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Plato (c. 428-348 BCE)

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Hipparchus

Soc. And what is love of gain? What can it be, and who are the lovers of gain?

Fr. In my opinion, they are those who think it worth while to make gain out of things of no worth.

Soc. Is it your opinion that they know those things to be of no worth, or do not know? For if they do not know, you mean that the lovers of gain are fools.

Fr. No, I do not mean they are fools, but rascals who wickedly yield to gain, because they know that the things out of which they dare to make their gain are worthless, and yet they dare to be lovers of gain from mere shamelessness.

Soc. Well now, do you mean by the lover of gain such a man, for instance, as a farmer who plants something which he knows is a worthless herb, and thinks fit to make gain out of it when he has reared it up? Is that the sort of man you mean?

Fr. The lover of gain, as such, Socrates, thinks he ought to make gain from everything.

Soc. Please do not speak so recklessly, as though you had been wronged by someone, but give me your attention and answer just as you would if I were beginning my questions over again. Do you not admit that the lover of gain has knowledge of the worth of the thing from which he thinks it worth while to make gain?

Fr. I do.

Soc. Then who has knowledge of the worth of plants, and of the sort of season and soil in which they are worth planting—if we too may throw in one of those artful phrases [1] which adroit pleaders use

to trick out their speeches in the law courts?

Fr. For my part, I should say a farmer.

Soc. And by "think it worth while to make gain" do you mean aught but "thinking one ought to make gain"?

Fr. I mean that.

Soc. Then do not attempt to deceive me, who am now quite an elderly person, and you so young, by making, as you did just now, an answer that is not even your own thought; but tell me in all truth, do you suppose that any man who was taking up farming and who knew it was a worthless plant that he was planting, could think to make gain from it?

Fr. Upon my word, I do not.

Soc. Or again, take a horseman who knows that he is providing worthless food for his horse; do you suppose he is unaware that he is destroying his horse?

Fr. I do not.

Soc. So he does not think to make gain from that worthless food.

Fr. No.

Soc. Or again, take a navigator who has furnished his ship with worthless spars and ropes; do you think he is unaware that he will suffer for it, and will be in danger of being lost himself, and of losing the ship and all her cargo?

Fr. I do not.

Soc. So he does not think to make gain from that worthless tackle?

Fr. No, indeed.

Soc. But does a general, who knows that his army has worthless arms, think to make gain, or think it worth while to make gain, from them?

Fr. By no means.

Soc. Or does a flute-player who has worthless flutes, or a harper with a lyre, a bowman with a bow, or anyone else at all, in short, among ordinary craftsmen or sensible men in general, with any implement or other equipment of any sort that is worthless, think to make gain from it?

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[1] The "artful phrase" here is the jingling *ὥρᾳ καὶ χώρᾳ*, characteristic of the rhetoric taught by Gorgias and his followers.

Fr. To all appearance, no.

Soc. Then whoever can they be, your lovers of gain? For I presume they are not the people whom we have successively mentioned, but people who know their worthless things, and yet think they are to make gain from them. But in that case, by what you say, remarkable sir, no man alive is a lover of gain

Fr. Well, Socrates, I should like to call those lovers of gain who from insatiable greed consumedly long for things that are even quite petty and of little or no worth, and so love gain, in each case.

Soc. Not knowing, of course, my excellent friend, that the things are worthless; for we have already convinced ourselves by our argument that this is impossible.

Fr. I agree.

Soc. And if not knowing this, clearly they are ignorant of it, but think that those worthless things are worth a great deal.

Fr. Apparently.

Soc. Now, of course lovers of gain must love gain?

Fr. Yes.

Soc. And by gain you mean the opposite of loss?

Fr. I do.

Soc. And is it a good thing for anyone to suffer loss?

Fr. For no one.

Soc. Rather an evil?

Fr. Yes.

Soc. So mankind are harmed by loss.

Fr. They are harmed.

Soc. Then loss is an evil.

