

CRATYLUS

This dialogue is on a topic of great interest to Plato's contemporaries that figures little in our own discussions in philosophy of language: the 'correctness of names'. When a name (or, for that matter, any other word or phrase) is the correct one for naming a given thing or performing another linguistic function, what is the source of this correctness? Socrates canvasses two opposed positions. The first is defended by his close friend Hermogenes (Hermogenes was in Socrates' entourage on the day of his death), the impecunious brother of Callias, the rich patron of sophists at Athens in whose house the drama of Protagoras is set. Hermogenes adopts the minimalist position that correctness is by convention: whatever is agreed in a community to be the name to use for a thing is the correct one in that community. The other position is defended by Cratylus, a historical person mentioned also by Aristotle, whose own information about him may however derive from what the character Cratylus says in this dialogue. Cratylus adopts the obscure 'naturalist' position that each name names only whatever it does 'by nature'—no matter what the conventions in any community may be. As a first approximation, this means that under expert etymological examination each name can be reduced to a disguised description correctly revealing the nature of the thing named by it—and that revelatory capacity is what makes it the correct name for that thing. Socrates examines the views of each disputant and attempts to resolve the conflict between them. But he concludes that the knowledge of names—the etymological art professing to reveal the true nature of things by working out the ultimate descriptive meanings of the words we use—is of no real importance. All it can ever reveal is what those who first introduced our words thought was the nature of reality, and that might well be wrong—indeed, Socrates employs etymological principles themselves to argue that the Greek language indicates, falsely, that the nature of reality is constant change and flux. To learn the truth we have to go behind words altogether, to examine with our minds, and grasp directly the permanent, unchanging natures of things as they are in themselves: Platonic Forms.

Readers are always puzzled at the fact that Plato has Socrates devote more than half his discussion to proposing etymological analyses of a whole series of names, beginning with the names of the gods. We should bear in mind that, when Plato was writing, expertise in etymology was highly regarded, precisely as a means of discovering the ultimate truth about things through coming to possess knowledge of names. At least part of Plato's purpose seems to be to establish Socrates' credentials as a first-rate practitioner of the art of etymology

as then practiced, better than the 'experts' themselves. When Socrates then also argues that knowledge of names is an unimportant thing, he can be taken to speak with the authority not just of philosophy but even of etymological science itself—as an insider, not an outsider looking in. Somewhat similarly, in Phaedrus and Menexenus philosophy is credited with the unique ability actually to do well what rhetoric, another prestigious contemporary expertise, professed to be able to do on its own.

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383 HERMOGENES: Shall we let Socrates here join our discussion?

CRATYLUS: If you like.

HERMOGENES: Cratylus says, Socrates, that there is a correctness of name for each thing, one that belongs to it by nature. A thing's name isn't whatever people agree to call it—some bit of their native language that applies to it—but there is a natural correctness of names, which is the same for everyone, Greek or foreigner. So, I ask him whether his own name is truly 'Cratylus'. He agrees that it is. "What about Socrates?" I say. "His name is 'Socrates'." "Does this also hold for everyone else? Is the name we call him his name?" "It certainly doesn't hold of you. Your name isn't 'Hermogenes', not even if everyone calls you by it." Eagerly, I ask him to tell me what he means. He responds sarcastically and makes nothing clear. He pretends to possess some private knowledge which would force me to agree with him and say the very things about names that he says himself, were he to express it in plain terms. So, if you can somehow interpret Cratylus' oracular utterances, I'd gladly listen. Though I'd really rather find out what you yourself have to say about the correctness of names, if that's all right with you.

384 SOCRATES: Hermogenes, son of Hipponicus, there is an ancient proverb that "fine things are very difficult" to know about, and it certainly isn't easy to get to know about names. To be sure, if I'd attended Prodicus' fifty-drachma lecture course, which he himself advertises as an exhaustive treatment of the topic, there'd be nothing to prevent you from learning the precise truth about the correctness of names straightaway. But as I've heard only the one-drachma course, I don't know the truth about it. Nonetheless, I am ready to investigate it along with you and Cratylus. As for his denying that your real name is 'Hermogenes', I suspect he's making fun of you. Perhaps he thinks you want to make money but fail every time you try.¹ In any case, as I was saying, it's certainly difficult to know

Translated by C.D.C. Reeve.

1. Hermes is the god of profit and 'Hermogenes' means 'son of Hermes.' A different account of the name is given at 407e–408b.

about these matters, so we'll have to conduct a joint investigation to see who is right, you or Cratylus.

HERMOGENES: Well, Socrates, I've often talked with Cratylus—and with lots of other people, for that matter—and no one is able to persuade me that the correctness of names is determined by anything besides convention and agreement. I believe that any name you give a thing is its correct name. If you change its name and give it another, the new one is as correct as the old. For example, when we give names to our domestic slaves, the new ones are as correct as the old. No name belongs to a particular thing by nature, but only because of the rules and usage of those who establish the usage and call it by that name. However, if I'm wrong about this, I'm ready to listen not just to Cratylus but to anyone, and to learn from him too.

SOCRATES: Perhaps you're on to something, Hermogenes, let's see. Are you saying that whatever anyone decides to call² a particular thing is its name?

HERMOGENES: I am.

SOCRATES: Whether it is a private individual or a community that does so?

HERMOGENES: Yes.

SOCRATES: What about this? Suppose I call one of the things that are—for instance, the one we now call 'man'—suppose I give *that* the name 'horse' and give the one we now call 'horse' the name 'man'. Will the same thing have the public name 'man' but the private name 'horse'? Is that what you mean?

HERMOGENES: Yes.³ 385b1

SOCRATES: So whatever each person says is the name of something, for him, that is its name? d

HERMOGENES: Yes.

SOCRATES: And however many names someone says there are for each thing, it will really have that number at whatever time he says it?

HERMOGENES: Yes, Socrates, for I can't conceive of any other way in which names could be correct. I call a thing by the name I gave it; you call it by the different name you gave it. In the same way, I see that different communities have different names for the same things—Greeks differing from other Greeks, and Greeks from foreigners. e

SOCRATES: Let's see, Hermogenes, whether the same also seems to you to hold of the things that are. Is the being or essence of each of them something private for each person, as Protagoras tells us? He says that man is "the measure of all things," and that things are to me as they appear to me, and are to you as they appear to you. Do you agree, or do you believe that things have some fixed being or essence of their own? 386

2. Reading *ho ean thēi kalein* in a2.

3. Following Schofield, *Classical Quarterly* 22 (1972), we transfer 385b2–d1 to follow 387c5.

HERMOGENES: There have been times, Socrates, when I have been so puzzled that I've been driven to take refuge in Protagoras' doctrine, even though I don't believe it at all.

SOCRATES: What's that? Have you actually been driven to believe that
b there is no such thing as a bad man?

HERMOGENES: No, by god, I haven't. Indeed, I've often found myself believing that there are *very* bad ones, and plenty of them.

SOCRATES: What? Have you never believed that there are any who are very good?

HERMOGENES: Not many.

SOCRATES: But you did believe that there were *some* good ones?

HERMOGENES: I did.

SOCRATES: And what do you hold about such people? Or is it this: the very good are very wise, while the very bad are very foolish?

c HERMOGENES: Yes, that's what I believe.

SOCRATES: But if Protagoras is telling the truth—if it *is* the *Truth*⁴ that things are for each person as he believes them to be, how is it possible for one person to be wise and another foolish?

HERMOGENES: It isn't possible.

SOCRATES: You strongly believe, it seems to me, that if wisdom exists, and foolishness likewise, then Protagoras cannot be telling the truth. After all, if what each person believes to be true *is* true for him, no one can truly
d be wiser than anyone else.

HERMOGENES: That's right.

SOCRATES: But you also reject Euthydemus' doctrine that everything always has every attribute simultaneously. For if virtue and vice always belong to everything simultaneously, it follows once again that it is impossible for some people to be good and others to be bad.

HERMOGENES: That's true.

SOCRATES: But if neither is right, if it isn't the case that everything always has every attribute simultaneously or that each thing has a being or essence privately for each person, then it is clear that things have some fixed being
e or essence of their own. They are not in relation to us and are not made to fluctuate by how they appear to us. They are by themselves, in relation to their own being or essence, which is theirs by nature.

HERMOGENES: I agree, Socrates.

SOCRATES: And if things are of such a nature, doesn't the same hold of actions performed in relation to them? Or aren't actions included in some one class of the things that are?

HERMOGENES: Of course they are.

387 SOCRATES: So an action's performance accords with the action's own nature, and not with what we believe. Suppose, for example, that we undertake to cut something. If we make the cut in whatever way *we* choose and with whatever tool *we* choose, we will not succeed in cutting. But if

4. Plato is making a pun on the title of Protagoras' book.

in each case we choose to cut in accord with the nature of cutting and being cut and with the natural tool for cutting, we'll succeed and cut correctly. If we try to cut contrary to nature, however, we'll be in error and accomplish nothing.

HERMOGENES: That's my view, at least. b

SOCRATES: So, again, if we undertake to burn something, our burning mustn't accord with every belief but with the correct one—that is to say, with the one that tells us how that thing burns and is burned naturally, and what the natural tool for burning it is?

HERMOGENES: That's right.

SOCRATES: And the same holds of all other actions?

HERMOGENES: Certainly.

SOCRATES: Now isn't speaking or saying one sort of action?

HERMOGENES: Yes.

SOCRATES: Then will someone speak correctly if he speaks in whatever way he believes he should speak? Or isn't it rather the case that he will accomplish something and succeed in speaking if he says things in the natural way to say them, in the natural way for them to be said, and with the natural tool for saying them? But if he speaks in any other way he will be in error and accomplish nothing? c

HERMOGENES: I believe so.⁵ 387c5

SOCRATES: Tell me this. Is there something you call speaking the truth 385b2 and something you call speaking a falsehood?

HERMOGENES: Indeed, there is.

SOCRATES: Then some statements are true, while others are false?

HERMOGENES: Certainly.

SOCRATES: And those that say of the things that are that they are, are true, while those that say of the things that are that they are not, are false?

HERMOGENES: Yes.

SOCRATES: So it is possible to say both things that are and things that are not in a statement?

HERMOGENES: Certainly.

SOCRATES: Is a whole true statement true but not its parts? c

HERMOGENES: No, the parts are also true.

SOCRATES: Are the large parts true but not the small ones, or are all of them true?

HERMOGENES: In my view, they are all true.

SOCRATES: Is there a part of a statement that's smaller than a name?

HERMOGENES: No, it is the smallest.

SOCRATES: In a true statement, is this smallest part something that's said?

HERMOGENES: Yes.

SOCRATES: And, on your view, this part is then true.

HERMOGENES: Yes.

SOCRATES: And a part of a false statement is false?

5. Here we insert 385b2–d1; see note to 385b above.

HERMOGENES: That's right.

SOCRATES: So isn't it possible to say a true or a false name, since true or false statements are possible?

d HERMOGENES: Certainly.

387c6 SOCRATES: Now using names is a part of saying; since it is by using names that people say things.

HERMOGENES: Certainly.

SOCRATES: And if speaking or saying is a sort of action, one that is about things, isn't using names also a sort of action?

HERMOGENES: Yes.

d SOCRATES: And didn't we see that actions aren't in relation to us but have a special nature of their own?

HERMOGENES: We did.

SOCRATES: So if we are to be consistent with what we said previously, we cannot name things as we choose; rather, we must name them in the natural way for them to be named and with the natural tool for naming them. In that way we'll accomplish something and succeed in naming, otherwise we won't.

HERMOGENES: So it seems.

SOCRATES: Again, what one has to cut, one must cut with something?

HERMOGENES: Yes.

SOCRATES: And what one has to weave, one must weave with something?

e And what one has to drill, one must drill with something?

HERMOGENES: Certainly.

SOCRATES: And what one has to name, one must name with something?

388 HERMOGENES: That's right.

SOCRATES: What must drilling be done with?

HERMOGENES: A drill.

SOCRATES: Weaving?

HERMOGENES: A shuttle.

SOCRATES: And naming?

HERMOGENES: A name.

SOCRATES: Well done! So a name is also a sort of tool?

HERMOGENES: That's right.

SOCRATES: And suppose I ask, "What sort of tool is a shuttle?" Isn't the answer, "One we weave with"?

b HERMOGENES: Yes.

SOCRATES: What do we do when we weave? Don't we divide the warp and woof that are mixed together?

HERMOGENES: Yes.

SOCRATES: Would you answer in the same way about drills and other tools?

HERMOGENES: Certainly.

SOCRATES: And you'd also answer in the same way about names, since they are tools. What do we do when we name?

HERMOGENES: I don't know what to answer.

SOCRATES: Don't we instruct each other, that is to say, divide things according to their natures?

HERMOGENES: Certainly.

SOCRATES: So just as a shuttle is a tool for dividing warp and woof, a name is a tool for giving instruction, that is to say, for dividing being. c

HERMOGENES: Yes.

SOCRATES: Isn't a shuttle a weaver's tool?

HERMOGENES: Of course.

SOCRATES: So a weaver will use shuttles well; and to use a shuttle well is to use it as a weaver does. By the same token, an instructor will use names well; and to use a name well is to use it as an instructor does.

HERMOGENES: Yes.

SOCRATES: When a weaver uses a shuttle well, whose product is he using?

HERMOGENES: A carpenter's.

SOCRATES: Is everyone a carpenter or only those who possess the craft of carpentry?

HERMOGENES: Only those who possess the craft.

SOCRATES: And whose product does a driller use well when he uses a drill? d

HERMOGENES: A blacksmith's.

SOCRATES: And is everyone a blacksmith or only those who possess the craft?

HERMOGENES: Only those who possess the craft.

SOCRATES: Good. So whose product does an instructor use when he uses a name?

HERMOGENES: I don't know.

SOCRATES: Can you at least tell me this? Who or what provides us with the names we use?

HERMOGENES: I don't know that either.

SOCRATES: Don't you think that rules⁶ provide us with them?

HERMOGENES: I suppose they do.

SOCRATES: So, when an instructor uses a name, he's using the product of a rule-setter. e

HERMOGENES: I believe he is.

SOCRATES: Do you think that every man is a rule-setter or only the one who possesses the craft?

HERMOGENES: Only the one who possesses the craft.

SOCRATES: It follows that it isn't every man who can give names, Hermogenes, but only a namemaker, and he, it seems, is a rule-setter—the kind of craftsman most rarely found among human beings. 389

HERMOGENES: I suppose so.

6. The Greek here is *ho nomos*: law or customary usage—itsself established, as Socrates immediately goes on to say, by a *nomothetēs*, usually a legislator or law-giver, but here someone who establishes the rules of usage that give significance to names, a 'rule-setter.'

SOCRATES: Come now, consider where a rule-setter looks in giving names. Use the previous discussion as your guide. Where does a carpenter look in making a shuttle? Isn't it to that sort of thing whose nature is to weave?

HERMOGENES: Certainly.

- b SOCRATES: Suppose the shuttle breaks while he's making it. Will he make another looking to the broken one? Or will he look to the very form to which he looked in making the one he broke?

HERMOGENES: In my view, he will look to the form.

SOCRATES: Then it would be absolutely right to call that what a shuttle itself is.

HERMOGENES: I suppose so.

SOCRATES: Hence whenever he has to make a shuttle for weaving garments of any sort, whether light or heavy, linen or woolen, mustn't it possess the form of a shuttle? And mustn't he put into it the nature that naturally best suits it to perform its own work?

- c HERMOGENES: Yes.

SOCRATES: And the same holds of all other tools. When a craftsman discovers the type of tool that is naturally suited for a given type of work, he must embody it in the material out of which he is making the tool. He mustn't make the tool in whatever way he happens to choose, but in the natural way. So it seems that a blacksmith must know how to embody in iron the type of drill naturally suited for each type of work.

HERMOGENES: Certainly.

SOCRATES: And a carpenter must embody in wood the type of shuttle naturally suited for each type of weaving.

HERMOGENES: That's right.

- d SOCRATES: Because it seems that there's a type of shuttle that's naturally suited to each type of weaving. And the same holds of tools in general.

HERMOGENES: Yes.

- e SOCRATES: So mustn't a rule-setter also know how to embody in sounds and syllables the name naturally suited to each thing? And if he is to be an authentic giver of names, mustn't he, in making and giving each name, look to what a name itself is? And if different rule-setters do not make each name out of the same syllables, we mustn't forget⁷ that different blacksmiths, who are making the same tool for the same type of work, don't all make it out of the same iron. But as long as they give it the same form—even if that form is embodied in different iron—the tool will be correct, whether it is made in Greece or abroad. Isn't that so?

390 HERMOGENES: Certainly.

SOCRATES: Don't you evaluate Greek and foreign rule-setters in the same way? Provided they give each thing the form of name suited to it, no matter what syllables it is embodied in, they are equally good rule-setters, whether they are in Greece or abroad.

