BOOKSTACKS CLASSICS

Hippias Major

Plato (c. 428-348 BCE)

English EDITION

BOOKSTACKS EDITION

Publication record

Title	Hippias Major
Author	Plato (c. 428-348 BCE)
Translator	Harold North Fowler
Edition	Bookstacks TEI edition, based on the source electronic edition
Source	Plato in Twelve Volumes. Harvard University Press. 1926
Published	21 August 2026
Edition ID	plato_greater-hippias
Canonical URI	bookstacks.org

Rights and availability

The underlying ancient work is in the public domain. Rights in this translation and source encoding are described below. This derived TEI file is made available under the Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International License; source rights remain as recorded in sourceDesc. View the canonical license terms.

No ISBN has been assigned. The stable Bookstacks edition identifier and canonical URI above serve as the publication record for this digital edition. Bookstacks asserts no additional restriction over this generated PDF beyond the canonical source terms.

Contents

Hippias Major 1

Hippias Major

Soc.

Hippias, beautiful and wise, what a long time it is since you have put in at the port of Athens!

Hipp.

I am too busy, Socrates. For whenever Elis needs to have any business transacted with any of the states, she always comes to me first of her citizens and chooses me as envoy, thinking that I am the ablest judge and messenger of the words that are spoken by the several states. So I have often gone as envoy to other states, but most often and concerning the most numerous and important matters to Lacedaemon. For that reason, then, since you ask me, I do not often come to this neighborhood.

Soc.

That's what it is, Hippias, to be a truly wise and perfect man! For you are both in your private capacity able to earn much money from the young and to confer upon them still greater benefits than you receive, and in public affairs you are able to benefit your own state, as a man must who is to be not despised but held in high repute among the many. And yet, Hippias, what in the world is the reason why those men of old whose names are called great in respect to wisdom—Pittacus, and Bias, and the Milesian Thales [1] with his followers and also the later ones, down to Anaxagoras, are all, or most of them, found to refrain from affairs of state?

Hipp.

[1] Pittacus of Mitylene, Bias of Priene, and Thales of Miletus were among the traditional seven wise men.

What else do you suppose, Socrates, than that they were not able to compass by their wisdom both public and private matters?

Soc.

Then for Heaven's sake, just as the other arts have progressed, and the ancients are of no account in comparison with the artisans of today, shall we say that your art also has progressed and those of the ancients who were concerned with wisdom are of no account in comparison with you?

Hipp.

Yes, you are quite right.

Soc.

Then, Hippias, if Bias were to come to life again now, he would be a laughing-stock in comparison with you, just as the sculptors say that Daedalus, [2] if he were to be born now and were to create such works as those from which he got his reputation, would be ridiculous.

Hipp.

That, Socrates, is exactly as you say. I, however, am in the habit of praising the ancients and our predecessors rather than the men of the present day, and more greatly, as a precaution against the envy of the living and through fear of the wrath of those who are dead.

Soc.

Yours, Hippias, is a most excellent way, at any rate, of speaking about them and of thinking, it seems to me and I can bear you witness that you speak the truth, and that your art really has progressed in the direction of ability to carry on public together with private affairs. For this man [3] Gorgias, the sophist from Leontini, came here from home in the public capacity of envoy, as being best able of all the citizens of Leontini to attend to the interests of the community, and it was the general opinion that he spoke excellently in the public assembly, and in his private capacity, by giving exhibitions and associating with the young, he earned and received a great deal of money from this city; or, if you like, our friend here, Prodicus, often went to other places in a public capacity, and the last time, just lately, when he came here in a public capacity from Ceos, he gained great reputation by his speaking before the Council, and in his private capacity, by giving

[2] Daedalus, the traditional inventor of sculpture.

[3] The word *οὗτος* does not indicate that Gorgias was among those present at the moment, but only that he was at the time much talked of at Athens. The imaginary, or dramatic, date of this dialogue, would, then, be shortly after the time of Gorgias' activity at Athens.

exhibitions and associating with the young, he received a marvellous sum of money; but none of those ancients ever thought fit to exact the money as payment for his wisdom or to give exhibitions among people of various places; so simple-minded were they, and so unconscious of the fact that money is of the greatest value. But either of these two has earned more money from his wisdom than any artisan from his art. And even before these Protagoras did so.

Hipp.

Why, Socrates, you know nothing of the beauties of this. For if you were to know how much money I have made, you would be amazed. I won't mention the rest, but once, when I went to Sicily, although Protagoras was staying there and had a great reputation and was the older, I, who was much younger, made in a very short time more than one hundred and fifty minas, and in one very small place, Inycus, more than twenty minas; and when I came home, I took this and gave it to my father, so that he and the other citizens were overwhelmed with amazement. And I pretty well think I have made more money than any other two sophists together.

Soc.

That's a fine thing you say, Hippias, and strong testimony to your wisdom and that of the men of today and to their great superiority to the ancients. For the earlier sophists of the school of Anaxagoras must have been very ignorant to judge from what is said, according to your view; for they say that what happened to Anaxagoras was the opposite of what happens to you; for though much money was left him, he neglected it and lost it all so senseless was his wisdom. And they tell similar tales about others among the ancients. So this seems to me fine testimony that you adduce for the wisdom of the men of today as compared with the earlier men, and many people agree with me that the wise man must be wise for himself especially [4]; and the test of this is, who makes the most money. Well, so much for that. But tell me this: at which of the cities that you go to did you make the most money? Or are we to take it that it was at Lacedaemon, where your visits have been most frequent?

Hipp.

No, by Zeus, it was not, Socrates.

Soc.

What's that you say? But did you make least there?

[4] Apparently a proverbial expression like "physician, heal thyself" or "look out for number one."

Hipp.
Why, I never made anything at all.
Soc.
That is a prodigious marvel that you tell, Hippias; and say now: is not your wisdom such as to make those who are in contact with it and learn it, better men in respect to virtue?
Hipp.
Yes, much better, Socrates.
Soc.
But you were able to make the sons of the Inycenes better, and had no power to improve the sons of the Spartans?
Hipp.
That is far from true.
Soc.
Well, then, the Siceliotes desire to become better, and the Lacedaemonians do not?

Hipp.
No certainly, Socrates, the Lacedaemonians also desire it.
Soc.
Then it was for lack of money that they avoided intercourse with you?
Hipp.
Not at all, since they have plenty of money.
Soc.
What, then, could be the reason, that when they desired it and had money, and you had power to confer upon them the greatest benefits, they did not send you away loaded with money? But I see; perhaps the Lacedaemonians might educate their own children better than you? Shall we state it so, and do you agree?

Hipp.
Not in the least.
Soc.
Then were you not able to persuade the young men at Lacedaemon that they would make more progress towards virtue by associating with you than with their own people, or were you powerless to persuade their fathers that they ought rather to hand them over to you than to care for them themselves, if they are at all concerned for their sons? For surely they did not begrudge it to their children to become as good as

possible.

Hipp.

I do not think they begrudged it.

Soc.

But certainly Lacedaemon is well governed.

Hipp.

Of course it is.

Soc.

