

Hippias Major - An Update to the Interpretation

1. Introduction

My MA thesis, submitted in 1986, offered a purely structural analysis of the dialogue *Hippias Major*. Setting aside the controversy over its authenticity, I concentrated on the dialogue's internal organization. A revised and expanded version of that study was published as a book in 1991. The present study reformulates my account of *Hippias Major* in light of my subsequent analyses of other Platonic dialogues. It modifies, but does not replace, the findings of my 1991 book, especially with regard to the dialogue's ontology.

In 1991, I described the characters as stable, unchanging models reflecting a central concept. I would now describe them more precisely as *deigmata* of *paradeigmata* of *eidē* of an *idea*, which I shall now explain.

Two Greek terms derive from an Indo-European stem that also gives the Latin verb *video*, "to see". These terms are *idea* and *eidos*, both meaning "aspect". The *idea* is a general aspect, while the *eidos* is a sub-aspect. An *idea* may be divided into a number of *eidē* or sub-aspects according to a criterion, whereby the sub-aspects together complete the *idea*. An *idea* is the general aspect present in all particulars that share it. An *eidos* is a sub-aspect present in a subset of the particulars of an *idea*, distinguished from other subsets by an additional feature common to the members of that subset alone. The *idea* "animal", for example, may be arranged according to the criterion of habitat to comprise the *eidē* or sub-aspects: animal of the air, animal of the land, and animal of the water.

A *paradeigma* is a minimal concrete representation of an *eidos*, but does not itself participate in the dialogue. To continue the example just given, the *paradeigmata* would be a nondescript animal of the air, animal of the land, and animal of the water.

A *deigma* in a Platonic dialogue is effectively a *paradeigma* with additional individuating features, creating not merely a subspecies such as a parrot, a dog, or a fish, but an individual such as Polly, Fido, or Wanda. These individuals have inessential details added to the specific features of their respective *eidē*, while all of them together reveal the generic feature or features of the *idea*.

This refinement of my earlier position is not merely terminological. The former language of “models of concepts” implied abstraction and representation. A concept resides in the mind and is an abstraction from features common to a group of similar particulars, whereas an *idea* and indeed an *eidos* are the external commonality independent of an observer. The notion of characters as “models” leaves the extent of artistic leeway unclear, whereas the notion of *deigmata* clearly demarcates the essential from the inessential.

The present account draws on the explicit language used by Socrates in *Politeia*, a dialogue dramatizing, among other things, the nature of early Platonic dialogues. It is therefore not an anachronistic imposition on *Hippias Major*, or indeed on the other early dialogues analysed here.

2. The Aspects

My original analysis distinguished between the Good and the Fine, as the Fitting and the apparently fitting, and this distinction still stands. There is, however, much to be clarified.

The Good, *to agathon*, is the Fitting, *to prepon*, and this is the primary *idea* being dramatized in the dialogue. That is to say, the dialogue is ultimately a dramatization of the Good. This *idea* is to be found in all particulars which are fitting, whether they are instantiations of concrete or abstract fittingness. Concrete instantiations are sensible, whether sensed or not, and abstract instantiations are intelligible, whether intelligized or not.

the Fine, *to kalon*, is the Apparently Fitting, *to phainomenon prepon*. This *idea* follows necessarily from the first. Fitting particulars actually sensed and actually intelligized constitute two sub-aspects of this *idea*, since they are apparently fitting particulars. However, another sub-aspect consists in merely opined fitting particulars. These include (1) fitting particulars that are sensed but assumed to be something other than sensed (for example, a handsome man who, because he is handsome, is assumed to be beneficial); (2) merely conventionally fitting particulars (for example, a socially fitting person); and (3) conventionally fitting particulars assumed, because of their status, to be beneficial.

3. The *Paradeigmata*

There are two sub-aspects of the *idea* of the Good and three sub-aspects of the *idea* of the Fine. In principle, we might therefore expect five *paradeigmata*, since each of these sub-aspects should be dramatized:

- The Sensible Fitting Particular - a well-structured person. His parts fit the whole.
- The Intelligible Fitting Particular - a person fitting some goal.
- The Sensed Fitting Particular - a fine, good-looking, well-sounding person. The Sophist
- The Intelligized Fitting Particular - a beneficial person. The Dialectician
- The Opined Fitting Particular - a person wrongly construed to be fitting. The Sophist

We might also expect five other *paradeigmata*, to dramatize the unfitting:

- The Sensible Unfitting Particular - a badly-structured person. His parts do not fit the whole.
- The Intelligible Unfitting Particular - a person unfitting for some goal.
- The Sensed Unfitting Particular - an ugly uncouth person.
- The Intelligized Unfitting Particular - a harmful person.
- The Opined Unfitting Particular - a person wrongly construed to be unfitting.

However, the dialogue cannot dramatize the actually fitting or unfitting. Fittingness can only appear to the reader, as indeed to any animal in this world. The sensible and intelligible fittingness of the Good itself therefore cannot be presented directly. Only the three modes in which fittingness and unfittingness appear - sensed, intelligized, and opined - can be dramatized. The ten possible *paradeigmata* are therefore reduced to six.