7. Reading *agnoein* in e1.

HERMOGENES: Certainly.

SOCRATES: Now, who is likely to know whether the appropriate form of shuttle is present in any given bit of wood? A carpenter who makes it or a weaver who uses it? b

HERMOGENES: In all likelihood, Socrates, it is the one who uses it.

SOCRATES: So who uses what a lyre-maker produces? Isn't he the one who would know best how to supervise the manufacture of lyres and would also know whether what has been made has been well made or not?

HERMOGENES: Certainly.

SOCRATES: Who is that?

HERMOGENES: A lyre-player.

SOCRATES: And who will supervise a ship-builder?

HERMOGENES: A ship's captain. c

SOCRATES: And who can best supervise the work of a rule-setter, whether here or abroad, and judge its products? Isn't it whoever will use them?

HERMOGENES: Yes.

SOCRATES: And isn't that the person who knows how to ask questions?

HERMOGENES: Certainly.

SOCRATES: And he also knows how to answer them?

HERMOGENES: Yes.

SOCRATES: And what would you call someone who knows how to ask and answer questions? Wouldn't you call him a dialectician?

HERMOGENES: Yes, I would.

SOCRATES: So it's the work of a carpenter to make a rudder. And if the rudder is to be a fine one, a ship-captain must supervise him. d

HERMOGENES: Evidently.

SOCRATES: But it's the work of a rule-setter, it seems, to make a name. And if names are to be given well, a dialectician must supervise him.

HERMOGENES: That's right.

SOCRATES: It follows that the giving of names can't be as inconsequential a matter as you think, Hermogenes, nor can it be the work of an inconsequential or chance person. So Cratylus is right in saying that things have natural names, and that not everyone is a craftsman of names, but only someone who looks to the natural name of each thing and is able to put its form into letters and syllables. e

HERMOGENES: I don't know how to oppose you, Socrates. It isn't easy for me suddenly to change my opinion, though. I think you would be more likely to persuade me if you showed me just what this natural correctness of names you're talking about consists in. 391

SOCRATES: My dear Hermogenes, I don't have a position on this. You have forgotten what I told you a while ago, namely that I didn't know about names but that I would investigate them with you. And now that we *are* investigating them, you and I, at least this much is clearer than before, that names do possess some sort of natural correctness and that it isn't every man who knows how to name things well. Isn't that right? b

HERMOGENES: Certainly.

SOCRATES: So our next task is to try to discover what this correctness is, if indeed you want to know.

HERMOGENES: Of course I do.

SOCRATES: Then investigate the matter.

HERMOGENES: How am I to do that?

SOCRATES: The most correct way is together with people who already know, but you must pay them well and show gratitude besides—these are the sophists. Your brother Callias got his reputation for wisdom from them in return for a lot of money. So you had better beg and implore him
c to teach you what he learned from Protagoras about the correctness of names, since you haven't yet come into any money of your own.

HERMOGENES: But it would be absurd for me to beg for Protagoras' "Truth," Socrates, as if I desired the things contained in it and thought them worthwhile, when I totally reject them.

SOCRATES: Well, if that doesn't suit you, you'll have to learn from Homer
d and the other poets.

HERMOGENES: And where does Homer say anything about names, Socrates, and what does he say?

SOCRATES: In lots of places. The best and most important are the ones in which he distinguishes between the names humans call things and those the gods call them. Or don't you think that these passages tell us something remarkable about the correctness of names? Surely, the gods call things
e by their naturally correct names—or don't you think so?

HERMOGENES: I certainly know that if they call them by any names at all, it's by the correct ones. But what passages are you referring to?

SOCRATES: Do you know where he says that the Trojan river that had single combat with Hephaestus is "called 'Xanthos' by the gods and 'Skamandros' by men"?⁸

HERMOGENES: I certainly do.

392 SOCRATES: And don't you think it's an awe-inspiring thing to know that the river is more correctly called 'Xanthos' than 'Skamandros'? Or consider, if you like, when he says about a certain bird that

The gods call it 'chalcis' but men call it 'cymindis'.⁹

Do you think it's an inconsequential matter to learn that it is far more correct to call this bird 'chalcis' than to call it 'cymindis'? What about all the similar things that Homer and the other poets tell us? For example,
b that it is more correct to call a certain hill 'Murine' than 'Batieia'?¹⁰ But perhaps these examples are too hard for you and me to figure out. It is

8. *Iliad* xxi.332–80 and xx.74.

9. *Iliad* xiv.291.

10. *Iliad* ii.813 ff.

easier and more within human power, I think, to investigate the kind of correctness Homer ascribes to 'Skamandrios' and 'Astyanax', which he says are the names of Hector's son. You know, of course, the lines to which I refer.¹¹

HERMOGENES: Certainly.

SOCRATES: Which of the names given to the boy do you suppose Homer thought was more correct, 'Astyanax' or 'Skamandrios'?

HERMOGENES: I really can't say.

SOCRATES: Look at it this way. If you were asked who gives names more correctly, those who are wiser or those who are more foolish, what would you answer?

HERMOGENES: That it is clearly those who are wiser.

SOCRATES: And which class do you think is wiser on the whole, a city's women or its men?

HERMOGENES: Its men.

SOCRATES: Now you know, don't you, that Homer tells us that Hector's son was called 'Astyanax' by the men of Troy?¹² But if the men called him 'Astyanax', isn't it clear that 'Skamandrios' must be what the women called him?

HERMOGENES: Probably so.

SOCRATES: And didn't Homer also think that the Trojans were wiser than their women?

HERMOGENES: I suppose he did.

SOCRATES: So mustn't he have thought that 'Astyanax' was a more correct name for the boy than 'Skamandrios'?

HERMOGENES: Evidently.

SOCRATES: Well, let's investigate why it is more correct. Doesn't Homer himself suggest a very good explanation when he says

*He alone defended their city and long walls?*¹³

For because of this, you see, it seems correct to call the son of the defender 'Astyanax' or lord of the city (*astu, anax*) which, as Homer says, his father was defending.

HERMOGENES: That seems right to me.

SOCRATES: It does? You understand it, Hermogenes? For I don't understand it yet myself.

HERMOGENES: Then I certainly don't.

SOCRATES: But, my good friend, didn't Homer also give Hector his name?

HERMOGENES: What if he did?

11. *Iliad* vi.402-3.

12. *Iliad* xxii.506.

13. *Iliad* xxii.507, referring to Hector.

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SOCRATES: Well, it seems to me that 'Hector' is more or less the same as 'Astyanax', since both names seem to be Greek. After all, 'lord' (*'anax'*) and 'possessor' (*'hektōr'*) signify pretty much the same, since both are names for a king. Surely, a man possesses that of which he is lord, since it is clear that he controls, owns, and has it. But perhaps you think I'm talking nonsense, and that I'm wrong to suppose that I've found a clue to Homer's beliefs about the correctness of names.

HERMOGENES: No, I don't think you're wrong. You may well have found a clue.

SOCRATES: At any rate, it seems to me that it is right to call a lion's offspring a 'lion' and a horse's offspring a 'horse'. I'm not talking about some monster other than a horse that happens to be born from a horse but one that is a natural offspring of its kind. If, contrary to nature, a horse gave birth to a calf, it should be called a 'calf', not a 'colt'. And if something that isn't a human offspring is born to a human, I don't think it should be called a 'human'. And the same applies to trees and all the rest. Don't you agree?

HERMOGENES: I agree.

SOCRATES: Good. But you had better watch out in case I trick you, for by the same argument any offspring of a king should be called a 'king'. But it doesn't matter whether the same thing is signified by the same syllables or by different ones. And if a letter is added or subtracted, that doesn't matter either, so long as the being or essence of the thing is in control and is expressed in its name.

HERMOGENES: How do you mean?

SOCRATES: It's something fairly simple. You know that when we speak of the elements or letters of the alphabet, it is their names we utter, not the letters themselves, except in the case of these four *e*, *u*, *o*, and *ō*.¹⁴ We make names for all the other vowels and consonants, as you know, by uttering additional letters together with them. But as long as we include the force or power of the letter, we may correctly call it by that name, and it will express it for us. Take *'bēta'*, for example. The addition of *'ē'*, *'t'*, and *'a'* does no harm and doesn't prevent the whole name from expressing the nature of that element or letter which the rule-setter wished to name, so well did he know how to give names to the letters.

HERMOGENES: I believe you're right.

SOCRATES: Doesn't the same argument apply to 'king'? For a king will probably be the son of a king, a good man the son of a good man, a fine man the son of a fine one, and so on. So, unless a monster is born, the offspring of a kind will be of the same kind and should be called by the same name. But because of variation in their syllables, names that are really the same seem different to the uninitiated. Similarly, a doctor's medicines, which have different colors and perfumes added to them, ap-

14. The names 'epsilon', 'upsilon', 'omicron' (short *o*), and 'omega' (long *o*) were not used in Plato's time; one simply pronounced the sound.

pear different to us, although they are really the same and appear the same to a doctor, who looks only to their power to cure and isn't disconcerted by the additives. Similarly, someone who knows about names looks to their force or power and isn't disconcerted if a letter is added, transposed, or subtracted, or even if the force a name possesses is embodied in different letters altogether. So, for example, in the names 'Hector' and 'Astyanax', which we were discussing just now, none of the letters is the same, except 't', but they signify the same anyway. And what letters does 'Archeopolis'—'Ruler-of-a-city'—have in common with them? Yet, it expresses the same thing. Many other names signify simply king; others signify general, for example, 'Agis' ('Leader'), 'Polemarchus' ('War-lord'), 'Eupolemus' ('Good-warrior'); and still others signify doctor, for example, 'Iatrocles' ('Famous-healer') and 'Acesimbrotus' ('Healer-of-mortals'). And we might perhaps find many others, which differ in their letters and syllables, but which have the same force or power when spoken. Is that plain to you or not?

HERMOGENES Certainly.

SOCRATES: Then those that are born according to nature should be given the same names as their fathers.

HERMOGENES: Yes.

SOCRATES: What about the ones that are born contrary to nature, those that are some form of monster? For instance, when a good and pious man has an impious son, the latter shouldn't have his father's name but that of the kind to which he belongs, just as in our earlier example of a horse having a calf as offspring?

HERMOGENES: Yes.

SOCRATES: Therefore the impious son of a pious father should be given the name of the kind to which he belongs.

HERMOGENES: That's right.

SOCRATES: Then he shouldn't be called 'Theophilus' ('God-beloved') or 'Mnesitheus' ('Mindful-of-god'), or anything of that sort, but something that signifies the opposite, if indeed names are to be actually correct.

HERMOGENES: That's absolutely right, Socrates.

SOCRATES: Thus the name 'Orestes' ('Mountain-man') is surely correct, Hermogenes, whether it was given to him by chance or by some poet, who displayed in his name the brutality, savagery, and ruggedness of his nature.

HERMOGENES: It seems so, Socrates.

SOCRATES: And his father's name also seems to accord with nature.

HERMOGENES: It does.

SOCRATES: Yes, for Agamemnon is someone who worked hard and persevered, bringing his plans to completion because of his virtue or excellence. The stay of his army in Troy and his perseverance there is a sign of this. And thus the name 'Agamemnon' signifies that this man is admirable (*agastos*) for holding his ground (*epimonē*). The name 'Atreus' also seems to be correct; for both his murder of Chrysippus and his cruelty to Thyestes

were damaging and destructive (*atēra*) to his virtue. However, the meaning of his name is somewhat distorted and obscure, so that it doesn't express his nature to everyone. But to those who understand about names it adequately expresses what 'Atreus' means. For whether the name accords with his stubbornness (*ateires*), or his boldness (*atrestos*), or his destructiveness (*at-*
 c *ēros*), it is correctly given to him. I think Pelops also has a fitting name; for 'Pelops' signifies he who sees only what is near at hand (*pelas, opsis*).

HERMOGENES: How is that?

SOCRATES: Because, according to legend, he didn't think about or foresee what the long-term consequences of murdering Myrtilus would be for his entire family, or all the misery that would overwhelm them. In his eagerness to win Hippodameia by any available means, he saw only what was ready
 d to hand and on the spot—that is to say, what was nearby (*pelas*). Everyone would agree, too, that 'Tantalus' was given correctly and according to nature, if what's said about its bearer is true.

HERMOGENES: What's that?

SOCRATES: They say that many terrible misfortunes happened to him in his life—the last of which was the total overthrow of his country—and that, in Hades, after his death, he had a stone suspended (*talanteia*) over
 e his head, in wondrous harmony with his name. It's exactly as if someone had wished to name him 'Talantatos' ('Most-weighed-upon') but had disguised the name and said 'Tantalus' instead. In some such way, in any case, the chance of legend supplied him with this name. His father, who is said to have been Zeus, also seems to have had an altogether fine name
 396 given to him—but it isn't easy to figure out. That's because the name 'Zeus' is exactly like a phrase that we divide into two parts, 'Zēna' and 'Dia', some of us using one of them and some the other.¹⁵ But these two names, reunited into one, express the nature of the god—which is just what we said a name should do. Certainly, no one is more the cause of life (*zēn*), whether for us or for anything else, than the ruler and king of all things. Thus 'Zēna' and 'Dia' together correctly name the god that is
 b always the cause of life (*di' hon zēn*) for all creatures. But, as I say, his name, which is really one, is divided in two, 'Dia' and 'Zēna'. When one hears that Zeus is the son of Cronus, one might find that offensive at first, and it might seem more reasonable to say that he is the offspring of a great intellect. But in fact Cronus' name signifies not a child (*koros*), but the purity and clarity of his intellect or understanding.¹⁶ According to legend, he was the son of Uranus (Heaven), whose name is also correctly given, for the sight of what is above is well called by the name 'ourania' ('heavenly')—looking at the things above (*horōsa ta anō*)—and astronomers

15. 'Zeus' (nominative) has two declensions, one of which (a poetical one) has 'Zēna' in the accusative, the other (the ordinary one) 'Dia'.

16. Socrates is treating Cronus' name as deriving not from 'koros' but from 'korein' ('to sweep'). Cronus' character is spotless and his intelligence clear because both have been well swept.

say, Hermogenes, that that results in purity of intellect. If I could remember Hesiod's genealogy, and the even earlier ancestors of the gods he mentions, I wouldn't have stopped explaining the correctness of the names he gives them, until I had tested this wisdom which has suddenly come upon me—I do not know from where—to see whether or not it holds up till the end. c
d

HERMOGENES: Indeed, Socrates, you do seem to me to be exactly like a prophet who has suddenly been inspired to deliver oracles.

SOCRATES: Yes, Hermogenes, and I, for my part, mostly blame Euthyphro, of the deme of Prospalta,¹⁷ for its coming upon me. I was with him at dawn, lending an ear to his lengthy discussion. He must have been inspired, because it looks as though he has not only filled my ears with his superhuman wisdom but taken possession of my soul as well. So it seems to me that this is what we ought to do: Today, we'll use this wisdom and finish our examination of names, but tomorrow, if the rest of you agree, we'll exorcise it and purify ourselves, as soon as we've found someone—whether priest or wise man—who is clever at that kind of purification. e
397

HERMOGENES: That's fine with me. I'd be very glad to hear what remains to be said about names.

SOCRATES: Then that's what we must do. Since we now have some sort of outline to follow, which names do you want us to begin with, in order to find out whether names themselves will testify to us that they are not given by chance, but have some sort of correctness? The names that heroes and men are said to have might perhaps deceive us. After all, as we saw at the beginning, they are often given because they are the names of ancestors, and some of them are wholly inappropriate. Many, too, are given in the hope that they will prove appropriate, such as 'Eutyichides' ('Son-of-good-fortune'), 'Sosias' ('Saviour'), 'Theophilus' ('God-beloved'), and many others. In my view, we must leave such names aside. We are most likely to find correctly given names among those concerned with the things that by nature always are, since it is proper for their names to be given with the greatest care, and some may even be the work of a more than human power. b
c

HERMOGENES: I think that's sensible, Socrates.

SOCRATES: So isn't it right to begin by seeing why the name '*theoi*' ('gods') is itself one that the gods are correctly called?

HERMOGENES: It probably is.

SOCRATES: I suspect something like this. It seems to me that the first inhabitants of Greece believed only in those gods in which many foreigners still believe today—the sun, moon, earth, stars, and sky. And, seeing that these were always moving or running, they gave them the name '*theoi*' because it was their nature to run (*thein*). Later, when they learned about the other gods, they called them all by that name. Does that seem likely—or am I talking nonsense? d

17. This is probably the Euthyphro who appears in the dialogue of that name, where he is described as claiming authority on Uranus, Cronus, and Zeus (*Euthyphro* 4e–5a, 5e–6a).

HERMOGENES: It's very likely.