And in well-governed states virtue is most highly honored.

Hipp.

Certainly.

Soc.

And you know best of all men how to transmit that to another.

Hipp.

Much best, Socrates.

Soc.

Well, he who knows best how to transmit horsemanship would be most honored in Thessaly of all parts of Greece and would receive most money—and anywhere else where horsemanship is a serious interest, would he not?

Hipp.

Very likely.

Soc.

Then will not he who is able to transmit the doctrines that are of most value for the acquisition of virtue be most highly honored in Lacedaemon and make most money, if he so wishes, and in any other of the Greek states that is well governed? But do you, my friend, think he will fare better in Sicily and at Inycus? Are we to believe that, Hippias? For if you tell us to do so, we must believe it.

Hipp.

Yes, for it is not the inherited usage of the Lacedaemonians to change their laws or to educate their children differently from what is customary.

Soc.

What? For the Lacedaemonians is it the hereditary usage not to act rightly, but to commit errors?

Hipp.

I wouldn't say so, Socrates.

Soc.

Would they, then, not act rightly in educating the young men better, but not in educating them worse?

Hipp.

Yes, they would; but it is not lawful for them to give them a foreign education; for you may be sure that if anybody had ever received money there in payment for education, I should have received by far the most; they certainly enjoy hearing me and they applaud me; but, as I say, it is not the law.

Soc.

But, Hippias, do you say that law is an injury to the state, or a benefit?

Hipp.

It is made, I think, with benefit in view, but sometimes, if the law is badly made, it is injurious.

Soc.

Well, then, is it not true that those who make the law make it as the greatest good to the state, and that without this it is impossible to enjoy good government?

Hipp.

What you say is true.

Soc.

Then, when those who make the laws miss the good, they have missed the lawful and the law; or what do you say?

Hipp.

Speaking accurately, Socrates, that is true; however, men are not accustomed to think so.

Soc.

The men who know, Hippias, or those who do not know?

Hipp.

The many.

Soc.

Are these, the many, those who know the truth?

Hipp.

Certainly not.

Soc.

But surely those who know, think that in truth for all men that which is more beneficial is more lawful than that which is less beneficial; or do you not agree?

Hipp.

Yes, I agree that they think it is so in truth.

Soc.
Well, it actually is as those who know think it is, is it not?
Hipp.
Certainly.
Soc.
But or the Lacedaemonians, as you say, it is more beneficial to be educated in your education, which is foreign, than in the local education.
Hipp.
Yes, and what I say is true.
Soc.
And do you say this also, Hippias, that beneficial things are more lawful?
Hipp.
Yes, I said so.
Soc.
Then, according to what you say, it is more lawful for the sons of the Lacedaemonians to be educated by Hippias and less lawful for them to be educated by their fathers, if in reality they will be more benefited by you.
Hipp.
But certainly they will be benefited, Socrates.

Soc.
Then the Lacedaemonians in not giving you money and entrusting their sons to you , act contrary to law.
Hipp.
I agree to that; for you seem to be making your argument in my favour, and there is no need of my opposing it.
Soc.
Then my friends, we find that the Lacedaemonians are law-breakers, and that too in the most important affairs—they who are regarded as the most law-abiding of men. But then, for Heaven's sake, Hippias, what sort of discourses are those for which they applaud you and which they enjoy hearing? Or are they evidently those which you understand most admirably, those about the stars and the phenomena of the heavens?
Hipp.
Not in the least; they won't even endure those.
Soc.
But they enjoy hearing about geometry?

Hipp.
Not at all, since one might say that many of them do not even know how to count.

Soc.
Then they are far from enduring a lecture by you on the processes of thought.

Hipp.
Far from it indeed, by Zeus.

Soc.
Well, then, those matters which you of all men know best how to discuss, concerning the value of letters and syllables and rhythms and harmonies?

Hipp.
Harmonies indeed, my good fellow, and letters!

Soc.
But then what are the things about which they like to listen to you and which they applaud? Tell me yourself, for I cannot discover them.

Hipp.
They are very fond of hearing about the genealogies of heroes and men, Socrates, and the foundations of cities in ancient times and, in short, about antiquity in general, so that for their sake I have been obliged to learn all that sort of thing by heart and practise it thoroughly.

Soc.
By Zeus, Hippias, it is lucky for you that the Lacedaemonians do not enjoy hearing one recite the list of our archons from Solon's time; if they did, you would have trouble in learning it by heart.

Hipp.
How so, Socrates? After hearing them once, I can remember fifty names.

Soc.
True, but I did not understand that you possess the science of memory; and so I understand that the Lacedaemonians naturally enjoy you as one who knows many things, and they make use of you as children make use of old women, to tell stories agreeably.

Hipp.
And by Zeus, Socrates, I have just lately gained reputation there by telling about noble or beautiful pursuits, recounting what those of a young man should be. For I have a very beautiful discourse composed about them, well arranged in its words and also in other respects. And the plan of the discourse, and its beginning, is something like this: After the fall of Troy, the story goes that Neoptolemus asked Nestor

what the noble and beautiful pursuits were, by following which a young man would become most famous; so after that we have Nestor speaking and suggesting to him very many lawful and most beautiful pursuits. That discourse, then, I delivered there and intend to deliver here the day after tomorrow in Pheidostratus's schoolroom, with many other things worth hearing; for Eudicus, the son of Apemantus, asked me to do so. Now be sure to be there yourself and to bring others who are able to judge of discourses that they hear.

Soc.

Well, that shall be done, God willing, Hippias. Now, however, give me a brief answer to a question about your discourse, for you reminded me of the beautiful just at the right moment. For recently, my most excellent friend, as I was finding fault with some things in certain speeches as ugly and praising other things as beautiful, a man threw me into confusion by questioning me very insolently somewhat after this fashion:

"How, if you please, do you know, Socrates," said he,

"what sort of things are beautiful and ugly? For, come now, could you tell me what the beautiful is?" And I, being of no account, was at a loss and could not answer him properly; and so, as I was going away from the company, I was angry with myself and reproached myself, and threatened that the first time I met one of you wise men, I would hear and learn and practise and then go back to the man who questioned me to renew the wordy strife. So now, as I say, you have come at the right moment; just teach me satisfactorily what the absolute beautiful is, and try in replying to speak as accurately as possible, that I may not be confuted a second time and be made ridiculous again. For you doubtless know clearly, and this would doubtless be but a small example of your wide learning.

Hipp.

Yes, surely, by Zeus, a small one, Socrates, and, I may say, of no value.

Soc.

Then I shall learn it easily, and nobody will confute me any more.

Hipp.

Nobody, surely; for in that case my profession would be worthless and ordinary.

Soc.

That is good, by Hera, Hippias, if we are to worst the fellow. But may I without hindering you imitate him, and when you answer, take exception to what you say, in order that you may give me as much practice as possible? For I am more or less experienced in taking

exceptions. So, if it is all the same to you, I wish to take exceptions, that I may learn more vigorously.

Hipp.

Oh yes, take exceptions. For, as I said just now, the question is no great matter, but I could teach you to answer much harder ones than this, so that nobody in the world could confute you.