Fr. Yes.

Soc. And gain is the opposite of loss.

Fr. The opposite.

Soc. So that gain is a good.

Fr. Yes.

Soc. Hence it is those who love the good that you call lovers of gain.

Fr. So it seems.

Soc. At least there is nothing mad, my friend, about lovers of gain, as you describe them. But tell me, do you yourself love, or not love, whatever is good?

Fr. I love it.

Soc. And is there anything good that you do not love, or must it then be evil?

Fr. Upon my word, nothing.

Soc. In fact, I expect you love all good things.

Fr. Yes.

Soc. Well now, ask me on my side whether I do not likewise: for I shall agree with you, for my part, that I love good things. But besides you and me, do you not think that all the rest of mankind love good things, and hate evil things?

Fr. It appears so to me.

Soc. And we admitted that gain is good?

Fr. Yes.

Soc. On this new showing, everyone appears to be a lover of gain; whereas, by our former way of arguing, no one was a lover of gain. So on which of the two arguments are we to rely, in order to avoid error?

Fr. What has to be done, I think, Socrates, is to conceive the lover of gain rightly. The right view of the lover of gain is that he is one who concerns himself with, and thinks fit to make gain from, things from which honest men do not dare to make gain.

Soc. But you see, my sweet sir, we have just admitted that making gain is being benefited.

Fr. Well, what of that?

Soc. There is the further point we have admitted in addition to this—that all men wish for good things always.

Fr. Yes.

Soc. Then good men likewise wish to have all gains, if these are good things.

Fr. Not those gains from which they are bound, Socrates, to suffer harm.

Soc. By "suffer harm" do you mean "suffer loss," or something else?

Fr. No, I mean just "suffer loss."

Soc. Well, do men suffer loss from gain or from loss?

Fr. From both; for they suffer loss from loss and from wicked gain.

Soc. Pray now, do you consider that any useful and good thing is wicked?

Fr. I do not.

Soc. And we admitted a little while ago that gain is the opposite of loss, which is an evil.

Fr. I agree.

Soc. And that, being the opposite of an evil, it is good?

Fr. That was our admission.

Soc. So you see, you are attempting to deceive me, for you deliberately contradict what we agreed to just now.

Fr. No, on my honor, Socrates; on the contrary, it is you who are deceiving me, by twisting this way and that so perplexingly in your talk.

Soc. Hush, hush! Why, surely it would be wrong of me not to obey a good and wise person.

Fr. Who is that? And to what are you referring now?

Soc. I mean my and your fellow-citizen, Pisistratus's son Hipparchus, of Philaidae, who was the eldest and wisest of Pisistratus's sons, and who, among the many goodly proofs of wisdom that he showed, first brought the poems of Homer into this country of ours, and compelled the rhapsodes at the Panathenaea to recite them in relay, one man following on another, as they still do now. He dispatched a fifty-oared galley for Anacreon of Teos, and brought him into our city. Simonides of Ceos he always had about him, prevailing on him by plenteous fees and gifts. All this he did from a wish to educate the citizens, in order that he might have subjects of the highest excellence; for he thought it not right to grudge wisdom to any, so noble and good was he. And when his people in the city had been educated and were admiring him for his wisdom, he proceeded next, with the design of educating those of the countryside, to set up figures of Hermes for them along the roads in the midst of the city and every district town; and then, after selecting from his own wise lore, both learnt from others and discovered for himself, the things that he considered the wisest, he threw these into elegiac form and inscribed them on the figures as verses of his own and testimonies of his wisdom, so that in the first place his people should not admire those wise Delphic legends of ""Know thyself"" and ""Nothing overmuch"", and the other sayings of the sort, but should rather regard as wise the utterances of Hipparchus; and that in the second place, through passing up and down and reading his words and acquiring a taste for his wisdom, they might resort hither from the country for the completion of their education.