SOCRATES: What shall we investigate next? Clearly, it's daemons,¹⁸ then heroes, then humans, isn't it?¹⁹

e HERMOGENES: Yes, daemons are next.²⁰

SOCRATES: And what is the correct meaning of the name 'daemons', Hermogenes? See if you think there's anything in what I'm about to say.

HERMOGENES: Say it, and I will.

SOCRATES: Do you know what Hesiod says daemons are?

HERMOGENES: No, I don't remember.

SOCRATES: Do you remember that he speaks of a golden race, which was the first race of human beings to be born?

HERMOGENES: Yes, I remember that.

SOCRATES: He says this about it:

398 *Since this race has been eclipsed by fate,
They are called sacred daemons;
They live on earth and are good,
Warding off evil and guarding mortal men.*²¹

HERMOGENES: So what?

SOCRATES: Well, I don't think he's saying that the golden race is by nature made of gold, but that it is good and fine. I consider it a proof of this that he calls us a race of iron.

HERMOGENES: That's true.

b SOCRATES: So don't you think that if someone who presently exists were good, Hesiod would say that he too belonged to the golden race?

HERMOGENES: He probably would.

SOCRATES: Are good people any different from wise ones?

HERMOGENES: No, they aren't.

c SOCRATES: It is principally because daemons are wise and knowing (*daēmones*), I think, that Hesiod says they are named 'daemons' (*daimones*). In our older Attic dialect, we actually find the word '*daēmones*'. So, Hesiod and many other poets speak well when they say that when a good man dies, he has a great destiny and a great honor and becomes a 'daemon', which is a name given to him because it accords with wisdom. And I myself assert, indeed, that every good man, whether alive or dead, is daemonic, and is correctly called a 'daemon'.

18. Daemons are gods or children of the gods (*Apology* 27d–e) or messengers from the gods (*Symposium* 202e).

19. Reading *ē dēlon dē hoti daimonas te kai hērōas kai anthrōpous?* in d9–e1, attributing these words to Socrates.

20. Attributing *daimonas* in e1 to Hermogenes.

21. *Works and Days*, 121–23, with minor variations.

HERMOGENES: And I think that I completely agree with you, Socrates. But what about the name 'hero' (*'hērōs'*)? What is it?

SOCRATES: That one isn't so hard to understand because the name has been little altered. It expresses the fact that heroes were born out of love (*erōs*).

HERMOGENES: How do you mean?

SOCRATES: Don't you know that the heroes are demigods?

HERMOGENES: So what?

SOCRATES: So all of them sprang from the love of a god for a mortal woman or of a mortal man for a goddess. And if, as before, you investigate the matter by relying on old Attic, you will get a better understanding, since it will show you that the name 'hero' (*'hērōs'*) is only a slightly altered form of the word 'love' (*'erōs'*)—the very thing from which the heroes sprang. And either this is the reason they were called 'heroes' or else because they were sophists, clever speech-makers (*rhētores*) and dialecticians, skilled questioners (*erōtan*)—for *'eirein'* is the same as *'legein'* ('to speak'). And therefore, as we were saying just now, in the Attic dialect, the heroes turn out to be speech-makers and questioners. Hence the noble breed of heroes turns out to be a race of speech-makers and sophists. That isn't hard to understand. But can you tell me why members of the human race are called 'humans' (*'anthrōpoi'*)? That's much harder to understand.

HERMOGENES: How could I do that, Socrates? I wouldn't strain myself to find it even if I could, because I think you're much more likely to find it than I am.

SOCRATES: You really do have faith in Euthyphro's inspiration, it seems. 399

HERMOGENES: Clearly.

SOCRATES: And you're certainly right to have faith in it. Indeed, I seem to have had such a clever insight just now, that, if I'm not careful, I'll be in danger of becoming altogether *too* wise before the day is out. So pay attention. First of all, we must bear in mind the following point about names: we often add letters or take them out and change the accents as well, thus swerving aside from what we want to name. For instance, take *'Dii philos'* ('Friend-to-Zeus'). In order for us to have a name instead of a phrase, we took out the second *'i'*, and pronounced the second syllable with a grave accent instead of an acute (*'Diphilos'*). In other cases, we do the opposite, inserting letters and pronouncing a syllable with an acute accent instead of a grave.

HERMOGENES: That's true.

SOCRATES: Now, I think our name for human beings is a case of just this sort. It was a phrase but became a name. One letter—*'a'*—has been taken away and the accent on the final syllable has become a grave.

HERMOGENES: What do you mean?

SOCRATES: The name 'human' signifies that the other animals do not investigate or reason about anything they see, nor do they observe anything closely. But a human being no sooner sees something—that is to say, *'opōpe'*—than he observes it closely and reasons about it. Hence human

beings alone among the animals are correctly named '*anthrōpos*'—one who observes closely what he has seen (*anathrōn ha opōpe*).

HERMOGENES: What comes next? May I tell you what I'd like to have explained?

SOCRATES: Of course.

d HERMOGENES: It seems to me to be next in order. We speak of the body and soul of a human being.

SOCRATES: Certainly.

HERMOGENES: Then let's try to analyze their names as we did the previous ones.

SOCRATES: Are you saying that we should investigate whether soul and then body are reasonably named?

HERMOGENES: Yes.

SOCRATES: Speaking off the top of my head, I think that those who gave soul its name had something like this in mind. They thought that when the soul is present in the body, it causes it to live and gives it the power
e to breathe the air and be revitalized (*anapsuchon*), and that when this revitalization fails, the body dies and is finished. It's for this reason, I think, that they called it 'soul' (*psuchē*). But hold on a minute, if you don't mind, for I imagine that the followers of Euthyphro would despise this
400 analysis and think it crude. But I think I glimpse one they will find more persuasive. Have a look and see whether it pleases you.

HERMOGENES: Tell it to me and I will.

SOCRATES: When you consider the nature of every body, what, besides the soul, do you think sustains and supports it, so that it lives and moves about?

HERMOGENES: There isn't anything.

SOCRATES: What about when you consider the nature of everything else? Don't you agree with Anaxagoras that it is ordered and sustained by mind or soul?

HERMOGENES: I do.

b SOCRATES: So a fine name to give this power, which supports and sustains (*ochei kai echei*) the whole of nature (*phusis*), would be 'nature-sustainer' (*phusechē*). This may also be pronounced more elegantly, '*psuchē*'.

HERMOGENES: Absolutely, and I also think this *is* a more scientific explanation than the other.

SOCRATES: Yes, it is. Nevertheless, it sounds funny when it's named in the true way, with its actual name (i.e., '*phusechē*').

HERMOGENES: What are we going to say about the next one?

SOCRATES: Are you referring to the name 'body'?

HERMOGENES: Yes.

SOCRATES: There's a lot to say, it seems to me—and if one distorted the name a little, there would be even more. Thus some people say that the
c body (*sōma*) is the tomb (*sēma*) of the soul, on the grounds that it is entombed in its present life, while others say that it is correctly called 'a sign' (*sēma*) because the soul signifies whatever it wants to signify by means of the body. I think it is most likely the followers of Orpheus who gave the body

its name, with the idea that the soul is being punished for something, and that the body is an enclosure or prison in which the soul is securely kept (*sōzetai*)—as the name '*sōma*' itself suggests—until the penalty is paid; for, on this view, not even a single letter of the word needs to be changed.

HERMOGENES: I think we've adequately examined these names, Socrates. But could we investigate the names of the other gods along the lines of your earlier discussion of 'Zeus', to see with what kind of correctness they have been given? d

SOCRATES: By Zeus, we certainly can, Hermogenes. The first and finest line of investigation, which as intelligent people we must acknowledge, is this, that we admit that we know nothing about the gods themselves or about the names they call themselves—although it is clear that they call themselves by true ones. The second best line on the correctness of names is to say, as is customary in our prayers, that we hope the gods are pleased by the names we give them, since we know no others. I think this is an excellent custom. So, if it's all right with you, let's begin our investigation by first announcing to the gods that we will not be investigating *them*—since we do not regard ourselves as worthy to conduct such an investigation—but rather human beings, and the beliefs they had in giving the gods their names. After all, there's no offense in doing that. 401

HERMOGENES: What you say seems reasonable to me, Socrates, so let's proceed as you suggest.

SOCRATES: Shall we begin, as is customary, with Hestia?²² b

HERMOGENES: All right.

SOCRATES: What do you think the person who gave Hestia her name had in mind by naming her that?

HERMOGENES: That's no easy question to answer, in my opinion.

SOCRATES: At any rate, Hermogenes, the first name-givers weren't ordinary people, but lofty thinkers and subtle reasoners.

HERMOGENES: What of it?

SOCRATES: Well, it's obvious to me that it was people of this sort who gave things names, for even if one investigates names foreign to Attic Greek, it is equally easy to discover what they mean. In the case of what we in Attic call '*ousia*' ('being'), for example, some call it '*essia*' and others '*ōsia*'. First, then, it is reasonable, according to the second of these names, to call the being or essence (*ousia*) of things 'Hestia'. Besides, we ourselves say that what partakes of being 'is' ('*estin*'), so being is also correctly called 'Hestia' for this reason. We even seem to have called being '*essia*' in ancient times. And, if one has sacrifices in mind, one will realize that the name-givers themselves understood matters in this way, for anyone who called the being or essence of all things '*essia*' would naturally sacrifice to Hestia before all the other gods. On the other hand, those who use the name '*ōsia*' seem to agree pretty much with Heraclitus' doctrine that the things that are c
d

22. Hestia, the goddess of the hearth, usually received the first part of a sacrifice and was named first in prayers and (often) in oaths.

are all flowing and that nothing stands fast—for the cause and originator of them is then the pusher (*ōthoun*), and so is well named '*ōsia*'. But that's
 e enough for us to say about this, since we know nothing. After Hestia, it is right to investigate Rhea and Cronus, though we've already discussed the latter's name. Now, maybe what I'm about to tell you is nonsense.

HERMOGENES: Why do you say that, Socrates?

SOCRATES: Because I've got a whole swarm of wisdom in my mind!

HERMOGENES: What sort of wisdom?

SOCRATES: It sounds completely absurd, yet it seems to me to have some-
 402 thing very plausible about it.

HERMOGENES: How so?

SOCRATES: I seem to see Heraclitus spouting some ancient bits of wisdom that Homer also tells us—wisdom as old as the days of Cronus and Rhea.

HERMOGENES: What are you referring to?

SOCRATES: Heraclitus says somewhere that "everything gives way and nothing stands fast," and, likening the things that are to the flowing (*rhoē*) of a river, he says that "you cannot step into the same river twice."²³

HERMOGENES: So he does.

SOCRATES: Well, then, don't you think that whoever gave the names
 b 'Rhea' and 'Cronus' to the ancestors of the other gods understood things in the same way as Heraclitus? Or do you think he gave them both the names of streams (*rheumata*) merely by chance?²⁴ Similarly, Homer speaks of

*Ocean, origin of the gods, and their mother Tethys,*²⁵

I think Hesiod says much the same. Orpheus, too, says somewhere that

*Fair-flowing Ocean was the first to marry,
 c And he wedded his sister, the daughter of his mother.*²⁶

See how they agree with each other, and how they all lean towards the doctrines of Heraclitus.

HERMOGENES: I think there's something in what you say, Socrates, but I don't understand what the name 'Tethys' means.

SOCRATES: But it practically tells you itself that it is the slightly disguised name of a spring! After all, what is strained (*diattōmenon*) and filtered
 d (*ēthoumenon*) is like a spring, and the name 'Tethys' is a compound of these two names.

23. Frg. 91 (Diels-Kranz).

24. 'Rhea' sounds a lot like '*rheuma*' ('stream'); apparently Socrates expects Hermogenes to hear 'Cronus' as connected with '*krounos*' ('spring').

25. *Iliad* xiv.201, 302.

26. Frg. 15 (Kern).

HERMOGENES: That's elegant, Socrates.

SOCRATES: Indeed, it is. But what comes next? We've already talked about Zeus.

HERMOGENES: Yes, we have.

SOCRATES: So let's discuss his brothers, Posidon and Pluto (whether we call him 'Pluto' or by his other name).

HERMOGENES: Certainly.

SOCRATES: It seems to me that whoever first gave Posidon his name, gave it to him because he saw that the force of the waves stopped him from walking and prevented him from going any further, just like a shackle around his feet (*desmos tōn podōn*). So he called this god, who is the ruler of the sea's power, 'Posidon', because his 'feet were shackled' (*'posidesmon'*)—the 'e' was probably added for the sake of euphony. But perhaps this isn't what it says. Perhaps, instead of the 's' the name was originally pronounced with a double 'l', because many things are known (*poll' eidōs*) to the god. Or maybe he was called 'The Shaker' (*'ho seiōn'*), because he shook (*seiēin*) the earth, and the 'p' and 'd' were added on. As for Pluto, he was given that name because it accords with his being the source of wealth (*ploutos*), since wealth comes up from below the ground. It seems to me that most people call him by the name 'Pluto', because they are afraid of what they can't see (*aeides*), and they assume that his other name, 'Hades', associates him with that.

HERMOGENES: And what do you think yourself, Socrates?

SOCRATES: I think people have lots of mistaken opinions about the power of this god and are unduly afraid of him. They are afraid because once we are dead we remain in his realm forever. They are terrified because the soul goes there stripped of the body. But I think that all these things, together with the name and office of the god, point in the same direction.

HERMOGENES: How so?

SOCRATES: I'll tell you how it looks to me. But first answer me this: Of the shackles that bind a living being and keep him in a place, which is stronger, force or desire?

HERMOGENES: Desire is far stronger, Socrates.

SOCRATES: Don't you think then that many people would escape from Hades, if he didn't bind those who come to him with the strongest of shackles?

HERMOGENES: Clearly.

SOCRATES: So, if he is to bind them with the strongest of shackles, rather than holding them by force, he must, it seems, bind them with some sort of desire.

HERMOGENES: Evidently.

SOCRATES: Now, there are lots of desires, aren't there?

HERMOGENES: Yes.

SOCRATES: So, if he is really going to hold them with the greatest shackles, he has to bind them with the greatest desire.

HERMOGENES: Yes.

SOCRATES: Is any desire greater than the desire to associate with someone whose company one believes will make one a better man?

HERMOGENES: No, there certainly isn't, Socrates.

SOCRATES: So let's say that it is for these reasons, Hermogenes, that hitherto no one has wished to come back here from there. The words
 e Hades knows how to speak are so beautiful, it seems, that everyone—even the Sirens—has been overcome by his enchantments. On this account, therefore, this god is a perfect sophist, and a great benefactor to those who are with him. So great is the wealth that surrounds him there below, indeed, that he even sends many good things to us from it. This is how he got the name 'Pluto'. On the other hand, because he is unwilling to associate with human beings while they have their bodies, but converses
 404 of the body, doesn't he seem to you to be a philosopher? For hasn't he well understood that when people are free of their bodies he can bind them with the desire for virtue, but that while they feel the agitation and madness of the body not even the famous shackles of his father Cronus could keep them with him?²⁷

HERMOGENES: Probably so, Socrates.

b SOCRATES: It's much more likely then, Hermogenes, that Hades derives his name not from what cannot be seen (*aeides*), but from the fact that he knows (*eidennai*) everything fine and beautiful, and that that is why the rule-setter called him 'Hades'.

HERMOGENES: All right. But what about Demeter, Hera, Apollo, Athena, Hephaestus, and all the other gods? What are we to say about them?

SOCRATES: Demeter seems to have been so called because she gives (*didousa*) nourishment just like a mother (*metēr*); Hera is a loveable one (*eratē*),
 c and, indeed, Zeus is said to have married her for love. But perhaps the rule-setter, being a lofty thinker, called her 'Hera' as a disguised name for air (*aēr*), putting the end of her name at the beginning—you'll get the idea if you repeat the name 'Hera' over and over. As for '*pherrephatta*': it seems that many people dread the names 'Pherrephatta' and 'Apollo' because they are ignorant about the correctness of names, for they change the first name to 'Phersephone', and then it seems terrifying to them.²⁸ But really the name 'Pherrephatta' indicates that the goddess is wise—for since things
 d are being swept along, wisdom is the power to grasp (*ephaptomenon*), comprehend (*epaphōn*), and follow (*epakolouthein*) them. Thus it would be correct to call this goddess 'Pherepapha', or something like that, because of her wisdom, that is to say, her power to comprehend what is being swept along (*epaphē tou pheromenou*)—this is also the reason that Hades, since he is himself wise, associates with her. But people nowadays attach

27. Cronus, the father of Poseidon and Zeus, was dethroned by the latter and chained by him in Tartarus, the deepest part of Hades. See *Iliad* xiv.203–4.

28. Presumably because they see it as meaning 'who brings carnage' (*pherein phonon*).

more importance to euphony than to truth, so they distort her name and call her 'Pherrephatta'. And, as I said, the same thing has happened to Apollo. Many people are afraid of his name because they think it indicates something terrifying.²⁹ Haven't you noticed this? e

HERMOGENES: I certainly have, and what you say is true.

