

# DOES THE GOOD MAN DO INJUSTICE VOLUNTARILY? IN DEFENSE OF PLATO'S *LESSER HIPPIAS*

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*Resumo.* Uma questão básica ainda se coloca aos leitores do *Hípias menor* de Platão: como lidar com a conclusão final do diálogo, de que o homem bom pratica a injustiça voluntariamente, que parece profundamente inconciliável com o princípio atribuído a Sócrates de que “ninguém erra de propósito”. Contudo, se investigamos o texto mais de perto, encontramos indícios de que o posicionamento de Sócrates não é nem paradoxal nem contraditório com as posições filosóficas que ele estabelece nas outras obras de Platão. Ao contrário, o diálogo chega a uma conclusão definitiva. O homem justo se recusa a praticar a injustiça precisamente porque ele não deseja (βούλεσθαι) fazê-lo. O conhecimento do que é bom ou ruim (em outras palavras, do que favorece ou prejudica a alma) ativa exclusivamente o desejo pelo bem e, conseqüentemente, o poder de produzi-lo.

*Palavras-chave.* Platão; Sócrates; conhecimento do bom e ruim; justiça; desejo; poder.  
D.O.I. 10.11606/issn.2358-3150.v0i16p35-60

THE END OF HIPPIAS' EXHIBITION (ΕΠΙΔΕΙΞΙΣ) ON HOMER IS FOLLOWED BY A philosophical gathering of a group of listeners who, having chosen Eudicus<sup>1</sup> for their representative, urge Socrates to scrutinize and evaluate what has been said by putting Hippias' speech to the test.<sup>2</sup> Plato describes this group as being well acquainted with the Socratic elenchus, which aims at examining whether a speech has been well-spoken (καλῶς λέγειν) or not.<sup>3</sup> Thus, right from the beginning, the dialogue provides an appropriate occasion for the demonstration and the subsequent criticism of Hippias' exhibition speech having as its central idea the concepts of truth and falsehood.

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\*\* Artigo recebido em 4.set.2015 e aceito para publicação em 28.out.2015.

<sup>1</sup> On the idea that Plato meant to give us a hint at the good (ἀγαθόν) and the just (δίκαιον) by choosing the name Εὐδικός, see Friedländer 1964, 145. Cf. Lampert 2002, 236 n. 12; Weiss 2006, 147 n. 53.

<sup>2</sup> ἢ καὶ ἐλέγεις, εἴ τί σοι μὴ καλῶς δοκεῖ εἰρηκέναι, 363a3.

<sup>3</sup> What should be noted is that the Socratic elenchus here, being in line with how it appears in other dialogues, forms the tool urging to determine or establish whether a certain reasoning is a good one (καλὸς λόγος) or not, namely whether it can withstand elenctic pressure, eventually not being refuted as false opinion (ψευδὴς δόξα). For Plato's presentation of the customary elenctic Socrates in the *Lesser Hippias*, with special emphasis on his elaboration on the various aspects of the philosophical persona of his master, see Blondell 2002, 113 ff.

Blundell (1992, 134–5) holds that the dialogue is “a portrayal of the fruits of the traditional forms of education and their sophistic heirs”. Plato himself, she continues, follows “the educational traditions of his culture by using archetypal heroes to examine aspects of moral and intellectual character”.<sup>4</sup> Therefore, the arguments of the *Lesser Hippias* should be seen as part of a larger pedagogical strategy, in which Socrates challenges both traditional and sophistic educational methods. Following the same line of thought, Kahn (1996, 114) notes that a strong background theme for the *Lesser Hippias*, as for the *Ion*, is the role of poetry in education. The aim of this paper is twofold: first, to offer a new interpretation of the dialogue which aims to do justice to the dialogue itself not only by seeking to defend and restore the value of the arguments unfolded in it, but also by attempting to show how these arguments are employed by Plato for a larger pedagogical and philosophical purpose; second, to illustrate, through this interpretation, the criticism Plato levels against traditional forms of education, values and their moral standards, with a view to justifying the philosophical life as the best way of life for a human being.

#### INITIAL DISTINCTION BETWEEN THE TRUE MAN (ἈΛΗΘΗΣ ἄνθρωπος) AND THE FALSE MAN (ΨΕΥΔΗΣ ἄνθρωπος) (363a6–365d)

Hippias’ exhibition on poetry in general, but especially on Homer’s poetry,<sup>5</sup> gives rise to the Socratic elenchus, which aims to test his expertise in discoursing upon these issues. Besides, Plato’s *Ion* (531e–532a) teaches us that possessing a craft implies being able to discern who speaks well and badly about its subject matter. Socrates’ reference to the superiority of the *Iliad* over the *Odyssey*, to just the extent that Achilles is a better man (ἀμείνων) than Odysseus,<sup>6</sup> aims at examining (ἐλεγχος) Hippias’ expertise. Blundell (1992, 140) notes that “Hippias’ expertise in the evaluation of Homeric characters, together with his status as a moral teacher and his desire for popular approval, makes him a fitting representative of traditional

<sup>4</sup> Cf. also Pottenger 1995, 45; Blundell 2002, 114.

<sup>5</sup> ἐπιδέδεικται καὶ περὶ ποιητῶν τε ἄλλων καὶ περὶ Ὀμήρου, 363c2–3. Blundell (1992, 137) considers Hippias as a voice of conventional, common-sense values. Cf. also Ovink 1931, 136; Kahn 1996, 115, 118; Allen 1996, 28; Blundell 2002, 130, 136; Weiss 2006, 146.

<sup>6</sup> ἥκουον ὅτι ἡ Ἰλιάς κάλλιον εἶη ποίημα [...] ἢ ἡ Ὀδύσσεια, τοσοῦτ’ δὲ κάλλιον, ὅσῳ ἀμείνων Ἀχιλλεύς Ὀδυσσεύς, 363b2–4. Blundell (1992, 140) observes that “the moralizing attitude towards literature reflects the widespread belief that literary characters influence the audience through imitation resulting from emotional identification”. Cf. also Blundell 2002, 115.

moral standards and their dissemination through the study of Homer".<sup>7</sup> Through its representative, Homeric ethics becomes the target of Plato's criticism. The end of Socrates' dialectic will demonstrate whether an exhibition (ἐπίδειξις) of this sort is accompanied by knowledge or seeming wisdom.<sup>8</sup> Therefore, the major question raised concerns the comparison between Achilles and Odysseus and its evaluation, for which the most suitable is the expert in Homer's poetry.<sup>9</sup>

Hippias begins with a brief characterization of Achilles, Nestor and Odysseus, stressing that Homer depicts them as "the best man" (ἄριστος), "the wisest" (σοφώτατος) and "the wiliest" (πολυτροπώτατος) respectively (364c5–7).<sup>10</sup> It is the last part of Hippias' characterization, his use of the word πολυτροπώτατος to refer to Odysseus, that calls forth one of Socrates' main objections: Achilles is also described as "wily" by Homer.

The Socratic objection provokes Hippias to limit the semantic correlations of the word πολυτροπος (*wily* man), making its use and interpretation even clearer. The use of the Homeric intertext, based on which Achilles' most honest (ἀπλούστατος) and true (ἀληθέστατος) character is highlighted,<sup>11</sup> aims at the exclusion of the characterisation πολυτροπος for Achilles.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Cf. also Ovink 1931, 145 ff; Blondell 2002, 118–9, 128.

<sup>8</sup> The very term ἐπίδειξις is a Platonic hint at seeming (δοκεῖν)-wisdom, in which the sophists seem to be more interested, cf. also Blondell 2002, 130.

<sup>9</sup> Plato's irony is situated in both Socrates' repeated admiration of Hippias' expertise (οὐτως εὐελπὶς ὢν περὶ τῆς ψυχῆς εἰς σοφίαν ἀφικνῆ εἰς τὸ ἱερόν, 364a2–3; ἀφόβως τε καὶ πιστευτικῶς [...] τῆ διανοίᾳ, 364a4–6; τῆς σοφίας ἀνάθημα τὴν δόξαν εἶναι τὴν σὴν [...], 364b2), as well as in the latter's presumptuous display of his own superiority in wisdom (οὐδενὶ πάποτε κρείττονι εἰς οὐδὲν ἑαυτοῦ ἐνέτυχον, 364a8). By contrast, this very irony foreshadows his lack of wisdom that will be eventually disclosed. For the irony of the passage, cf. Blondell 1992, 138 n. 31.

<sup>10</sup> Scholars have been divided into two groups as to whether the dialogue contains equivocation or not. Sprague (1962, 67–8, 74, 75–6), on the one hand, stresses that large parts of the argument of Plato's *Lesser Hippias* turn on the equivocal use of terms such as "willingness", "power", "good", "voluntary", cf. Hoerber 1962; Mulhern 1968; Klosko 1987, 622ff.; Zembaty 1989, 58–61. On the other hand, Weiss 1981, 288 n. 5 and *passim* does not believe that the dialogue must be charged with equivocation, cf. O'Brien 1967, 100 n. 11. I am generally inclined to support Weiss's view, but I cannot elaborate this point further in this paper.