Soc. There are two such inscriptions of his: on the left side of each

Hermes there is one in which the god says that he stands in the midst of the city or the township, while on the right side he says: "The memorial of Hipparchus: walk with just intent." There are many other fine inscriptions from his poems on other figures of Hermes, and this one in particular, on the Steiria [2] road, in which he says: "The memorial of Hipparchus: deceive not a friend." I therefore should never dare, I am sure, to deceive you, who are my friend, or disobey the great Hipparchus, after whose death the Athenians were for three years under the despotic rule of his brother Hippias, and you might have heard anyone of the earlier period say that it was only in these years that there was despotism in Athens, [3] and that at all other times the Athenians lived very much as in the reign of Cronos. And the subtler sort of people say that Hipparchus's death was due, not to the cause supposed by most—the disqualification of the assassin's sister from bearing the basket, [4] for that is a silly motive—but because Harmodius had become the favorite of Aristogeiton and had been educated by him. Thus Aristogeiton also prided himself on educating people, and he regarded Hipparchus as a dangerous rival. And at that time, it is said, Harmodius happened to be himself in love with one of the handsome and well-born youths of the day; they do tell his name, but I cannot remember it. Well, for a while this youth admired both Harmodius and Aristogeiton as wise men, but afterwards, when he associated with Hipparchus, he despised them, and they were so overcome with the pain of this "disqualification" that they slew Hipparchus. [5]

Fr. It would seem, then, Socrates, either that you do not regard me as your friend, or if you do, that you do not obey Hipparchus. For that you are not deceiving me—though I cannot tell how you contrive it—in your talk, is more than I can believe.

Soc. Well now, as though we were playing draughts, I am willing to let you revoke, as you please, anything you have said in carrying on the discussion, in order that you may not think you are being deceived. So tell me, shall I revoke for you the statement that all men desire good things?

Fr. No, thank you.

[2] A town on the south-east coast of Attica.

[3] On this point the writer agrees with *Thuc. 6.59*, who gives what is now the accepted story of Harmodius and Aristogeiton.

[4] In the Panathenaic procession.

[5] This curious version of the fall of the Pisistratid rulers (Hippias and Hipparchus) seeks to explain the conspiracy as due to a rivalry in a sort of pre-Socratic influence over young men which arose between the citizen Aristogiton and the ruler Hipparchus.

Soc. Well, that suffering loss, or loss, is an evil?

Fr. No, thank you.

Soc. Well, that gain, or making gain, is the opposite of loss, or suffering loss?

Fr. Nor that either.

Soc. Well, that making gain, as the opposite of evil, is a good?

Fr. Nothing of all this do I bid you revoke for me.

Soc. You think, then, it seems, that some gain is good, and some evil.

Fr. I do.

Soc. Well then, I revoke so much for you; so let us assume that some gain is good, and some other gain evil. But the good sort is no more gain than the evil sort, is it?

Fr. What do you mean by this question?

Soc. I will explain. Is there both good and evil food?

Fr. Yes.

Soc. And is the one sort more food than the other, or are they both similarly this same thing, food, and in this respect does the one differ no wise from the other, in being food, but only in the fact of the one being good and the other evil?

Fr. Yes.

Soc. And so with drink and every other class of things that exist, when some things in any class come to be good, and others evil, one thing does not differ from another in that respect whereby they are the same? For instance, one man, I suppose, is virtuous, and another wicked.

Fr. Yes.

Soc. But neither of them, I conceive, is more or less man than the other—neither the virtuous than the wicked, nor the wicked than the virtuous.

Fr. What you say is true.

Soc. Then are we to take the same view of gain also, that both the wicked and the virtuous sort are similarly gain?

Fr. Necessarily.

Soc. So he who has virtuous gain is no whit the more a gainer than he who has wicked gain: neither sort is found to be more gain, as we agree.

Fr. Yes.

Soc. For neither of them has addition of either more or less.

Fr. No, indeed.

Soc. And how could one do or suffer anything more or less with a thing of this sort, that had neither of these additions?

Fr. Impossible.