SOCRATES: In my view, however, the name is most beautifully suited to the power of the god.

HERMOGENES: How so?

SOCRATES: I'll try to say how it seems to me, at least. I think no single name could be more in keeping with the four powers of the god. It comprehends each of them, expressing his power in music, prophecy, medicine, and archery. 405

HERMOGENES: It's a pretty remarkable name you're talking about; so go ahead and explain it.

SOCRATES: It's certainly a harmonious one. After all, it's the name of the god of music. To begin with, the purgations and purifications that doctors and prophets use, the fumigations with medicinal and magical drugs, and the various washings and sprinklings that are involved in these processes, all have the same effect, don't they, namely, to make a person pure in body and soul? b

HERMOGENES: Certainly.

SOCRATES: But isn't Apollo the purifying god who washes away (*apolouōn*) such evil impurities and releases (*apoluōn*) us from them?

HERMOGENES: Certainly.

SOCRATES: Since he washes and releases and is a doctor for our evil impurities, he might correctly be called '*Apolouōn*' ('The Washer'). On the other hand, it may well be most correct to call him by the name the Thessalians use, since it accords with his prophecy, that is to say, with his single-mindedness (*haploun*) or truthfulness (these being the same thing), for all the Thessalians call this god '*Aploun*'. And since he always (*aei*) makes his shots (*bolōn*), because of his skill in archery, he is also '*Aeiballōn*' ('Always-shooting'). To understand how his name accords with his musical powers, we have to understand that the letter '*a*' often signifies togetherness (*to homou*), as it does in '*akolouthos*' ('follower' or 'attendant') and '*akoitis*' ('bed-fellow', 'spouse', 'husband').³⁰ In this case, it signifies moving together (*homou polēsis*), whether the moving together of the heavens around what we call the 'poles' ('*poloi*'), or the harmonious moving together in music, which we call 'being in concert' ('*sumphonia*'); for, as those who are clever in astronomy and music say, all these things move together simultaneously by a kind of harmony. Apollo is the god who directs the harmony, and makes all things move together (*homopolōn*), whether for gods or human beings. So, just as the names '*akolouthos*' and '*akoitis*' are derived from c d

29. They connect 'Apollo' with '*apolluōn*' ('who destroys').

30. Removing the brackets in c7.

'homokolouthos' and 'homokoitis' by replacing 'homo' with 'a', we called him
 'Apollo', though he was really 'Homopolon' ('the one who makes things
 e move together'). We inserted the second 'l' lest his name become an oppres-
 sive one.³¹ Even as it is, indeed, some people, who haven't correctly investi-
 gated the force or power of his name, are afraid of it, because they suspect
 406 that it does signify some kind of destructiveness. But, as we said earlier,
 it really comprehends each of the powers of the god, who is a single-
 minded, always shooting washer, who makes things move together. As
 for the Muses and music and poetry in general, they seem to have derived
 their name from their eager desire (*mōsthai*) to investigate and do philoso-
 phy. Leto is so-called because of being very gentle (*pra(i)otētos*) and willing
 (*ethelēmos*) to do whatever is asked of her. Or perhaps her name derives
 from the one used by those who speak dialects other than Attic, many of
 whom call her 'Letho'—apparently on account of the fact that her character
 b isn't rough but gentle and smooth (*leion*). Artemis appears to have been
 so-called because of her soundness (*artemes*) and orderliness, and because
 of her desire for virginity (*parthenia*). Or perhaps the one who gave her
 that name was calling her 'an investigator of virtue' (*'aretēs histōr'*) or 'a
 hater of sexual intercourse between men and women' (*'aroton misēsasēs'*).
 It is for some one of these reasons or for all of them that the one who gave
 this name to the goddess gave it to her.

HERMOGENES: What about 'Dionysos' and 'Aphrodite'?

SOCRATES: You're asking great things of me, son of Hipponicus, because
 there is not only a serious way of explaining the names of these divinities
 c but a playful one as well. You'll have to ask others for the serious one,
 but there's nothing to prevent us from going through the playful one—
 even the gods love play. Dionysos, the giver of wine (*ho didous ton oinon*),
 might playfully be called 'Didoinusos'; while wine (*oinos*) would most justly
 be called 'oionous', since it makes most drinkers think they understood
 (*oiesthai noun echein*) when they don't. As far as Aphrodite is concerned,
 there's no point in contradicting Hesiod—we should agree with him that
 d she is called 'Aphrodite' because she was born from foam (*aphros*).³²

HERMOGENES: Being an Athenian, Socrates, you surely aren't going to forget Athena, or Hephaestus and Ares either, for that matter.

SOCRATES: Not likely.

HERMOGENES: No, indeed.

SOCRATES: It isn't hard to explain how Athena got her other name.

HERMOGENES: Which one?

SOCRATES: 'Pallas'—you know we call her that.

HERMOGENES: Of course.

SOCRATES: In my view, we would be correct to think that this name
 e derives from her dancing in arms and armor, for lifting oneself or anything

31. 'Apolōn' means 'destroying utterly', 'killing', 'slaying'.

32. *Theogony* 195–97.

else up, whether from the ground or in one's hands, is called 'shaking' ('*pallein*') and 'dancing' or 'being shaken' ('*pallesthai*') and 'being danced'. 407

HERMOGENES: Certainly.

SOCRATES: She's called 'Pallas' because of this.

HERMOGENES: And correctly so. But how do you explain her other name?

SOCRATES: You mean 'Athena'?

HERMOGENES: Yes.

SOCRATES: That's a much weightier issue, my friend. The ancients seem to have had the same opinion about Athena as do contemporary experts on Homer. Many of them say in their interpretations of the poet that he represents Athena as Understanding or Thought. The maker of names seems to think the same sort of thing about the goddess. Indeed, he speaks of her in still grander terms, saying she is the very mind of god (*theou noēsis*), as if she is '*ha theonoo*'—using 'a' in the non-Attic style in place of 'ē' and deleting 'i' and 's'.³³ But perhaps this isn't the explanation. Perhaps what he called her was '*Theonoē*', because of her unparalleled knowledge of divine things (*ta theia noousa*). Nor would we be far off the mark if we supposed that what he called her was '*Ēthonoē*', because he wanted to identify the goddess with her understanding character (*hē en tōi ēthei noēsis*). Then he himself or others after him made the name more beautiful, as they thought, and called her '*Athēnaa*'. c

HERMOGENES: What about Hephaestus? How do you explain him?

SOCRATES: Are you asking me about the noble judge of light (*phaeos histōr*)?

HERMOGENES: It seems so.

SOCRATES: Isn't it clear to everyone then that he is 'Phaestus' with an 'ē' added on?

HERMOGENES: It probably is—unless you happen to have yet another opinion on the matter. And you probably do.

SOCRATES: Then to prevent me from giving it, ask me about Ares.

HERMOGENES: Consider yourself asked!

SOCRATES: All right, if that's what you want. It is proper for a god who is in every way warlike to be called 'Ares', for 'Ares' accords with virility (*arren*) and courage (*andreia*), or with a hard and unbending nature, the one that is called '*arratos*'. d

HERMOGENES: It certainly is.

SOCRATES: Then for god's sake let's leave the subject of the gods, because it frightens me to talk about them. But ask me about anything else you like, "until we see what the horses" of Euthyphro "can do."³⁴

HERMOGENES: I'll do that, but there is still one god I want to ask you about, and that's Hermes, since Cratylus says that I am no Hermogenes e

33. I.e., '*ha theonoo*' or 'Athena' is derived thus: delete 'sis' from '*theou noēsis*', yielding a single word '*theounoē*'; add the feminine article in its non-Attic style and change 'ē' to 'a' to get '*ha theounoo*'. Since at this time there was not the distinction we now make between 'o' and 'ou', we get '*ha theonoo*'.

34. *Iliad* v.221–22. For Euthyphro, see 396d.

(Son-of-Hermes). So let's examine the name 'Hermes' and its meaning, to see whether there's anything in what he says.

408 SOCRAATES: Well, the name 'Hermes' seems to have something to do with speech: he is an interpreter (*hermēneus*), a messenger, a thief and a deceiver in words, a wheeler-dealer—and all these activities involve the power of speech. Now, as we mentioned before,³⁵ 'eirein' means 'to use words', and the other part of the name says—as Homer often does—'emēsato' ('he contrived'), which means 'to devise'. And it was out of these two words that the rule-setter established the name of the god who devised speech (*legein*) and words, since 'eirein' means the same as 'legein' ('to speak'). It's just as if he had told us: "Humans, it would be right for you to call the god who has contrived speech (*to eirein emēsato*) 'Eiremēs'." But we, beautifying the name, as we suppose, call him 'Hermes' nowadays.

HERMOGENES: I'm certain that Cratylus was right when he said that I'm no Hermogenes then, since I'm no good at devising speeches.

SOCRAATES: But it *is* reasonable for Pan to be Hermes' double-natured son.

c HERMOGENES: How so?

SOCRAATES: You know speech signifies all things (*to pan*) and keeps them circulating and always going about, and that it has two forms—true and false?

HERMOGENES: Certainly.

SOCRAATES: Well, the true part is smooth and divine and dwells among the gods above, while the false part dwells below among the human masses, and is rough and goatish (*tragikon*); for it is here, in the tragic (*tragikon*) life, that one finds the vast majority of myths and falsehoods.

HERMOGENES: Certainly.

d SOCRAATES: Therefore the one who expresses all things (*pan*) and keeps them always in circulation (*aei polōn*) is correctly called 'Pan-the-goat-herd' ('*Pan aipolos*'). The double-natured son of Hermes, he is smooth in his upper parts, and rough and goatish in the ones below. He is either speech itself or the brother of speech, since he is the son of Hermes. And it's not a bit surprising that a brother resembles his brother. But, as I said, let's leave the gods.

e HERMOGENES: That sort of gods, Socrates, if that's what you want. But what keeps you from discussing these gods: the sun and moon, and stars, earth, aether, air, fire, water, and the seasons and the year?

SOCRAATES: That's a lot you're asking of me! All the same, if it will please you, I am willing.

HERMOGENES: Of course, it will.

SOCRAATES: Which one do you want me to take up first? Or, since you mentioned the sun (*hēlios*) first, shall we begin with it?

HERMOGENES: Certainly.

409 SOCRAATES: If we use the Doric form of the name, I think matters will become clearer, for the Dorians call the sun '*halios*'. So '*halios*' might accord

35. See 398d.

with the fact that the sun collects (*halizein*) people together when it rises, or with the fact that it is always rolling (*aei heilein iōn*) in its course around the earth, or with the fact that it seems to color (*poikillei*) the products of the earth, for '*poikillein*' means the same as '*aiolein*' ('to shift rapidly to and fro').

HERMOGENES: What about the moon (*selēnē*)?

SOCRATES: The name certainly seems to put Anaxagoras in an awkward position.

HERMOGENES: Why is that?

SOCRATES: It seems to reveal that his recent theory about the moon deriving its light from the sun is in fact quite old. b

HERMOGENES: In what way?

SOCRATES: *Selas* (bright light) and *phōs* (light) are the same thing.

HERMOGENES: Yes.

SOCRATES: Now, if what the Anaxagoreans say is true, the light of the moon (*selēnē*) is always both new (*neon*) and old (*henon*), for they say that as the sun circles around the moon it always casts new light on it, but that the light from the previous month also remains there.

HERMOGENES: Certainly.

SOCRATES: But many people call the moon '*Selanaia*'.

HERMOGENES: Yes, they do.

SOCRATES: And, since its light is always both new and old (*selas neon kai enon echei aei*), the right name to call it is '*Selaenoneoaeia*', and this is the one that has been compressed into '*Selanaia*'. c

HERMOGENES: And a dithyrambic³⁶ name it is too, Socrates! But what have you to say about the month and the stars?

SOCRATES: The correct name to call a month (*meis*) is '*meiēs*' from '*mei-ousthai*' ('to grow smaller'). And the stars (*astra*) seem to get their name given to them from '*astrapē*' ('lightning'), for lightning is what causes the eyes to turn upward (*anastrephei ta ōpa*). Hence, it should really be called '*anastrōpē*', but nowadays the name is beautified and it is called '*astrapē*'.

HERMOGENES: What about fire and water?

SOCRATES: I'm really puzzled about fire (*pur*). So either Euthyphro's muse has abandoned me or this really is very hard. But notice the device I use in all such puzzling cases. d

HERMOGENES: What is that?

SOCRATES: I'll tell you. But first answer me this. Could you say in what way *pur* (fire) comes to be so called?

HERMOGENES: I certainly can't.

SOCRATES: Here's what I suspect. I think that the Greeks, especially those who live abroad, have adopted many names from foreign tongues. e

HERMOGENES: What of it?

36. A dithyramb is a choral song to the god Dionysus, noted for its complex and pompous language.

SOCRATES: Well, if someone were trying to discover whether these names had been reasonably given, and he treated them as belonging to the Greek language rather than the one they really come from, you know that he would be in a quandary.

HERMOGENES: He very probably would.

410 SOCRATES: Now, look at 'fire' (*'pur'*) and see whether it isn't a foreign name—for it certainly isn't easy to connect it with the Greek language. Besides, it's obvious that the Phrygians use the same name slightly altered. And the same holds for 'water' (*'hudōr'*) and 'dog' (*'kuōn'*), and lots of others.

HERMOGENES: So it does.

SOCRATES: Consequently, though one might say something about these names, one mustn't push them too far. That, then, is how I get rid of 'fire' (*'pur'*) and 'water' (*'hudōr'*). But what about air, Hermogenes? Is it called
 b *'aēr'* because it raises (*airei*) things from the earth? Or because it is always flowing (*aei rhei*)? Or because wind (*pneuma*) arises from its flow? For the poets call the winds (*pneumata*) 'gales' (*aētai*), don't they? So, perhaps a poet says *'aētorrous'* ('gale flow') in place of *'pneumatorrous'* ('wind flow'), thereby indicating that what he is talking about is air.³⁷ As for aether, I'd explain it as follows: it is right to call it *'aeitheēr'*, because it is always running and flowing (*aei thei rheōn*) about the air. The earth (*gē*) is better
 c signified by the name *'gaia'*; for *gaia* is correctly called a 'mother', as Homer tells us by using *'gegaasi'* for 'to be born'. All right, what was to come next?

HERMOGENES: 'Seasons' (*'Hōrai'*), Socrates, and the two names for the year, *'eniautos'* and *'etos'*.

SOCRATES: If you want to know the probable truth about the name *'hōrai'* ('seasons'), you must look to the fact that it is spelled *'horai'* in old Attic. The seasons are rightly called *'horai'* ('things that distinguish or mark off one thing from another'), because they distinguish (*horizein*) the weathers of winter and summer, the winds, and the fruits of the earth. As for
 d *'eniautos'* and *'etos'*, they are actually one name. We saw earlier that Zeus' name was divided in two—some called him *'Zēna'*, some *'Dia'* in the accusative.³⁸ Well, exactly the same is true of the name of the year. It is the year by itself that brings the plants and animals of the earth to light, each in its proper season, and passes them in review within itself (*en heautōi exetazei*). Hence, some people call it *'etos'*, because it passes things in review (*etazei*), while others call it *'eniautos'*, because it does this within itself (*en heautōi*). The whole phrase is 'passing things in review within itself' (*'en heautōi etazon'*), but this single phrase results in the year being called these two different names. Thus, the two names, *'eniautos'* and *'etos'*, derive from
 e a single phrase.

HERMOGENES: I say, Socrates, you *are* making great progress!

SOCRATES: I think I'm driving my apparent wisdom pretty hard at present.

37. Removing the brackets in b5–6.

38. See 395e ff.

HERMOGENES: You certainly are.

SOCRATES: You'll be even more certain in a second.

HERMOGENES: Now that we've examined that sort of name, I'd next like to see with what correctness the names of the virtues are given. I mean 'wisdom' (*phronēsis*), 'comprehension' (*sunesis*), 'justice' (*dikaiosunē*), and all the other fine names of that sort. 411

SOCRATES: That's no inconsequential class of names you're stirring up, Hermogenes, but, since I have put on the lion's skin,³⁹ I mustn't lose heart. So, it seems I must investigate 'wisdom', 'comprehension', 'judgment' (*gnōmē*), 'knowledge' (*epistēmē*), and all those other fine names of which you speak. b

HERMOGENES: We certainly mustn't stop until we've done so.

SOCRATES: By the dog, I think that's a pretty good inspiration—what popped into my mind just now! Most of our wise men nowadays get so dizzy going around and around in their search for the nature of the things that are, that the things themselves appear to them to be turning around and moving every which way. Well, I think that the people who gave things their names in very ancient times are exactly like these wise men. They don't blame this on their own internal condition, however, but on the nature of the things themselves, which they think are never stable or steadfast, but flowing and moving, full of every sort of motion and constant coming into being. I say this, because the names you just mentioned put me in mind of it. c

HERMOGENES: How did they do that, Socrates?