Soc.

Oh how good that is! But come, since you tell me to do so, now let me try to play that man's part, so far as possible, and ask you questions. For if you were to deliver for him this discourse that you mention, the one about beautiful pursuits, when he had heard it, after you had stopped speaking, the very first thing he would ask about would be the beautiful; for he has that sort of habit, and he would say,

"Stranger from Elis, is it not by justice that the just are just?" So answer, Hippias, as though he were asking the question.

Hipp.

I shall answer that it is by justice.

Soc.

"Then this—I mean justice—is something?"

Hipp.

Certainly.

Soc.

"Then, too, by wisdom the wise are wise and by the good all things are good, are they not?"

Hipp.

Of course.

Soc.

"And justice, wisdom, and so forth are something; for the just, wise, and so forth would not be such by them, if they were not something."

Hipp.

To be sure, they are something.

Soc.

"Then are not all beautiful things beautiful by the beautiful?"

Hipp.

Yes, by the beautiful.

Soc.

"By the beautiful, which is something?"

Hipp.

Yes, for what alternative is there?

Soc.

"Tell me, then, stranger," he will say,

"what is this, the beautiful?"

Hipp.

Well, Socrates, does he who asks this question want to find out anything else than what is beautiful?

Soc.

I do not think that is what he wants to find out, but what the beautiful is.

Hipp.

And what difference is there between the two?

Soc.

Do you think there is none?

Hipp.

Yes, for there is no difference.

Soc.

Well, surely it is plain that you know best; but still, my good friend, consider; for he asked you, not what is beautiful, but what the beautiful is.

Hipp.

I understand, my good friend, and I will answer and tell him what the beautiful is, and I shall never be confuted. For be assured, Socrates, if I must speak the truth, a beautiful maiden is beautiful.

Soc.

Beautifully answered, Hippias, by the dog, and notably! Then if I give this answer, I shall have answered the question that was asked, and shall have answered it correctly, and shall never be confuted?

Hipp.

Yes, for how could you, Socrates, be confuted, when you say what everybody thinks, and when all who hear it will bear witness that what you say is correct?

Soc.

Very well; certainly. Come, then, Hippias, let me rehearse to myself what you say. The man will question me in some such fashion as this:

"Come Socrates, answer me. All these things which you say are beautiful, if the absolute beautiful is anything, would be beautiful?" And I shall say that if a beautiful maiden is beautiful, there is something by reason of which these things would be beautiful.

Hipp.

Do you think, then, that he will still attempt to refute you and to show that what you say is not beautiful, or, if he does attempt it, that he will not be ridiculous?

Soc.

That he will attempt it, my admirable friend, I am sure but whether the attempt will make him ridiculous, the event will show. However, I should like to tell you what he will ask.

Hipp.

Do so.

Soc.

"How charming you are, Socrates!" he will say.

"But is not a beautiful mare beautiful, which even the god praised in his oracle?" [5] What shall we say, Hippias? Shall we not say that the mare is beautiful, I mean the beautiful mare? For how could we dare to deny that the beautiful thing is beautiful?

Hipp.

Quite true, Socrates for what the god said is quite correct, too; for very beautiful mares are bred in our country.

Soc.

"Very well," he will say,

"and how about a beautiful lyre? Is it not beautiful?" Shall we agree, Hippias?

Hipp.

Yes.

Soc.

After this, then, the man will ask, I am sure, judging by his character:

"You most excellent man, how about a beautiful pot? Is it, then, not beautiful?"

Hipp.

Socrates, who is the fellow? What an uncultivated person, who has the face to mention such worthless things in a dignified discussion!

Soc.

[5] Heindorf and other commentators connect this reference with an oracle quoted by a scholiast on Theocritus, *Idyl* xiv. 48. The Megarians, being filled with pride, asked the god who were better then they. The first lines of the reply they received are: "*Γαίης μέν πάσης τὸ Πελασγικὸν Ἄργος ἄμεινον, ἵπποι Θρηΐκιαι, Λακεδαιμόνιαι δὲ γυναῖκες*" Better than all other land is the land of Pelasgian Argos, | Thracian mares are the best, and the Lacedaemonian women. To be sure, nothing is said about the beauty of the mares, and the reference to Elis contained in *παρ' ἡμῖν* just below is hard to reconcile with the Thracian mares of the oracle.

That's the kind of person he is, Hippias, not elegant, but vulgar, thinking of nothing but the truth. But nevertheless the man must be answered, and I will declare my opinion beforehand: if the pot were made by a good potter, were smooth and round and well fired, as are some of the two-handled pots, those that hold six choes, [6] very beautiful ones—if that were the kind of pot he asked about, we must agree that it is beautiful; for how could we say that being beautiful it is not beautiful?

Hipp.

We could not at all, Socrates.

Soc.

"Then," he will say,

"a beautiful pot also is beautiful, is it not?" Answer.

Hipp.

Well, Socrates, it is like this, I think. This utensil, when well wrought, is beautiful, but absolutely considered it does not deserve to be regarded as beautiful in comparison with a mare and a maiden and all the beautiful things.

Soc.

Very well I understand, Hippias, that the proper reply to him who asks these questions is this:

"Sir, you are not aware that the saying of Heracleitus is good, that Ôthe most beautiful of monkeys is ugly compared with the race of man,Õ and the most beautiful of pots is ugly compared with the race of maidens, as Hippias the wise man says." Is it not so, Hippias?

Hipp.

Certainly, Socrates; you replied rightly.

Soc.

Listen then. For I am sure that after this he will say:

"Yes, but, Socrates, if we compare maidens with gods, will not the same thing happen to them that happened to pots when compared with maidens? Will not the most beautiful maiden appear ugly? Or does not Heracleitus, whom you cite, mean just this, that the wisest of men, if compared with a god, will appear a monkey, both in wisdom and in beauty and in everything else?" Shall we agree, Hippias, that the most beautiful maiden is ugly if compared with the gods?

Hipp.

Yes, for who would deny that, Socrates?

---

[6] The *χοῦς* was 5.76 pints.

Soc.

If, then, we agree to that, he will laugh and say:

"Socrates, do you remember the question you were asked?"

"I do," I shall say,

"the question was what the absolute beautiful is."

"Then," he will say,

"when you were asked for the beautiful, do you give as your reply what is, as you yourself say, no more beautiful than ugly?"

"So it seems," I shall say; or what do you, my friend, advise me to say?

Hipp.

That is what I advise; for, of course, in saying that the human race is not beautiful in comparison with gods, you will be speaking the truth.

Soc.

"But if I had asked you," he will say,

"in the beginning what is beautiful and ugly, if you had replied as you now do, would you not have replied correctly? But do you still think that the absolute beautiful, by the addition of which all other things are adorned and made to appear beautiful, when its form is added to any of them—do you think that is a maiden or a mare or a lyre?"

Hipp.