<sup>11</sup> χρῆ μὲν δὴ τὸν μῦθον ἀπηλεγέως ἀποειπεῖν [...] ἐχθρὸς γάρ μοι κείνος ὅμως Αἰῖαο πύλησιν/ ὅς χ' ἔτερον μὲν κεύθη ἐνὶ φρεσίν, ἄλλο δὲ εἶπη, 365a2–b1. When Hippias quotes Achilles' words to Odysseus at *Il.* 9.308–13, he omits 311 and slightly alters 310 and 314. Labarbe (1949, 51–2) holds that the variations of the text reflect a 4<sup>th</sup>-cent. text of Homer: "Reste la première hypothèse: Platon ne connaissait pas le vers. Elle a de sérieuses chances d'être correcte". However, Phillips (1987, 23) claims that these variations misrepresent the intention of the Homeric Achilles, while Blondell (1992, 144 n. 60) agrees with Brennan's suggestion (1987, 24–5) that they show the weakness of Hippias' memory and serve to lay greater stress on intentional action.

<sup>12</sup> Hoerber (1962, 124–5) notes that the word πολυτροπος is the adjective Homer employs to describe Odysseus in the first line of the *Odyssey* (cf. *Od.* 10.330), where it means "much-travelled", "much-wandering". However, the scholar observes that the adjective may be ambiguous, in that it appears in Greek literature also in the sense of "crafty, shifty, clever, versatile", cf. O'Brien 1967, 97; Blondell 1992, 144; Lampert 2002, 232 n. 2. Hoerber concludes that it is the latter

According to the sophist's opinion, πολύτροπος is directly correlated with false man (ψευδής) and constitutes a main characteristic of Odysseus'.<sup>13</sup> On the contrary, Achilles is presented as the model of true and honest man.<sup>14</sup> Combining Hippias' previous argument, based on which Achilles is a character shaped by Homer in order to become the model of the best man (ἄριστος ἀνὴρ, 364c5), one can conclude that, for the sophist, truth and honesty are integral parts of the term "good man", thus certifying the placement of the textual terms in the following uniform equation basis: the best man = the most true and honest. For the needs of his dialectic, Socrates clarifies the proposed semantic correlation between πολύτροπος and ψευδής, at the same time highlighting the definite disjunction suggested by Hippias' interpretation of Homer's poetic craftsmanship: namely that between the true man (ἀληθής) and the false man (ψευδής).<sup>15</sup>

#### THE SAME MAN IS BOTH TRUE AND FALSE (365d-369b)

The Socratic elenchus underscores their inability to verify the real plan lying behind the composition of the Homeric epics.<sup>16</sup> Therefore, he places Hippias in the position of the Homeric representative and brings the opinion to which the sophist arrived (about the disjunction between the true man and the false) to the forefront of his elenchus, attempting to

meaning which the versatile Hippias assumes for πολύτροπος, by equating πολύτροπος with ψευδής (365b). Moreover, Weiss (1981, 289) does not accept Muhlern's suggestion (1968, 283–8) that the word τρόπος contained in πολύτροπος signifies the typical behaviour of a person, the way he is, his character. She stresses that although it contains the word τρόπος, πολύτροπος is itself not a *tropos*-term but rather a *dunamis*-term; "it does not signify a person's typical behaviour but rather an ability or capacity to behave a certain way". For an elaborate discussion of the idea that Antisthenes is one of Plato's targets here, see e.g. Raeder 1905, 57; Kahn 1996, 121 ff.

<sup>13</sup> Vlastos (1991, 276) claims that though ψευδής can mean "liar" and does so in many contexts, it need not-it does not always do so. For example (at 276 n. 130), a false statement need not be a lying one, i.e. intended to be thought true, or a person making false statements need not intend them to be thought true. He therefore concludes that "throughout the dialogue Socrates uses ψευδής to mean not someone whose character it is to speak falsehoods but only someone who has the *ability* to do so if he so chooses". Vlastos's proposal aims to prove that Socrates is absolved of any intention to deceive. For Blundell (1992, 144), however, it is clear from the Homeric quotation that Hippias does mean to characterise Odysseus as a liar.

<sup>14</sup> "Ἠκιστὰ γε [...] ἀλλ' ἀπλοῦστατος καὶ ἀληθέστατος, 364e7–8; ὡς ὁ μὲν Ἀχιλλεὺς εἶη ἀληθής τε καὶ ἀπλοῦς, ὁ δὲ Ὀδυσσεὺς πολύτροπός τε καὶ ψευδής, 365b4–5. Weiss (2006, 125) notes that the word ἀπλοῦς has a range of meaning as broad as that of πολύτροπος; it is often translated "simple", but it can be taken to mean "either something like 'hapless', the opposite of πολύτροπος as 'resourceful', or something like 'artless', the opposite of πολύτροπος as 'wily'". Cf. Ovink 1931, 149.

<sup>15</sup> Ἐδόκει [...] Ὀμήρω ἕτερος μὲν εἶναι ἀνὴρ ἀληθής, ἕτερος δὲ ψευδής, ἀλλ' οὐχ ὁ αὐτός, 365c3–4.

<sup>16</sup> ἀδύνατον ἐπανερέσθαι τί ποτε νοῶν ταῦτα ἐποίησεν τὰ ἔπη, 365d1. Cf. *Ion* 530c-d; *Protagoras* 347e; Friedländer 1964, 137; Blundell 1992, 145.

extract at a first stage the definition that the sophist has to propose for the false man (ψευδής). It is particularly interesting to record the steps of the Socratic inductive reasoning by focusing on Hippias' admissions.

### 1<sup>st</sup> part of the reasoning (H)

Hippias' admissions:

H<sub>1</sub>. False men are able (δυνατοί) – among others – to deceive people (365d7–8).

H<sub>2</sub>. False men are powerful and – based on his previous admission – wily (πολύτροποι) (365e1–2).

H<sub>3</sub>. False men are powerful and wily due to cunning and some kind of intelligence (φρόνησις) (365e2–5). In this way, Hippias attributes some kind of intelligence to wily men.<sup>17</sup>

H<sub>4</sub>. False men, as intelligent (φρόνιμοι), know the content of their actions and, for these reasons, they do ill (κακουργοῦσι) (365e5–9). It is worth noting that this idea recalls *Crito* 44d6, where those that are capable of the greatest evil (τὰ μέγιστα κακά) are also capable of the greatest good (ἀγαθὰ τὰ μέγιστα) (44d6–8).

H<sub>5</sub>. False men, as men who know the content of their actions and choose to do ill, namely to deceive, are wise (σοφοί) in deception, wise in doing ill (365e9–11).

From the first part of the reasoning (H), Socrates draws the following conclusion: false men are powerful (δυνατοί) and intelligent (φρόνιμοι), knowing (ἐπιστήμονες) and wise (σοφοί) in those things in which they are false (366a2–4).

### 2<sup>nd</sup> part of the reasoning (Ha)

Hippias' admissions:

Ha<sub>1</sub>. (Already from section I) False men and true are not identical: therefore, they are different and quite opposite from each other (366a5–6, cf. 365c3–4). This opinion involves – from this initial admission of Ha<sub>1</sub> –

<sup>17</sup> Weiss 1981, 292 argues that “the difference between the positions of Socrates and Hippias is not the difference between *tropos*-concepts and *dunamis*-concepts, between terms indicating typical behaviour and terms indicating skill, but rather the difference between two kinds of *dunamis*-concept, one of which is neutral and the other of which is negative”. Thus, she concludes that by introducing ψευδής as a synonym for πολύτροπος, Hippias was not substituting a *tropos*-adjective for a *dunamis*-adjective; instead, he was supplying the δύναμις of ὁ ψευδής with a particular content, a content which he thought negatively coloured the δύναμις itself.

that true men are neither powerful nor intelligent nor knowing nor wise in those things in which they are true.

Ha<sub>2</sub>. Clarifying the conclusion of H and with the aid of Ha<sub>1</sub>: the idea that false men, separated from true men, are powerful and wise in those things in which they are false, involves that, if they wish, they are able to be false. At this point, an alternative verb-expression is used instead of “to be able to deceive” (δυνατοὶ ἐξαπατᾶν), which he used previously at a parallel equation with “to do ill” (κακουργεῖν). The expression “to be able to speak falsely” (δυνατοὶ ψεύδεσθαι) combined with the notion of “will” (βούλησις) forms the expression “to be able, if they wish, to speak falsely” (λέγεις δυνατοὺς εἶναι ψεύδεσθαι ἐὰν βούλωνται, 366b2–3). In his interpretation, Hippias equates the terms “able, powerful” (δυνατοὶ) and “wise” (σοφοί), placing particular emphasis on δύναμις and not on σοφία.