SOCRATES: Perhaps you didn't notice that they are given on the assumption that the things they name are moving, flowing, and coming into being.

HERMOGENES: No, I didn't think of that at all.

SOCRATES: Well, to begin with, the first name we mentioned is undoubtedly like this. d

HERMOGENES: What name was that?

SOCRATES: 'Wisdom' (*phronēsis*). Wisdom is the understanding of motion (*phoras noēsis*) and flow. Or it might be interpreted as taking delight in motion (*phoras onēsis*). In either case, it has to do with motion. If you want another example, the name 'judgment' (*gnōmē*) expresses the fact that to judge is to examine or study whatever is begotten (*gonēs nōmēsis*); for 'studying' (*nōman'*) and 'examining' (*skopein'*) are the same. And if you want yet another example, understanding (*noēsis*) itself is the longing for the new (*neou hesis*). But to say that the things that are are new is to signify that they are always coming into being. And such things are what the soul longs for, as the giver of the name, '*neoesis*' expressed, for the ancient name wasn't '*noēsis*' but '*noesis*', but an '*ē*' took the place of the double '*e*'. e
Moderation (*sōphrosunē*) is the saviour (*sōteria*) of the wisdom (*phronēsis*) we just looked at. 'Knowledge' (*epistēmē*) indicates that a worthwhile soul follows (*hepetai*) the movement of things, neither falling behind nor running 412

39. The skin of the Nemean lion worn by Heracles.

on ahead. So we ought to insert an 'e' in the name and spell it 'hepeistēmē'. Comprehension (*sunesis*), in turn, seems to be a kind of summing up (*sullogismos*), and whenever one says 'comprehends' ('*sunienai*'), it's exactly as if one has said 'knows' ('*epistasthai*'), for '*sunienai*' (literally, 'goes along with') means that the soul 'journeys together' with things. As for 'wisdom' ('*sophia*'), it signifies the grasp of motion. But it is rather obscure and non-Attic. Nonetheless, we must remember that the poets often say of something that begins to advance quickly that it "rushed" ("*esuthē*"). Indeed, there was a famous Spartan man named '*Sous*', for this is what the Spartans call a rapid advance. 'Wisdom' signifies the grasping (*epaphē*) of this motion, on the assumption that the things that are are moving. The name 'good' ('*agathon*') is intended to signify everything in nature that is admirable (*agaston*). The things that are are moving, but some are moving quickly, others slowly. So what moves quickly is not all there is, but the admirable part of it. Hence this name '*tagathon*' ('the good') is applied to what is admirable (*agaston*) about the fast (*thoon*).

It's easy to figure out that 'justice' ('*dikaiosunē*') is the name given to the comprehension of the just (*dikaïou sunesis*), but the just itself is hard to understand. It seems that many people agree with one another about it up to a point, but beyond that they disagree. Those who think that the universe is in motion believe that most of it is of such a kind as to do nothing but give way, but that something penetrates all of it and generates everything that comes into being. This, they say, is the fastest and smallest thing of all; for if it were not the smallest, so that nothing could keep it out, or not the fastest, so that it could treat all other things as though they were standing still, it wouldn't be able to travel through everything. However, since it is governor and penetrator (*diaïon*) of everything else, it is rightly called 'just' ('*dikaïon*')—the 'k'-sound is added for the sake of euphony. As I was saying before, many people agree about the just up to this point. As for myself, Hermogenes, because I persisted at it, I learned all about the matter in secret—that this is the just and the cause, since that through which (*dí ho*) a thing comes to be is the cause. Indeed, someone told me that it is correct to call this '*Dia*' ('Zeus') for that reason. Even when I'd heard this, however, I persisted in gently asking, "If all this is true, my friend, what actually *is* the just?" Thereupon, they think I am asking too many questions and demanding the impossible, and they tell me that I have already learned enough. Then they try to satisfy me by having each tell me his own view. But they disagree with each other. One says that the just is the sun, since only the sun governs all of the things that are, penetrating (*diaiōn*) and burning (*kaōn*) them. Well-satisfied, I tell this fine answer to one of the others, but he ridicules me by asking if I think nothing just ever happens in human affairs once the sun has set. So I persist, and ask him to tell me what *he* thinks the just is, and he says that it is fire (*to pur*)—but that isn't easy to understand. Another says that it isn't fire, but the heat itself that is in fire. Another says that all these explanations are ridiculous, and that the just is what Anaxagoras talks

about, namely, mind; for he says that mind is self-ruling, mixes with nothing else, orders the things that are, and travels through everything.⁴⁰ Thereupon, my friend, I am even more perplexed than when I set out to learn what the just is. However, the goal of our investigation was the *name* 'just', and it seems to have been given for the reasons we mentioned.

HERMOGENES: I think you really must have heard this from someone, Socrates, rather than making it up as you went along.

SOCRATES: What about the other explanations I've mentioned?

HERMOGENES: I certainly don't think you heard those.

SOCRATES: Listen, then, and perhaps I'll be able to deceive you into thinking that I haven't heard the remaining ones either. After justice what's left? I don't think we've discussed courage—but it's clear that injustice (*adikia*) is really nothing more than a hindering of that which penetrates (*diaiōn*). 'Courage' (*'andreia'*) signifies that this virtue was given its name in battle. And if indeed the things that are are flowing, then a battle cannot be anything but an opposing flow. If we remove the 'd' from *'andreia'* to get *'anreia'* ('flowing back'), the name itself indicates this fact. Of course, it is clear that courage doesn't oppose every flow, but only the one that is contrary to justice; otherwise, courage wouldn't be praiseworthy. Similarly, 'male' (*'arren'*) and 'man' (*'anēr'*) indicate upward flow (*anō rhoē*). It seems to me that *'gunē'* ('woman') wants to be *'gonē'* ('womb'), that *'thēlus'* ('female') comes from *'thēlē'* ('nipple'), and that a nipple (*thēlē*) is so-called, Hermogenes, because it makes things flourish (*tethēlenai*) in just the way that watering makes plants flourish.

HERMOGENES: Probably so, Socrates.

SOCRATES: Yes, *'thallein'* itself seems to me to be like the sudden and rapid growth of the young, for the name-giver has imitated something like this in the name, which he put together from *'thein'* ('to run') and *'hallesthai'* ('to jump'). Notice how I go off course, when I get on the flat. But there are still plenty of names left that seem important.

HERMOGENES: That's true.

SOCRATES: And one of them is to see what the name *'technē'* ('craft') means.

HERMOGENES: Certainly.

SOCRATES: If you remove the 't' and insert an 'o' between the 'ch' and the 'n' and the 'n' and the 'ē',⁴¹ doesn't it signify the possession of understanding (*hexis nou*)?

HERMOGENES: Yes, Socrates, but getting it to do so is like trying to haul a boat up a very sticky ramp!

SOCRATES: But then you know, Hermogenes, that the first names given to things have long since been covered over by those who wanted to dress them up, and that letters were added or subtracted to make them sound good in the mouth, resulting in distortions and ornamentation of every

40. Frg. 12 (Diels-Kranz).

41. Resulting in *'echonōē'*.

kind. You know, too, that time has had a share in this process. Take *'katoptron* ('mirror'), for example, don't you think that the 'r' is an absurd addition?⁴² In my view, this sort of thing is the work of people who think
 d nothing of the truth, but only of the sounds their mouths make. Hence, they keep embellishing the first names, until finally a name is reached that no human being can understand. One example, among many others, is that they call the Sphinx by that name instead of *'Phix'*.⁴³

HERMOGENES: That's right, Socrates.

SOCRATES: And yet, if we can add whatever we like to names, or subtract whatever we like from them, it will be far too easy to fit any name to
 e any thing.

HERMOGENES: That's true.

SOCRATES: Yes, it is true. So, I think a wise supervisor,⁴⁴ like yourself, will have to keep a close watch, to preserve balance and probability.

HERMOGENES: That's what I want to do.

SOCRATES: And I want to do it along with you, Hermogenes, but don't
 415 demand too much precision, in case

*You enfeeble my strength.*⁴⁵

Now that *'technē'* is out of the way, I'm about to come to the summit of our inquiries. But first I'll investigate *'mēchanē'* ('device'). It seems to me that *'mēchanē'* signifies great accomplishment (*anein epi polu*); for *'mēkos'* signifies some sort of greatness, and these two, *'mēkos'* and *'anein'* make up the name *'mēchanē'*. But, as I was saying just now, we must go on to the summit of our inquiries, and investigate the names *'aretē'* ('virtue')
 b and *'kakia'* ('vice'). I don't yet understand the first of them, but the other seems clear enough, since it is in harmony with everything we said before. To the degree that things are in motion, all that is moving badly (*kakōs ion*) should be called *'kakia'*, but the name for all such things is mostly given to a soul in which this bad movement in relation to things resides. It seems to me that the name *'deilia'* ('cowardice'), which we haven't discussed, expresses what this bad movement is.—We ought to have discussed
 c *'deilia'* after *'andreia'* ('courage'), but we passed it by, as I believe we have passed by lots of other names.—Now, *'deilia'* signifies the soul's being bound with a strong shackle (*desmos*), for *lian* (too much) is a degree of strength. Therefore, *'deilia'* signifies the strongest of the soul's shackles.

42. Because it interrupts the sequence *'opto'*, suggesting a verb for seeing.

43. Hesiod uses the latter form of the name at *Theogony* 326. Popular etymology inappropriately connects *'Sphinx'* with a verb meaning 'to torture'. *'Phix'*, the Boeotian form of the word, connects it more appropriately with Mount Phikion in Boeotia, because of the special association of the Sphinx with Thebes.

44. See 390b ff.

45. *Iliad* vi.265.

Aporia (perplexity, inability to move on) is a vice of the same sort, and so, it seems, is everything else that hinders movement and motion. This makes it clear that the bad movement in question is a restrained or hindered motion, whose possession by a soul causes it to become filled with vice. And, if '*kakia*' is the name of that sort of thing, '*aretē*' is the opposite. It signifies, first, lack of perplexity (*euporia*, ease of movement), and, second, that the flow of a good soul is always unimpeded; for it seems that it is given this name '*aretē*' because it is unrestrained and unhindered and so is always flowing (*aei rheon*). Thus it is correct to call it '*aeirheitē*', but this has been contracted, and it is called '*aretē*'. Now, maybe you'll say that I'm inventing things again, but I think that if what I just said about '*kakia*' is correct, then so is what I said about the name '*aretē*'.
d
e

HERMOGENES: What about '*kakon*' ('bad'), which has been involved in many of the previous inquiries? What's the meaning of it?
416

SOCRATES: It's a strange word, by god! At least, that's what I think. And one that's hard to interpret. So I'll use the device I introduced earlier on it as well.

HERMOGENES: Which one?

SOCRATES: That of attributing a foreign origin to it.⁴⁶

HERMOGENES: And you may well be correct. So suppose we leave these inquiries, and try to see what rationale there is for '*kalon*' ('fine', 'beautiful') and '*aischron*' ('disgraceful', 'ugly').

SOCRATES: The meaning of '*aischron*' seems clear to me, and it is also in harmony with what we said before. It seems to me that the giver of names reviles everything that hinders or restrains the flowing of the things that are. In particular, he gave this name '*aeischoroun*' to what always restrains their flowing (*aei ischei ton rhoun*). But nowadays it is contracted and pronounced '*aischron*'.
b

HERMOGENES: What about '*kalon*'?

SOCRATES: It's harder to understand. Indeed, it is pronounced like this only because it sounds harmonious to shorten the '*ou*' to '*o*'.

HERMOGENES: How so?

SOCRATES: In my view, this name derives from a sort of thought (*dianoia*).

HERMOGENES: What do you mean?

SOCRATES: Tell me. What caused each of the things that are to be called by a name? Isn't it whatever gave them their names?
c

HERMOGENES: Certainly.

SOCRATES: And wasn't it thought—whether divine or human or both—that did this?

HERMOGENES: Yes.

SOCRATES: And isn't what originally named them the same as what names (*kaloun*) them now, that is to say, thought?

HERMOGENES: Evidently.

46. See 409d.

SOCRATES: Aren't all the works performed by thought and understanding praiseworthy, while those that aren't are blameworthy?

HERMOGENES: Certainly.

SOCRATES: Now, medicine performs medical works and carpentry performs works of carpentry? Do you agree?

HERMOGENES: I do.

SOCRATES: And to name things (*kaloun*) is to perform beautiful (*kalon*) works?

HERMOGENES: Necessarily.

SOCRATES: And we say that it is thought that does this?

HERMOGENES: Certainly.

SOCRATES: Therefore wisdom (*phronēsis*) is correctly given the name '*kalon*' ('beautiful'), since it performs the works that we say are beautiful and welcome as such.

HERMOGENES: Evidently.

SOCRATES: What other such names still remain for us to examine?

HERMOGENES: Those related to the good and the beautiful, such as '*sumpheron*' ('advantageous'), '*lusiteloun*' ('profitable'), '*ōphelimon*' ('beneficial'), '*kerdaleon*' ('gainful'), and their opposites.

SOCRATES: In light of the previous investigations, you should now be able to explain '*sumpheron*' ('advantageous') for yourself, since it is obviously a close relative of '*epistēmē*' ('knowledge'). It expresses the fact that what is advantageous is nothing other than the movement (*phora*) of a soul in accord with the movement of things.⁴⁷ The things that are done as a result of this movement are probably called '*sumphora*' or '*sumpheronta*' because they are being moved in harmony with things (*sumperipheresthai*). But '*kerdaleon*' ('gainful') derives from '*kerdos*' ('gain'). If you replace the '*d*' in '*kerdos*' with a '*n*', the name expresses its meaning clearly; it names the good, but in another way. Because the good penetrates everything, it has the power to regulate (*kerannutai*) everything, and the one who gave it its name named it after this power. But he put a '*d*' instead of the '*n*' and pronounced it '*kerdos*'.

HERMOGENES: What about '*lusiteloun*' ('profitable')?

SOCRATES: I don't think, Hermogenes, that he uses the name '*lusiteloun*' to mean the profit that releases (*apoluei*) a capital sum for reinvestment, which is what retailers use it to mean. The namer-giver calls the good by that name because it is the fastest of the things that are, it doesn't allow things to remain at rest, or permit their motion to stop, pause, or reach an end. Instead, it always does away with (*luei*) any attempt to let motion end, making it unceasing and immortal. In my view, it is for this reason that the good is said to be '*lusiteloun*', because it does away with (*luon*) any end (*telos*) to motion. '*Ōphelimon*' ('beneficial') is a non-Attic name. Homer often uses it in the form '*ophellein*', which derives from '*auxein*' ('to increase') and '*poiein*' ('to make').

HERMOGENES: And what are we to say about their opposites?

47. See 412a ff.

SOCRATES: Those that are mere negations don't need any discussion, in my view.

HERMOGENES: Which ones are they?

SOCRATES: '*Asumpheron*' ('disadvantageous'), '*anōpheles*' ('nonbeneficial'), '*alusiteles*' ('unprofitable'), and '*akerdes*' ('non-gainful').

HERMOGENES: It's true, they don't need discussion.

SOCRATES: But '*blaberon*' ('harmful') and '*zēmiōdes*' ('hurtful') do.

HERMOGENES: Yes.

SOCRATES: '*Blaberon*' ('harmful') means that which is harming (*blapton*) the flow (*rhoun*). '*Blapton*', in turn, signifies wanting to grasp (*boulomenon haptēin*). But grasping is the same as shackling, and the name-giver always finds fault with that. Now what wants to grasp the flow (*to boulomenon haptēin rhoun*) would be most correctly called '*boulapteroun*', but this has been beautified, as it seems to me, and so it is called '*blaberon*'. e

HERMOGENES: What intricate names you come up with, Socrates! When you uttered the name '*boulapteroun*' just now, you looked just as if you were whistling the flute-prelude of the Hymn to Athena! 418

SOCRATES: I'm not responsible for them, Hermogenes; the name-givers are.

HERMOGENES: That's true. But what about '*zēmiōdes*' ('hurtful')? What does it mean?

SOCRATES: What does '*zēmiōdes*' mean? See how right I was to say, Hermogenes, that people make huge changes in the meaning of names by adding or subtracting letters, and how even a very slight alteration of this sort can make a name signify the opposite of what it used to signify. '*Deon*' ('obligation') is an example that has just occurred to me, and it reminds me of what I was about to say to you about '*zēmiōdes*'. Our fine modern language has obliterated the true meaning of these names by so twisting them around that they now mean the opposite of what they used to, whereas the ancient language expresses clearly what they mean. b

HERMOGENES: What do you mean?