Plato distributes these six *paradeigmata* between the two active participants in a philosophically striking way. The pattern is made explicit in *Politeia*, in Glaucon's speech in Book II. In order to assess the worth of living a just life, Glaucon suggests that Socrates compare a just person who appears unjust with an unjust person who appears just. In *Hippias*

Major, an earlier dialogue, the thought experiment is carried out without anyone making it explicit.

The Intelligized Fitting Particular is at the same time the Sensed and Opined Unfitting Particular, while the Intelligized Unfitting Particular is the Sensed and Opined Fitting Particular. These compound paradeigmata are the Dialectician and the Sophist, respectively. They are extreme characters, but they accurately portray the misconstrual which not only may occur, but actually did occur, given the mechanics of the Good as it is and as it appears.

4. The *Deigma*

The two *Hippias* dialogues are distinguished by their length - *Minor* and *Major* - while the speakers themselves, Hippias and Socrates, are overtly the same in both dialogues. The dialogues, however, dramatize different *ideai*: *Hippias Minor* dramatizes ability, while *Hippias Major* dramatizes apparent fittingness. We find in *Hippias Major* that ability of any sort is just one aspect of apparent fittingness. Thus *Hippias Major*, evidently written later, does not contradict *Hippias Minor*, but develops it. The *deigmata*, reflecting different *ideai*, necessarily differ from one dialogue to the other.

The Sophist is Hippias of Elis. In *Hippias Minor* he is a *deigma* of the *paradeigma* representing technical ability whose end is the appearance of benefit. In *Hippias Major*, Hippias becomes a *deigma* of the *paradeigma* representing the misconstrual of sensed and opined fittingness as practical fittingness.

The Dialectician is Socrates. In *Hippias Minor* he is a *deigma* of the *paradeigma* appearing to the Many to lack ability, since the *technē* of dialectic is unknown to them and Socrates appears quite the opposite of the socially able Eudicus and the technically able Hippias. In *Hippias Major*, the *deigma* Socrates is expanded to represent the *paradeigma* of the misconstrual of sensed and opined unfittingness as practical unfittingness.

In my thesis and subsequently in my 1991 book, I referred to two other figures as completing the cast of *Hippias Major*, namely the Many and the Questioner. While they are indeed required for our understanding of the dynamics of the dialogue, they are not present in

the conversation in the way that Socrates and Hippias are.

Socrates and Hippias are alone. Without the Many in the philosophical background, however, there would be no Hippias, and no misconstrual of apparent fittingness. It is the Many who opine fittingness, and it is the Many who confuse sensed and opined fittingness with practical fittingness. It is this confusion which Hippias exploits in order to appear practically fitting to his audience. The Many therefore function as an absent *deigma*, comparable to the poets and fathers of timocrats in *Politeia*: they do not appear in the conversation, yet their presence is structurally required for the phenomenon being dramatized. Hippias and the Many may thus be regarded as the two sides of the same misconstrual of apparent fittingness, the Many passively opining it and Hippias actively exploiting it.

The Questioner is of a different nature. He is a device invented by Socrates. The Questioner combines the questioning of the Dialectician with the underhand tactics of the Sophist as eristician. Socrates himself is capable of using eristic techniques, but never with the intention of winning a debate. The Questioner, by contrast, actually defeats Hippias eristically. Such a figure cannot be a *deigma*. A *deigma* represents a single intelligible orientation, whereas the Questioner embodies two diametrically opposing motivations: the dialectical search for truth and the eristic desire to prevail precisely at the expense of truth and logic. He must therefore be understood as a dramatic device invented by the Dialectician in his treatment of the Sophist.

Why is the Questioner necessary? Hippias is an unwavering representation of the appearance of fittingness and, as such, is unable to participate in a conversation in which he might appear less than fitting. It is for this reason that Socrates praises Hippias continuously. At the same time, Socrates must attempt to cause Hippias to think critically or dialectically, using his usual method of confronting his interlocutor with his own internal inconsistencies. The counter-criterion of wisdom which Socrates establishes in the first phase of the conversation is one method. Socrates, however, wishes to engage Hippias in an extended discussion of *to kalon* itself and to exploit this discussion in order to confront Hippias with evidence refuting his claims to excellence, and this is where the Questioner becomes

particularly useful.

Socrates enlists Hippias as the excellent teacher of eristics who will rid him of a ruffian who keeps questioning him about his claims regarding *to kalon*, the Fine. The ruffian is the one we call the Questioner, a character who eristically vilifies and refutes Socrates for things which Hippias himself has taught him to say. A less deigmatic person might realize that the criticism is levelled against him, but Hippias is satisfied that Socrates accepts all the blame and continues to treat Hippias as a trustworthy and decent authority.

5. The Conversation

My analysis of the arguments of the dialogue remains essentially unchanged from that presented in my thesis and in my 1991 book. I shall present the drama with the hindsight of that analysis; for the detective work leading from the confusing conversation to the governing *idea*, the reader is invited to consult the book. My aim here is to interpret the dialogue in terms of *deigmata*, whose use yields a cleaner interpretation than the “models” employed in my earlier work.