From the second part of the reasoning (Ha), Socrates draws the following conclusion: the false are those who are wise and powerful in respect to speaking falsely (366b4–5).<sup>18</sup> The reversal of terms, from δυνατοὶ καὶ σοφοὶ (366a7, 366b1) to σοφοὶ τε καὶ δυνατοὶ (366b5), highlights the fundamental Socratic attitude towards knowledge. While, for Hippias, the main characteristic of ψευδής is the ability (δύναμις), whenever he wishes, to handle the knowledge of speaking falsely with the aim of speaking falsely (δυνατοὶ καὶ σοφοὶ ψεύδεσθαι), for Socrates, the knowledge of speaking falsely defines the ability to speak falsely (σοφοὶ καὶ δυνατοὶ ψεύδεσθαι): knowledge makes someone powerful, capable of performing specific actions. However, the reversal of the above terms requires the definition of δυνατός, so that the semantic background of the δύναμις defined by the knowledge of speaking falsely can be specified. In this way, Socrates reaches, together with Hippias, the definition of δυνατός.

Δυνατός is someone that can do what he wishes when he wishes<sup>19</sup>; therefore, δύναμις is the power of doing what one wishes when one wishes. Socrates recalls Ha<sub>2</sub> (ψευδεῖς = λέγεις δυνατοὺς εἶναι ψεύδεσθαι ἐὰν βούλωνται) and the use of the verb “wish” (βούλομαι) by Hippias. However, the two interlocutors interpret the definition of δυνατός in different ways with very

<sup>18</sup> Mulhern (1968, 286) observes that ψευδής is reduced from the status of a *tropos*-adjective to that of a mere *dunamis*-adjective at 366b4–5. Weiss (1981, 289), however, goes further in saying that from that point on, the dialogue gives not the slightest indication that Socrates in any way regrets this. Unlike Mulhern, she claims that Socrates ceases to ask questions of definitions and proceeds immediately to employ the *dunamis*-sense of ψευδής in his illustrations. Based on this reasoning, the conclusion retains the *dunamis*-sense of ἀληθής and ψευδής: the man skilled at speaking truthfully and the man skilled at speaking falsely are the same man. Thus the paradox vanishes, cf. Hoerber 1962, 126.

<sup>19</sup> Δυνατός δέ γ' ἐστὶν ἕκαστος ἄρα, ὃς ἂν ποιῇ τότε ὃ ἂν βούληται, ὅταν βούληται, 366b7–c1.

different ideological nuances: understanding will (βούλησις) as a precondition of δύναμις (whenever I wish to speak falsely, or, in general, to do what I wish, I can use the necessary cognitive means and do it), Hippias highlights his faith in the manipulation of knowledge (σοφία) with the only goal of δύναμις. On the other hand, applying the definition of δυνατός in the carefully placed and suggestively presented Socratic opinion, one can note that, for Socrates, the knowledge (σοφία) of speaking falsely, which defines the ability (δύναμις) to speak falsely, finally defines the ability to perform the false speaking, or, in general, to do what one wishes whenever he wishes.<sup>20</sup> Essentially, the real question that has been raised by now from the discussion is the following: if my will (βούλησις) defines my ability (δύναμις) (which both interlocutors seem to accept), what factor defines the will? The Socratic reply lies at the heart of the dialogue: knowledge (σοφία) predetermines the will (βούλησις) and, therefore, the ability (δύναμις) to do something, which refers to the wider philosophical question of whether I know what I really wish and what benefits me (prudential benefit),<sup>21</sup> namely a matter of virtue evaluation. The passage portrays most vigorously the distance that separates the two interlocutors, a distance created by two semantically different approaches to the terms σοφία, βούλησις and δύναμις and the relationships among them, which are attributed to two diametrically opposed assessments of the virtues that one must set as a priority in their lives: for Hippias, the will to achieve false speaking originates from the assessment of (the deed and) the outcome of the deed of false speaking as good, and activates the ability to do this through the proper conception and treatment of the cognitive means necessary to achieve this goal.<sup>22</sup> However, the reversal of terms attempted by Socrates redefines the functional value and prioritisation of knowledge (σοφία) in human life. For Socrates, the will (βούλησις) to achieve false speaking originates from the knowledge that the deed of false speaking is going to produce good<sup>23</sup>: the reasonable – based on knowledge – assessment of performing a good thing is going to activate the ability for its performance. What is suggested in the passage is that the previous identification of the terms “deceive” (ἐξαπατᾶν), “speak falsely” (ψεύδεσθαι) and “do ill” (κακουργοῦσι), as well as the special meaning they take under the light of their examination as identical terms, lead to the conclusion that

<sup>20</sup> But does anyone wish to speak falsely (ψεύδεσθαι) or to do ill (κακουργεῖν)?

<sup>21</sup> Cf. Vlastos 1991, 279 ff.; Kahn 1996, 117.

<sup>22</sup> Socrates correlates will (βούλησις) with knowledge (σοφία), approaching differently the former and the latter, while Hippias understands knowledge under different terms.

<sup>23</sup> This highlights the principle attributed to Socrates that no one errs willingly (ἐκῶν): one acts ἐκῶν when he knows that what he does produces a good outcome.

the actions these verbs describe cannot constitute the object of someone's *will* (since this is prohibited by his σοφία), so that they can be transformed into *ability* to perform the respective deed. For Hippias, σοφία is a set of individual cognitive means and methods, which are defined by the strict and indiscriminate application of the relationship between will (βούλησις) and ability (δύναμις); on the other hand, for Socrates, it is directly related to the wider issue of the knowledge of good and evil.

The above differentiation of terms and meanings is going to become clearer through the third part of the reasoning, in which Socrates resorts to one of the most typical features of his elenchus, namely that of craft analogy: for the needs of the reasoning, he re-introduces the term ἄριστος (the best man), which Hippias himself used at the beginning of the dialogue (364c5), attributing truth and honesty to it as necessary features (365b4). In this way, he aims to unite knowledge (σοφία) with virtue (ἀρετή). One should recall here that Hippias originally (364c5–7) attributed three different characteristics, ἄριστος (the best man), σοφώτατος (the wisest) and πολυτροπώτατος (the wiliest), to three characters, Achilles, Nestor and Odysseus respectively: Socrates' aim is to show that these three characteristics can essentially stem only from one person. The true man (ἀληθής) and the false (ψευδής) are actually the same: the good man (ἀγαθός), and the good man is the wise man (σοφός).

### 3<sup>rd</sup> part of the reasoning (Hb)

Hippias' admissions:

Hb<sub>1</sub>. Hippias' experience in the art of calculating (λογιστική) makes him able (δυνατός), if he wishes (βούλησις), to tell the truth about it, without any intention to deceive, giving the correct answer in matters of calculation, faster and more effectively than anyone (speed of response, effectiveness, success, 366c5–d). In other words, the cognitive, fast and effective performance of the deed related to the particular art is linked to the truth and unavoidably leads to success. In this way, the union of knowledge (σοφία) with effectiveness and truth is achieved.

Hb<sub>2</sub>. The reason why Hippias gives the correct-true answer in calculation issues faster than anyone is because he outmatches everyone with regard to his ability (δύναμις) and knowledge (σοφία) in the sector of calculating.

Hb<sub>3</sub>. Being most able/powerful (δυνατώτατος) and wisest (σοφώτατος) in a particular art entails being also best (ἄριστος) in this art (366d2 ff.). What should be noted is that Plato has Socrates repeat (366d3) the reversal of terms he suggested above, a reversal that again eludes the sophist's at-

tention: unaware that he could be walking into a verbal trap, Hippias in reality consents to the conclusion “the one who is wisest and most powerful in a particular art is also best in this art, most able to tell the truth about matters related to this art”, while he has apparently consented to the view “the one who is most powerful and wisest in a particular art is also best in this art, most able to tell the truth about matters related to this art”. The careful study of the text shows that the reversal of terms does not change the outcome of the reasoning: however, based on the aforementioned unfolding of my reasoning, the reversal aims at presenting Socrates’ attempt to place knowledge (σοφία) in the centre of interest. In this way, he seeks to achieve the union of knowledge with virtue (ἀρετή) and establish the idea “virtue is knowledge”. He also dictates the opinion that ignorance is evil.

Hb<sub>4</sub>. The validity of the opinion that “the one who is wisest and most powerful in a particular art is also best in this art, most able to tell the truth about matters related to this craft” raises the issue of who is most able to tell falsehoods about it.

Hb<sub>5</sub>. Only the wise man (σοφός) in respect to calculation is able<sup>24</sup> to express, if he wishes (the precondition is that he wishes), an erroneous opinion by speaking falsely (ψεύδεσθαι) in matters of calculation; the ignorant of calculation is actually weak (366e3–367a5).