Well, certainly, Socrates, if that is what he is looking for, nothing is easier than to answer and tell him what the beautiful is, by which all other things are adorned and by the addition of which they are made to appear beautiful. So the fellow is very simple-minded and knows nothing about beautiful possessions. For if you reply to him:

"This that you ask about, the beautiful, is nothing else but gold," he will be thrown into confusion and will not attempt to confute you. For we all know, I fancy, that wherever this is added, even what before appears ugly will appear beautiful when adorned with gold.

Soc.

You don't know the man, Hippias, what a wretch he is, and how certain not to accept anything easily.

Hipp.

What of that, then, Socrates? For he must perforce accept what is correct, or if he does not accept it, be ridiculous.

Soc.

This reply, my most excellent friend, he not only will certainly not accept, but he will even jeer at me grossly and will say:

"You lunatic, do you think Pheidias is a bad craftsman?" And I

shall say,

"Not in the least."

Hipp.

And you will be right, Socrates.

Soc.

Yes, to be sure. Consequently when I agree that Pheidias is a good craftsman,

"Well, then," he will say,

"do you imagine that Pheidias did not know this beautiful that you speak of?"

"Why do you ask that?" I shall say.

"Because," he will say,

"he did not make the eyes of his Athena of gold, nor the rest of her face, nor her hands and feet, if, that is, they were sure to appear most beautiful provided only they were made of gold, but he made them of ivory; evidently he made this mistake through ignorance, not knowing that it is gold which makes everything beautiful to which it is added." When he says that, what reply shall we make to him, Hippias?

Hipp.

That is easy; for we shall say that Pheidias did right; for ivory, I think, is beautiful.

Soc.

"Why, then," he will say,

"did he not make the middle parts of the eyes also of ivory, but of stone, procuring stone as similar as possible to the ivory? Or is beautiful stone also beautiful?" Shall we say that it is, Hippias?

Hipp.

Surely we shall say so, that is, where it is appropriate.

Soc.

"But ugly when not appropriate?" Shall I agree, or not?

Hipp.

Agree, that is, when it is not appropriate.

Soc.

"What then? Do not gold and ivory," he will say,

"when they are appropriate, make things beautiful, and when they are not appropriate, ugly?" Shall we deny that, or agree that what he says is correct?

Hipp.

We shall agree to this, at any rate, that whatever is appropriate to any particular thing makes that thing beautiful.

Soc.

"Well, then," he will say,

"when some one has boiled the pot of which we were speaking just now, the beautiful one, full of beautiful soup, is a golden ladle appropriate to it, or one made of fig wood?"

Hipp.

Heracles! What a fellow this is that you speak of! Won't you tell me who he is?

Soc.

You would not know him if I should tell you his name.

Hipp.

But even now I know that he is an ignoramus.

Soc.

He is a great nuisance, Hippias but yet, what shall we say? Which of the two ladles shall we say is appropriate to the soup and the pot? Is it not evidently the one of fig wood? For it is likely to make the soup smell better, and besides, my friend, it would not break the pot, thereby spilling the soup, putting out the fire, and making those who are to be entertained go without their splendid soup; whereas the golden ladle would do all those things, so that it seems to me that we must say that the wooden ladle is more appropriate than the golden one, unless you disagree.

Hipp.

No, for it is more appropriate, Socrates; however, I, for my part, would not talk with the fellow when he asks such questions.

Soc.

Quite right, my friend; for it would not be appropriate for you to be filled up with such words, you who are so beautifully clad, so beautifully shod, and so famous for your wisdom among all the Greeks; but for me it doesn't matter if I do associate with the fellow; so instruct me and for my sake answer him.

"For if the wooden one is more appropriate than the golden one," the fellow will say,

"would it not be more beautiful, since you agreed, Socrates, that the appropriate is more beautiful than that which is not appropriate?" Shall we not agree, Hippias, that the wooden one is more beautiful than the golden?

Hipp.

Do you wish me to tell you, Socrates, what definition of the beautiful

will enable you to free yourself from long discussion?

Soc.

Certainly; but not until after you have told me which of the two ladles I just spoke of I shall reply is appropriate and more beautiful.

Hipp.

Well, if you like, reply to him that it is the one made of fig wood.

Soc.

Now, then, say what you were just now going to say. For by this reply, if I say that the beautiful is gold, it seems to me that gold will be shown to be no more beautiful than fig wood; but what do you now, once more, say that the beautiful is?

Hipp.

I will tell you; for you seem to me to be seeking to reply that the beautiful is something of such sort that it will never appear ugly anywhere to anybody.

Soc.

Certainly, Hippias; now you understand beautifully.

Hipp.

Listen, then; for, mind you, if anyone has anything to say against this, you may say I know nothing at all.

Soc.

Then for Heaven's sake, speak as quickly as you can.

Hipp.

I say, then, that for every man and everywhere it is most beautiful to be rich and healthy, and honored by the Greeks, to reach old age, and, after providing a beautiful funeral for his deceased parents, to be beautifully and splendidly buried by his own offspring.

Soc.

Bravo, bravo, Hippias! You have spoken in a way that is wonderful and great and worthy of you; and now, by Hera, I thank you, because you are kindly coming to my assistance to the best of your ability. But our shots are not hitting the man; no, he will laugh at us now more than ever, be sure of that.

Hipp.

A wretched laugh, Socrates; for when he has nothing to say to this, but laughs, he will be laughing at himself and will himself be laughed at by those present.

Soc.

Perhaps that is so perhaps, however, after this reply, he will, I foresee, be likely to do more than laugh at me.

Hipp.

Why do you say that, pray?

Soc.

Because, if he happens to have a stick, unless I get away in a hurry, he will try to fetch me a good one.

Hipp.

What? Is the fellow some sort of master of yours, and if he does that, will he not be arrested and have to pay for it? Or does your city disregard justice and allow the citizens to beat one another unjustly?

Soc.

Oh no that is not allowed at all.

Hipp.

Then he will have to pay a penalty for beating you unjustly.

Soc.

I do not think so, Hippias. No, if I were to make that reply, the beating would be just, I think.

Hipp.

Then I think so, too, Socrates, since that is your own belief.

Soc.

Shall I, then, not tell you why it is my own belief that the beating would be just, if I made that reply? Or will you also beat me without trial? Or will you listen to what I have to say?

Hipp.

It would be shocking if I would not listen; but what have you to say?

Soc.

I will tell you, imitating him in the same way as a while ago, that I may not use to you such harsh and uncouth words as he uses to me. For you may be sure,

"Tell me, Socrates," he will say,

"do you think it would be unjust if you got a beating for singing such a long dithyramb so unmusically and so far from the question?"

"How so?" I shall say.

"How so?" he will say;

"are you not able to remember that I asked for the absolute beautiful, by which everything to which it is added has the property of being beautiful, both stone and stick and man and god and every act and every acquisition of knowledge? For what I am asking is this, man:

what is absolute beauty? and I cannot make you hear what I say any more than if you were a stone sitting beside me, and a millstone at that, having neither ears nor brain." Would you, then, not be angry, Hippias,if I should be frightened and should reply in this way?

"Well, but Hippias said that this was the beautiful; and yet I asked him, just as you asked me, what is beautiful to all and always." What do you say? Will you not be angry if I say that?

Hipp.