When I analyse a dialogue I insist on restricting references to other dialogues, since each drama should be understood in its own right. I do not break that rule by beginning here with *Hippias Minor*. I have analysed both the *Hippias* independently, and the conclusions reached in each case are not altered. *Hippias Major* was written after *Hippias Minor*, as may be seen from the *ideai* governing the dialogues. *Hippias Minor* concerns *dynamis* (power or ability) misconstrued as beneficial; *Hippias Major* includes *dynamis* as one facet within a much larger demonstration of sensed and opined good misconstrued as beneficial.

There is reason to believe that the dialogues are not simply complementary. Plato allows the reader to see *Hippias Major* as a development of *Hippias Minor*. Simply having the same interlocutor in both dialogues, however, is insufficient justification for comparison. Socrates appears in many dialogues, but it would be disastrous for the understanding of any one dialogue to import features attributed to him from others. The present case is different. In *Hippias Minor*, Hippias is portrayed as having just given an exhibition in Athens of many of his abilities, during which event he evidently referred to Nestor as the most expert

(*sophōtatos*). In *Hippias Major*, Hippias invites Socrates to hear a speech in which Nestor tells Neoptolemus how to acquire a good reputation. Plato could have had Hippias refer to something entirely different had he not wished the reader to make a connection between the two dialogues. It is therefore worth taking a closer look at this speech and what it tells us about Hippias as a *deigma*.

The first point to appreciate is that the display speech dramatically takes on a life of its own beyond either dialogue. The dramatist assures us that Hippias is not distorting the essence of the speech, since he has Hippias invite Socrates to come to the performance and hear it for himself. At the time of writing *Hippias Minor*, the reference to Nestor almost certainly did not refer to this particular speech, but Plato has reused that reference from the earlier dialogue. We must now, in *Hippias Major*, accept that Socrates will hear this speech by Nestor to Neoptolemus in an exhibition which will display Hippias' many abilities.

Hippias might at first appear to be describing the speech as belonging to the tradition of wisdom literature, in which a wise old man imparts sage advice to a young man. He is in fact saying something else (286a8-b2):

ἐπειδὴ ἡ Τροία ἦλω, λέγει ὁ λόγος ὅτι Νεοπτόλεμος Νέστορα
ἔροιτο ποῖά ἐστι καλὰ ἐπιτηδεύματα, ἃ ἂν τις ἐπιτηδεύσας νέος
ὦν εὐδοκιμώτατος γένοιτο.

When Troy was taken, the story goes that Neoptolemus asked Nestor what kinds of practices are *kala*, whereby a young man practising them would become most well-reputed.

Hippias has selected two characters who might be expected to fulfil the roles of teacher and pupil: Nestor was famed for his advanced old age, and old age was equated with experience; Neoptolemus is therefore the logical recipient of this experience, being one of the youngest characters in all of Homer's poems. Interestingly, Neoptolemus does not ask how to become good, but how to become most well-reputed, which is the result of appearing good. Nestor obliges, and explains how one is to appear to be good (286b2-4):

μετὰ ταῦτα δὴ λέγων ἐστὶν ὁ Νέστωρ καὶ ὑποτιθέμενος αὐτῷ
πάμπολλα νόμιμα καὶ πάγκαλα.

After this, Nestor is the one speaking and teaching him a great many customary and totally *kala* things.

One appears to be good by doing *kala*, and we learn that these fine things are the customary things which the Many expect of those who fit in, those they consider to be good. Doing *kala* things is assumed by the Many to be beneficial, and it is this assumption which leads to a good reputation. The Many, however, are incapable of grasping what is truly beneficial. The deeds they sense as good are merely beautiful, socially appropriate, or technically proficient. Hippias here concentrates on the socially appropriate.

Hippias concludes with a remark revealing not only the brilliance of the speech, but also the nature of his *deigma* (286a4-5):

ἠὺδοκίμησα διεξιῶν ἅ χρῆ τὸν νέον ἐπιτηδεύειν.

I was well-reputed for recounting in full those things which the young man should practise.

In the very act of teaching apparent *aretē*, Hippias is guaranteed to appear to possess *aretē*, whether in Sparta or in Athens. This is a masterstroke, but a necessary one for a *deigma* representing the misconstrual of sensed and opined good as beneficial.

As the perfect representation of this misconstrual, Hippias must also suffer from it. He believes that he possesses a *technē* of appearing beneficial through the exploitation of things sensed and opined good by the Many, and this itself is a misconstrual. A *technē* is a means to a good or bad end, depending on the intention of the *technitēs*, the craftsman: a physician, for example, may intentionally heal or kill. Hippias' *technē*, however, is directed only toward appearance. Furthermore, appearance itself is bad insofar as it deceives; at its most extreme, this apparent *technē* of apparent *aretē* is sophistry, which actively causes great harm through the undermining of logic and critical thinking.

Ordinary sophistry already tends toward this harmful end, but Plato ensures that Hippias reflects consistently and accurately the worst elements of sophistry precisely because he is a *deigma* of the misconstrual of sensed and opined good as beneficial. Thus, Hippias consistently appears beneficial to the Many. Socrates, by contrast, as a *deigma* of the misconstrual of sensed and opined badness as harmful, is necessarily sensed and opined as

bad, and must also be the truly beneficial dialectician, the diametrical opposite of the sophist. He consistently attempts to provoke logical and critical thinking in his interlocutor.

