forgetfulness on Hippias' part, but we are reminded later that he is a proud inventor of his own mnemonic device (368d5). If Hippias lies to make his case and is able to manipulate the text to his advantage, then it casts a certain shadow over the entire dialogue.

By publicly denouncing Odysseus as a cheating liar, perhaps even feigning indignation at these types of 'unscrupulous men,' Hippias deflects attention away from his own thoughts about the good. Moreover, we witnessed how Hippias, when backed into a corner, calls upon the authority of the laws, something of which he seems to be very aware. Perhaps recognizing that most men will understand justice as law-abidingness, he constantly acts as though he agrees with the laws: voluntary evil-doers and unjust men must be punished because they harm others. By feigning sympathy for those who suffer from injustice, he is able to disarm the potential suspicions of people around him. In connection with this, remember that when Socrates asks Hippias about using their own soul to create evil voluntarily, Hippias refuses even hypothetically to identify himself with men that appear so unjust; therefore he refers to such men constantly as "those" who do injustice (375d4). We see that Hippias is foremost aware of how such voluntary evil-doers appear—perhaps they appear so repugnant that he cannot

even hypothetically include himself in such a category or he is very careful never to identify himself with those who appear to be unjust.

According to such an interpretation, Hippias is more of a skillful manipulator than he first seems. He is what he publicly deplores—a voluntary, wily, resourceful liar. However, through the course of the discussion, we recognized that judging the voluntary actor as better could be based not only on the standard of his capacity but also on the justness of his actions. Simply because Hippias seems to effect voluntarily what is shameful and bad in the arts, and seems to lie and deceive voluntarily, this does not in itself make him a worse or unjust man. Recall, in the previous chapter we had suggested that often acting justly in a particular situation entailed voluntarily choosing shameful and bad effects. This course of action was deemed to be necessary because the good towards which it was aimed was ranked higher and more comprehensive than the evils that were produced by such actions. Accordingly, in order to judge Hippias' character and thus his virtue, one must judge the justness of his actions. It is only by examining his ends, or the goods to which his actions aim, that we may be able to reach a judgment about Hippias' character.

With this in mind, we again scrutinize his speech and deeds. When we examined Hippias' various arts and sciences we saw that they were dedicated to beautifying his appearance, aimed at creating a powerful image that most would be struck by. In this sense, they made him look more beautiful, more capable and wiser. His speech was also boastful and exaggerated, again making him appear to be more than his worth. He claimed not only to be the best in everything but also that he had never yet met anyone better than him in anything. For most intents and purposes, Hippias' efforts are directed at making him appear better than he himself is. Therefore, Hippias' actions demonstrate that his lies serve to exaggerate his worth, and he falls short of his depiction. Such deceit then does not seem to benefit the one who is deceived nor does it seem to aim at a greater and more comprehensive good; in fact it may even prove to be harmful to others. In recounting his repertoire of arts and sciences, Socrates had alluded to the possibility that the goods which Hippias most desired were money and praise. Whether money and praise are always truly good for the one who pursues such things is questionable.

The traditional subtitle of Plato's *Lesser Hippias* is "On the lie." Curiously, in the platonic dialogue that is named after the lie, we are never introduced to the most crucial of platonic terms on the subject, namely the 'true lie' or the difference between the 'voluntary and involuntary lie.' Even though Socrates considers the voluntary and involuntary liar (in terms of his knowledge, capacity and choice) he never directly considers the voluntary and involuntary lie. We are, however, introduced to this concept in the *Republic*. After discussing the nature of the divine, Socrates asks his interlocutor,

> "That surely no one," I said, "voluntarily wishes to lie about the most sovereign things to what is most sovereign in himself. Rather, he fears holding a lie there more than anything."
>
> "I still don't understand," he said.
>
> "That's because you suppose I mean something exalted," I said. "But I mean that to lie and to have lied to the soul about the things that are, and to be unlearned, and to have and to hold a lie there is what everyone would least accept; and that everyone hates a lie in that place most of all. Now what I was just talking about would most correctly be called truly a lie — the ignorance in the soul of the man who has been lied to. For the lie in speeches is a kind of imitation of the affection in the soul, a phantom of it that comes into being after it, and not quite an unadulterated lie. So the real lie is hated not only by gods, but also by human beings."[98]