I know very well, Socrates, that this which I said was beautiful is beautiful to all and will seem so.

Soc.

And will it be so, too he will say for the beautiful is always beautiful, is it not?

Hipp.

Certainly.

Soc.

"Then was it so, too?" he will say.

Hipp.

It was so, too.

Soc.

"And," he will say,

"did the stranger from Elis say also that for Achilles it was beautiful to be buried later than his parents, and for his grandfather Aeacus, and all the others who were born of gods, and for the gods themselves?"

Hipp.

What's that? Confound it! These questions of the fellow's are not even respectful to religion.

Soc.

Well, then, when another asks the question, perhaps it is not quite disrespectful to religion to say that these things are so?

Hipp.

Perhaps.

Soc.

"Perhaps, then, you are the man," he will say,

"who says that it is beautiful for every one and always to be buried by one's offspring, and to bury one's parents; or was not Heracles included in 'every one,' he and all those whom we just now mentioned?"

Hipp.

But I did not say it was so for the gods.

Soc.

"Nor for the heroes either, apparently."

Hipp.
Not those who were children of gods.
Soc.
"But those who were not?"
Hipp.
Certainly.
Soc.
"Then again, according to your statement, among the heroes it is terrible and impious and disgraceful for Tantalus and Dardanus and Zethus, but beautiful for Pelops [7] and the others who were born as he was?"
Hipp.
I think so.
Soc.
"You think, then, what you did not say just now, that to bury one's parents and be buried by one's offspring is sometimes and for some persons disgraceful; and it is still more impossible, as it seems, for this to become and to be beautiful for all, so that the same thing has happened to this as to the things we mentioned before, the maiden and the pot, in a still more ridiculous way than to them; it is beautiful for some and not beautiful for others. And you are not able yet, even today, Socrates," he will say,

"to answer what is asked about the beautiful, namely what it is." With these words and the like he will rebuke me, if I reply to him in this way. For the most part, Hippias, he talks with me in some such way as that but sometimes, as if in pity for my inexperience and lack of training, he himself volunteers a question, and asks whether I think the beautiful is so and so or whatever else it is which happens to be the subject of our questions and our discussion.

Hipp.
What do you mean by that, Socrates?
Soc.
I will tell you.

"Oh, my dear Socrates," he says,

"stop making replies of this sort and in this way—for they are too silly and easy to refute; but see if something like this does not seem to you to be beautiful, which we got hold of just now in our reply, when we said that gold was beautiful for those things for which it was appropriate, but not for those for which it was not, and that all the

[7] Pelops as the son of a mortal (Tantalus); the others mentioned were sons of gods.

other things were beautiful to which this quality pertains; so examine this very thing, the appropriate, and see if it is perchance the beautiful." Now I am accustomed to agree to such things every time for I don't know what to say; but now does it seem to you that the appropriate is the beautiful?

Hipp.

Yes, certainly, Socrates.

Soc.

Let us consider, lest we make a mistake somehow.

Hipp.

Yes, we must consider.

Soc.

See, then; do we say that the appropriate is that which, when it is added, makes each of those things to which it is added appear beautiful, or which makes them be beautiful, or neither of these?

Hipp.

I think so.

Soc.

Which?

Hipp.

That which makes them appear beautiful; as when a man takes clothes or shoes that fit, even if he be ridiculous, he appears more beautiful.

Soc.

Then if the appropriate makes him appear more beautiful than he is, the appropriate would be a sort of deceit in respect to the beautiful, and would not be that which we are looking for, would it, Hippias? For we were rather looking for that by which all beautiful things are beautiful—like that by which all great things are great, that is, excess; for it is by this that all great things are great; for even if they do not appear great, but exceed, they are of necessity great; so, then, we say, what would the beautiful be, by which all things are beautiful, whether they appear so or not? For it could not be the appropriate, since that, by your statement, makes things appear more beautiful than they are, but does not let them appear such as they are. But we must try to say what that is which makes things be beautiful, as I said just now, whether they appear so or not; for that is what we are looking for, since we are looking for the beautiful.

Hipp.

But the appropriate, Socrates, makes things both be and appear beautiful by its presence.

Soc.

Is it impossible, then, for things which are really beautiful not to appear to be beautiful, at any rate when that is present which makes them appear so?

Hipp.

It is impossible.

Soc.

Shall we, then, agree to this, Hippias, that all things which are really beautiful, both uses and pursuits, are always believed to be beautiful by all, and appear so to them, or, quite the contrary, that people are ignorant about them, and that there is more strife and contention about them than about anything else, both in private between individuals and in public between states?

Hipp.

The latter rather, Socrates; that people are ignorant about them.

Soc.

They would not be so, if the appearance of beauty were added to them; and it would be added, if the appropriate were beautiful and made things not only to be beautiful, but also to appear so. So that the appropriate, if it is that which makes things be beautiful, would be the beautiful which we are looking for, but would not be that which makes things appear beautiful; but if, on the other hand, the appropriate is that which makes things appear beautiful, it would not be the beautiful for which we are looking. For that makes things be beautiful, but the same element could not make things both appear and be beautiful, nor could it make them both appear and be anything else whatsoever. Let us choose, then, whether we think that the appropriate is that which makes things appear or be beautiful.

Hipp.

That which makes them appear so, in my opinion, Socrates.

Soc.

Whew! Our perception of what the beautiful is has fled away and gone, Hippias, since the appropriate has been found to be something other than the beautiful.

Hipp.

Yes, by Zeus, Socrates, and to me that is very queer.

Soc.

However, my friend, let us not yet give it up, for I still have hopes that what the beautiful is will be made clear.

Hipp.

Certainly, to be sure, Socrates, for it is not hard to find. Now I know that if I should go away into solitude and meditate alone by myself, I could tell it to you with the most perfect accuracy.

Soc.

Ah, don't boast, Hippias. You see how much trouble it has caused us already; I'm afraid it may get angry and run away more than ever. And yet that is nonsense; for you, I think, will easily find it when you go away by yourself. But for Heaven's sake, find it in my presence, or, if you please, join me, as you are now doing, in looking for it. And if we find it, that will be splendid, but if we do not, I shall, I suppose, accept my lot, and you will go away and find it easily. And if we find it now, I shall certainly not be a nuisance to you by asking what that was which you found by yourself; but now once more see if this is in your opinion the beautiful : I say, then, that it is—but consider, paying close attention to me, that I may not talk nonsense—for I say, then, whatever is useful shall be for us beautiful. But I said it with this reason for my thought; beautiful eyes, we say, are not such as seem to be so, which are unable to see, but those which are able and useful for seeing. Is that right?

Hipp.

Yes.

Soc.

Then, too, in the same way we say that the whole body is beautiful, part of it for running, part for wrestling; and again all the animals, a beautiful horse or cock or quail and all utensils and land vehicles, and on the sea freight-ships and ships of war; and all instruments in music and in the other arts, and, if you like, customs and laws also—pretty well all these we call beautiful in the same way looking at each of them—how it is formed by nature, how it is wrought, how it has been enacted—the useful we call beautiful, and beautiful in the way in which it is useful, and for the purpose for which it is useful, and at the time when it is useful; and that which is in all these aspects useless we say is ugly. Now is not this your opinion also, Hippias?