Socrates will not know that he is a *deigma*, or that Hippias is a *deigma*, since they are not reading a Platonic dialogue. Socrates, however, the extreme dialectician, will be able to predict every step but one of the conversation precisely because he understands that Hippias will attempt at every stage to appear beneficial to his audience, which in this case is Socrates alone. The one unpredictable step would be that Hippias might begin to think critically after one or other dialectical shock, but this is an event which never comes.

Socrates, being the sole audience for Hippias, is at liberty to appear to have whatever criterion of the good he wishes, knowing that Hippias will adopt it in order to appear good to him. Plato thus ensures that Hippias, the *deigma* of the Fine misconstrued as beneficial, must consistently attempt to appear beneficial to Socrates, while Socrates, the *deigma* of the base misconstrued as harmful, appears worthless to Hippias through his habitual self-abasement.

When Socrates greets Hippias at the beginning of the dialogue, both *deigmata* are already fully functional, and they never waver throughout the conversation. Socrates appears to admire Hippias, and Hippias immediately adopts what he takes to be Socrates' criterion of expertise, since an expert appears beneficial. Socrates' greeting may easily be seen as natural and normal, as if Socrates is merely delighted to see some old friend he has not seen for a long time, but it is now obvious that Socrates is already allowing Hippias to adapt himself to his audience's apparent criterion of expertise (281a1-2):

Ἰππίας ὁ καλός τε καὶ σοφός· ὥς διὰ χρόνου ἡμῖν κατῆρας εἰς
τάς Ἀθήνας.

Hippias, the *kalos* and *sophos* (expert)! How long it's been
since you put in to Athens!

The greeting tells Hippias that Socrates sees him as fine and expert, and that he expects a particular expertise to explain what has kept him away from Athens for so long. We see that this is what Hippias understands from the greeting by the way he finishes off his long reply (281b3-4):

διὸ δὴ, ὃ σὺ ἐρωτᾷς, οὐ θαμίζω εἰς τούσδε τοὺς τόπους.

That, to answer your question, is why I don't come to these

parts often.

Hippias appears to have answered the implied question, “Why haven’t you been to Athens for a long time?” It would have been sufficient to explain that he is engaged for much of the time as an ambassador for his city Elis in cities other than Athens. He does say this, but he adds much more, although he concludes as if this were all he had said. Here is what he actually does say (281a3-b4):

Οὐ γὰρ σχολή, ὦ Σώκρατες. ἢ γὰρ Ἑλις ὅταν τι δέηται διαπράξασθαι πρὸς τινα τῶν πόλεων, ἀεὶ ἐπὶ πρῶτον ἐμὲ ἔρχεται τῶν πολιτῶν αἰρουμένη πρεσβευτήν, ἡγουμένη δικαστήν καὶ ἄγγελον ἰκανώτατον εἶναι τῶν λόγων οἱ ἂν παρὰ τῶν πόλεων ἐκάστων λέγονται. πολλάκις μὲν οὖν καὶ εἰς ἄλλας πόλεις ἐπρέσβευσα, πλεῖστα δὲ καὶ περὶ πλείστων καὶ μεγίστων εἰς τὴν Λακεδαιμόνα· διὸ δὴ, ὃ σὺ ἐρωτᾷς, οὐ θαμίζω εἰς τοῦσδε τοὺς τόπους.

No free time, Socrates. For whenever Elis needs to work out business with another city, she always comes first to me from among the citizens in choosing an ambassador, considering me to be the most capable judge and messenger of those words spoken by each of the cities. Often, then, have I been on missions to cities, but most often, and on the most and greatest affairs, to Sparta. That, to answer your question, is why I don’t come to these parts often.

Hippias is not explaining why he has not been to Athens for so long, but why Socrates is right to consider him *kalos* and *sophos*, due to the *sophia* which has kept him away from Athens for so long. Socrates responds appropriately, apparently impressed (281b5-6):

Τοιοῦτον μέντοι, ὦ Ἰππία, ἔστι τὸ τῆ ἀληθείᾳ σοφόν τε καὶ τέλειον ἄνδρα εἶναι.

That indeed, Hippias, is what it is really like to be an expert and accomplished man.

We may appreciate that Socrates, by remarking how long it has been since Hippias visited Athens, obliges Hippias (not that he needs much obliging) to think of a grand expertise that would both impress Socrates and explain his long absence from the city. Being an ambassador for Elis is the obvious choice. Furthermore, however, given that Hippias wishes to appear as beneficial as possible, he emphasizes that he is frequently sent to the greatest of the Dorian cities, Sparta. All this would have been predictable, given what Socrates knows about Hippias.

It is now a simple matter for Socrates to set up another criterion of expertise by which frequent visits to Sparta will appear to be a sign of extreme stupidity. How could Hippias appear stupid according to the current criterion? Frequent trips to Sparta as an ambassador for one's city are admirable so long as the criterion is being an ambassador. Hippias not only adopts this criterion, but immediately presents himself as the best according to it.

It would be the height of stupidity, however, to be an ambassador frequently in Sparta and yet fail to exploit the position in order to make money privately. At least, it would be the height of stupidity if the criterion were the exploitation of one's public position for private gain as a teacher of rhetoric. Yet, as Hippias himself is obliged to admit, the Spartans do not pay foreigners for education. Socrates therefore begins to shift his apparent criterion of expertise to include precisely this exploitation of office. At every step Hippias adopts the new criterion and presents himself as the best according to it.