From the third part of the reasoning (Hb), Socrates draws the following conclusion: Hippias, as wise (σοφός) in calculating (λογιστική), was proven to represent in the same person the one who is most able (δυνατώτατος) to speak truly and falsely about calculations; and this person, as he stressed

<sup>24</sup> It is worth noting the use of the potential optative in the passage, combined with the conditional participle βουλόμενος. The conditional element in βουλόμενος essentially raises the question: can anyone ever wish (βούλησις) what is bad? At first glance, the answer seems positive: only if he has no knowledge, because knowledge pushes us towards what is good, while ignorance towards what is bad. However, *Gorgias* 466a–468d teaches us that humans wish (βούλησις) the things that are good. Thus all voluntary action is aimed at the presumed good of the agent. On the contrary, involuntary actions are those which result in harm for the agent; in such cases, one does not do whatever he wishes (βούλησις), but only whatever seems good to him (δόξα). But here another question arises: should we resort to *Gorgias*’ teachings in order to interpret Plato’s elaboration on the notion of βούλησις in the *Lesser Hippias*? The answer is partly yes, partly no. Undoubtedly, the distinction between doing what I wish and doing what seems good to me plays a dominant role in the *Gorgias*. However, bearing this distinction in mind, one can observe that it is not elaborated here in any detail. In fact, Plato allows the ignorant to wish (βούλησις) to tell falsehoods (367a2). As we shall see, Plato’s treatment of βούλησις in the *Lesser Hippias*, though probably an earlier one than that of the *Gorgias*, is closely akin to it. At any rate, as is evident from what has been deduced from the text, a necessary condition for not wishing bad things is the attempt to acquire the knowledge of good. The craft analogy aims to show that what applies to the field of crafts can also apply to the field of ethics.

above (Hb<sub>3</sub>), is the one who is good (ἀγαθός) in respect to calculations. Consequently, being wise in calculations entails being good at them, namely most able to speak truly and falsely about them. This leads naturally to the identification of knowledge (σοφία) with virtue (ἀρετή); Socrates establishes the dominance of σοφία.

As a result, the same man is both true (ἀληθής) and false (ψευδής), so that an evaluative type of comparison (ἀμεινών) between the two cannot take place.<sup>25</sup> The application of this principle in all sciences (ἐπιστήμαι) and crafts (τέχναι)<sup>26</sup> proves that it has virtually the same validity<sup>27</sup>: the one who is wise (σοφός) in a particular craft, namely good (ἀγαθός) at it, is able (δυνατός) to speak both truly and falsely about matters related to it; but the ignorant (ἄμαθής) of a craft is actually bad (κακός)<sup>28</sup> at it and unable to speak both truth and falsehood about it, unable to be both true and false. This view dictates that, even when the ignorant man wishes (βούλησις) to speak one way or the other, he is unable to achieve what he wishes due to lack of knowledge. Wishing to speak falsely, he quite often involuntarily (ἄκων) tells the truth by accident, due to ignorance (cf. 367a2–3). By contrast, the wise man is always able to speak both truly and falsely, namely to voluntarily (ἐκῶν) achieve what he wishes when he wishes, through knowledge. This means that knowledge activates ability, power (δύναμις); but ignorance does not activate ability, even if it has managed to mislead the will (βούλησις). But what does misleading the will mean? It involves lacking the guidance of knowledge, and thereby lacking the ability to exercise reasonable judgement in evaluating some things as good. Therefore, two levels of βούλησις emerge: (a) the one that has been defined by knowledge and activates ability; in other words, the one that has been defined by knowledge always leads to the production of a good result, (b) the one that has been influenced by

<sup>25</sup> In this way, Hippias' original argument, according to which Achilles is better than Odysseus under the criterion of truth and honesty, is invalidated.

<sup>26</sup> Socrates' conversation with Hippias contributes to this, since the latter is "the wisest of men in the largest number of arts" (πλειστάς τέχνας πάντων σοφώτατος [...] ἀνθρώπων, 368b2–3) and "surpasses the rest in knowledge [...]" (ἐπιστήμων [...] διαφερόντως τῶν ἄλλων, 368d3–4). As regards Hippias' "much-learning" (πολυμαθία), Hoerber (1962, 124), after recording Plato's negative judgment on πολυμαθία in *Phaedrus* 275a-b and *Laws* 811b, 819a, goes on to say that "to Plato excessive versatility is conducive to confusion. It is no wonder, then, that in the *Lesser Hippias* [...] one of the main threads which runs throughout the treatise is confusion". Blondell (2002, 142), however, claims that Socrates here "implies that breadth of knowledge has its own value, if properly used and placed within the hierarchy of values established by dialectic".

<sup>27</sup> It is worth noting that in passage 368e5–369a1 (ἐν ἧτινι βούλει σοφία τοῦτο σκέψαι ἢ πανουργία ἢ ὅποιον χείρες ὀνομάζων: "examine this in any sort of wisdom you wish – or in any cunning or whatever name you like"), the terms σοφία and πανουργία appearing to be used interchangeably recall the earlier connection suggested by Hippias between πολῦτροπος and πανούργος, thus pointing to the identification of the true man with the false.

<sup>28</sup> Essentially, he implies that he is bad (κακός) at it because he is ignorant of it.

ignorance (unreflective acceptance of some things as good), which finally results in weakness.<sup>29</sup> Linking knowledge to virtue, Socrates argues that the only way for someone to be effective and powerful is knowledge. The identification of virtue with knowledge, and the activation of ability in the field of sciences-crafts lead to the formation of an unavoidable logical necessity that safely brings about the wished-for good outcome.

<sup>29</sup> Friedländer (1964, 140) stresses that *Gorgias* 466dff. clarifies the distinction between genuine willing and arbitrary inclination (βούλομαι-δοκεῖ μοι): a true act of the will always aims at the good (cf. O'Brien 1967, 105 n.15). Following this line of thought, the scholar concludes that only Socratic deception "willing" the good is power. Eventually, Hippias' claim cannot be valid any longer; the same person is both true and false. Blundell (1992, 146) says that in *Metaphysics* Δ.29.1025a6–13, Aristotle criticizes this argument as fallacious, especially for its equivocation on ψευδής as a capacity and as a disposition which gives rise to intentional action. She concludes (at 152) that the confusion of capacity with disposition serves to conflate Hippias with the figure of Odysseus. Generally speaking, Friedländer (1964, 139) observes that Hippias and Socrates mean quite different things by the word ψευδής: Hippias means a false person deriving pleasure or advantage from his deception, while Socrates "means a person who deceives in a specific situation but can just as well tell the truth, and who, as a man of knowledge, will use the one or the other as a means to achieve his end, 'the good'". For Muhlern (1968, 286), the paradoxical conclusion that "the same man is both true and false" "depends throughout upon the failure to dissociate δύναμις-concepts from τρόπος-concepts. In each of the cases of technical knowledge, the δύναμις supposed to be conferred by its appropriate σοφία – arithmetical, geometrical, or astronomical – is taken at one time for a δύναμις, at the next for a τρόπος". Against those who charge the *Lesser Hippias* with patent equivocation and abuses of language (see, for example, Hoerber 1962, Sprague 1962, Muhlern 1968), Weiss (1981, 288, 288 n. 6, 290) attempts to defend both the validity of the argument and the truth of the conclusion by claiming that the argument contains only *dunamis*-terms (cf. also Weiss 2006, 121–4, 129–30, 137–8). Thus neither Socrates nor Hippias is to be accused of equivocation. Waterfield (1987, 270) criticises Weiss's account of the validity of the argument and goes further in saying that if the present argument had been couched entirely in terms of ability, then the conclusion would be that the person with the ability to lie is better than the person who is unable to lie. But "the conclusion is meant to be more radical than that: it is that someone who deliberately *exercises* his talent for deceit is better than one who does not" (cf. Zembyat 1989, 52–8). Such regular deceit is something as immoral and unacceptable as the final conclusion of the dialogue. Waterfield concludes that Hippias' disapproving attitude towards deceit "reflects not just common Greek morality, but Plato's views too; the conclusion is unacceptable all round". Skouteropoulos (1995, 20) notes that, from this point on (namely, the point of identification of the true man with the false), the two terms, ἀληθής and ψευδής, are signified in two ways: ἀληθής sometimes signifies the truthful, straight, honest man (A<sub>1</sub>) and, other times, the man whose decisions reflect the way things are (person speaking the truth) (A<sub>2</sub>); on the other hand, ψευδής sometimes signifies the untruthful and dishonest man (Ψ<sub>1</sub>) and, other times, the man whose decisions are not identified with the truth (Ψ<sub>2</sub>). The scholar believes that each of them uses the terms differently: Hippias points to A<sub>1</sub> and Ψ<sub>1</sub>, which define an ethical parameter, forming the pair "honest-dishonest", which has ethical connotations, while Socrates points to A<sub>2</sub>-Ψ<sub>2</sub>, which has a basically intellectualistic parameter and mainly ethically indifferent, forming the ethically indifferent pair "speaking the truth-not speaking the truth". Finally, Kahn (1996, 115) follows those who suggested that the fallacy of the argument is located in the move from *is able to lie to is a liar*. He claims that Hippias "has been deceived by Socrates' repeated claim that the capacity to lie is a necessary condition for being a liar (366b, 367b2–5); he is thus led to suppose that it must be a sufficient condition as well". Kahn adds (at 116) that Plato is aware of the fallacy here; in fact, he repeatedly alludes to the idea that "to be a liar requires not only the capacity to lie but also the will, desire, or intention to do so". The scholar stresses that in Aristotelian terms "the fallacy lies in collapsing the distinction between an open capacity like art or science (a *dunamis*, *technē*, or *epistēmē*) and a fixed disposition or character trait (*hexis*)".