Although it may appear as though the true lie is never discussed in the dialogue, on closer examination we see that it is ever present in the action and drama of the dialogue, especially as it relates to Hippias' character. If Hippias is aware at all of the connection between the arts, sciences and the soul, his understanding might nevertheless be very limited. For him, the arts, sciences, and the souls of others can all be used to procure the goods that he lusts after—namely, money and praise. It is in this sense, then, that the activity of his soul is intimately connected with everything else; he uses the rational parts of his soul to satisfy his desires. But if he conceives the souls of others only as tools and instruments that he can use badly and shamefully to acquire his own good, he may be ignorant of the interrelationship between his soul and the souls of others. As we had earlier discussed, even in the case of inanimate tools, like the rudder, how badly one used the rudder had an effect not only on the tool but also the user. Moreover, when it came to

[98] *Republic*, Book II: 382a-382b.

using the souls of horses, dogs, and eventually humans badly and shamefully, one had to take into account how this affected one's own soul. That is, if one's well-being is also interconnected to the well being of others, then by abusing others one may indirectly be causing shameful and bad effects in one's own soul.

When we become aware that the activity of our soul is intimately and essentially connected with all other activities that we choose to engage or refrain from, then we also become aware of another type of effect. Like the shameful effects that we considered in terms of causing shame in the soul of others, when we act, we also affect our own soul. Therefore, creating evil effects and doing an injustice can apply to oneself, as well as to others; one becomes the cause of the effect but also the recipient of the affect. If Hippias pursues goods that are illusory then his capacity to lie and use people to his advantage may actually cause him to harm his own soul. When someone acts voluntarily, they aim at procuring what is better in any given circumstance. And everyone wants to possess what is truly good not what is apparently good. Therefore to act voluntarily means to know what is better and to be capable of effecting it. Voluntary action, then, is based on knowing what is better and not just appearing to know what is better.

In terms of injustice, Hippias, being mired in appearances, seems to be unaware or forgets this internal perspective. Perhaps this is part of why he calls upon the authority of the laws—the *external* source of law and punishment—to support his case. Once this internal perspective is brought to one's attention, effecting/affecting the condition of one's soul becomes of utmost importance. That is, the things that we pursue, the types of activities that we engage in, and how we use other tools and possessions does have an affect on our soul. And at the same time we use our soul in deciding and carrying out these activities. Hippias seems to be aware of the latter but not the former; he seems to think that his soul is a tool like any other, something which he can use to get to his desired end. But what he desires, in large part, seems to remain unexamined. In this sense then, he may never truly act voluntarily. One's soul then is not just a part, tool, possession or something which we have a partnership, even though parts of our soul can be better understood by such analogies. One's soul is most intimately what defines who we are and the life we essentially live.

Hippias does not seem to question whether the soul's activity, similar to the arts and sciences, also has an innate standard of goodness; ignorant of this standard, Hippias may never pursue knowledge of that goodness. For this reason, again, he may fail to act voluntarily. Rather, he may always prove to be an involuntary actor as long as he does not know how things truly stand. Ironically he may even speak the truth, as he does at the end of the dialogue when he refuses to agree that one who commits injustice voluntarily is better than one who does so involuntarily. But failing to know the truth, Hippias may believe that he is lying. In this sense, Hippias may be the ignorant liar that Socrates earlier describes, "would the ignorant one involuntarily speak the truth many times if he should chance upon it through not knowing, though he might wish to speak lies?" (367a2-4). Accordingly, Hippias' actions are governed more by chance than by knowledge, and, failing to understand human excellence, Hippias—the professor of human virtue—never truly excels.

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