It may be helpful to follow the whole process by which Socrates establishes and then shifts the apparent criterion of expertise. This part of the dialogue belongs to the non-philosophical preamble. It is therefore not a matter for debate whether Plato the philosopher is making some mistake or advancing a bold thesis. Plato clearly intends this part of the dialogue to show beyond doubt that the claims made by Socrates and Hippias are plainly nonsensical. The *deigmata* continue in this vein in the so-called philosophical part as well, but there it becomes more difficult for some philosophers to distinguish nonsense from Platonism.

The first line of Socrates' response would appear to be a confirmation of Hippias' expertise according to the political criterion encouraged by Socrates and actually employed by Hippias, but if we read on we note a subtle shift of emphasis away from the purely political (281b5-c3):

Τοιοῦτον μέντοι, ὦ Ἰππία, ἔστι τὸ τῆ ἀληθείᾳ σοφὸν τε καὶ τέλειον ἄνδρα εἶναι. σὺ γὰρ καὶ ἰδίᾳ ἰκανὸς εἶ παρὰ τῶν νέων πολλὰ χρήματα λαμβάνων ἔτι πλείω ὠφελεῖν ὧν λαμβάνεις, καὶ αὖ δημοσίᾳ τὴν σαντοῦ πόλιν ἰκανὸς εὐεργετεῖν, ὥσπερ χρῆ τὸν μέλλοντα μὴ καταφρονήσεσθαι ἀλλ' εὐδοκμήσειν ἐν τοῖς πολλοῖς.

Such indeed, Hippias, is what it truly is to be an expert and accomplished man. For in your private capacity you are capable, while taking much money from young men, of benefitting them even more than you receive; and again, in your public capacity you are capable of benefitting your own city, as befits one who is not to be despised but to enjoy a good reputation among the Many.

Socrates makes it clear what Hippias is about. Hippias does what he does in order not to be despised but rather in order to have a good reputation. While making this point explicit so soon at the beginning of the dialogue, Socrates is also beginning to change the criterion by which Hippias is to be not despised but be well reputed among the Many. Socrates still pretends to regard Hippias as beneficial, which is essential if Hippias is to continue talking to him, but the admiration is due to Hippias not only benefitting his city by being an ambassador, but also by earning money privately. Socrates appears to be impressed that an ambassador in a public capacity effectively advertises himself so that he might earn money for teaching rhetoric in a private capacity. We may note that Socrates allows Hippias to consider the problem that “the Many” in this case is Socrates alone. Hippias is not in fact appearing beneficial to the Many, but only to his immediate audience. What would happen if the Many had an opinion of him at odds with the current criterion he has adopted from his

immediate audience?

Socrates addresses this problem, which Hippias evidently has not asked himself, by perverting the unassailable reputation of traditionally outstanding people famous for their technical ability. Why, asks Socrates, with obvious disdain, do the legendary craftsmen seem to have kept away from politics (281c3-8). Hippias picks up on the new criterion, taking advantage of Socrates' apparent ignorance (these men of old actually did benefit their cities, but they did not earn money in a private capacity), rather than countering it. He asserts that the men of old were incapable of embracing both public and private affairs (c9-d2). Socrates is to understand that Hippias agrees with him, that sophists are capable of embracing both public and private affairs. We learn that Hippias is unconcerned by the fickleness of reputation, and this is not because he is an idiot, but because he is concerned, expert and deigma that he is, with the criterion of his current audience.

Socrates now proceeds to pin Hippias to this new criterion of apparent benefit by suggesting that the ability to encompass both public and private affairs is the very essence of the sophists' *technē*. It is because of this ability that their *technē* is superior to any earlier *technē*. He chooses the legendary figures of Bias, a fabled legislator, and Daedalus, a sculptor of statues so lifelike that they appeared to move. Bias is implicitly treated by Socrates as if he were a practitioner of *politikē technē*; Socrates suggests that Bias would be as much of a laughing stock to the sophists (implicitly, therefore, also practitioners of *politikē technē*) as Daedalus would be to present day sculptors (281d3-282a3). Hippias thinks that he continues to appear beneficial to Socrates by agreeing with this nonsense. Note the early introduction of the laughing stock motif, which becomes the lynch-pin of the "philosophical" discussion on the Fine.

Socrates now concentrates on the sophists, describing how Gorgias and Prodicus both came on diplomatic missions to Athens recently, where they took advantage of the reputation thus gained to associate with the youth of the city, resulting in the acquisition of vast sums of money in exchange for private displays (282b1-c6). The apparent greatness of the sophists' *technē* has shifted from its ability to embrace public and private benefit to the amount of money to be earned privately (*χρήματα πολλά, χρήματα θαυμαστά ὅσα*) from this *technē*

which now clearly exploits the civic aspect of the *technē* as a form of advertising. As if to drive home the point, he then sneers at the ancients for their failure to give private displays of their wisdom in exchange for money (282c6-d3), by which point the pecuniary criterion has clearly become a major part of the technical, sophistic, criterion of apparent benefit (282d1-3):

οὕτως ἦσαν εὐήθεις καὶ ἐλελήθη αὐτοὺς ἀργύριον ὡς πολλοῦ
ἄξιον εἶη.