Hipp.

It is.Soc, Then are we right in saying that the useful rather than everything else is beautiful?

Hipp.

We are right, surely, Socrates.

Soc.

Now that which has power to accomplish anything is useful for that for which it has power, but that which is powerless is useless, is it not?

Hipp.
Certainly.
Soc.
Power, then, is beautiful, and want of power is disgraceful or ugly.
Hipp.
Decidedly. Now other things, Socrates, testify for us that this is so, but especially political affairs; for in political affairs and in one's own state to be powerful is the most beautiful of all things, but to be powerless is the most disgraceful of all.
Soc.
Good! Then, for Heaven's sake, Hippias, is wisdom also for this reason the most beautiful of all things and ignorance the most disgraceful of all things?
Hipp.
Well, what do you suppose, Socrates?
Soc.
Just keep quiet, my dear friend; I am so afraid and wondering what in the world we are saying again.

Hipp.
What are you afraid of again, Socrates, since now your discussion has gone ahead most beautifully?
Soc.
I wish that might be the case; but consider this point with me: could a person do what he did not know how and was utterly powerless to do?
Hipp.
By no means; for how could he do what he was powerless to do?
Soc.
Then those who commit errors and accomplish and do bad things involuntarily, if they were powerless to do those things, would not do them?

Hipp.
Evidently not.
Soc.
But yet it is by power that those are powerful who are powerful for surely it is not by powerlessness.
Hipp.
Certainly not.

Soc.
And all who do, have power to do what they do?
Hipp.
Yes.
Soc.
Men do many more bad things than good, from childhood up, and commit many errors involuntarily.
Hipp.
That is true.
Soc.
Well, then, this power and these useful things, which are useful for accomplishing something bad—shall we say that they are beautiful, or far from it?

Hipp.
Far from it, in my opinion, Socrates.
Soc.
Then, Hippias, the powerful and the useful are not, as it seems, our beautiful.
Hipp.
They are, Socrates, if they are powerful and useful for good.
Soc.
Then that assertion, that the powerful and useful are beautiful without qualification, is gone; but was this, Hippias, what our soul wished to say, that the useful and the powerful for doing something good is the beautiful?

Hipp.
Yes, in my opinion.
Soc.
But surely this is beneficial; or is it not?
Hipp.
Certainly.
Soc.
So by this argument the beautiful persons and beautiful customs and all that we mentioned just now are beautiful because they are beneficial.
Hipp.
Evidently.
Soc.

Then the beneficial seems to us to be the beautiful, Hippias.

Hipp.

Yes, certainly, Socrates.

Soc.

But the beneficial is that which creates good.

Hipp.

Yes, it is.

Soc.

But that which creates is nothing else than the cause; am I right?

Hipp.

It is so.

Soc.

Then the beautiful is the cause of the good.

Hipp.

Yes, it is.

Soc.

But surely, Hippias, the cause and that of which the cause is the cause are different; for the cause could not well be the cause of the cause. But look at it in this way was not the cause seen to be creating?

Hipp.

Yes, certainly.

Soc.

By that which creates, then, only that is created which comes into being, but not that which creates. [8] Is not that true?

Hipp.

That is true.

Soc.

The cause, then, is not the cause of the cause, but of that which comes into being through it.

Hipp.

Certainly.

Soc.

If, then, the beautiful is the cause of good, the good would come into being through the beautiful; and this is why we are eager for wisdom and all the other beautiful things, because their offspring, the good, is worthy of eagerness, and, from what we are finding, it looks as if the beautiful were a sort of father of the good.

[8] i.e. the creative force creates the thing created, not the creative force.

Hipp.
Certainly for what you say is well said, Socrates.
Soc.
Then is this well said, too, that the father is not the son, and the son not father?

Hipp.
To be sure it is well said.
Soc.
And neither is the cause that which comes into being, nor is that which comes into being the cause.
Hipp.
True.
Soc.
By Zeus, my good friend, then neither is the beautiful good, nor the good beautiful; or does it seem to you possible, after what has been said?
Hipp.
No, by Zeus, it does not appear so to me.
Soc.
Does it please us, and should we be willing to say that the beautiful is not good, and the good not beautiful?
Hipp.
No, by Zeus, it does not please me at all.
Soc.
Right, by Zeus, Hippias! And it pleases me least of all the things we have said.
Hipp.
Yes, that is likely.
Soc.
Then there is a good chance that the statement that the beneficial and the useful and the powerful to create something good are beautiful, is not, as it appeared to be, the most beautiful of of statements, but, if that be possible, is even more ridiculous than those first ones in which we thought the maiden was the beautiful, and each of the various other things we spoke of before.
Hipp.
That is likely.
Soc.
And Hippias, I no longer know where to turn; I am at a loss; but have

you anything to say?

Hipp.

Not at the moment, but, as I said just now, I am sure I shall find it after meditation.

Soc.

But it seems to me that I am so eager to know that I cannot wait for you while you delay; for I believe I have just now found a way out. Just see; how would it help us towards our goal if we were to say that that is beautiful which makes us feel joy; I do not mean all pleasures, but that which makes us feel joy through hearing and sight? For surely beautiful human beings, Hippias, and all decorations and paintings and works of sculpture which are beautiful, delight us when we see them; and beautiful sounds and music in general and speeches and stories do the same thing, so that if we were to reply to that impudent fellow,

"My excellent man, the beautiful is that which is pleasing through hearing and sight," don't you think that we should put a stop to his impudence?

Hipp.

To me, at any rate, Socrates, it seems that the nature of the beautiful is now well stated.

Soc.

But what then? Shall we say, Hippias, that beautiful customs and laws are beautiful because they are pleasing through hearing and sight, or that they have some other form of beauty?

Hipp.

Perhaps, Socrates, these things might slip past the man unnoticed.

Soc.

No, by dog, Hippias—not past the man before whom I should be most ashamed of talking nonsense and pretending that I was talking sense when I was not.

Hipp.

What man is that?

Soc.

Socrates, the son of Sophroniscus, who would no more permit me to say these things carelessly without investigation than to say that I know what I do not know.

Hipp.

But certainly I also, now that you have mentioned it, think that this about the laws is something different.

Soc.

Not too fast, Hippias; for very likely we have fallen into the same perplexity about the beautiful in which we were a while ago, although we think we have found another way out.

Hipp.

What do you mean by that, Socrates?

Soc.

I will tell you what presents itself to me, if perhaps there may be some sense in it. For perhaps these matters of laws and customs might be shown to be not outside of the perception which we have through hearing and sight; but let us stick to the statement that that which is pleasing through the senses is beautiful, without interjecting the matter of the laws. But if this man of whom I speak, or anyone else whosoever, should ask us:

"Hippias and Socrates, did you make the distinction that in the category of the pleasing that which is pleasing in the way you mention is beautiful, whereas you say that that which is pleasing according to the other senses —those concerned with food and drink and sexual love and all such things—is not beautiful? Or do you say that such things are not even pleasing and that there is no pleasure at all in them, nor in anything else except sight and hearing?" What shall we say, Hippias?