INTERLUDE: DIALECTIC AND LITERATURE (369b–373c).  
THE MEANING OF ἘΚΩΝ IN RELATION TO WILL

The identification of ἀληθῆς with ψευδῆς directly affects Hippias' attempt to comparatively define Achilles' and Odysseus' goodness (ἀμείνω, 363b3–4, 364c5, 365b4). The comparison falls apart due to the fact that it is based on two features that were proven identical. However, Hippias' stubbornness together with his effort to confirm his poetic specialisation outflank the conclusion of the reasoning and are tossed as a powerful attempt to restore his speech with the aim of establishing it as the "best speech" (369c7–8). Therefore, his reasoning follows the following stages:

Central thesis: Homer made Achilles better (ἀμείνων) than Odysseus and without falsehood (ἀψευδῆς), but Odysseus deceitful (δολερός), a teller of many falsehoods (πολλὰ ψευδόμενος), and worse (χειρῶν) than Achilles (369c3–5).

- i. He rebukes Socrates' attempt to interpret Homer in a way that suits him best in order to establish the view that Achilles performs actions that are not consistent with his words. Specifically, the disagreement between words and deeds<sup>30</sup> Socrates refers to concerns the fact that, while Achilles advertises his departure, he does not prepare it, thus putting the truth of his words at risk (cf. 370d5–6). Before the challenge raised by the Socratic question about how the degree of goodness of both Achilles and Socrates is to be defined,<sup>31</sup> Hippias introduces the concepts of "purposefulness" (or, by extension, "treachery", ἐπιβουλή) and "voluntariness" (ἐκῶν) in relation to speaking falsely (ψεύδεσθαι), aiming at the differentiation of speaking falsely in the case of the two characters: Achilles speaks falsely not on purpose (ἐξ ἐπιβουλής) but involuntarily (ἄκων), forced by the misfortune of the army to stay; on the contrary, Odysseus speaks falsely willingly (ἐκῶν) and by design (ἐξ ἐπιβουλής) (370e5–9).
- ii. Socrates' objection stems from the contradictory content of the words Achilles addresses to Odysseus, to whom he talks about his departure,

<sup>30</sup> Cf. Blondell 2002, 130.

<sup>31</sup> ἀπορῶν ὁπότερος τοῦτον τοῖν ἀνδροῖν ἀμείνων πεποιήται τῷ ποιητῆι, καὶ ἡγούμενος ἀμφοτέρω ἀρίστου εἶναι καὶ δύσκριτον ὁπότερος ἀμείνων εἴη καὶ περὶ ψεύδους καὶ ἀληθείας καὶ τῆς ἄλλης ἀρετῆς· ἀμφοτέρω γὰρ καὶ κατὰ τοῦτο παραπλησίω ἔστόν, 370d7–e4 ("because I am perplexed as to which of the two men is portrayed as better by the poet, and because I believe both are extremely good, and it is hard to decide which of the two is better, concerning falsehood and truth and the rest of virtue; for both men are in fact nearly equal in this matter"). Hobbs (2000, 195 ff.) bases her interpretation on this passage. She suggests that for Socrates, Achilles and Odysseus represent two different types of heroism and *andreia*: each hero (at 198) "embodies a particular version of *andreia* which requires considerable purification if it is to be of use to Plato's educational project".

and to Ajax, to whom he talks about his stay. From this point of view, Achilles has bad intentions, a treacherous goal and a carefully prepared plan to deceive, a plan which is superior to that of Odysseus': Homer made him a cheat and plotter of deception.<sup>32</sup> Socrates' disagreement makes Hippias redefine Achilles' motives: goodwill (εὐνοία)<sup>33</sup> induces Achilles to change his words depending on the circumstance. On the contrary, whenever Odysseus speaks, truly or falsely, he always speaks with design (ἐπιβουλεύσας, 371e3). Up to this point, one can discern two pairs of terms separated from each other: on the one hand, the pair of terms ἐκῶν-ἐπιβουλή and, on the other hand, the pair ἄκων-εὐνοία.

- iii. Combining the previous conclusion drawn at the end of section II, namely that "the one who is wise (σοφός) in a particular craft, namely good (ἀγαθός) at it, is able (δυνατός) to speak both truly and falsely about matters related to it", and premise ii ("whenever Odysseus speaks, truly or falsely, he always speaks with design"), Socrates concludes in favour of Odysseus: Odysseus is better (ἀμείνων) than Achilles because those who voluntarily speak falsely (οἱ ἐκόντες ψευδόμενοι) were found to be better than those who do so involuntarily (ἄκοντες) (371e7–8). Of course, those who speak falsely voluntarily, as shown previously, are also able to speak truly voluntarily; thus Socrates points once again to the close connection between ἐκῶν and knowledge on the one hand, and ἄκων and ignorance on the other. Nevertheless, Hippias declares his absolute disagreement with the aforementioned conclusion: correlating speaking falsely (ψεύδεσθαι) with doing ill, he deems it unreasonable to believe that those who voluntarily do wrong and voluntarily plot to do evils (οἱ ἐκόντες ἀδικοῦντες, ἐπιβουλεύσαντες καὶ κακὰ ἐργασάμενοι) could be better than those who do so involuntarily: wrongs done involuntarily are attributed to ignorance, can be forgiven and can also count as a mitigating circumstance, whereas the laws are much more severe towards those who do them voluntarily (371e9–372a5). Hippias pushes the discussion into a new direction by shifting focus from the realm of crafts to moral issues. At first glance, his view on voluntariness (ἐκῶν) resembles the way Socrates treats it. However, there is a considerable difference between the two views. Hippias interprets ἐκῶν in terms of knowledge accompanied by bad intention manifesting itself in plotting evils, while ἄκων in terms of ignorance resulting inevitably in doing wrong or con-

<sup>32</sup> Cf. ἐξ ἐπιβουλῆς φῆς τὸν Ἀχιλλεῖα ψεύδεσθαι, 371a2–3; οὕτω γόης καὶ ἐπιβουλος πρὸς τῇ ἀλαζονείᾳ, ὡς πεποίηκεν Ὀμηρος, 371a3–4; καὶ αὐτοῦ αὐτῷ τούτῳ τῷ τεχνάζειν τε καὶ ψεύδεσθαι περιέσεσθαι, 371d6–7.

<sup>33</sup> Reading εὐνοίας in 371e1.

triving evils. But Socrates, as we have shown above, treats ἐκὼν in terms of knowledge defining the will, and activating the power, to produce only good things. It only remains to show how what applies to the realm of crafts and sciences applies also to the realm of ethics.

Hippias' passionate belief in the truth of his words is moderated by Socrates' avowal of ignorance, which virtually amounts to a justification of his dialectic as knowledge-centred activity aiming at the good.<sup>34</sup> Guided by the outcome of the previous reasoning, Socrates embraced the view that those who harm people and do wrong and speak falsely and deceive and err voluntarily are better than those who do so involuntarily. However, in professing ignorance, he makes it obvious that he pursues the greatest good that the sophist can offer him, his wisdom in the matter in hand, as a cure for his soul.<sup>35</sup>

#### ONLY THE GOOD MAN ERRS VOLUNTARILY (373c–376c)

##### Reasoning steps

The last part of the dialogue gives an example of inductive reasoning, in which Socrates seeks to find a satisfactory solution to the issue concerning whether those who err voluntarily or those who err involuntarily are better. The various steps of the reasoning process which covers a wide range of activities can be classified as follows:

$S_1$ – $S_7$ : *race and running*

$S_1$ . One who runs well and successfully (ὁ εὖ θέων) is a good runner (ἀγαθός), while one who runs badly (ὁ κακῶς) is a bad one (κακός) (373c9–d2). The

<sup>34</sup> κινδυνεύω ἐν μόνον ἔχειν τοῦτο ἀγαθόν [...] τῶν μὲν γὰρ πραγμάτων ἢ ἔχει ἔσφαλμαι, καὶ οὐκ οἶδ' ὅπη ἐστὶ [...] φαίνομαι οὐδὲν εἰδώς [...] καίτοι τί μείζον ἀμαθίας τεκμηρίον ἢ ἐπειδὴν τις σοφοῖς ἀνδράσι διαφέρηται; ἐν δὲ τοῦτο θαυμάσιον ἔχω ἀγαθόν, ὃ με σώζει· οὐ γὰρ αἰσχύνομαι μανθάνων, ἀλλὰ πυνθάνομαι καὶ ἐρωτῶ, 372b1–c4. Cf. also *Apology* 38a2, where he says that the greatest good for a human being is to converse about virtue.