... that's how foolish they were, and they did not realize that
money was of great value.

Socrates continues the elevation of the pecuniary criterion of apparent benefit within the sophistic criterion of apparent benefit by praising the sophists' *technē* as if it excels all other *technai* in profitability. He openly praises Gorgias and Prodicus, and then recalls Protagoras, almost as an afterthought. This skilful device prompts Hippias to position himself as the best in the eyes of his audience of one. Socrates is manifestly impressed by men who have earned a fortune from the sophists' *technē*.

Hippias accordingly produces a farcical story intended to show his superiority over Protagoras, whom Socrates has just mentioned with apparent admiration. Protagoras, says Hippias, was already old, with a great reputation, and living in Sicily when Hippias visited that island; yet despite Protagoras, Hippias managed to procure a not inconsiderable sum of money in a short time (282d6-e4). He adds that all this money he gave away to his father, noting that his father and all the other citizens were amazed and dumbfounded. Despite the red herrings of filial piety and generosity, Hippias returns to Socrates' apparent criterion by concluding that he believes he has earned more money than any two other sophists together (e6-8).

The counter-criterion has now been sufficiently established, and willingly adopted by Hippias, so that Socrates could easily raise the question of Hippias' embassies to Sparta and hope to have Hippias reconsider his life. Socrates chooses instead to shut down the attempt to appear generous and pious. The criterion must be understood by Hippias to concern money-making only.

Remarking on the example Hippias has given of his expertise, Socrates compares it with an example of the ancients' folly (πολλή ἀμαθία, 283a3). Anaxagoras is said to have neglected the riches bequeathed to him, and lost them all. Similar stories can be told of other ancients. Socrates' appears to believe that folly may be judged by the loss of money. Hippias must conclude that Socrates thinks expertise involves earning and actually keeping money. Hippias has to hope that Socrates does not recall how he stupidly gave his money away to his father. Interestingly, Diogenes Laertius II.7 relates not that Anaxagoras lost his wealth, but that he gave it away to his relatives - a remarkable parallel to the story recounted by Hippias.

Before springing his trap, Socrates needs to set it as clearly as possible for an interlocutor as impervious to critical thinking as Hippias (283b2-3):

τούτου δ' ὅρος ἔστιν ἄρα, ὃς ἂν πλεῖστον ἀργύριον ἐργάσεται.

This, then, is the definition of him, whoever earns the most money.

The definition of the expert sophist is the one who earns the most, or very much, money. This is the criterion Hippias needs to work with. It should, therefore, bother him not a little when Socrates now chooses to return to the state of affairs which Hippias had formerly been so proud of, his frequent visits to Sparta (283b3-6):

καὶ ταῦτα μὲν ἱκανῶς ἐχέτω· τόδε δέ μοι εἰπέ, σὺ αὐτὸς πόθεν πλεῖστον ἀργύριον ἠργάσω τῶν πόλεων εἰς ἃς ἀφικνῆ; ἢ δῆλον ὅτι ἐκ Λακεδαιμόνος, οἷπερ καὶ πλειστάκις ἀφῖξαι;

And enough about this. But tell me; from which of the cities you visit did you make most money? Isn't it clear that it was from Sparta, where you also most often visited?

Of course, Hippias earns no money in Sparta, since the Spartans regard education as a civic obligation intended to raise boys for military service. Rhetoric and other new-fangled academic fields, such as advanced mathematics, are not high on their list of priorities. Logically, he should suppose that Socrates regards him as an absolute failure, given that he makes no money at all from exploiting the public aspect of his *technē* for private gain. Why does Hippias make no attempt during the preceding conversation to head off this question,

and why does he seem unaffected by it even now?

The answer appears to be that Hippias sees no need to avoid the new criterion despite the obvious difficulty it creates for him. He assumes that Socrates is too stupid to realize what the criterion entails, exactly as we would expect considering what Socrates' *deigma* represents. Socrates overtly behaves in a way calculated to make Hippias believe that he has before him the most admiring audience he has ever had. Hippias sees and hears an adulatory audience, and fails to use his intelligence to realize that he cannot but appear ridiculous. This accords with his *deigma*, which represents sensed and opined, rather than intelligized, fittingness. Hippias therefore responds to the way his audience looks and sounds rather than intellectually to the criteria they actually hold, unless those criteria are explicitly voiced - as Socrates has done in the gradual slide from his first criterion to the ultimate counter-criterion.

After Hippias' revelation that he earns no money whatsoever in Sparta, Socrates expresses great surprise; but instead of concluding that Hippias is stupid, as a normal person holding that counter-criterion would need to do, he unleashes a string of questions in an attempt to discover who or what is responsible for withholding payment from Hippias. Hippias finally explains why he earns no money in Sparta, but he adds a rider which reveals that the financial criterion of wisdom is still very much on his mind (284c5-9):

ἀλλὰ ξενικὴν παιδεύειν οὐ νόμιμον αὐτοῖς παιδεύειν, ἐπεὶ εὖ ἴσθι, εἴπερ τις ἄλλος ἐκεῖθεν χρήματα ἔλαβεν πώποτε ἐπὶ παιδεύσει, καὶ ἐμὲ ἂν λαβεῖν πολὺ μάλιστα - χαίρουσι γοῦν ἀκούοντες ἐμοῦ καὶ ἐπαινοῦσιν - ἀλλ' ὃ λέγω, οὐ νόμος.