Hipp.

Certainly, by all means, Socrates, we shall say that there are very great pleasures in the other things also.

Soc.

"Why, then," he will say,

"if they are pleasures no less than the others, do you take from them this designation and deprive them of being beautiful?"

"Because," we shall say,

"everybody would laugh at us if we should say that eating is not pleasant but is beautiful, and that a pleasant odor is not pleasant but is beautiful; and as to the act of sexual love, we should all, no doubt, contend that it is most pleasant, but that one must, if he perform it, do it so that no one else shall see, because it is most repulsive to see." If we say this, Hippias,

"I too understand," he will perhaps say,

"that you have all along been ashamed to say that these pleasures are beautiful, because they do not seem so to people; but that is not what I asked, what seems to most people to be beautiful, but what is so." We shall, then, I fancy, say, as we suggested,

"We say that that part of the pleasant which comes by sight and hearing is beautiful." Do you think the statement is of any use, Hippias, or shall we say something else?

Hipp.

Inevitably, in view of what has been said, Socrates, we must say just that.

Soc.

"Excellent!" he will say.

"Then if that which is pleasant through sight and hearing is beautiful, that among pleasant things which does not happen to be of that sort would evidently not be beautiful?" Shall we agree?

Hipp.

Yes.

Soc.

"Is, then, that which is pleasant through sight," he will say,

"pleasant through sight and hearing, or is that which is pleasant through hearing pleasant through hearing and sight?"

"No," we shall say,

"that which is pleasant through each of these would not in the least be pleasant through both—for that is what you appear to us to mean—but we said that either of these pleasant things would be beautiful alone by itself, and both together." Is not that the reply we shall make?

Hipp.

Certainly.

Soc.

"Does, then," he will say,

"any pleasant thing whatsoever differ from any pleasant thing whatsoever by this, by being pleasant? I ask not whether any pleasure is greater or smaller or more or less, but whether it differs by just this very thing, by the fact that one of the pleasures is a pleasure and the other is not a pleasure."

"We do not think so." Do we?

Hipp.

No, we do not.

Soc.

"Is it not," then, he will say,

"for some other reason than because they are pleasures that you chose these pleasures out from the other pleasures —it was because you saw some quality in both, since they have something different from the others, in view of which you say that they are beautiful? For the

reason why that which is pleasant through sight is beautiful, is not, I imagine, because it is through sight; for if that were the cause of its being beautiful, the other pleasure, that through hearing, would not be beautiful; it certainly is not pleasure through sight." Shall we say

"What you say is true?"

Hipp.

Yes, we shall.

Soc.

"Nor, again, is the pleasure through hearing beautiful for the reason that it is through hearing; for in that case, again, the pleasure through sight would not be beautiful; it certainly is not pleasure through hearing." Shall we say, Hippias, that the man who says that speaks the truth?

Hipp.

Yes, he speaks the truth.

Soc.

"But yet both are beautiful, as you say." We do say that, do we not?

Hipp.

We do.

Soc.

"They have, then, something identical which makes them to be beautiful, this common quality which pertains to both of them in common and to each individually; for otherwise they would not both collectively and each individually be beautiful." Answer me, as if you were answering him.

Hipp.

I answer, and I think it is as you say.

Soc.

If, then, these pleasures are both affected in any way collectively, but each individually is not so affected, it is not by this affection that they would be beautiful.

Hipp.

And how could that be, Socrates, when neither of them individually is affected by some affection or other, that then both are affected by that affection by which neither is affected?

Soc.

You think it cannot be?

Hipp.

I should have to be very inexperienced both in the nature of these things and in the language of our present discussion.

Soc.

Very pretty, Hippias. But there is a chance that I think I see a case of that kind which you say is impossible, but do not really see it.

Hipp.

There's no chance about it, Socrates, but you quite purposely see wrongly.

Soc.

And certainly many such cases appear before my mind, but I mistrust them because they do not appear to you, a man who has made more money by wisdom than anyone now living, but to me who never made any money at all; and the thought disturbs me that you are playing with me and purposely deceiving me, they appear to me in such numbers and with such force.

Hipp.

Nobody, Socrates, will know better than you whether I am playing with you or not, if you proceed to tell these things that appear to you; for it will be apparent to you that you are talking nonsense. For you will never find that you and I are both affected by an affection by which neither of us is affected.

Soc.

What are you saying, Hippias? Perhaps you are talking sense, and I fail to understand; but let me tell more clearly what I wish to say. For it appears to me that it is possible for us both to be so affected as to be something which I am not so affected as to be, and which I am not and you are not either; and again for neither of us to be so affected as to be other things which we both are.

Hipp.

Your reply, Socrates, seems to involve miracles again even greater than those of your previous reply. For consider: if we are both just, would not each of us be just also, and if each is unjust, would not both again also be unjust, or if both are healthy, each of us also? Or if each of us were to be tired or wounded or struck or affected in any other way whatsoever, should we not both of us be affected in the same way? Then, too, if we were to be golden or of silver or of ivory, or, if you please, noble or wise or honored or old or young or whatever else you like of all that flesh is heir to, is it not quite inevitable that each of us be that also?

Soc.

Absolutely.

Hipp.

But you see, Socrates, you do not consider the entirety of things, nor do they with whom you are in the habit of conversing, but you all test the beautiful and each individual entity by taking them separately and cutting them to pieces. For this reason you fail to observe that embodiments of reality are by nature so great and undivided. And now you have failed to observe to such a degree that you think there is some affection or reality which pertains to both of these together, but not to each individually, or again to each, but not to both; so unreasoning and undiscerning and foolish and unreflecting is your state of mind.

Soc.

Human affairs, Hippias, are not what a man wishes, but what he can, [9] as the proverb goes which people are constantly citing; but you are always aiding us with admonitions. For now too, until we were admonished by you of our foolish state of mind—shall I continue to speak and make you a still further exhibition of our thoughts on the subject, or shall I not speak?

Hipp.

You will speak to one who knows, Socrates, for I know the state of mind of all who are concerned with discussions; but nevertheless, if you prefer, speak.

Soc.

Well, I do prefer. For we, my friend, were so stupid, before you spoke, as to have an opinion concerning you and me, that each of us was one, but that we were not both that which each of us was—for we are not one, but two —so foolish were we. But now we have been taught by you that if we are both two, then each of us is inevitably two, and if each is one, then both are inevitably one; for it is impossible, by the continuous doctrine of reality according to Hippias, that it be otherwise, but what we both are, that each is, and what each is, both are. So now I have been convinced by you, and I hold this position. But first, Hippias, refresh my memory: Are you and I one, or are you two and I two?

Hipp.

[9] Suidas gives the proverb in the form: *ζῶμεν γὰρ οὐχ ὡς θέλομεν, ἀλλ' ὡς δυνάμεθα*. "Man proposes, but God disposes" would be an English equivalent.

What do you mean, Socrates?

Soc.

Just what I say; for I am afraid to speak plainly to you, because you are vexed with me, when you think you are talking sensibly; however, tell me further: Is not each of us one and affected in such a way as to be one?