SOCRATES: I'll tell you. You know that our ancestors made great use of '*i*' and '*d*' (especially the women, who are the best preservers of the ancient language). But nowadays people change '*i*' to '*ē*' or '*e*', which are supposed to sound more grandiose. c

HERMOGENES: They do?

SOCRATES: Yes. For example, people now call the day '*hēmera*', but in very ancient times they called it '*himerā*' or '*hemera*'.

HERMOGENES: That's true.

SOCRATES: You know then that only the ancient name expresses the name-giver's meaning clearly? People welcome the daylight that comes out of the darkness and long for (*himeirousin*) it, and that's why they named it '*himerā*'. d

HERMOGENES: Evidently.

SOCRATES: But nowadays the name is so dressed up that no one can understand what it means. Although there are some who think the day is called '*hēmera*' because it makes things gentle (*hēmera*).

HERMOGENES: So it seems.

SOCRATES: Do you also know that the ancients called a yoke *'duogon'* not *'zugon'*?

HERMOGENES: Of course.

SOCRATES: Now, *'zugon'* expresses nothing clearly, but the name *'duogon'*, on the other hand, is quite rightly given to whatever binds two animals together so that they can pull a plough or cart (*duoin agōgēn*). Nonetheless, e nowadays *'zugon'* it is. And there are plenty of other examples.

HERMOGENES: Evidently.

SOCRATES: Similarly, *'deon'* ('obligation'), when pronounced in this way, seems at first to signify the opposite of all the other names for the good. After all, even though an obligation is a kind of good, *'deon'* plainly signifies a shackle (*desmos*) and obstacle to motion, and so is closely akin to *'blaberon'* ('harmful').

HERMOGENES: Yes, Socrates, it does plainly signify that.

SOCRATES: But not if you use the ancient name, which is much more likely to have been correctly given than the present one. If you replace 419 the *'e'* with an *'i'*, as in the ancient name, it agrees with the earlier names of good things—for *'dion'* ('passing through'), not *'deon'*, signifies a good, and is a term of praise. So the name-giver didn't contradict himself, and *'deon'* ('obligation') is plainly the same as *'ōphelimon'* ('beneficial'), *'lusiteloun'* ('profitable'), *'kerdaleon'* ('gainful'), *'agathon'* ('good'), *'sumpheron'* ('advantageous'), and *'euporon'* ('lack of perplexity'), which are different names signifying what orders and moves. This is always praised, while what b restrains and shackles is found fault with. Likewise, in the case of *'zēmiōdes'* ('hurtful'), if you replace the *'z'* with a *'d'*, as in the ancient language, it will be plain to you that the name was given to what shackles motion (*doun to ion*), since *'dēmiōdes'* derives from that.

HERMOGENES: What about *'hēdonē'* ('pleasure'), *'lupē'* ('pain'), and *'epithumia'* ('appetite'), Socrates, and others like them?

SOCRATES: I don't think there is any great difficulty about them, Hermogenes. *Hēdonē* (pleasure) seems to have been given its name because it is an activity that tends towards enjoyment (*hē onēsis*), but a *'d'* has been inserted and we call it *'hēdonē'* instead of *'hēonē'*. *'Lupē'* ('pain') seems to c derive from the weakening (*dialysis*) the body suffers when in pain. *'Ania'* ('sorrow') signifies what hinders (*hienai*) motion. *'Algēdōn'* ('distress') seems to me to be a foreign name deriving from *'algeinos'* ('distressing'). *'Odunē'* ('grief') seems to be named after the entering in (*endusis*) of pain. It is clear to everyone that pronouncing the name *'achthēdōn'* ('affliction') is like giving motion a burden (*achthos*) to carry. *Chara* (joy) seems to have been so called because it is an outpouring (*diachusis*) or good movement of the soul's flow (*rhoē*). *'Terpsis'* ('delight') comes from *'terpnon'* ('delightful'), d which, in turn, comes from that which glides (*herpsis*) through the soul like a breath (*pnoē*). By rights it is called *'herpnoun'*, but over time its name has been changed to *'terpnon'*. *Euphrosunē* (lightheartedness) needs no explanation, since it is clear to everyone that it derives its name from

the movement of the soul that well accords (*eu sumpheresthai*) with that of things. By rights it is called *'eupherosunē'*, but we call it *'euphrosunē'*. Nor is there any difficulty about *epithumia* ('appetite'), for it is clear that its name derives from the power that opposes the spirited part of the soul (*epi ton thumon iousa*), while *'thumos'* ('spirit', 'anger') derives from the raging (*thusis*) and boiling of the soul. The name *'himeros'* ('desire') derives from what most drives the soul's flow. It flows with a rush (*hiemenos rhei*) and sets on (*ephiemenos*) things, thus violently dragging the soul because of the rush of its flow. And so, because it has all this power, it is called *'himeros'*. *'Pothos'* ('longing'), on the other hand, signifies that it isn't a desire (or flow) for what is present but for what is elsewhere (*pou*) or absent. So, when its object is absent, it is given the name *'pothos'*, and, when its object is present, it is called *'himeros'*. *Erōs* (erotic love) is so called because it flows in from outside, that is to say, the flow doesn't belong to the person who has it, but is introduced into him through his eyes. Because of this it was called *'esros'* ('influx') in ancient times, when they used *'o'* for *'ō'*, but now that *'o'* is changed to *'ō'*, it is called *'erōs'*. So, what other names do you think are left for us to examine?

HERMOGENES: What do you think about *'doxa'* ('opinion') and the like?

SOCRATES: *'Doxa'* ('opinion') either derives from the pursuit (*diōxis*) the soul engages in when it hunts for the knowledge of how things are, or it derives from the shooting of a bow (*toxōn*). But the latter is more likely. At any rate, *'oiēsis'* ('thinking') is in harmony with it. It seems to express the fact that thinking is the motion (*oisis*) of the soul towards every thing, towards how each of the things that are really is. In the same way, *'boulē'* ('planning') has to do with trying to hit (*bolē*) some target, and *'boulesthai'* ('wishing') and *'bouleuesthai'* ('deliberating') signify aiming at something (*ephiesthai*). All these names seem to go along with *'doxa'* in that they're all like *'bolē'*, like trying to hit some target. Similarly, the opposite, *'aboulia'* ('lack of planning'), seems to signify a failure to get something (*atuchia*), as when someone fails to hit or get what he shot at, wished for, planned, or desired.

HERMOGENES: The pace of investigating seems to be quickening, Socrates!

SOCRATES: That's because I'm coming to the finishing post! But I still want to investigate *'anankē'* ('compulsion') and *'hekousion'* ('voluntary'), since they're next. The name *'hekousion'* expresses the fact that it signifies yielding and not resisting, but yielding, as I said before, to the motion (*eikon tōi ionti*)—the one that comes into being in accord with our wish. *'Anankaion'* ('compulsory') and *'antitupnon'* ('resistant'), on the other hand, since they signify motion contrary to our wish, are associated with 'error' and 'ignorance'. Indeed, saying *'anankaion'* is like trying to get through a ravine (*ankē*), for ravines restrain motion, since they are rough-going, filled with bushes, and hard to get through. It's probably for this reason that we use *'anankaion'* in the way we do—because saying it is like trying to get through a ravine. Nonetheless, while my strength lasts, let's not stop using it. Don't you stop, either, but keep asking your questions.

421 HERMOGENES: Well, then, let me ask about the finest and most important names, *'alētheia'* ('truth'), *'pseudos'* ('falsehood'), *'on'* ('being'), and—the subject of our present conversation—*'onoma'* ('name'), and why it is so named.

SOCRATES: Do you know what *'maiesthai'* means?

HERMOGENES: Yes, it means 'to search' (*'zētein'*).

SOCRATES: Well, *'onoma'* ('name') seems to be a compressed statement which says: "this is a being for which there is a search." You can see this more easily in *'onomaston'* ('thing named'), since it clearly says: "this is a being for which there is a search (*on hou masma estin*)."
 b *'Alētheia'* ('truth') is like these others in being compressed, for the divine motion of being is called *'alētheia'* because *'alētheia'* is a compressed form of the phrase "a wandering that is divine (*alē theia*)."
'Pseudos' ('falsehood') is the opposite of this motion, so that, once again, what is restrained or compelled to be inactive is reviled by the name-giver, and likened to people asleep (*katheudousi*)—but the meaning of the name is concealed by the addition of *'ps'*.
'On' ('being') or *'ousia'* ('being') says the same as *'alētheia'* once an *'i'* is added, since it signifies going (*ion*).
 c *'Ouk on'* ('not being'), in turn, is *'ouk ion'* ('not going'), and indeed some people actually use that name for it.

HERMOGENES: I think you've hammered these into shape manfully, Socrates. But suppose someone were to ask you about the correctness of the names *'ion'* ('going'), *'rheon'* ('flowing'), and *'down'* ('shackling') . . .

SOCRATES: "How should we answer him?" Is that what you were going to say?

HERMOGENES: Yes, exactly.

SOCRATES: One way of giving the semblance of an answer has been suggested already.⁴⁸

HERMOGENES: What way is that?

SOCRATES: To say that a name has a foreign origin when we don't know what it signifies. Now, it may well be true that some of these names are
 d foreign, but it is also possible that the basic or 'first' names are Greek, but not recoverable because they are so old. Names have been twisted in so many ways, indeed, that it wouldn't be surprising if the ancient Greek word was the same as the modern foreign one.

HERMOGENES: At any rate, it wouldn't be at all inappropriate for you to respond that way.

SOCRATES: No, it probably wouldn't. Nevertheless, it seems to me that "once we're in the competition, we're allowed no excuses,"⁴⁹ but must investigate these names vigorously. We should remember this, however:
 e if someone asks about the terms from which a name is formed, and then about the ones from which those terms are formed, and keeps on doing this indefinitely, the answerer must finally give up. Mustn't he?

48. See 409d, 416a.

49. A proverbial expression. See *Laws* 751d.

HERMOGENES: That's my view, at any rate.

SOCRATES: At what point would he be right to stop? Wouldn't it be when he reaches the names that are as it were the elements of all the other statements and names? For, if these are indeed elements, it cannot be right to suppose that *they* are composed out of other names. Consider '*agathos*' ('good'), for example; we said it is composed out of '*agaston*' ('admirable') and '*thoon*' ('fast').⁵⁰ And probably '*thoon*' is composed out of other names, and those out of still other ones. But if we ever get hold of a name that isn't composed out of other names, we'll be right to say that at last we've reached an element, which cannot any longer be carried back to other names. b

HERMOGENES: That seems right to me, at least.

SOCRATES: And if the names you're asking about now turn out to be elements, won't we have to investigate their correctness in a different manner from the one we've been using so far?

HERMOGENES: Probably so.

SOCRATES: It is certainly probable, Hermogenes. At any rate, it's obvious that all the earlier ones were resolved into these. So, if they are indeed elements, as they seem to me to be, join me again in investigating them, to ensure that I don't talk nonsense about the correctness of the first names. c

HERMOGENES: You have only to speak, and I will join in the investigation so far as I'm able.

SOCRATES: I think you agree with me that there is only one kind of correctness in all names, primary as well as derivative, and that considered simply as names there is no difference between them.

HERMOGENES: Certainly.

SOCRATES: Now, the correctness of every name we analyzed was intended to consist in its expressing the nature of one of the things that are. d

HERMOGENES: Of course.

SOCRATES: And this is no less true of primary names than derivative ones, if indeed they are names.

HERMOGENES: Certainly.

SOCRATES: But it seems that the derivative ones were able to accomplish this by means of the primary ones.

HERMOGENES: Apparently.

SOCRATES: And if the primary names are indeed names, they must make the things that are as clear as possible to us. But how can they do this when they aren't based on other names? Answer me this: If we hadn't a voice or a tongue, and wanted to express things to one another, wouldn't we try to make signs by moving our hands, head, and the rest of our body, just as dumb people do at present? e

HERMOGENES: What other choice would we have, Socrates?

SOCRATES: So, if we wanted to express something light in weight or above us, I think we'd raise our hand towards the sky in imitation of the very 423

50. See 412b–c.

nature of the thing. And if we wanted to express something heavy or below us, we'd move our hand towards the earth. And if we wanted to express a horse (or any other animal) galloping, you know that we'd make our bodies and our gestures as much like theirs as possible.

HERMOGENES: I think we'd have to.

SOCRATES: Because the only way to express anything by means of our body is to have our body imitate whatever we want to express.

HERMOGENES: Yes.

SOCRATES: So, if we want to express a particular fact by using our voice, tongue, and mouth, we will succeed in doing so, if we succeed in imitating it by means of them?

HERMOGENES: That must be right, I think.

SOCRATES: It seems to follow that a name is a vocal imitation of what it imitates, and that someone who imitates something with his voice names what he imitates.

HERMOGENES: I think so.

SOCRATES: Well, I don't. I don't think this is a fine thing to say at all.

HERMOGENES: Why not?

SOCRATES: Because then we'd have to agree that those who imitate sheep, cocks, or other animals are naming the things they imitate.

HERMOGENES: That's true, we would.

SOCRATES: And do you think that's a fine conclusion?

HERMOGENES: No, I don't. But then what sort of imitation is a name, Socrates?

SOCRATES: In the first place, if we imitate things the way we imitate them in music, we won't be naming them, not even if the imitation in question is vocal. And the same holds if we imitate the things music imitates. What I mean is this: each thing has a sound and a shape, and many of them have a color. Don't they?

HERMOGENES: Certainly.

SOCRATES: It doesn't seem to be the craft of naming that's concerned with imitating these qualities, however, but rather the crafts of music and painting. Isn't that so?

HERMOGENES: Yes.

SOCRATES: And what about this? Don't you think that just as each thing has a color or some of those other qualities we mentioned, it also has a being or essence? Indeed, don't color and sound each have a being or essence, just like every other thing that we say "is"?

HERMOGENES: Yes, I think they do.

SOCRATES: So if someone were able to imitate in letters and syllables this being or essence that each thing has, wouldn't he express what each thing itself is?

424 HERMOGENES: He certainly would.

SOCRATES: And if you were to identify the person who is able to do this, in just the way that you said the first was a musician and the second a painter, what would you say he is?

HERMOGENES: I think he's the namer, Socrates, the one we've been looking for from the beginning.

SOCRATES: If that's true, doesn't it seem that we are now in a position to investigate each of the names you were asking about—'rhoē' ('flowing'), 'ienai' ('going'), and 'schesis' ('restraining')—to see whether or not he has grasped the being or essence of each of the things they signify by imitating its being or essence in the letters and syllables of its name. Isn't that so?

HERMOGENES: Certainly.

SOCRATES: Come, then, let's see if these are the only primary names or if there are many others.

HERMOGENES: For my part, I think there are others.

SOCRATES: Yes, there probably are. But how are we to divide off the ones with which the imitator begins his imitation? Since an imitation of a thing's being or essence is made out of letters and syllables, wouldn't it be most correct for us to divide off the letters or elements first, just as those who set to work on speech rhythms first divide off the forces or powers of the letters or elements, then those of syllables, and only then investigate rhythms themselves?

HERMOGENES: Yes.

SOCRATES: So mustn't we first divide off the vowels and then the others in accordance with their differences in kind, that is to say, the "consonants" and "mutes" (as I take it they're called by specialists in these matters) and the semivowels, which are neither vowels nor mutes? And, as to the vowels themselves, mustn't we also divide off those that differ in kind from one another? Then when we've also well divided off the things that are—the things to which we have to give names—if there are some things to which they can all be carried back, as names are to the letters, and from which we can see that they derive, and if different kinds of being are found among them, in just the way that there are among the letters—once we've done all this well, we'll know how to apply each letter to what it resembles, whether one letter or a combination of many is to be applied to one thing. It's just the same as it is with painters. When they want to produce a resemblance, they sometimes use only purple, sometimes another color, and sometimes—for example, when they want to paint human flesh or something of that sort—they mix many colors, employing the particular color, I suppose, that their particular subject demands. Similarly, we'll apply letters to things, using one letter for one thing, when that's what seems to be required, or many letters together, to form what's called a syllable, or many syllables combined to form names and verbs. From names and verbs, in turn, we shall finally construct something important, beautiful, and whole. And just as the painter painted an animal, so—by means of the craft of naming or rhetoric or whatever it is—we shall construct sentences. Of course, I don't really mean *we ourselves*—I was carried away by the discussion. It was *the ancients* who combined things in this way. Our job—if indeed we are to examine all these things with scientific knowledge—is to divide where they put together, so as to see whether or

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- b not both the primary and derivative names are given in accord with nature. For, any other way of connecting names to things, Hermogenes, is inferior and unsystematic.

HERMOGENES: By god, Socrates, it probably is.

SOCRATES: Well, then, do you think you could divide them in that way? I don't think I could.

HERMOGENES: Then it's even less likely that I could.