But to teach a foreign education is not customary for them, since be sure that if anybody else had ever taken from there money for education, I would have taken by far the most - they really enjoy hearing me, and they praise me - but, as I say, it isn't customary.

Were it not for Spartan law, Hippias would appear to be most expert at the sophists' *technē*, since he would exploit public duty to make the most private gain. Attention is thus diverted from Hippias' actual shortcoming - that he earns no money in Sparta - to his potential

excellence - that he would earn the most money there - by scapegoating a third party: Spartan law. In a nice touch, we see that Hippias does not offend against Spartan custom by demanding payment. He practises what he preaches by adopting behaviour that is fine and customary wherever he happens to be. It does not concern him that this means behaving differently in different places and before different audiences.

While Hippias is careful to fit in with conventions and members of his immediate audience, it means that he is also liable to grossly offend the very same conventions and people when he has to cater to another audience. Take, for example, what now happens in his conversation with Socrates. Of course, what happens is engineered by Socrates deliberately in order to create the greatest *volte face* possible in the hopes that this will cause Hippias to ponder his behaviour, and of course, Hippias sees only that Socrates is arguing in his favour, and he sees no reason to object, leading to the Spartans being portrayed as lawbreakers precisely because they do not pay Hippias. Socrates begins by distinguishing between Law, which is always beneficial to a city, and laws enacted by statesmen, which may be beneficial, but which may also be harmful when the law-givers err from Law (284d1-e1). As Hippias points out, this is not the way people commonly talk about it, but he is soon persuaded to accept Socrates' point of view (284e1-9). Having agreed that Law is beneficial, they then agree that Hippias' teaching is beneficial (284e10-285b1). The Spartans' law forbidding (beneficial) teaching by Hippias is therefore an aberration from Law, so we would expect the logical conclusion that the Spartans are Law-breakers. Socrates' conclusion, however, is ambiguous (285b1-3):

Παρανομοῦσιν ἄρα Λακεδαιμόνιοι οὐ δίδόντες σοι χρυσίον καὶ
ἐπιτρέποντες τοὺς αὐτῶν υἱεῖς.

So the Spartans are law/Law-breaking by not giving you money
and entrusting their sons to you.

The strength of the argument lies in the ambiguity of the compound verb, as I have indicated in my translation. While logically the Spartans are breaking Law, the point of the argument would require the conclusion that the Spartans are breaking the law, and Socrates appears to be saying that the Spartans are acting like common criminals by failing to give Hippias

money and entrust their sons to him. Hippias had used Spartan law as the scapegoat to divert attention from his own shortcoming; Socrates uses the Spartans themselves. Socrates' defence of Hippias is stronger, since he vilifies and condemns the scapegoat for its alleged wrongs against Hippias. Hippias would be seen to be most beneficial (by earning most money) in Sparta, were it not for the Spartans themselves who prevent him, and thus show themselves to be common criminals.

Hippias and Socrates speak of the Spartans as forbidding foreign education, yet we have already heard Hippias claim that the Spartans enjoy listening to him, and praise him (284c5-9). It is as if the refusal to pay Hippias nullifies whatever it is that Hippias teaches them as education. Now that it has been established that the Spartans are breaking the law by failing to pay Hippias and entrust him with their sons, Socrates returns to Hippias' boast that the Spartans enjoy listening to him, and asks Hippias what the Spartans praise him for, and what they enjoy listening to (285b7-8). Although education has been ruled out, Socrates runs through the list of educational subjects in which he knows Hippias is outstanding. Hippias, seeing and hearing that he appears to be beneficial to Socrates, does not interject and say once more that foreign education is unlawful in Sparta. Instead, he makes disparaging remarks about the Spartans' capacity for technical subjects such as those in which he is expert: they can't abide astronomy, he says; as for geometry, many of them can't even count; so, prompts Socrates, they are far from tolerating arithmetic; and Hippias recoils at the idea that they might enjoy euphony lessons (285b7-d3). It transpires that the Spartans enjoy listening to Hippias relating the genealogies of men and heroes, telling foundation stories, and recounting history in general - it is because of the Spartans that Hippias has had to learn up on these subjects (d3-e2).

Although Socrates' questions draw out the fact that Hippias does not teach at Sparta any of the exact sciences in which he is expert, owing to a lack of interest on the part of his audience, they also indicate an assumption on Socrates' part that Hippias must nevertheless teach something there. Hippias is therefore obliged to satisfy this expectation in order to meet Socrates' apparent criterion of benefit. His reply shows that he teaches whatever his audience enjoys hearing. In Athens he may teach rhetoric and mathematics, but in Sparta he "teaches"

genealogies of heroes and myths. It is in this context that Hippias summarizes for Socrates the Nestor–Neoptolemus speech which is designed to bring him good repute wherever he delivers it. In Sparta the mythical moralizing speech will be received more as a myth, while in Athens it will be regarded more as a piece of moralizing; but in either case Hippias will appear beneficial (286a8-b2).