Hipp.

Certainly.

Soc.

Then each of us, if one, would be an odd number; or do you not consider one an odd number?

Hipp.

I do.

Soc.

Then are we both an odd number, being two?

Hipp.

That could not be, Socrates.

Soc.

But we are both an even number, are we not?

Hipp.

Certainly.

Soc.

Then because we are both even, is each of us on that account even?

Hipp.

No, surely not.

Soc.

Then it is not absolutely inevitable, as you said just now, that what both are, each is, and what each is, both are.

Hipp.

Not things of this sort, but such as I mentioned before.

Soc.

That suffices, Hippias; for even this is welcome, since it appears that some things are so and some are not so. For I said, if you remember the beginning of this discussion, that pleasure through sight and through hearing were beautiful, not by that by which each of them was so affected as to be beautiful, but not both, nor both but not each, but by that by which both and each were so affected, because you conceded that both and each were beautiful. For this reason I thought that if both are beautiful they must be beautiful by that essence which

belongs to both, but not by that which is lacking in each; and I still think so. But tell me, as in the beginning: If pleasure through sight and pleasure through hearing are both and each beautiful, does not that which makes them beautiful belong to both and to each?

Hipp.

Certainly.

Soc.

Is it, then, for this reason, because each is a pleasure and both are pleasures, that they would be beautiful? Or would all other pleasures be for this reason no less beautiful than they? For we saw, if you remember, that they were no less pleasures.

Hipp.

Yes,I remember.

Soc.

But for this reason, because these pleasures were through sight and hearing, it was said that they are beautiful.

Hipp.

Yes, that is what was said.

Soc.

See if what I say is true. For it was said, if my memory serves me, that this "pleasant" was beautiful, not all "pleasant," but that which is through sight and hearing.

Hipp.

True.

Soc.

Now this quality belongs to both, but not to each, does it not? For surely each of them, as was said before, is not through both senses, but both are through both, and each is not. Is that true?

Hipp.

It is.

Soc.

Then it is not by that which does not belong to each that each of them is beautiful; for "both" does not belong to each; so that it is possible, according to our hypothesis, to say that they both are beautiful, but not to say that each is so; or what shall we say? Is that not inevitable?

Hipp.

It appears so.

Soc.

Shall we say, then, that both are beautiful, but that each is not?

Hipp.
What is to prevent?
Soc.
This seems to me, my friend, to prevent, that there were some attributes thus belonging to individual things, which belonged, we thought, to each, if they belonged to both, and to both, if they belonged to each—I mean all those attributes which you specified. [10] Am I right?
Hipp.
Yes.
Soc.
But those again which I specified [11] did not; and among those were precisely "each" and "both." Is that so?
Hipp.
It is.

Soc.
To which group, then, Hippias, does the beautiful seem to you to belong? To the group of those that you mentioned? If I am strong and you also, are we both collectively strong, and if I am just and you also, are we both collectively just, and if both collectively, then each individually so, too, if I am beautiful and you also, are we both collectively beautiful, and if both collectively, then each individually? Or is there nothing to prevent this, as in the case that when given things are both collectively even, they may perhaps individually be odd, or perhaps even, and again, when things are individually irrational quantities they may perhaps both collectively be rational, or perhaps irrational, and countless other cases which, you know, I said appeared before my mind? [12] To which group do you assign the beautiful? Or have you the same view about it as I? For to me it seems great foolishness that we collectively are beautiful, but each of us is not so, or that each of us is so, but both are not, or anything else of that sort. Do you choose in this way, as I do, or in some other way?
Hipp.
In this way, Socrates.
Soc.
You choose well, Hippias, that we may be free from the need of further

[10] See 300 E., 301 A.
[11] See 301 E, 302 A.
[12] See 300 C.

search; for if the beautiful is in this group, that which is pleasing through sight and hearing would no longer be the beautiful. For the expression through sight and hearing makes both collectively beautiful, but not each individually; and this was impossible, as you and I agree.

Hipp.

Yes, we agree.

Soc.

It is, then, impossible that the pleasant through sight and hearing be the beautiful, since in becoming beautiful it offers an impossibility.

Hipp.

That is true.

Soc.

"Then tell us again," he will say,

"from the beginning, since you failed this time; what do you say that this 'beautiful,' belonging to both the pleasures, is, on account of which you honored them before the rest and called them beautiful?" It seems to me, Hippias, inevitable that we say that these are the most harmless and the best of pleasures, both of them collectively and each of them individually; or have you anything else to suggest, by which they excel the rest?

Hipp.

Not at all; for really they are the best.

Soc.

"This, then," he will say,

"you say is the beautiful, beneficial pleasure?"

"It seems that we do," I shall say; and you?

Hipp.

I also.

Soc.

"Well, then," he will say,

"beneficial is that which creates the good, but that which creates and that which is created were just now seen to be different, and our argument has come round to the earlier argument, has it not? For neither could the good be beautiful nor the beautiful good, if each of them is different from the other."

"Absolutely true," we shall say, if we are reasonable; for it is inadmissible to disagree with him who says what is right.

Hipp.

But now, Socrates, what do you think all this amounts to? It is mere scrapings and shavings of discourse, as I said a while ago, [13] divided

into bits; but that other ability is beautiful and of great worth, the ability to produce a discourse well and beautifully in a court of law or a council-house or before any other public body before which the discourse may be delivered, to convince the audience and to carry off, not the smallest, but the greatest of prizes, the salvation of oneself, one's property, and one's friends. For these things, therefore, one must strive, renouncing these petty arguments, that one may not, by busying oneself, as at present, with mere talk and nonsense, appear to be a fool.

Soc.

My dear Hippias, you are blessed because you know the things a man ought to practise, and have, as you say, practised them satisfactorily. But I, as it seems, am possessed by some accursed fortune, so that I am always wandering and perplexed, and, exhibiting my perplexity to you wise men, am in turn reviled by you in speech whenever I exhibit it. For you say of me, what you are now saying, that I busy myself with silly little matters of no account; but when in turn I am convinced by you and say what you say, that it is by far the best thing to be able to produce a discourse well and beautifully and gain one's end in a court of law or in any other assemblage, I am called everything that is bad by some other men here and especially by that man who is continually refuting me; for he is a very near relative of mine and lives in the same house. So whenever I go home to my own house, and he hears me saying these things, he asks me if I am not ashamed that I have the face to talk about beautiful practices, when it is so plainly shown, to my confusion, that I do not even know what the beautiful itself is.

"And yet how are you to know," he will say,

"either who produced a discourse, or anything else whatsoever, beautifully, or not, when you are ignorant of the beautiful? And when you are in such a condition, do you think it is better for you to be alive than dead?" So it has come about, as I say, that I am abused and reviled by you and by him. But perhaps it is necessary to endure all this, for it is quite reasonable that I might be benefited by it. So I think, Hippias, that I have been benefited by conversation with both of you; for I think I know the meaning of the proverb "beautiful things are difficult."

[13] See 301 B.

This offline edition was generated from the canonical TEI text.

bookstacks.org