Soc. Since, therefore, both of these are gains and gain-making affairs, we must now consider what it can be that leads you to call both of them gain: what is it that you see to be the same in both? Suppose you were to ask me, in those instances that I gave just now, what it is that leads me to call both good food and evil food alike food, I should tell you— for this reason, because both are a dry sustenance of the body. For that, I am sure you would agree, is what food is, would you not?

Fr. I would.

Soc. And so too about drink the answer would be on the same lines, that the wet sustenance of the body, whether it be wholesome or pernicious, has this name of drink; and likewise with the rest. Try therefore on your part to imitate my method of answering. When you say that virtuous gain and wicked gain are both gain, what is it that you see to be the same in them, judging it to be the actual element of gain? And if again you are yourself unable to answer, just let me put it for your consideration, whether you describe as gain every acquisition that one has acquired either with no expense, or as a profit over and above one's expense.

Fr. I believe that is what I call gain.

Soc. Do you include a case where, after enjoying a banquet at which one has had much good cheer without any expense, one acquires an illness?

Fr. Upon my word, not I.

Soc. And if one acquired health from attending a banquet, would one acquire gain or loss?

Fr. Gain.

Soc. Hence gain is not just acquiring any acquisition.

Fr. No, indeed.

Soc. Do you mean, not if it is evil? Or will one acquire no gain even if one acquires something good?

Fr. Apparently one will, if it is good.

Soc. And if it is evil, will not one acquire loss?

Fr. I think so.

Soc. You see, then, how you are running round again to the same old point? Gain is found to be good, and loss evil.

Fr. For my part, I cannot tell what to say.

Soc. And not without good reason, sir. Now answer this further question: you say that if one acquires more than the amount one has spent, it is gain?

Fr. I do not mean, when it is evil, but if one gets more gold or silver than one has spent.

Soc. Now, I am just going to ask you about that. Tell me, if one spends half a pound of gold and gets double that weight in silver, has one got gain or loss?

Fr. Loss, I presume, Socrates for one's gold is reduced to twice, instead of twelve times, the value of silver.

Soc. But you see, one has got more; or is double not more than half?

Fr. Not in worth, the one being silver and the other gold.

Soc. So gain, it seems, must have this addition of worth. At least, you now say that silver, though more than gold, is not worth as much, and that gold, though less, is of equal worth.

Fr. Assuredly, for that is the case.

Soc. Then the valuable is what produces gain, whether it be small or great, and the valueless produces no gain.

Fr. Yes.

Soc. And by the valuable you mean simply, valuable to possess?

Fr. Yes, to possess.

Soc. And again, by what is valuable to possess, do you mean the unprofitable or the profitable?

Fr. The profitable, I presume.

Soc. And the profitable is good?

Fr. Yes.

Soc. And so, most valiant of men, have we not here once more, for the third or fourth time, the admission that what produces gain is good?

Fr. So it seems.

Soc. Then do you remember the point from which this discussion of ours arose?

Fr. I think I do.

Soc. In case you do not, I will remind you. You maintained against

me that good men do not wish to make all sorts of gain, but only those gains that are good, and not those that are wicked.

Fr. Yes.

Soc. And now the argument has compelled us to acknowledge that all gains, both small and great, are good?

Fr. Yes, it has compelled me, at least, Socrates, rather than persuaded me.

Soc. Well, later on, perhaps, it might also persuade you. Now, however, whether you are persuaded or whatever is your feeling, you at least agree with me that all gains are good, both small and great ones.

Fr. Yes, I do admit it.

Soc. And you admit that virtuous men all wish for all good things, do you not?

Fr. I do.

Soc. But, you know, you stated yourself that wicked men love both small and great gains.

Fr. I did.

Soc. And so, by your account, all men will be lovers of gain, whether they be virtuous or wicked.

Fr. Apparently.

Soc. Hence it is not right to reproach anybody with being a lover of gain: for he who makes this reproach is actually such an one himself.

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