Plato provides all this information about the *deigmata* before the overtly philosophical discussion of the Fine is broached precisely in order to prepare the reader to understand that the discussion of the Fine is not philosophical but an extension of the dance between apparent benefit and real benefit. Socrates once again changes his criterion of expertise by enlisting Hippias as a teacher of eristic, thereby obliging Hippias to appear to be the best eristician. Socrates must then invent the device of the Questioner in order to challenge and eventually refute every answer Hippias provides. Hippias has no difficulty seeing his answers refuted, since by the time they are refuted they are associated with Socrates the idiot rather than with Hippias the benevolent adviser.

It should be immediately obvious to any reader that the entire conversation on the Fine is far from philosophical in nature, precisely because Socrates enlists Hippias as a teacher of eristic, with a view to silencing a rowdy heckler who challenges and refutes Socrates whenever he praises fine things or criticizes base things. Hippias offers three eristic answers designed to silence the Questioner:

- A fine maiden is a fine thing (287e2–4). This is irrefutable. Hippias believes he has maintained his appearance of being beneficial. Unfortunately, the Questioner refutes the answer, necessarily using eristics.

- Gold makes things fine (289e2–4). This is arguably true, but the Questioner points out that even ordinary stone can make things fine. It is here that Hippias introduces the connection between the Fine and the Fitting in an attempt to prevent the argument from descending into ridicule: stone is indeed fine when it is fitting. The Questioner nevertheless refutes the original answer eristically by declaring that gold is no more fine than base.

- Hippias should have chosen as his third answer his own insight that the Fine is the Fitting. It is not, but it would at least have been a much better reply. Instead he produces the

worst answer so far, although it is the most impressive (291d9–e2): “I say now that always, to everyone, everywhere, it is most fine for a man, being rich, healthy, and honoured by the Greeks, who has reached old age and has buried his deceased parents finely, to be finely and grandly buried by his own offspring.” It is easy to refute a claim for something fine that includes a healthy man being buried, and Socrates makes the refutation even more ridiculous than the claim itself.

All these attempts to silence the Questioner are refuted - and refuted eristically, not philosophically. Socrates’ intention is to prompt Hippias to begin thinking critically or self-reflectively, given how easily the eristician’s answers collapse. Hippias’ intention, by contrast, is simply to continue appearing beneficial to Socrates, which he believes he succeeds in doing, given how hopeless Socrates appears in eristic debate with a ruffian.

Once Socrates has exhausted the usefulness of eliciting answers from Hippias to be refuted by the Questioner, he has the Questioner himself return to Hippias’ insight, unwittingly advanced in the conversation after the second answer, that even stone is fine if it is fitting, and suggest what Hippias should have provided as his third answer:

- the Fine is the Fitting. A full analysis of the *deigmata* reveals that the Fine is the Apparently Fitting, and only then may we appreciate that the Questioner’s answer is fundamentally flawed, which allows even this answer to be refuted.

Socrates then suggests three answers himself. These are in effect flawed formulations of aspects of the Fine, and are required to guide us to a correct analysis of the Apparently Fitting:

- Whatever is useful is fine (295c2-3). Here we see the philosophical connection to *Hippias Minor*, where the Useful is one of the aspects of the Able which may be misconstrued as the Beneficial. This answer is not refuted but transmuted into the fifth answer: the useful for a good end is the Beneficial.
- The Beneficial is the Fine (296e5-6). The obvious problem with this answer is that the Intelligized Beneficial is one aspect of the Fine, while the Beneficial itself is one aspect of the Good. Regardless of the actual problem, the answer is refuted eristically.
- Pleasure through hearing and sight is the Fine (298a6-7). The discussion of this final

answer is long and convoluted, albeit full of interesting pitfalls and errors. Most of them become irrelevant once the obvious point is made that pleasure is not what is seen or heard, but the result of sensing something sensible which is common both to sight and sound. This is sensed fittingness. The answer, badly formulated as it is, is therefore doomed to failure.

The seven answers to the question what the Fine is comprise three ineffectual attempts by Hippias to silence the Questioner, one almost correct answer from the Questioner, and three answers from Socrates, still badly formulated, but revealing the aspects of the Fine. The *deigma* representing the Dialectician (the Sensed and Opined Bad misconstrued as Harmful) attempts to make the *deigma* representing the Sophist (the Sensed and Opined Good misconstrued as Beneficial) think for himself. Socrates could provide Hippias (and Plato Platonists) with ready-made answers, but there would be no point in doing so when the *deigma*'s attention would remain transfixed on appearing to be beneficial rather than being beneficial.

The outrageous arguments are a necessary product of the *deigmata*, but they all hint at features to be found in the Fine, particularly the dangers inherent in confusing the different aspects of apparent fittingness. The confusion must first become apparent in the mind of the reader, if not in the mind of Hippias. The sophistic discussion of the Fine hints at the coherent solution. The *deigmata* point to the *paradeigmata* (the Sophist and the Dialectician), and they in turn indicate the aspects of the *ideai*, Apparent Fittingness (*to kalon*) and finally Fittingness itself (*to agathon*).