- SOCRATES: Shall we give up then? Or do you want us to do what we can, and try to see a little of what these names are like? Aren't we in a similar situation to the one we were in a while ago with the gods?⁵¹ We prefaced that discussion by saying that we were wholly ignorant of the truth, and were merely describing human beliefs about the gods. So, shouldn't we now say this to ourselves before we proceed: If anyone, whether ourselves or someone else, divides names properly, he will divide them in the way we have just described, but, given our present situation, we must follow the proverb and "do the best we can" to work at them? Do you agree or not?

HERMOGENES: Of course, I agree completely.

- d SOCRATES: Perhaps it will seem absurd, Hermogenes, to think that things become clear by being imitated in letters and syllables, but it is absolutely unavoidable. For we have nothing better on which to base the truth of primary names. Unless you want us to behave like tragic poets, who introduce a *deus ex machina* whenever they're perplexed. For we, too, could escape our difficulties by saying that the primary names are correct because they were given by the gods. But is that the best account we can give? Or
- e is it this one: that we got them from foreigners, who are more ancient than we are? Or this: that just as it is impossible to investigate foreign names, so it is impossible to investigate the primary ones because they are too
- 426 ancient? Aren't all these merely the clever excuses of people who have no account to offer of how primary names are correctly given? And yet regardless of what kind of excuse one offers, if one doesn't know about the correctness of primary names, one cannot know about the correctness of derivative ones, which can only express something by means of those others about which one knows nothing. Clearly, then, anyone who claims to have a scientific understanding of derivative names must first and
- b foremost be able to explain the primary ones with perfect clarity. Otherwise he can be certain that what he says about the others will be worthless. Or do you disagree?

HERMOGENES: No, Socrates, not in the least.

SOCRATES: Well, my impressions about primary names seem to me to be entirely outrageous and absurd. Nonetheless, I'll share them with you, if you like. But if you have something better to offer, I hope you'll share it with me.

HERMOGENES: Have no fear, I will.

- c SOCRATES: First off, 'r' seems to me to be a tool for copying every sort of motion (*kinēsis*).—We haven't said why motion has this name, but it's

51. See 401a.

clear that it means *'hesis'* ('a going forth'), since in ancient times we used *'e'* in place of *'ē'*. The first part comes from *'kiein'*, a non-Attic name equivalent to *'ienai'* ('moving'). So if you wanted to find an ancient name corresponding to the present *'kinēsis'*, the correct answer would be *'hesis'*. But nowadays, what with the non-Attic word *'kiein'*, the change from *'e'* to *'ē'*, and the insertion of *'n'*, we say *'kinēsis'*, though it ought to be *'kieinēsis'*. *'Stasis'* ('rest') is a beautified version of a name meaning the opposite of *'ienai'* ('moving').—In any case, as I was saying, the letter *'r'* seemed to the name-giver to be a beautiful tool for copying motion, at any rate he often uses it for this purpose. He first uses this letter to imitate motion in the name *'rhein'* ('flowing') and *'rhoē'* ('flow') themselves. Then in *'tromos'* ('trembling') and *'trechein'* ('running'), and in such verbs as *'krouein'* ('striking'), *'thrauein'* ('crushing'), *'ereikein'* ('rending'), *'thruptein'* ('breaking'), *'kermatizein'* ('crumbling'), *'rhumbein'* ('whirling'), it is mostly *'r'* he uses to imitate these motions. He saw, I suppose, that the tongue was most agitated and least at rest in pronouncing this letter, and that's probably why he used it in these names. He uses *'i'*, in turn, to imitate all the small things that can most easily penetrate everything. Hence, in *'ienai'* ('moving') and *'hiesthai'* ('hastening'), he uses *'i'* to do the imitating. Similarly, he uses *'phi'*, *'psi'*, *'s'*, and *'z'* to do the imitating in such names as *'psuchron'* ('chilling'), *'zeon'* ('seething'), *'seiesthai'* ('shaking'), and *'seismos'* ('quaking'), because all these letters are pronounced with an expulsion of breath. Indeed, whenever the name-giver wants to imitate some sort of blowing or hard breathing (*phusōdes*), he almost always seems to employ them. He also seems to have thought that the compression and stopping of the power of the tongue involved in pronouncing *'d'* and *'t'* made such names as *'desmos'* ('shackling') and *'stasis'* ('rest') appropriately imitative. And because he observed that the tongue glides most of all in pronouncing *'l'*, he uses it to produce a resemblance in *'olisthanein'* ('glide') itself, and in such names as *'leion'* ('smooth'), *'liparon'* ('sleek'), *'kollōdes'* ('viscous'), and the like. But when he wants to imitate something cloying, he uses names, such as *'glischron'* ('gluey'), *'gluku'* ('sweet'), and *'gloiōdes'* ('clammy'), in which the gliding of the tongue is stopped by the power of the *'g'*. And because he saw that *'n'* is sounded inwardly, he used it in *'endon'* ('within') and *'entos'* ('inside'), in order to make the letters copy the things. He put an *'a'* in *'mega'* ('large') and an *'ē'* in *'mēkos'* ('length') because these letters are both pronounced long. He wanted *'o'* to signify roundness, so he mixed lots of it into the name *'gongulon'* ('round'). In the same way, the rule-setter apparently used the other letters or elements as likenesses in order to make a sign or name for each of the things that are, and then compounded all the remaining names out of these, imitating the things they name. That, Hermogenes, is my view of what it means to say that names are correct—unless, of course, Cratylus disagrees.

HERMOGENES: Well, Socrates, as I said at the beginning, Cratylus confuses me a lot of the time. He *says* that there is such a thing as the correctness of names, but he never explains clearly what it is. Consequently, I'm never able to determine whether his lack of clarity is intentional or unintentional.

- e So tell me now, Cratylus, here in the presence of Socrates, do you agree with what he has been saying about names, or do you have something better to say? If you have, tell it to us, and either you'll learn about your errors from Socrates or become our teacher.

CRATYLUS: But, Hermogenes, do you really think that any subject can be taught or learned so quickly, not to mention one like this, which seems to be among the most important?

- 428 HERMOGENES: No, by god, I don't. But I think that Hesiod is right in saying that

*If you can add even a little to a little, it's worthwhile.*⁵²

So, if you can add even a little more, don't shrink from the labor, but assist Socrates—he deserves it—and assist me, too.

- b SOCRATES: Yes, Cratylus, please do. As far as I'm concerned, nothing I've said is set in stone. I have simply been saying what seems right to me as a result of my investigations with Hermogenes. So, don't hesitate to speak, and if your views are better than mine, I'll gladly accept them. And it wouldn't surprise me if they were better, for you've both investigated these matters for yourself and learned about them from others. So, if indeed you do happen to have something better to offer, you may sign me up as a student in your course on the correctness of names.

- c CRATYLUS: Yes, Socrates, I have, as you say, occupied myself with these matters, and it's possible that you might have something to learn from me. But I fear the opposite is altogether more likely. So much so, indeed, that it occurs to me to say to you what Achilles says to Ajax in the "Prayers":

*Ajax, son of Telamon, seed of Zeus, lord of the people,
All you have said to me seems spoken after my own mind.*⁵³

The same is true of me where you're concerned, Socrates: your oracular utterances—whether inspired by Euthyphro or by some other Muse who has long inhabited your own mind without your knowing about it—seem to be pretty much spoken after *my* own mind.

- d SOCRATES: But, Cratylus, I have long been surprised at my own wisdom—and doubtful of it, too. That's why I think it's necessary to keep re-investigating whatever I say, since self-deception is the worst thing of all. How could it not be terrible, indeed, when the deceiver never deserts you even for an instant but is always right there with you? Therefore, I think we have to turn back frequently to what we've already said, in order to test it by looking at it "backwards and forwards simultaneously," as the

52. *Works and Days*, 361.

53. *Iliad* ix.644–45.

aforementioned poet puts it.⁵⁴ So, let's now see what we *have* said. We said that the correctness of a name consists in displaying the nature of the thing it names. And is that statement satisfactory? e

CRATYLUS: In my view, Socrates, it is entirely satisfactory.

SOCRATES: So names are spoken in order to give instruction?

CRATYLUS: Certainly.

SOCRATES: Is there a craft for that and are there craftsmen who practice it?

CRATYLUS: Certainly.

SOCRATES: Who are they?

CRATYLUS: As you said at the beginning, they're the rule-setters.⁵⁵ 429

SOCRATES: Is this craft attributed to human beings in the same way as other crafts or not? What I mean is this: aren't some painters better or worse than others?

CRATYLUS: Certainly.

SOCRATES: And the better painters produce finer products or paintings, while the others produce inferior ones? Similarly with builders—some build finer houses, others build inferior ones?

CRATYLUS: Yes.

SOCRATES: What about rule-setters? Do some of them produce finer products, others inferior ones? b

CRATYLUS: No, there I no longer agree with you.

SOCRATES: So you don't think that some rules are better, others inferior?

CRATYLUS: Certainly not.

SOCRATES: Nor names either, it seems. Or do you think that some names have been better given, others worse?

CRATYLUS: Certainly not.

SOCRATES: So all names have been correctly given?

CRATYLUS: Yes, as many of them as are names at all.

SOCRATES: What about the case of Hermogenes, which we mentioned earlier? Has he not been given this name at all, unless he belongs to the family of Hermes? Or has he been given it, only not correctly? c

CRATYLUS: I think he hasn't been given it at all, Socrates. People take it to have been given to him, but it is really the name of someone else, namely, the very one who also has the nature.

SOCRATES: What about when someone says that our friend here is Hermogenes? Is he speaking falsely or is he not even managing to do that much? Is it even possible to say that he *is* Hermogenes, if he isn't?

CRATYLUS: What do you mean?

SOCRATES: That false speaking is in every way impossible, for isn't that what *you* are trying to say? Certainly, many people do say it nowadays, Cratylus, and many have said it in the past as well. d

CRATYLUS: But, Socrates, how can anyone say the thing he says and not say something that is? Doesn't speaking falsely consist in not saying things that are?

54. *Iliad* i.343.

55. See 388d ff.

SOCRATES: Your argument is too subtle for me at my age. All the same, tell me this. Do you think it is possible to say something falsely, although
 e not possible to speak it falsely?

CRATYLUS: In my view, one can neither speak nor say anything falsely.

SOCRATES: What about announcing something falsely or addressing someone falsely? For example, suppose you were in a foreign country and someone meeting you took your hand and said, "Greetings! Hermogenes, son of Smicrion, visitor from Athens," would he be speaking, saying, announcing, or addressing these words not to you but to Hermogenes—or to no one?

CRATYLUS: In my view, Socrates, he is not articulating them as he should.

430 SOCRATES: Well, that's a welcome answer. But are the words he articulates true or false, or partly true and partly false? If you tell me that, I'll be satisfied.

CRATYLUS: For my part, I'd say he's just making noise and acting pointlessly, as if he were banging a brass pot.

SOCRATES: Let's see, Cratylus, if we can somehow come to terms with one another. You agree, don't you, that it's one thing to be a name and another to be the thing it names?

CRATYLUS: Yes, I do.

b SOCRATES: And you also agree that a name is an imitation of a thing?

CRATYLUS: Absolutely.

SOCRATES: And that a painting is a different sort of imitation of a thing?

CRATYLUS: Yes.

SOCRATES: Well, perhaps what you're saying is correct and I'm misunderstanding you, but can both of these imitations—both paintings and names—be assigned and applied to the things of which they are imitations, or not?

CRATYLUS: They can.

c SOCRATES: Then consider this. Can we assign a likeness of a man to a man and that of a woman to a woman, and so on?

CRATYLUS: Certainly.

SOCRATES: What about the opposite? Can we assign the likeness of a man to a woman and that of a woman to a man?

CRATYLUS: Yes, we can.

SOCRATES: And are both these assignments correct, or only the first?

CRATYLUS: Only the first.

SOCRATES: That is to say, the one that assigns to each thing the painting or name that is appropriate to it or like it?

CRATYLUS: That's my view, at least.

d SOCRATES: Since you and I are friends, we don't want to mince words, so here's what I think. I call the first kind of assignment correct, whether it's an assignment of a painting or a name, but if it's an assignment of a name, I call it both correct and *true*. And I call the other kind of assignment, the one that assigns and applies unlike imitations, incorrect, and, in the case of names, *false* as well.

CRATYLUS: But it may be, Socrates, that it's possible to assign paintings incorrectly, but not names, which must always be correctly assigned. e

SOCRATES: What do you mean? What's the difference between them? Can't I step up to a man and say "This is your portrait," while showing him what happens to be his own likeness, or what happens to be the likeness of a woman? And by "show" I mean bring before the sense of sight.

CRATYLUS: Certainly.

SOCRATES: Well, then, can't I step up to the same man a second time and say, "This is your name"? Now, a name is an imitation, just as a painting or portrait is. So, can't I say to him, "This is your name," and after that put before his sense of hearing what happens to be an imitation of himself, saying "Man," or what happens to be an imitation of a female of the human species, saying "Woman"? Don't you think that all this is possible and sometimes occurs? 431

CRATYLUS: I'm willing to go along with you, Socrates, and say that it occurs.

SOCRATES: It's good of you to do so, Cratylus, provided you really are willing, since then we don't have to argue any further about the matter. So if some such assignments of names take place, we may call the first of them speaking truly and the second speaking falsely. But if that is so, it is sometimes possible to assign names incorrectly, to give them not to things they fit but to things they don't fit. The same is true of verbs. But if verbs and names can be assigned in this way, the same must be true of statements, since statements are, I believe, a combination of names and verbs. What do you think, Cratylus? b c

CRATYLUS: The same as you, since I think you're right.

SOCRATES: Further, primary names may be compared to paintings, and in paintings it's possible to present all the appropriate colors and shapes, or not to present them all. Some may be left out, or too many included, or those included may be too large. Isn't that so?

CRATYLUS: It is.

SOCRATES: So doesn't someone who presents all of them, present a fine painting or likeness, while someone who adds some or leaves some out, though he still produces a painting or likeness, produces a bad one?

CRATYLUS: Yes. d

SOCRATES: What about someone who imitates the being or essence of things in syllables and letters? According to this account, if he presents all the appropriate things, won't the likeness—that is to say, the name—be a fine one? But if he happens to add a little or leave a little out, though he'll still have produced an image, it won't be fine? Doesn't it follow that some names are finely made, while others are made badly?

CRATYLUS: Presumably.

SOCRATES: So presumably one person will be a good craftsman of names and another a bad one? e

CRATYLUS: Yes.

SOCRATES: And this craftsman is named a rule-setter.

CRATYLUS: Yes.

SOCRATES: By god, presumably some rule-setters are good and others bad then, especially if what we agreed to before is true, and they are just like other craftsmen.

432 CRATYLUS: That's right. But you see, Socrates, when we assign 'a', 'b', and each of the other letters to names by using the craft of grammar, if we add, subtract, or transpose a letter, we don't simply write the name incorrectly, we don't write *it* at all, for it immediately becomes a different name, if any of those things happens.

SOCRATES: That's not a good way for us to look at the matter, Cratylus.

CRATYLUS: Why not?

SOCRATES: What you say may well be true of numbers, which have to be a certain number or not be at all. For example, if you add anything to the number ten or subtract anything from it, it immediately becomes a different number, and the same is true of any other number you choose. But this isn't the sort of correctness that belongs to things with sensory
 b qualities, such as images in general. Indeed, the opposite is true of them—an image cannot remain an image if it presents all the details of what it represents. See if I'm right. Would there be two things—Cratylus and an image of Cratylus—in the following circumstances? Suppose some god didn't just represent your color and shape the way painters do, but made
 c all the inner parts like yours, with the same warmth and softness, and put motion, soul, and wisdom like yours into them—in a word, suppose he made a duplicate of everything you have and put it beside you. Would there then be two Cratyluses or Cratylus and an image of Cratylus?

CRATYLUS: It seems to me, Socrates, that there would be two Cratyluses.

SOCRATES: So don't you see that we must look for some other kind of correctness in images and in the names we've been discussing, and not insist that if a detail is added to an image or omitted from it, it's no longer
 d an image at all. Or haven't you noticed how far images are from having the same features as the things of which they are images?

CRATYLUS: Yes, I have.

SOCRATES: At any rate, Cratylus, names would have an absurd effect on the things they name, if they resembled them in every respect, since all of them would then be duplicated, and no one would be able to say which was the thing and which was the name.

CRATYLUS: That's true.

SOCRATES: Take courage then and admit that one name may be well-
 e given while another isn't. Don't insist that it have all the letters and exactly resemble the thing it names, but allow that an inappropriate letter may be included. But if an inappropriate letter may be included in a name, an inappropriate name may be included in a phrase. And if an inappropriate name may be included in a phrase, a phrase which is inappropriate to the things may be employed in a statement. Things are still named and described when this happens, provided the phrases include the pattern of

the things they're about. Remember that this is just what Hermogenes and I claimed earlier about the names of the elements.⁵⁶

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CRATYLUS: I remember.

