

***Polytropic Socrates' Implicit
Defense of Philosophy:
Lying, Justice, and Sophistry in
Plato's *Lesser Hippias****

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Background

- ▶ Follows the *Greater Hippias* in the Platonic corpus
 - ▶ Examination of Hippias
- ▶ A Socratic examination of a sophist
 - ▶ Teachers of rhetoric
 - ▶ Frequent activity of Socrates
- ▶ Directly follows Hippias' speech in Athens
- ▶ Argument centers on who is better: Homer's Odysseus or Achilles?
 - ▶ Is *polytropic* (wily) a good characteristic?

Dramatic Setting and Audience

- ▶ “So be there yourself, and bring others who are able, when they hear, to judge what is said” (*Greater Hippias* 286b).
- ▶ “...we alone are left who would particularly make claim to share in the pursuit of philosophy” (*Lesser Hippias* 363a).
- ▶ “...because there was the *hoi polloi* inside... but now, since there are fewer of us” (*Lesser Hippias* 364bff).

Examination and Homeric Characters

- ▶ “...what seemed most unusual and a mark of your greatest wisdom, was... the belt of your tunic... like the very expensive Persian ones and that you had plaited this yourself” (*Lesser Hippias* 368c).
- ▶ “...your artful device...for remembering, in which you suppose you are most splendid” (*Lesser Hippias* 368dff).
- ▶ Achilles: “For that one is hateful to me as the gates of Hades who hides one thing in his mind but says something else’” (*Lesser Hippias* 365ab, citing *Iliad* IX 308–14).
- ▶ Hippias: “Socrates always causes confusion in the argument and seems to want to make trouble” (*Lesser Hippias* 373b).

Socrates' Teaching

- ▶ “...what greater proof of ignorance... than when someone differs with wise men?” (*Lesser Hippias* 372bc).
- ▶ “... he who voluntarily goes wrong and does what is shameful and unjust... would be no other than the good man” (*Lesser Hippias* 376b).
- ▶ “... the same one [i.e., the expert] is a liar and truthful about these things, and the truthful is no better than the liar? For indeed he is the same man” (*Lesser Hippias* 367c).

Conclusions



Questions?

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