<sup>35</sup> Cf. also *Gorgias* 458a7, where Socrates counts being refuted a greater good, insofar as it is a greater good for oneself to be delivered from the worst thing there is (namely, false belief about "the greatest things", τὰ μέγιστα) than to deliver someone else from it. It is worth noting the bright irony found in 373b4–9 (cf. also Friedländer 1964, 142): Socrates accepts Hippias' accusation that he "always makes confusion in arguments, and seems to argue unfairly (ὡς περ κακουργοῦντι)", however he does so out of ignorance and, therefore, involuntarily; thus he, according to Hippias' account, deserves forgiveness. It seems that Socrates ironically criticizes Hippias' view on the relationship between ἐκὼν and knowledge, with the purpose of establishing his own theory about it by shedding light on the deep connection between the two terms.

term “good” (ἀγαθός) refers to the proper performance of running, as well as to its successful outcome.

- S<sub>2</sub>. One who runs fast runs well and successfully, while one who runs slowly (ὁ βραδέως θέων) runs badly and unsuccessfully (373d3).
- S<sub>3</sub>. In a race, therefore, and in running, quickness is good (ἀγαθόν) but slowness is bad (κακόν) (373d4–5). This means that quickness in running involves performing the act of running quickly (quickness in running process), as well as reaching the destination quickly and first (effectiveness).
- S<sub>4</sub>. One who runs slowly voluntarily (ὁ ἐκὼν βραδέως θέων) is a better runner (ἀμείνων δρομεύς) than one who does so involuntarily (ὁ ἄκων). Due to S<sub>3</sub>, S<sub>4</sub> becomes: one who voluntarily runs slowly, namely badly, is a better runner than one who involuntarily runs slowly, namely badly (S<sub>4a</sub>). This view recalls the previous one: the one who is wise in a particular craft, namely good at it, is able to speak both truly and falsely about matters related to it. But the re-introduction of ἐκὼν into the reasoning has an additional role here, namely to remind readers of the crucial difference between Socrates’ and Hippias’ conceptions of voluntariness (ἐκὼν). In view of this difference, one cannot fail to notice that this reasoning amounts to Socrates’ final attempt to convince Hippias of the indissoluble connection between ἐκὼν and knowledge directed exclusively to the production of good things. Up to now, both interlocutors accept that “one who voluntarily runs slowly, namely badly, is a better runner than one who involuntarily runs slowly, namely badly” (S<sub>4a</sub>) in fact means “one who voluntarily, namely with knowledge, runs slowly, namely badly, is a better runner than one who involuntarily, namely with lack of knowledge, runs slowly, namely badly” (S<sub>4b</sub>). But in order to clarify whether ἐκὼν is to be linked with knowledge accompanied by bad intention which manifests itself in contriving and doing evils, or it is always inextricably intertwined with knowledge directed to the good, we should let Socrates be our guide.
- S<sub>5</sub>. To run is to do something (ποιεῖν) and therefore to perform something (ἐργάζεσθαι τι) (373d7–e1). Combining the above premises and the present one:
- a) A good runner is one who runs well and successfully, namely fast (since in running, quickness is good), one who quickly performs something in a race; a<sub>1</sub>) one who voluntarily, namely with knowledge, runs slowly/ runs badly/ performs something in a race is a better runner than one who involuntarily, namely with ignorance, runs slowly/ runs badly/ performs something in a race. Due to So-

crates' delineation of the connection between ἐκὼν and good, (a) is transformed into:

- a<sub>2</sub>) A good runner is one who voluntarily, namely with knowledge, runs, which means that he runs well and successfully/ runs fast/ quickly performs something in a race. The ἐκὼν-feature of a good runner defines whether he will run fast or slowly; in other words, it defines the ability to run in one way or the other.
- b) A bad runner is one who runs badly, namely slowly (since in running, slowness is bad), one who slowly performs something in a race. And (b) becomes (b<sub>1</sub>): A bad runner is one who involuntarily, namely with ignorance, runs, which means that he runs badly/ runs slowly/ slowly performs something in a race. The ἄκων-feature of a bad runner signifies his inability to run in one way or the other.
- S<sub>6</sub>. One who runs badly performs a bad (κακόν) and shameful (αἰσχρόν) thing in a race (373e1-2).
- S<sub>7</sub>. After providing a useful reminder of the pairs (of terms) "good-ἐκὼν" and "bad-ἄκων", Socrates virtually draws the following conclusion:

A good runner is (a) one who voluntarily, namely with knowledge, runs, which means that he runs well and successfully/ runs fast/ quickly performs something in a race. More specifically, (b) he performs a good and admirable thing in a race. The end of the reasoning further clarifies that a good runner is (c) one who voluntarily, namely with knowledge, runs fast or slowly/ voluntarily performs a good and admirable or a bad and shameful thing in a race;

A bad runner is (a) one who involuntarily, namely with ignorance, runs, which means that he runs badly and unsuccessfully/ runs slowly/ slowly performs something in a race. More specifically, (b) he performs a bad and shameful thing in a race. The end of the reasoning further clarifies that a bad runner is (c) one who involuntarily, namely with ignorance, runs fast or slowly/ involuntarily performs a good and admirable or a bad and shameful thing in race.

The conclusion dictates that the main characteristic of the good runner is the voluntary element found in his act of running; this leads to the effective and admirable performance of the act of running. Besides ensuring the characterisation of a runner as good in virtue of the successful result it produces, the position of ἐκὼν in the reasoning process plays a twofold role: on the one hand, it sheds light on how knowledge before acting,<sup>36</sup> proper

<sup>36</sup> Cf. Weiss 1981, 304.

guidance (thanks to knowledge) concerning the performance of the act of running and its successful outcome are tightly linked to each other; on the other hand, it implies the exclusion of the possibility that the good runner will perform a bad and shameful thing in a race, although he has the ability – by reason of his knowledge – to do one thing (what is good and admirable) or the other (what is bad and shameful). But what prevents him from doing a bad and shameful thing in a race? Guided by the knowledge of what is good and what is bad in a race, he voluntarily chooses to do only the good.

Moreover, Socrates extends the conclusion drawn from the examination in the field of race to all aspects of the human process (374a ff.):

- a) in wrestling, one who falls down voluntarily, namely one who voluntarily performs a bad and shameful thing (since being thrown down in wrestling is bad and shameful) is a better wrestler than one who does so involuntarily;
- b) in all physical activities, the physically better is able to do both sort of things: the strong and the weak, the shameful and the admirable; therefore, one who is physically better does what is bad and shameful in respect to the body voluntarily, but one who is worse does them involuntarily;
- c) furthermore, the better body voluntarily does what is bad and shameful: it voluntarily takes shameful and bad postures aiming at its awkwardness;
- d) the better voice sings out of tune voluntarily;
- e) Hippias would choose to possess good things rather than bad ones. It should be noted that the reasoning suddenly changes focus and, from the various aspects of the human process, proceeds to the question: what do people really wish (βούλησις)? Within this framework, the Socratic principle that everyone pursues the good (*Gorgias* 468b) unfolds, eventually excluding the alternative option of evil-doing. But let us see how this takes place.
- f) Hippias would prefer to have feet which limp voluntarily (limping is vice of foot) and eyes with which one would see dully and incorrectly voluntarily (dull sight is a vice of eyes);
- g) with regard to the senses, it is worth having those which voluntarily do ill, namely perform their work ineffectively by accomplishing bad results, because they are good;
- h) those tools with which one voluntarily produces bad results are better than those with which one does so involuntarily;
- i) with regard to all animals: with an animal better in soul, one would do voluntarily the bad works of this soul;

- j) for an archer, it is better to possess a soul which voluntarily misses the mark: this soul is better in archery;
- k) in every craft and science: a soul which voluntarily performs bad things and misses the mark in a particular craft or science is better at this craft or science than one which does so involuntarily;
- l) with the better slave's soul, one would voluntarily do the bad works of this soul: and this is what one would prefer to have.

Conclusion of the reasoning (application of the above to human souls)<sup>37</sup>: everyone would wish (βούλησις) to have his own soul as good as possible; but his soul will be better if it does evil and errs voluntarily.<sup>38</sup>

The text dictates that each man wishes (βούλησις) what is good, and this is directly linked to ἐκὼν and knowledge. In the case of crafts and sciences, the knowledge of what is good and bad defines the will (βούλησις) for the good, which activates – under ordinary circumstances, cf. 366c – the ability (δύναμις) to achieve it. Under this scope, the possibility that someone will wish what is bad and, therefore, activate the ability to achieve it is excluded, thanks to the knowledge directed towards the pursuit of good; but it is included, when one is deprived of such knowledge – in that case, however, he does not act voluntarily (ἐκὼν). This is true of crafts and sciences, where a set of principles is involved in the production of an object or, generally, the accomplishment of an end. But does this also apply to the human soul? Socrates' point is not paradoxical. His view justifies the philosophical life (cf. 372a6–373a8) which represents the true aim of life, namely to make one's soul as good as possible.<sup>39</sup> This is done by engaging in dialectical discussion: through elenctic examination, an interlocutor purges the false and preserves the true beliefs about *ta megista* (“the greatest things”). By focusing on the knowledge reached through Socratic cross-examination, Plato teaches us that, in ethical matters, justice profits the man who pos-

<sup>37</sup> Cf. Friedländer 1964, 143. Muhlern (1968, 287) claims that the above premises are employed to show that one speaks of a man as being good when his parts and powers are under his control, without considering whether the acts he performs are such as one would commend under ordinary circumstances. Moreover, he adds that “since a man is good when his powers are under his control, and since the soul is one of these powers, a man is good when his soul is under his control. Thus it is better to have one's soul under control and commit evil acts, than not to have one's soul under control and still commit evil acts”. By contrast, my analysis holds that if one has his soul under control, as MUHLERN puts it, he will always – as long as it depends on him and he is not hindered by disease or other such things inevitably depriving him of his knowledge (cf. 366c) – perform good acts.