SOCRATES: Good. So even if a name doesn't include all the appropriate letters, it will still describe the thing if it includes its pattern—though it will describe the thing well, if it includes all the appropriate letters, and badly, if it includes few of them. I think we had better accept this, Cratylus, or else, like men lost on the streets of Aegina late at night, we, too, may incur the charge of truly seeming to be the sort of people who arrive at things later than they should. For if you deny it, you cannot agree that a name is correct if it expresses things by means of letters and syllables and you'll have to search for some other account of the correctness of names, since if you both deny it and accept this account of correctness, you'll contradict yourself.

b

CRATYLUS: You seem to me to be speaking reasonably, Socrates, and I take what you've said as established.

SOCRATES: Well, then, since we agree about that, let's consider the next point. If a name is well given, don't we say that it must have the appropriate letters?

CRATYLUS: Yes.

SOCRATES: And the appropriate letters are the ones that are like the things?

c

CRATYLUS: Certainly.

SOCRATES: Therefore that's the way that well-given names are given. But if a name isn't well given, it's probable that most of its letters are appropriate or like the thing it names, if indeed it is a likeness of it, but that some are inappropriate and prevent the name from being good or well given. Is that our view or is it something different?

CRATYLUS: I don't suppose there's anything to be gained by continuing to quarrel, Socrates, but I'm not satisfied that something is a name if it isn't well given.

SOCRATES: But you *are* satisfied that a name is a way of expressing a thing?

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CRATYLUS: I am.

SOCRATES: And you think it's true that some names are composed out of more primitive ones, while others are primary?

CRATYLUS: Yes, I do.

SOCRATES: But if the primary names are to be ways of expressing things clearly, is there any better way of getting them to be such than by making each of them as much like the thing it is to express as possible? Or do you prefer the way proposed by Hermogenes and many others, who claim that names are conventional signs that express things to those who already knew the things before they established the conventions? Do you think that the correctness of names is conventional, so that it makes no difference whether we accept the present convention or adopt the opposite one,

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56. See 393d–e.

calling 'big' what we now call 'small', and 'small' what we now call 'big'? Which of these two ways of getting names to express things do you prefer?

434 CRATYLUS: A name that expresses a thing by being like it is in every way superior, Socrates, to one that is given by chance.

SOCRATES: That's right. But if a name is indeed to be like a thing, mustn't the letters or elements out of which primary names are composed be naturally like things? Let me explain by returning to our earlier analogy with painting. Could a painting ever be made like any of the things that are, if it were not composed of pigments that were by nature like the things that the art of painting imitates? Isn't that impossible?

CRATYLUS: Yes, it's impossible.

SOCRATES: Then by the same token can names ever be like anything unless the things they're composed out of have some kind of likeness to the things they imitate? And aren't they composed of letters or elements?

CRATYLUS: Yes.

c SOCRATES: Now, consider what I said to Hermogenes earlier. Tell me, do you think I was right to say that 'r' is like motion, moving, and hardness or not?

CRATYLUS: You were right.

SOCRATES: And 'l' is like smoothness, softness, and the other things we mentioned.

CRATYLUS: Yes.

SOCRATES: Yet you know that the very thing that we call '*sklērotēs*' ('hardness') is called '*sklērotēr*' by the Eretrians?

CRATYLUS: Certainly.

SOCRATES: Then are both 'r' and 's' like the same thing, and does the name ending in 'r' express the same thing to them as the one ending in 's' does to us, or does one of them fail to express it?

d CRATYLUS: They both express it.

SOCRATES: In so far as 'r' and 's' are alike, or in so far as they are unlike?

CRATYLUS: In so far as they are alike.

SOCRATES: Are they alike in all respects?

CRATYLUS: They are presumably alike with respect to expressing motion, at any rate.

SOCRATES: What about the 'l' in these names? Doesn't it express the opposite of hardness?

CRATYLUS: Perhaps it is incorrectly included in them, Socrates. Maybe it's just like the examples you cited to Hermogenes a while ago in which you added or subtracted letters. You were correct to do so, in my view. So, too, in the present case perhaps we ought to replace 'l' with 'r'.

e SOCRATES: You have a point. But what about when someone says '*sklēron*' ('hard'), and pronounces it the way we do at present? Don't we understand him? Don't you yourself know what *I* mean by it?

CRATYLUS: I do, but that's because of usage.

SOCRATES: When you say 'usage', do you mean something other than convention? Do you mean something by 'usage' besides this: when I utter

this name and mean hardness by it, you know that this is what I mean? Isn't that what you're saying?

CRATYLUS: Yes.

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SOCRATES: And if when I utter a name, you know what I mean, doesn't that name become a way for me to express it to you?

CRATYLUS: Yes.

SOCRATES: Even though the name I utter is unlike the thing I mean—since 'l' is unlike hardness (to revert to your example). But if that's right, surely you have entered into a convention with yourself, and the correctness of names has become a matter of convention for you, for isn't it the chance of usage and convention that makes both like and unlike letters express things? And even if usage is completely different from convention, still you must say that expressing something isn't a matter of likeness but of usage, since usage, it seems, enables both like and unlike names to express things. Since we agree on these points, Cratylus, for I take your silence as a sign of agreement, both convention and usage must contribute something to expressing what we mean when we speak. Consider numbers, Cratylus, since you want to have recourse to them.⁵⁷ Where do you think you'll get names that are like each one of the numbers, if you don't allow this agreement and convention of yours to have some control over the correctness of names? I myself prefer the view that names should be as much like things as possible, but I fear that defending this view is like hauling a ship up a sticky ramp, as Hermogenes suggested,⁵⁸ and that we have to make use of this worthless thing, convention, in the correctness of names. For probably the best possible way to speak consists in using names all (or most) of which are like the things they name (that is, are appropriate to them), while the worst is to use the opposite kind of names. But let me next ask you this. What power do names have for us? What's the good of them?

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d

CRATYLUS: To give instruction, Socrates. After all, the simple truth is that anyone who knows a thing's name also knows the thing.

SOCRATES: Perhaps you mean this, Cratylus, that when you know what a name is like, and it is like the thing it names, then you also know the thing, since it is like the name, and all like things fall under one and the same craft. Isn't that why you say that whoever knows a thing's name also knows the thing?

e

CRATYLUS: Yes, you're absolutely right.

SOCRATES: Then let's look at that way of giving instruction about the things that are. Is there also another one, but inferior to this, or is it the only one? What do you think?

CRATYLUS: I think that it is the best and only way, and that there are no others.

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57. See 432a.

58. At 414c.

SOCRATES: Is it also the best way to *discover* the things that are? If one discovers something's name has one also discovered the thing it names? Or are names only a way of getting people to learn things, and must investigation and discovery be undertaken in some different way?

CRATYLUS: They must certainly be undertaken in exactly the same way and by means of the same things.

b SOCRATES: But don't you see, Cratylus, that anyone who investigates things by taking names as his guides and looking into their meanings runs no small risk of being deceived?

CRATYLUS: In what way?

SOCRATES: It's clear that the first name-giver gave names to things based on his conception of what those things were like. Isn't that right?

CRATYLUS: Yes.

SOCRATES: And if his conception was incorrect and he gave names based on it, what do you suppose will happen to us if we take him as our guide? Won't we be deceived?

c CRATYLUS: But it wasn't that way, Socrates. The name-giver had to know the things he was naming. Otherwise, as I've been saying all along, his names wouldn't be names at all. And here's a powerful proof for you that the name-giver didn't miss the truth: His names are entirely consistent with one another. Or haven't you noticed that all the names you utter are based on the same assumption and have the same purpose?

d SOCRATES: But surely that's no defense, Cratylus. The name-giver might have made a mistake at the beginning and then forced the other names to be consistent with it. There would be nothing strange in that. Geometrical constructions often have a small unnoticed error at the beginning with which all the rest is perfectly consistent. That's why every man must think a lot about the first principles of any thing and investigate them thoroughly to see whether or not it's correct to assume them. For if they have been adequately examined, the subsequent steps will plainly follow from them.
e However, I'd be surprised if names *are* actually consistent with one another. So let's review our earlier discussion. We said that names signify the being or essence of things to us on the assumption that all things are moving and flowing and being swept along.⁵⁹ Isn't that what you think names express?

437 CRATYLUS: Absolutely. Moreover, I think they signify correctly.

SOCRATES: Of those we discussed, let's reconsider the name '*epistēmē*' ('knowledge') first and see how ambiguous it is. It seems to signify that it stops (*histēsi*) the movement of our soul towards (*epi*) things, rather than that it accompanies them in their movement, so that it's more correct to pronounce the beginning of it as we now do than to insert an '*e*' and get '*hepeistēmē*'⁶⁰—or rather, to insert an '*i*' instead of an '*e*'.⁶¹ Next, consider

59. See 411c.

60. As was suggested at 412a, yielding something to do with "following" things.

61. To get '*epihistēmē*', revealing more clearly the derivation from '*epi*' and '*histēsi*'.

'*bebaion*' ('certain'), which is an imitation of being based (*basis*) or resting (*stasis*), not of motion. '*Historia*' ('inquiry'), which is somewhat the same, signifies the stopping (*histēsi*) of the flow (*rhous*). '*Piston*' ('confidence'), too, certainly signifies stopping (*histan*). Next, anyone can see that '*mnēmē*' ('memory') means a staying (*monē*) in the soul, not a motion. Or consider '*hamartia*' ('error') and '*sumphora*' ('mishap'), if you like. If we take names as our guides, they seem to signify the same as '*sunesis*' ('comprehension') and '*epistēmē*' ('knowledge') and other names of excellent things.⁶² Moreover, '*amathia*' ('ignorance') and '*akolasia*' ('licentiousness') also seem to be closely akin to them. For '*amathia*' seems to mean the journey of someone who accompanies god (*hama theōi iōn*), and '*akolasia*' seems precisely to mean movement guided by things (*akolouthia tois pragmasin*). Thus names of what we consider to be the very worst things seem to be exactly like those of the very best. And if one took the trouble, I think one could find many other names from which one could conclude that the name-giver intended to signify not that things were moving and being swept along, but the opposite, that they were at rest.

CRATYLUS: But observe, Socrates, that most of them signify motion. d

SOCRATES: What if they do, Cratylus? Are we to count names like votes and determine their correctness that way? If more names signify motion, does that make *them* the true ones?

CRATYLUS: No, that's not a reasonable view.

SOCRATES: It certainly isn't, Cratylus. So let's drop this topic, and return to the one that led us here. A little while ago, you said, if you remember, that the name-giver had to know the things he named.⁶³ Do you still believe that or not? 438

CRATYLUS: I still do.

SOCRATES: Do you think that the giver of the first names also knew the things he named?

CRATYLUS: Yes, he did know them.

SOCRATES: What names did he learn or discover those things from? After all, the first names had not yet been given. Yet it's impossible, on our view, to learn or discover things except by learning their names from others or discovering them for ourselves? b

CRATYLUS: You have a point there, Socrates.

SOCRATES: So, if things cannot be learned except from their names, how can we possibly claim that the name-givers or rule-setters had knowledge before any names had been given for them to know?

CRATYLUS: I think the truest account of the matter, Socrates, is that a more than human power gave the first names to things, so that they are necessarily correct. c

62. '*Hamartia*' is like '*homartein*' ('to accompany'), and '*sumphora*' is like '*sumpheresthai*' ('to move together with').

63. At 435d.

SOCRATES: In your view then this name-giver contradicted himself, even though he's either a daemon or a god? Or do you think we were talking nonsense just now?

CRATYLUS: But one of the two apparently contradictory groups of names that we distinguished aren't names at all.

SOCRATES: Which one, Cratylus? Those which point to rest or those which point to motion? As we said just now, this cannot be settled by majority vote.

d CRATYLUS: No, that wouldn't be right, Socrates.

SOCRATES: But since there's a civil war among names, with some claiming that they are like the truth and others claiming that *they* are, how then are we to judge between them, and what are we to start from? We can't start from other different names because there are none. No, it's clear we'll have to look for something other than names, something that will make plain to us without using names which of these two kinds of names are the true ones—that is to say, the ones that express the truth about the things that are.

e CRATYLUS: I think so, too.

SOCRATES: But if that's right, Cratylus, then it seems it must be possible to learn about the things that are, independently of names.

CRATYLUS: Evidently.

SOCRATES: How else would you expect to learn about them? How else than in the most legitimate and natural way, namely, learning them through one another, if they are somehow akin, and through themselves? For something different, something that was other than they, wouldn't signify them, but something different, something other.

CRATYLUS: That seems true to me.

439 SOCRATES: But wait a minute! Haven't we often agreed that if names are well given, they are like the things they name and so are likenesses of them?

CRATYLUS: Yes.

SOCRATES: So if it's really the case that one can learn about things through names and that one can also learn about them through themselves, which would be the better and clearer way to learn about them? Is it better to learn from the likeness both whether it itself is a good likeness and also the truth it is a likeness of? Or is it better to learn from the truth both the truth itself and also whether the likeness of it is properly made?

b CRATYLUS: I think it is certainly better to learn from the truth.

SOCRATES: How to learn and make discoveries about the things that are is probably too large a topic for you or me. But we should be content to have agreed that it is far better to investigate them and learn about them through themselves than to do so through their names.

CRATYLUS: Evidently so, Socrates.

c SOCRATES: Still, let's investigate one further issue so as to avoid being deceived by the fact that so many of these names seem to lean in the same direction—as we will be if, as seems to me to be the case, the name-givers really did give them in the belief that everything is always moving and

flowing, and as it happens things aren't really that way at all, but the name-givers themselves have fallen into a kind of vortex and are whirled around in it, dragging us with them. Consider, Cratylus, a question that I for my part often dream about: Are we or aren't we to say that there is a beautiful itself, and a good itself, and the same for each one of the things that are?

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CRATYLUS: I think we are, Socrates.

SOCRATES: Let's not investigate whether a particular face or something of that sort is beautiful then, or whether all such things seem to be flowing, but let's ask this instead: Are we to say that the beautiful itself is always such as it is?

CRATYLUS: Absolutely.

SOCRATES: But if it is always passing away, can we correctly say of it first that it is *this*, and then that it is *such and such*? Or, at the very instant we are speaking, isn't it inevitably and immediately becoming a different thing and altering and no longer being as it was?

CRATYLUS: It is.

SOCRATES: Then if it never stays the same, how can it *be* something? After all, if it ever stays the same, it clearly isn't changing—at least, not during that time; and if it always stays the same and is always the same thing, so that it never departs from its own form, how can it ever change or move?

e

CRATYLUS: There's no way.

SOCRATES: Then again it can't even be known by anyone. For at the very instant the knower-to-be approaches, what he is approaching is becoming a different thing, of a different character, so that he can't yet come to know either what sort of thing it is or what it is like—surely, no kind of knowledge is knowledge of what isn't in any way.

440

CRATYLUS: That's right.

SOCRATES: Indeed, it isn't even reasonable to say that there is such a thing as knowledge, Cratylus, if all things are passing on and none remain. For if that thing itself, knowledge, did not pass on from being knowledge, then knowledge would always remain, and there would *be* such a thing as knowledge. On the other hand, if the very form of knowledge passed on from being knowledge, the instant it passed on into a different form than that of knowledge, there would be no knowledge. And if it were always passing on, there would always be no knowledge. Hence, on this account, no one could know anything and nothing could be known either. But if there is always that which knows and that which is known, if there are such things as the beautiful, the good, and each one of the things that are, it doesn't appear to me that these things can be at all like flowings or motions, as we were saying just now they were. So whether I'm right about these things or whether the truth lies with Heraclitus and many others⁶⁴ isn't an easy matter to investigate. But surely no one with any understanding will commit himself or the cultivation of his soul to names,

b

c

64. See 402a.

440d or trust them and their givers to the point of firmly stating that he knows something—condemning both himself and the things that are to be totally unsound like leaky sinks—or believe that things are exactly like people with runny noses, or that all things are afflicted with colds and drip over everything. It's certainly possible that things are that way, Cratylus, but it is also possible that they are not. So you must investigate them courageously and thoroughly and not accept anything easily—you are still young and in your prime, after all. Then after you've investigated them, if you happen to discover the truth, you can share it with me.

e CRATYLUS: I'll do that. But I assure you, Socrates, that I have already investigated them and have taken a lot of trouble over the matter, and things seem to me to be very much more as Heraclitus says they are.

SOCRATES: Instruct me about it another time, Cratylus, after you get back. But now go off into the country, as you were planning to do, and Hermogenes here will see you on your way.⁶⁵

CRATYLUS: I'll do that, Socrates, but I hope that you will also continue to think about these matters yourself.

65. 'See on your way' (*propempsei*): as a good son of Hermes *pompaios* (who conducts souls of the dead to Hades) would do. Hermogenes is thus correctly named after all. See 384c, 408b.