<sup>38</sup> Τί δέ; τὴν ἡμετέραν αὐτῶν οὐ βουλοίμεθ' ἂν ὡς βελτίστην ἐκτῆσθαι; Ναί. Οὐκοῦν βελτίων ἔσται, ἐὰν ἐκοῦσα κακοργῇ τε καὶ ἑξαμαρτάνῃ, ἢ ἐὰν ἄκουσα; 375c6–d2.

<sup>39</sup> Cf. *Apology* 30b; Gulley 1968, 87, 91–2; Penner 1973, 142, 147–8; Blondell 1992, 161, 164; Blondell 2002, 118.

sesses it: justice is what really benefits his soul.<sup>40</sup> This knowledge is not only prudential, as it is related to the interest of the soul, but also moral, since justice bridges the gap that separates individual from common good: it benefits both agent and patient. To sum up, as regards “the greatest things”, the knowledge reached by means of the *elenchus*, the knowledge of what is good and bad,<sup>41</sup> must distinguish and characterise the good man and the good citizen, eventually ensuring the performance of good and just deeds. The presentation of the aforementioned ideas serves as the prelude to the examination of the last part of the dialogue, through which the meaning of the dialogue will become clearer.

## Justice

Hippias bases his rejection of Socrates’ conclusion on the groundlessness of the assumption that those who voluntarily do wrong are better than those who do so involuntarily, in this way introducing the last treatment of the issue from the point of view of justice (δικαιοσύνη). Socrates’ reasoning consists of the following stages (375d7–376b7):

- J<sub>1</sub>. Justice is either some sort of power (δύναμις τις) or knowledge (ἐπιστήμη), or both.
- J<sub>2</sub>. If justice is a power of the soul, then the more powerful (δυνατωτέρα) soul is the more just (δικαιοτέρα). In fact, they had previously agreed that the more powerful soul is the better. At this point, we should recall the example of the good runner with which he started:

A good runner is (a) one who voluntarily, namely with knowledge, runs, which means that he runs well and successfully/ runs fast/ quickly performs something in a race. More specifically, (b) he performs a good and admirable thing in a race. The end of the reasoning further clarifies that a good runner is (c) one who voluntarily, namely with knowledge, runs fast or slowly/ voluntarily performs a good and admirable or a bad and shameful thing in a race.

At first glance the element of ἐκὼν makes the agent able (δύναμις) to do both. However, the knowledge of what is good activates the will (βούλησις) for the good thing and the ability (δύναμις) to acquire it. Therefore, due to the view “the more powerful soul is the better”, J<sub>1</sub> and J<sub>2</sub> are transformed into the following: if justice is a power of the soul, then the more powerful soul = the more just = the better.

<sup>40</sup> Cf. *Crito* 47d-48a; *Gorgias* 504a-505b, 512a-b; *Republic* 444c-e; Irwin 1977, 58–9; Blundell 1992, 161.

<sup>41</sup> Cf. O’Brien 1967, 96.

- J<sub>3</sub>. If justice is knowledge, then the wiser soul (ἡ σοφωτέρα ψυχή) is more just, while the more ignorant more unjust.
- J<sub>4</sub>. If justice is both, namely both power and knowledge, then the more powerful and wiser soul is more just, while the more ignorant more unjust. We should note here that, in case justice is both, Socrates does not argue that the more ignorant soul is both less powerful and more unjust; on the contrary, he only uses the term “more unjust”, presumably aiming at stripping the unjust soul of any sort of power and highlighting the importance of knowledge by restoring its value. We saw earlier that the knowledge of what is good in a particular craft or science defines the will (βούλησις) and the ability (δύναμις) to do it. The possession of such knowledge and its practical application aiming at the well-executed product of his art are what make a craftsman a good craftsman. Based on this analogy, Socrates points to the human soul. When the human, guided by the knowledge reached through Socratic cross-examination, evaluates something as bad for himself, he will not let it constitute the object of his will; although he knows it and is theoretically capable of doing it, he will not perform it precisely because he does not wish it.
- J<sub>5</sub>. As has been previously indicated, the more powerful (δυνατωτέρα) and wiser (σοφωτέρα) soul is better (ἀμείνων) and more able to do both admirable and shameful things in everything it accomplishes. Therefore, when this soul does shameful things, it does them voluntarily, by power and craft (διὰ δύναμιν καὶ τέχνην), and these things, either one or both of them, appear to be attributes of justice too.<sup>42</sup> We are left to wonder whether Socrates’ words here must be taken *cum gruno salis* or not. My suggestion is that Socrates’ point, though it may seem paradoxical, is clear enough. But in order to find the true meaning of his words, we should pay close attention to what he actually says. Therefore, the particular emphasis placed by Socrates on these two, power and knowledge, and the connection with the above highlight, although it is not explicitly stated, his belief that justice is both power and knowledge, or, much better, knowledge and power stemming from knowledge. This view along with the one stated above, that the more powerful and wiser soul is better, promotes the reasoning: the more powerful and wiser soul = better = more just. Plato implies that, as regards the human soul, justice is good, point-

<sup>42</sup> Hoerber (1962, 126 n.2) believes that the joining of δύναμις with τέχνη is another instance of loose terminology; it gives the impression that ἐπιστήμη and τέχνη are synonymous, whereas previously Socrates (368b1–2) had indicated a distinction between ἐπιστήμῃαι and τέχναι. But this does not seem to be the case here. As Weiss (1981, 297 n.37) puts it, τέχνη substitutes for ἐπιστήμη here, cf. Weiss 2006, 135 n.27.

ing, at the same time, to the philosophical life: the knowledge of what is good for the human soul dictates that we behave justly towards others. In analogy to the aforementioned examples, in which it was examined in each case what good is (for example, in a race, quickness is good, and this is actually what a good runner knows), Socrates' reasoning here implies that, when it comes to the field of ethics, justice is good, beneficial to the human soul; and this is what a good man knows.

- J<sub>6</sub>. To do injustice is to do evils, while not to do injustice is to do admirable things. Therefore, what emerges from the reasoning is that, in the case of justice, the more powerful and wiser (in justice) soul is better. Before moving to J<sub>7</sub>, let us see what will happen, if we substitute good man for good runner or good craftsman/scientist in general, as Socrates actually urges us to do. In other words, what effect does Socrates want us to see craft analogy as having? A good man (literally, good in justice) is (a) one who voluntarily, namely with knowledge, refrains from injustice, which means that he does well and successfully/ does not do injustice/ does not perform something unjustly. More specifically, (b) he performs a good and admirable thing. After further clarifying the analogy: a good man is (c) one who voluntarily, namely with knowledge, refrains from injustice or does injustice/ voluntarily performs a good and admirable or a bad and shameful thing. So far, the text allows us to draw the above parallelism between crafts/sciences and justice. But let us turn back to the reasoning and see how it reaches its end point.
- J<sub>7</sub>. The more powerful and better soul (which is the wiser one), when it does injustice, will do injustice voluntarily, but the bad soul involuntarily. It should be noted that Socrates leaves the chiasmus incomplete – one would expect to find a term denoting inability, such as ἀδυνατώτερα (more powerless, weaker), next to the term “bad” (πονηρά). He seems, then, to consider the concept of “power” less significant than (or subservient to) that of “wisdom”.
- J<sub>8</sub>. A good man (ἀγαθὸς ἀνὴρ) is one who has a good soul (ἀγαθὴ ψυχὴ), and a bad man (κακὸς ἀνὴρ) one who has a bad one (κακὴ ψυχὴ). It is in the nature of the good man to do injustice voluntarily, and of the bad man to do so involuntarily. Therefore, he who voluntarily errs and does shameful and unjust things, if indeed there is such a man, would be no other than the good man. The conclusion seems to stand in contrast to the principle attributed to Socrates that “no one errs willingly”.<sup>43</sup> How can such a *prima facie* disagreement be justified?

<sup>43</sup> Hoerber (1962, 128 n. 1) observes that the theory is found already in Plato's *Apology* (25d–26a) and extends to the *Laws* (731c, 734b, 860d), cf. *Meno* 77b–78b; *Protagoras* 345d–e, 358c–d; *Republic*

Scholars, in general, have charged the *Lesser Hippias* with: (a) weakness in argumentation resting upon craft analogy, and, subsequently, failure to distinguish between δύναμις and ἕξις; (b) patent equivocation and abuses of language. As regards (b), Weiss (1981, 299) and *passim* has argued sufficiently against those who prosecute Plato for his alleged intentional (or unintentional) equivocation.<sup>44</sup> Therefore, let us elaborate further on (a).

Hoerber (1962, 128, 128 n. 2) observes that the phrase, εἴπερ τίς ἐστιν οὗτος, should warn readers not to take seriously the puzzling propositions of the treatise.<sup>45</sup> Believing that the principal dramatic technique of the dialogue is its construction in “doublets”, he goes on to say (at 129) that these “doublets”<sup>46</sup>

seem to point the reader to a realization that a distinction must be made between two separate areas: ethics, on the one hand; and scientific technique or physical prowess, on the other. In the latter area, it is true, ἀρετή depends primarily, if not exclusively, on mental and physical natural ability; in the realm of ethics, however, ἀρετή encompasses not only training of the intellect, but also voluntary choice.<sup>47</sup>

Waterfield (1987, 267) notes that the main weakness of the craft analogy that is relevant to the *Lesser Hippias* is the following: while a craftsman achieves a result, it is

beyond the province of the craftsman simply *qua* craftsman to guarantee that the result is used, by himself or by others, for good or ill. But by definition virtue must be used well, so the analogy totters.

Taylor (1937, 88) had already noticed that knowledge of the good is the only knowledge that *cannot* be put to a wrong use, whereas every other kind of knowledge can be abused. Following this line of thought, Blundell (1992, 161) says that

justice remains, however, crucially different from other skills. As a kind of knowledge or capacity it has its own internal goals like any other craft. But unlike other skills, it cannot be used “badly” for immoral goals outside its own sphere of activity, since its internal goals are precisely those of morality.<sup>48</sup>

589c; *Timaeus* 86d–e; Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* 10.2.1172b35–1173a5; Proclus, *In Rempublicam* 2.355. For the parallel between the *Lesser Hippias* and Xenophon’s *Memorabilia* (4.2), see Calogero 1948, xii n. 2; Guthrie 1975, 197; Weiss 1981, 304 n. 55; Waterfield 1987, 269; Phillips 1989, 370; Weiss 2006, 136 n. 30.

<sup>44</sup> See, for example, Sprague 1962, 74; Muhlern 1968, 288.

<sup>45</sup> See also Taylor 1937, 87; Weiss 1981, 287 n. 2. For further discussions of the meaning of the phrase, see Sprague 1962, 76; O’Brien 1967, 104; Penner 1973, 140–1; Guthrie 1975, 197–8; Irwin 1977, 77; Müller 1979, 65, 74–5; Lampert 2002, 252–3; Weiss 2006, 140.

<sup>46</sup> Cf. O’Brien 1967, 103 n. 12.

<sup>47</sup> Cf. Friedländer 1964, 326 n. 3.

<sup>48</sup> See also Gould 1955, 43–5; O’Brien 1967, 103 and 106; Gulley 1968, 16, 85–7; Irwin 1977, 77–9; Zembaty 1989, 62–3; Vlastos 1991, 279; Allen 1996, 29; Kahn 1996, 117; Van Ackeren 2003, 54 ff.

Moreover, let us also quote Vlastos's (1991, 279) view:

[...] no reason to believe that when Plato wrote this dialogue he had himself spotted the root of trouble. What he would need for this purpose would be to identify the difference between the sense of "better" which is so conspicuous in this dialogue, the morally neutral sense of superior executive *power* or *skill*, on one hand, and that centrally and uniquely moral sense of superior *character* or *disposition* [...] This was to await Aristotle's clearer vision, which empowered him to discern how wrong it would be to define moral virtue as a power or craft, for power or craft could be used for either good or evil [...] Aristotle enriched the vocabulary of moral analysis by introducing the word *ἕξις* to designate the state of character which choose to exercise power for the right ends and resolutely declines to exercise it for the wrong ends.

Nevertheless, Socrates' use of craft analogy in the *Lesser Hippias* is designed to help us focus on good craftsman, not on craftsman in general. In the case of a good craftsman, a type of knowledge pertaining to a particular craft is possessed by a particular craftsman; this craftsman knows what he is doing and can give an account of what is good and bad in his craft. The knowledge of what is good in a particular craft defines the will (*βούλησις*) and the ability (*δύναμις*) to do the good, since it is directed towards it. In this case, the craftsman acts voluntarily (*ἐκόν*). But there are times when he is hindered by disease or that sort of thing (cf. 366c), thereby acting involuntarily. At any rate, it is only when he is guided by the knowledge of what is good in his craft and, thereby, produces a good-beneficial product that a craftsman can be a good craftsman.

This analogy gives Socrates an occasion to turn to the human soul: the more powerful, wiser, better and more just soul, the good soul of the good man, errs and does shameful and unjust things voluntarily. But the conclusion reached is at the same time invalidated. The knowledge of what is good for the soul, namely justice, defines the will (*βούλησις*) and the power (*δύναμις*) to do only the good, thus deactivating the power to do shameful and unjust things.<sup>49</sup> In this case, a man acts voluntarily (*ἐκόν*); but when he is deprived of such knowledge (cf. *Protagoras* 345b2–5),<sup>50</sup> he acts involuntarily. The analogy gradually reaches its peak: at any rate, it is only when he is guided by the knowledge of what is good for his soul and, thereby, produces good things that a man can be a good man. Plato does not need to distinguish between *δύναμις* and *ἕξις*, since *δύναμις* itself, being subordinate to the knowledge of what is good, is activated or deactivated depending on whether the agent is guided by or deprived of such knowledge.

<sup>49</sup> Cf. Friedländer 1964, 143–4; Balaban 2008.

<sup>50</sup> οὕτω καὶ ὁ μὲν ἀγαθὸς ἀνὴρ γένοιτ' ἂν ποτε καὶ κακὸς ἢ ὑπὸ χρόνου ἢ ὑπὸ πόνου ἢ ὑπὸ νόσου ἢ ὑπὸ ἄλλου τινὸς περιπτώματος – αὕτη γὰρ μόνη ἐστὶ κακὴ πράξις, ἐπιστήμης στερηθῆναι – (“In the same way the good man could on occasion also become bad, due to time or hardship or disease or some other accident – for this is the only bad practice, to be deprived of knowledge”).

However, in what way this knowledge is to be attained by human beings? Despite Hippias' final rejection of Socrates' view and the latter's profession of ignorance, the dialogue comes to a final and definite conclusion. It invalidates Hippias' apparent expertise in Homer, indicating his ignorance about the subject at issue. Besides stripping Hippias of his apparent wisdom, Plato turns his criticism towards traditional forms of education and their heirs, raising the question of what kinds of people they actually produce. The main problem lies in the fact that the traditional moral standards or values disseminated through the study of Homer are in fact uncritically accepted as desirable in themselves. They have binding force for those by whom they are accepted, but they are not accepted critically. Plato's criticism targets traditional values through their representative, underscoring his unreflective endorsement of them. Nevertheless, there is a solution to the problem, a way out of the impasse; and this solution is deeply related to the individual character of the interlocutor. One must step back, question and reflect on the moral beliefs he holds. Engaging in elenctic examination, the human gets rid of the false and keeps the right beliefs about what is good-beneficial to his soul and what is bad. Through the *elenchus*, which benefits both agent and patient (cf. *Gorgias* 458a–b), the human realizes that justice is what really benefits his soul. But justice in turn benefits both agent and patient, since it bridges the gap separating individual from common good. Plato justifies the philosophical life on the grounds that it is the only way of life worth living (cf. *Apology* 38a), aiming at making one's soul as good as possible. Thus it is entirely on the basis of this analogy from the crafts and the subsequent deactivation of wrongdoing that Socrates establishes the superiority of justice over injustice and the significance of the former for the human soul: caring for one's soul involves caring for justice.

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*Abstract.* A basic question still confronting readers of Plato's *Lesser Hippias* is how to deal with the final conclusion of the dialogue, namely that the good man does injustice voluntarily, which seems profoundly irreconcilable with the principle attributed to Socrates that "no one errs willingly". Nevertheless, if one delves deeper into the text, one will uncover further clues indicating that Socrates' point is neither paradoxical nor contradictory to the philosophical positions he sets forth in Plato's other works. On the contrary, the dialogue comes to a definite conclusion. The just man refrains from doing injustice precisely because he does not wish (βούλεσθαι) to do it. The knowledge of what is good and bad, namely of what benefits and harms the soul, activates exclusively the will for the good and, subsequently, the power to produce it.

*Keywords.* Plato; Socrates; knowledge of good and bad; justice; will; power.